

THEOLOGY OF NATURE: TRINITARIAN PARADIGMS FOR ECOLOGY

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Abstract

Theocentricism is the cornerstone of ecology. Orthodox theology offers a Trinitarian view of creation that is engraved in Trinitarian ecclesiology. As God relates to nature, creation acquires an “otherness” of its existence. The theology of “otherness” of nature, in the context of trinitarian ecclesiology, places creation into ecclesiological “koinonia” with humankind and God. Because God is a mystery and He calls man to participate in His mystery, humanity is also called to discover the mystery of nature. Humanity might discover new natural resources needed to maintain contemporary consumerism. An exclusive anthropocentric view of the world makes humanity responsible for the current ecological problem. The deformed relationship of humanity with nature brings us to the problem of ecology. Accountability is essential for the recovery of nature to its original place.

Introduction

Humanity faces one of the most difficult problems of its existence: environmental disaster of the world. Man is being challenged with the prospect of global warming, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, acid rain and global pollution. All we need to do is mention Chernobyl, Bophal, Times Beach and Love Canal to be reminded of the dangers lurking in toxic, radioactive, and chemical contamination. The pollution of streams, rivers, lakes and oceans, threatens our most valuable resource - water. Wetlands, beaches, and valuable farmlands are disappearing as a result of the greed and ignorance of development. Our next most valuable resource, arable land, over 50% of it has been irrevocably lost over the last 10 000 years due to destructive agricultural practices. Of the remaining land, 30% may be lost in the near future, due to continued erosion and poisoning by chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This would leave us with only 4% of the earth's surface to feed an exponentially growing global population.¹ The near environmental holocaust of epic proportions might exceed those of the Roman Empire in North Africa and the Maya in Meso-America.

¹Gregory D. Cusack, “The Rural Crisis and the Theology of Land.” *Epiphany*, 8 (1987) 1, 50.

The destruction and depletion of natural resources by humanity challenges the entire spectrum of consumerism of modern society, which is the main theme of this conference. The discussion of the subject of consumerism in Christian theology will be based on the perspective of fundamental Christian doctrine of creation that will lead us into the discussion of the related themes. A deadly threat to the life of human existence and the entire global environment asks us to provide a new look at the relationship between man and nature. The reexamination of this relationship is essential to the life of our planet and our approach to consumerism. In order to understand the authentic message of Christianity on creation we will attempt to place ourselves in a proper theological setting that will lead us to the mystery of God: the Trinity.

The fundamental basis for the debate of nature in the Christian perspective is the dogma of the Trinitarian God. The Trinitarian theology offers humanity a trinitarian concept of creation that can lead any discussion beyond human speculation. After the presentation of the basic principles of Trinitarian theology the discussion will be directed towards the trinitarian ecclesiology of the Church that embraces the entire creation. The discussion of the nature of the church in the Trinitarian context is fundamental for the analysis of nature and the ecological problem. Based on the Trinitarian ecclesiology this paper presents us with three paradigms to the problem of ecological crisis. According to the first paradigm, nature has to be reintroduced to its "otherness" as it relates to the relational God. The second paradigm emphasizes the mystery of God and creation in the context of consumerism. The third paradigm focuses on the responsibility of man (used as a plural form to signify both genders) towards nature. The paradigms present us with a stimulus that we need to seriously consider in the debate on nature and the environment.

A Trinitarian Approach to Creation

Orthodox theology offers a Trinitarian view of creation that acknowledges the Holy Trinity in the creation of the world. According to Christian cosmology and eschatology, the very existence of creation at any moment depends totally on the work of the Trinitarian God. Following the development of contemporary Orthodox thought, the foundation of Christian theology is the dogma of the Holy Trinity.² Accordingly, the theology of creation is also founded upon the Holy Trinity. Based on this fundamental theological principle, the Church reflects the life and action of the Divine Trinity in the world.³ The Holy Trinity is the ultimate foundation and source of the church's existence.⁴ In essence, the Church has a Trinitarian character and expression.⁵ The

²John Zizioulas, "The Ministry of the Church in Orthodox Tradition." *One in Christ* XXIV (1981) 1, 295; Stylianos Harakianakis, "Can a Petrine Office be Meaningful in the Church. A Greek Orthodox Reply." *Concilium* 4 (1971) 7, 118.

³John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of God, the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study." In: *The Forgotten Trinity*, A.I.C. Heron (ed.), BCC/CCBI, London, 1991, 28; Olivier Clement, "The Orthodox Diaspora in Western Europe: Its Future and its Role." *Sobornost* 7 (1978) 7, 579.

⁴George Dragas, "Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XXVI (1981) 3, 185.

Church becomes the living icon of the Holy Trinity.

Continuing the analysis of the ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, we have to emphasize that ecclesiology has christological, pneumatological, eschatological and cosmic dimensions.⁶ The total integration of the Divine Trinity in the life of the Church is expressed in those dimensions. The main purpose of the existence of the church is the vision of the Kingdom of God.⁷ Because of this eschatological presupposition, in her existence, the church strives to model itself on the pattern of the Kingdom of God and should never cease to do so. Any compromise with the powers of the fallen world would be detrimental to her identity.⁸ The main character of the Church is the nourishment and cultivation of the Christian "life style" for people of any time under any condition and difficulties.⁹ The Church is life in God and "not of this world (John 18:36). She cannot be categorized and discussed as any other ideology. If the church is the "living icon of the Holy Trinity" in the world then the whole universe, with all its complexities and problems, is the domain of the church. According to Maximos the Confessor, "the church is the print and image of the whole context, which consists of visible and invisible substances".¹⁰ In this context, the problems of man in the world are the church's problems.¹¹ All the daily dilemmas of humankind, including the political, economic, cultural and environmental problems, are being transferred to the church, where they are being sanctified and overcome in the Holy Eucharist.¹²

⁵Nicholas Koulomzine, "Images of the Church in Saint Paul's Epistles." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 14 (1970) 1-2, 5.

⁶Emmanuel Clapsis, "The Holy Spirit in the Church." *The Ecumenical Review* 41 (1989) 3, 339; Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Ekleziologia prawosławna i protestancka w zarysie." In: W. Grant, "Ku człowiekowi i Bogu w Chrystusie, *Zarys Teologii Katolickiej*", tom. 2, Lublin, 1974, 376 and 379.

⁷John Zizioulas, "Episcopate and Episkopos in the Early Church. A Brief Survey of the Evidence." *Episcopate and Episcopate in Ecumenical Perspective*, Faith and Order Paper 102, Geneva, 40; Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "The Church As Communion." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 38 (1994) 1, 8. Alexander Schmemmann, "The Problem of the Church Presence in the World in Orthodox Consciousness." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 21 (1977) 1, 13; John Meyendorff, "The Vision of Unity." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood, 1987, 156; Ioannes N. Karmiris, "Nationalism in the Orthodox Church." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 26 (1981) 3, 181; Emmanuel Clapsis, "Politics and Christian Faith." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (1992) 1-2, 101.

⁸Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "The Church As Communion," 8; Emmanuel Clapsis, "Politics and Christian Faith," 101.

⁹Stanley S. Harakas, "The Orthodox Theological Approach to Modern Trends." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969) 4, 210.

¹⁰In: John Karmiris, "Catholicity of the Church and Nationalism." In: *Process - Verbaux du Deuxieme Congres de Theologie Orthodoxe a Athenes 19-29 Aout 1976*, Publies par les soins du Professeur Savas Chr. Agourides, Athenes, 1978, 466; Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 9 (1969) 4, 210.

¹¹J. D. Zizioulas, "Informal Groups in the Church: An Orthodox Viewpoint." In: *Informal Groups in the Church. Papers of the Second Cerdic Colloquium Strasbourg, May 13-15, 1971*, Rene Metz and Jean Schlick (eds.), The Pickwick Press, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 1974, 187.

¹²Vladimir Lossky, "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood,

The church is the life of the world and by participating in the struggle of humanity for man's theosis, the church transforms the world. Although the church has a distinctive identity with a specific mission in the world, actions for environmental stability of the world are constitutive dimensions of the church's mission.¹³ The church is never associated with the indifference or excessive detachment that are part of the horror of the world.¹⁴ Indifference and apathy bring life to death, while participation and action change and transform the world. If a local church associates itself with indifference, it is not a church.¹⁵ Although the problems of the world are being brought to the church, they are never being identified with the church.¹⁶ The church, because of its ontological nature expressed in an apophatic theology, cannot identify itself with either national or social ideologies or with any other ideological trend of the society.¹⁷ It has to be emphasized that the church incarnates people, refusing to accept any ideas or beliefs.¹⁸

If the Church is the "living icon of the Holy Trinity" and the entire world is the domain of the church then the entire creation is an imprint of the Trinitarian life. This might be the reason why St. Maximos calls the world the "cosmic church".¹⁹ The nature of the world has a Trinitarian character. The church is the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity and as such the Holy Trinity constitutes her being in the world. The church reflects God's unity in the Holy Trinity²⁰ that is

1976, 113. Similar view is expressed by Nellas Panayiotis, look: Nellas Panayiotis, "Deification in Christ." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood, 1987, 169.

¹³Emmanuel Clapsis, "Politics and Christian Faith," 100.

¹⁴Stanley S. Harakas, "The Orthodox Theological Approach to Modern Trends," 204; Thomas Hopko, "The Narrow Way of Orthodoxy." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 40 (1996), 7; Emmanuel Clapsis, "Politics and Christian Faith," 101.

¹⁵John Zizioulas, "The Local Church in a Eucharistic Perspective - an Orthodox Contribution." *In Each Place: Toward a Fellowship of Local Churches Truly United*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1977, 59; George Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, vol II, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont, 1974, 99.

¹⁶Stanley Harakas, "The Orthodox Theological Approach to Modern Trends," 205; Stanley S. Harakas, "Orthodox Church - State Theory and American Democracy." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XXI (1971) 4, 418; Thomas Hopko, "The Narrow Way of Orthodoxy," 7.

¹⁷Christos Yannaras, "The Freedom of Morality." *St Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood, 1984, 215; Stanley S. Harakas, "Must God Remain Greek? Orthodox Reflections on Christian Faith and Culture." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 36 (1991) 3-4, 355; John Meyendorff, "The Vision of Unity," 156; Kallistos Ware, "Authority in the Orthodox Church." *Ekklisia kai Theologia* 3 (1982), 942; Jean Zizioulas, "The Eucharistic Prayer and Life." *Emmanuel* 85 (1979) 4, 201.

¹⁸John Zizioulas, "The Local Church in a Eucharistic Perspective," 61; Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "The Church as Communion," 8; Ioannes N. Karmiris, "Nationalism in the Orthodox Church," 178 and 182; John Meyendorff, "Who Holds the Church Together." *Ecumenical Review* XII (1960) 3, 197; John Meyendorff, "The Vision of Unity," 156.

¹⁹Paul Evdokimov, "Nature." *Mid-Stream*, 4 (1964) 2, 50.

²⁰George Dragas, "Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline," 185

being reflected on the nature of the world. In other words, the church mirrors the communion and “otherness” that exists in the Holy Trinity. Ideally, the life of members of the Church reflects ineffable life of the Holy Trinity.²¹ In addition, the Church cannot function without continual reference to the Triune God.²² The doctrine of the Trinity introduced by the Orthodox Church, based on the diversity of person, has an immense significance in the discussion of the nature of the world. The Three Persons are one in nature, but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are absolutely different.²³ Based on this, God is relational and God is koinonia.²⁴ The relationship of the Trinity acquires not only the Trinitarian mode, but it is also directed towards the entire creation. The Trinitarian God relates to His created world. God participates in the nature of the world as the Persons of the Trinity relate to each other. The identity and value of the created world are rooted in the fundamental relationship with the Triune God.²⁵ For Orthodoxy, based on the above said, nature is theocentric.²⁶ The cornerstone of Christian ecology is theocentricism.²⁷ As a consequence, Christian cosmology recognizes that theocentricism is fundamental for the creation of the world.²⁸ According to Orthodox theological thought, the creation of the world by the Trinitarian God became God’s second revelation²⁹ or the sacred Scripture written by Logos.³⁰ As a consequence, creation has a holy origin that is to be found in the Holy Trinity.³¹

²¹Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, “The Holy Trinity in Human Life.” *Sobornost*, XXI (1985) 1, 8.

²²John Zizioulas, “Suggestions for a Plan Study on Ecclesiology.” Faith Order 1985-1989; *Faith and Order* Paper No. 148, WWC Publications, Geneva, 211; J.D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of God, the Trinity Today,” 28.

²³Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, “Communion and Otherness.” *Sobornost* 16 (1994) 1, 12.

²⁴Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, “The Church As Communion,” 6.

²⁵Thomas FitzGerald, “Orthodox Theology and Ecumenical Witness: An Introduction to Major Themes.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 42 (1998) 3-4, 355; Alexander Schmemmann, “Sacraments and Orthodoxy.” *Palm Publishers*, Montreal, 1965,

²⁶Issa J. Khalil, “The Ecological Crisis: An Eastern Christian Perspective.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 22 (1987) 4, 189; Matthew Chapman, “Notes on the Nature of God, the Cosmos, and Novus Homo: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 21 (1976) 3, 255.

²⁷Vincent Rossi, “Theocentricism: The Cornerstone of Christian Ecology.” *Epiphany*, 6 (1985) 1, 8-14.

²⁸A careful reading of the Genesis accounts, John 1:1-3, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:15-17, Isaiah 40:26, 42:5, 45:8, etc., all attest to this belief; Thomas FitzGerald, “Orthodox Theology and Ecumenical Witness: An Introduction to Major Themes,” 356.

²⁹Lichacev D.S., “Poetika drevnerusskoj literatury.” Izd. 3, Moskva 1979. Translated into polish: “Poetyka literatury staroruskiej.” Przel. A. Prus-Boguslawski, Warszawa, 1981, 161; Wacław Hryniewicz, “Staroruska Teologia Paschalna w swietle pism sw. Cyryla Turowskiego.” Verbinum, Warszawa, 1993, 24.

³⁰Andrew Rossi, “Hearing the Word of God in the Creation.” *Epiphany* 9 (1989) 4, 75; Michael Oleksa, “Alaskan Missionary Spirituality.” *Paulist Press*, New York, 1987, 26.

³¹George H. Tavard, “The Church, Community of Salvation.” *The Liturgical Press*, Minneapolis, 1992, 24.

Trinitarian Paradigms For Ecology

Based on the above said let me present three, out of many, possible paradigms offered by Orthodoxy solely based on the Trinitarian model. We have to be aware of the limitations of these paradigms. These paradigms are not complete solutions to the ecological crisis of the world. They allow us to look beyond our rational mind in order to comprehend the problem and find possible directives for recovery.

1. God, the Holy Trinity is relational within the context of the Trinity and towards the entire creation. The presence of God is, therefore, relational in the context of the human being and nature. God is present in the world and the existence of creation totally depends on the continual presence of the Trinity in the world.³² It is beautifully expressed in the words of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus who said: "Lift the stone and there you will find me: cleave the wood and there am I."³³ Because creation has a non-ontological source³⁴ the only way creation can find its destiny is to relate to God.³⁵ According to the contemporary theological thought, because God in the Trinity is relational towards the entire creation, the nature of creation is also situated in the relational context. Nature is the "other" (being different or other than the thinking subject) that humanity is being called to bring into a proper communion with himself and God.³⁶ Man is being called by God to use his personal creativity in order to affirm the goodness of creation and redeem nature in the context of Eucharist from corruption.³⁷ The ultimate destiny of creation is found in the concept of the Eucharist where the natural elements of bread and wine, in the event of the Holy Spirit, acquire the personal qualities of Body and Blood of Christ. In the context of the Eucharist, nature achieves its final destiny - deification and the participation in the Godhead.³⁸ The Eucharist

³²Serge S. Verhovskoy, "The Light of the World." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood, 1982, 66-7; St. Gregory of Nyssa notes: "For nothing would remain in existence if it did not remain in the ... diving being. The fact that all things remain in existence compels us to believe that this divine being exists in them" in: George Mantzarides, "The Divine Liturgy and the World." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 26 (1980) 1-2, 63; Anestis G. Keselopoulos, "Man and the Environment." *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press*, Crestwood, 2001, 15.

³³From Oxyrhynchus Papyrus I: Logion 5, in: B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *Sayings of Our Lord from an Early Greek Papyrus*, London 1959, 42-43, in: Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of Material Creation." *Sobornost*, 6 (1971) 3, 155.

³⁴Chapman, "Notes on the Nature of God, the Cosmos, and Novos Homo: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective," 256.

³⁵John S. Romanides, "Man and His True Life." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 1 (1954) 1, 67.

³⁶Metropolitan John (Zizoulas) of Pergamon, "Communion and Otherness," 18; Ks. Jan Pryszmont, "U podstaw Chrześcijańskiej formacji moralnej." *Częstochowskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne Częstochowa*, 1987.

³⁷Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 156.

³⁸Chapman, "Notes on the Nature of God, the Cosmos, and Novos Homo: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective," 256-7; The idea of the deification of the nature, in the context of the deification of the human body, is elaborated by the

allows us to recover the sense of joy and wonder of nature and to treat nature as a sacrament of communion with God.³⁹ Based on the sacramental aspect, a Christian must love the world in order to place God's love for the world for the deification.⁴⁰ As a sacrament of communion with God, creation deserves a sense of respect and care discussed further in this paper.⁴¹ According to this argumentation, man cannot fulfill his destiny and develop a proper relationship with God by isolating himself from nature.⁴² Man needs to establish a certain relationship with nature and begin to understand the distinctiveness of nature.⁴³

The "otherness" of creation, so crucial for Orthodox theology, is very often ignored or unforgivably absent in the debate of ecology. The subordination of nature by humanity for the reason of exploitation of natural resources deprives creation a sense of coexistence with man. The abuse of nature by man deprives nature a sense of relation - so fundamental for symphony of life in creation.

This leads us to the problem we face today in the world. Orthodox theology acknowledges man as an integral and irreplaceable composition of creation. He is linked with it in his creation from the "dust of the earth" on the sixth day. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, all things exist in each other and all things - including man- mutually support each other.⁴⁴ Man's designed role in the world is to become a priest of creation.⁴⁵ Being ontologically joined with creation, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, man is a microcosm of the universe.⁴⁶ Man is the summary of all

contemporary Orthodox theologians Tymoth Ware, look: Timothy Ware, "The Transfiguration of the Body." *Sobornost*, 4 (1963) 8; Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 162. This view is also supported by St. Maximos the Confessor who says: "The body is divinised together with the soul, sharing in deification (theosis) in the manner appropriate to itself", in: Kallistos of Diokleia, "Praying with the body: the hesychast method and non-Christian parallels." *Sobornost*, 14 (1992) 2, 27; Similar view is expressed by W. Hryniewicz, in: Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Nasza Pascha." *Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL*, Lublin, 1987, 357.

³⁹ Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 155. According to W. Hryniewicz, man is able to discover the beauty and wonder of nature through the spiritual discovery of nature, look: Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Bog naszej nadzieji." *Wydawnictwo Sw. Krzyza*, Opole, 1989, 72; An identical conclusion is made by Nicholas Berdyaev, who says: "The transfiguration and regeneration of the world is beauty...", in: Nicholas Berdyaev, "The Destiny of Man." *Geoffrey Bless*, London, 1954, 187.

⁴⁰ James Finley, "Merton's Place of Nowhere." *Ave Maria Press*, Notre Dame, 1976, 40.

⁴¹ Anthony M. Coniaris, "Orthodoxy: A Creed for Today." *Light and Life Publishing Company*, Minneapolis, 1992, 65.

⁴² John Zizioulas, "The Eucharistic Prayer and Life," 193.

⁴³ Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 156.

⁴⁴ In: Vladimir Lossky, "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church," 103.

⁴⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, "Sacraments and Orthodoxy."

⁴⁶ Brother Aidan, "Where the River Flows: Ecology and the Orthodox Liturgy." *Ephiphany*, 9 (1989) 2, 35; Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 158. According to P. Florenski, man and nature are

creation to the point, according to Johannes Scotus Eriugena, that everything is recapitulated in him.⁴⁷ Man is a mediator, or an agent to bring the entire creation into deification.⁴⁸ Man, according to St. Gregory Palamas, is an inexhaustible source of sanctification of the entire creation.⁴⁹ As a living icon of God with free will, man can do two things: he can reshape and alter nature in the world or he can bring the entire world back to God.⁵⁰ According to contemporary Christian Orthodox theological thought, man is challenged to acknowledge and to recognize the theocentric view of creation despite the dominating and growing concept of biocentricism.⁵¹ Unfortunately for the entire world, the tragedy of nature is the crisis between humankind and the “otherness” of creation. The lack of acknowledgement of the “otherness” of creation by humanity creates the aspect of an imposition of authority on the world by man.⁵² Man’s contemporary self-centeredness or exclusive anthropocentric view of himself has immediate consequences on the entire aspect of creation. The disregard of the “otherness” of creation corrupts the relationship with creation. The contemporary understanding of “progress” and “development” with their ultimate consequences of the crisis of ecology proves to be an act of rape against nature.⁵³ It is a negation of the “otherness” of nature of its right to function. In the contemporary world, the church (koinonia) and an icon of the Trinitarian God ought to become conscious of the proclamation of the integral intrinsic koinonia between man and his natural environment.⁵⁴ The ethos of the Church denotes a reverence for nature and for us.⁵⁵ It is a reverence of a proper

two inseparable entities of life as a sign of a paradistic symphony, in: Pawel Florenski, “Ikonostas i inne szkice.” Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa, 1984.

⁴⁷Rossi Vincent, “The Earth is the Lord’s.” *Epiphany*, 6 (1985) 1, 4. Similar opinion was expressed by Christos Yannaras, in: Kallistos of Diokleja, “Praying with the body: the hesychast method and non-Christian parallels.” *Sobornost*, 14 (1992) 2, 6.

⁴⁸Stephen Muratore, “Stewardship is Enough: Ecology as Inner Priesthood.” *Epiphany*, 6 (1985) 1, 38

⁴⁹Look in: Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, “The Value of the Material Creation,” 159; Kallistos of Diokleia, “Salvation According to St. Silouan.” *Sobornost* 19 (1997) 1, 51.

⁵⁰Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, “The Value of the Material Creation,” 155-156

⁵¹Vincent Rossi, “Christian Ecology is Cosmic Christology.” *Epiphany*, 8 (1988) 2, 59. At the heart of biocentricism is the belief that nature - the earth - is a living entity in and of itself, not dependent upon man or God. She is “Gaia,” the product of evolution and the big bang. As a consequence, the nature is not the creation of the will of God. According to this argumentation, man must be viewed as being no more than “an animal in the brotherhood of animals...,” look in: Stephen Muratore, “Stewardship is Enough: Ecology as Inner Priesthood,” 44; The history of naturalism from the patristic perspective is given by George Florovsky in: George Florovsky, “Creation and Redemption.” Vol. III in the *Collected Works*, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont, 1976, 116-118.

⁵²Anestis G. Keselopoulos, “Man and the Environment,” 92

⁵³Christos Yannaras, “Elements of Faith.” *T&T Clark*, Edinburgh, 1991, 52.

⁵⁴Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, “The Church as Communion,” 13.

⁵⁵Emmanuel Clapsis, “Ecclesiology and Ethics: Reflections by an Orthodox Theologian.” *Ecumenical Review*, 47 (1995) 2, 168.

relationship between nature and man. Until the relationship towards nature is not restored to its original setting, the division between them will only increase. The Trinitarian concept of God and the relationship within the Trinity exemplifies dignity and respect towards each other. In retrospect of the ecological disaster of the world, the relationship between nature and man has to be seen again in the context of respect and reverence. Humanity has to redefine the value and dignity of the “other” of nature. In the prospect of ecological crisis of the world, humanity must also defend the right of nature to coexist. It might be time for humanity to mobilize the international community in order to defend the right of nature on the level of international law. In the context of the interrelationship among men, the loss of a dignified relationship within the community is a tragedy. From the other side, the extorted relationship between them is a catastrophe for the entire world. As humanity, we have to strengthen our efforts to defend the right of nature to exist and to give us the basis for coexistence. As humanity, we have to realize that the depravation of the “otherness” of nature, in the context of the economic development, is a beginning towards self-destruction. Before making any decisions regarding the defense of nature, we have to acknowledge that there is a problem. The denial of the ecological problem by humanity is the denial of the “otherness” of the creation and coexistence of man and nature. In fact, it is a denial of a theocentric view of creation and eventually denial of God. The denial of a theocentric value of creation is an indication of a weakening of an ethical problem of man. The weakening of the ethical aspect of humanity is linked with the environmental and social problem facing contemporary humanity.⁵⁶ The denial of the “otherness” of nature is the denial of right for nature to exist. As long as man will continue this process of negation of the “otherness” of nature, creation dies and humanity will follow as man shares the destiny of the natural world.⁵⁷ On the practical basis, the acknowledgement of the right of nature to coexist has to be addressed on the level of criminal and civil law where we can implement a practical solution to address the problem of ecology. The second step of the implementation of the practical steps towards the ecological problem has to be addressed by the Christian churches immediately. The ethos of faith of the Christian Churches cannot allow for the destructive cataclysm of nature. To be uninterested in the life of the world is to be uninterested in the practice of religion. This last statement might be addressed to every religion or any ideology of the world. If we are serious about our faith or ideology we have to be consequential about the pragmatic implication of our belief.

2 The second paradigm, also based on the principle of the Trinitarian theology, is directed towards the mystery of God. In His essence, God is a mystery. In order for the human being to participate in the mystery of God, man is being asked to search for God in his inner life. The mystery of God brings with itself the wealth and satisfaction for all the needs of humanity. Because God is relational, the mystery of God is also seen in His creation. We recognize God and wealth of life in His creation. God reveals Himself in creation.⁵⁸ Because God, as a mystery,

⁵⁶Anestis G. Keselopoulos, “Man and the Environment,” 93.

⁵⁷John Zizioulas, “The Eucharistic Prayer and Life,” 193; Similar conclusion is made by Anestis G. Keselopoulos in: Anestis G. Keselopoulos, “Man and the Environment.” 92.

⁵⁸Waclaw Hryniewicz, “Staroruska Teologia Paschalna w swietle pism sw. Cyryla Turowskiego,”

reveals Himself in creation, nature becomes the mystery of God's revelation. The ultimate revelation of God, as the ultimate mystery, was the incarnation of His only begotten Son. Incarnation testifies God's presence in nature and still maintains its mystery.⁵⁹ Christianity never defined the act of incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The mystery of revelation of God in the incarnation brings us to the point of thinking of our nature. Nature is a mystery that we have been called to discover. Man must not only be an explorer in the discovery of nature/logoi but he must also be a creator in order to respect it.⁶⁰ The call for man to enter the realm of discovery of nature is a dynamic movement that leads us towards the discovery of the Holy Trinity in nature. Even the contemporary theologians insist, although they are not scientists, that even the tiniest particle of matter of nature contains within itself tremendous energy and power.⁶¹ We have to learn how to read our nature in order to bring her closer to ourselves and discover potential resources. At the same time man must understand the material nature in order to behave accordingly.⁶² If we are facing an ecological problem it is because we have lost a reverence for matter and ability to understand the logoi that are inherited in it. At this point we, as humanity, have to learn how to manage and discover natural resources already existing in nature: natural gas, oil, the treasury of oceans, water e.t.c. If nature is a second revelation of God and in itself it is a mystery, than we have to direct our resources to discover the potential contained in nature. We have learned to properly use the economic element of our life regarding the new discoveries and resources. It will be correct to say that economy has to be a religious activity that penetrates the life of humanity and creation. In the context of a growing market economy and shrinking natural resources, we have to ask ourselves what kind of economy do we see in the future if we want to be responsible to nature and to the consumerism of tomorrow. Its time for us to spend more financial resources into research to study nature in order to maintain and sustain the consumerism of today. The discovery of new natural resources, pollution control, destruction of nature with the entire spectrum of related challenges and problems depend on the technological knowledge and a greater wisdom and skill of human kind. This, in return, asks us to rethink and reshape our approach to nature and the entire world. The mystery of nature offers us a potential to satisfy the need of contemporary consumption and the future for the generation to come.

3 The third paradigm has to be placed in the context of the destiny of man and creation. It has been pointed out that the ultimate destiny of creation is deification. The Trinitarian God reveals Himself towards His creation as a relational God. If, analogically, humanity is also relational than the final destiny is found in the relationship and unity with God. The ultimate task for man is to be in unity with God and to bring the entire creation to redemption. It is a call and

⁵⁹Anestis G. Keselopoulos, "Man and the Environment," 150.

⁶⁰Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, "The Value of the Material Creation," 157.

⁶¹Serge S. Verhovsky, "The Light of the World," 64.

⁶²George C. Papademetriou, "The Human Body According to Saint Gregory of Palamas." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 34 (1989) 1, 9.

challenge for humanity to respond to God's call. The task for man of bringing the entire creation, including himself, to God is related with the responsibility for creation. It also means to know the place and function of nature within the cosmos.⁶³ According to Orthodox theology, God gave us the entire creation to be responsible for it as we relate to it. On the daily basis, we are responsible for the pollution of rivers, seas, and the atmosphere, the destruction of trees, the forests, the accumulation of radioactive residues in living creatures e.t.c. The recovery of nature to its original state follows the recognition of our action. The world has to act together in order to bring those responsible for destruction of nature to justice. The late Kyoto agreement on the emission of green gases might be the best opportunity for humanity to act and to press our governments to act and to be responsible. The lobbying of environmental agencies would be a correct step towards this path. The fact that we have to lobby for the strength against our governments and companies indicates the weakness of humanity and interest of man. The question, which has to be addressed here, is the responsibility of consumerism for the contemporary crisis in ecology. An aggressive consumerism, secured today by technology in a form of abuse of the world, should be rejected and reinterpreted.⁶⁴ Another question, that has to be addressed here, is the definition of responsible consumerism in today's society.⁶⁵ If we are responsible for the entire creation, then are we have to be responsible for the development of today's consumerism. If consumerism embraces the entire spectrum of our life, it might be the right step to redefine contemporary consumerism in the context of the theology of nature. It is a question, which will be debated and asked for generations to come. The paradigm of responsibility for nature brings us into the concept of self-awareness and judgement so avoided in today's debate on the ecological crisis.

⁶³Alexander Schmemmann, "Sacraments and Orthodoxy."

⁶⁴Anestis G. Keselopoulos, "Man and the Environment." 92.

⁶⁵If we reduce consumerism to the sphere of food, Alexander Schmemmann defined the world in the following way: "For we already that food is life, that it is the very principle of life, and the whole world has been created as food for man" in: Alexander Schmemmann, "Sacraments and Orthodoxy," 40.

Conclusion

The Christian ethos on nature is dynamic and proactive. In retrospect, the natural ethos of Christianity calls humanity to challenge and to rediscover the origin and destiny of creation. In the process of technological development and changing philosophy of life, man has forgotten to maintain or consciously change the order of creation. Because of the technological development of the modern society and negation of man to acknowledge the right of nature to coexist, the world faces an ecological crisis. It is a crisis that penetrates all the spheres of man's life. In the context of an ecological disaster, we have to look for the possible solution to the problem. Regarding consumerism, we have to analyze the source of the environmental crisis that immediately effect consumerism. From the Christian Orthodox perspective, humanity is at the point of the realization of an epochal disaster that has to be confronted. According to the theocentric view of creation, humanity might discover the path, which leads man towards the discovery of the destiny of man and nature. The entire process of reevaluation of the contemporary philosophy of life has to be seen, according from the Christian perspective, in the prism of theocentric dimension of creation. A theocentric approach towards nature affirms the reverence and sanctity of creation based on the "otherness" of nature. It also affirms man being responsible for the entire creation. Because of the trinitarian relational affirmation towards nature, Christianity has to reclaim the salvific approach to nature and the entire world. Based on the Trinitarian theology, the Christian Church offers many paradigms towards the ecological problem. The most valuable for our discussion are those paradigms that offer us some possibilities to the problem and to consumerism. It is reasonable to think that the idea of reshaping and revolutionizing our consumption in the immediate future is vague. We also cannot expect the entire humanity to return to the patristic age, where the veneration and care for creation was at its peak. The possible paradigms offered by Christianity, that seem to appeal to humanity, are those that are directed towards man's creativity and expansion towards nature. This kind of approach never abolishes the holistic approach to nature and maintains the need of today's consumption. The theocentric paradigm towards nature affirms the sanctity of creation and at the same time expands human ability to discover the supreme mystery of creation and its ability and resources to maintain contemporary humanity.

In our approach towards the ecological nightmare from the Christian perspective, we have to reestablish the identity of nature which is safeguarded in the "otherness" of creation. The recovery of the identity of creation, based on the Trinitarian theology, allows man to see and to appreciate creation. The return of the "otherness" to nature would allow us to codify certain laws in order to defend nature. The theocentric paradigm would also allow us to investigate other sides of nature and to maintain a sustainable consumerism. It would also ask us to respect and to safeguard existing nature. The offered paradigms are not easy to achieve and implement. They offer humanity a potential future that might be accepted universally. The restoration of creation in the theocentric perspective faces many challenges that deal mainly with human approach towards nature and the entire world. The lack of response to the challenges of the ecological nature, from the perspective of humanity, only deepens the ecological crisis of the natural world.

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