

**Krzysztof LEŚNIEWSKI**

## **Care about the World of Creatures: Orthodox Environmental Insights**

Let me start this article with some good news. On May 7, 2002 the Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEOS I of Constantinople was awarded the Sophie Prize for his work in protecting the environment. The Prize was awarded in recognition of “his pioneering efforts in linking faith to the environment”. Patriarch BARTHOLOMEOS “has spoken out against injustice and inequity, challenging the present economic globalisation that widens the gap between rich and poor and leads to excessive consumption”, according to a statement issued by the Sophie Foundation. The foundation also cited the Patriarch for drawing attention to the problems of “over-consumption in first world countries and the lack of justice that causes growing inequity in developing nations.”

On the 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2002, the Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEOS I of Constantinople and Pope JOHN PAUL II signed the Venice Declaration on the Christian Commitment to Protect the Environment. It concluded the symposium entitled *The Adriatic: A Sea in Danger, Unity of Purpose*, sponsored by the Patriarch. Scientists, environmental and ecological experts and representatives of different religions participated in the symposium which took place during a six-day cruise along the Adriatic coast. The Declaration expresses the common will of safeguarding creation, the will to support and sustain every initiative that truly improves, cares for and preserves the Earth which God gave us so that humans would conserve it with wisdom and love. The Joint Declaration on the environment is the first among other ecumenical declarations and has a special meaning because of theological, ethical and spiritual insights.

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### **I. Orthodox Environmental Activities**

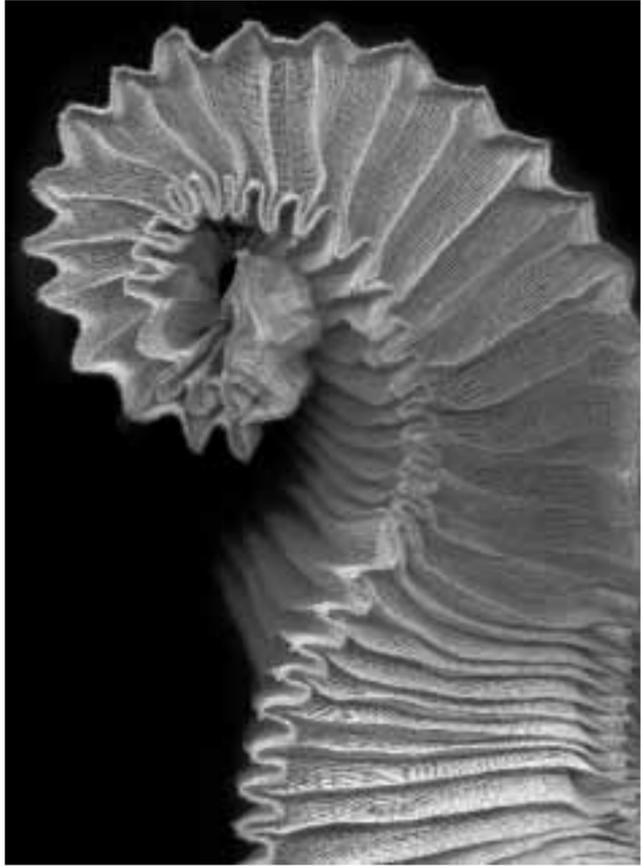
Patriarch DIMITRIOS invited the entire world to offer prayers of thanksgiving, but also of petition regarding the protection of creation. Thus, as of 1989, the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year, September 1 has been designated for all Orthodox Christians as a day of prayer for the protection of environment. The event underlined the need for a liturgical experience of the human's life-giving attachment not only to God, but also to the whole created world. Besides, it imposed a duty of the engagement in the environmental protection in an irrevocable way.

The establishment of the feast of the creation in the liturgical calendar has been accepted with recognition by the whole Christian world. Other denominations followed the example of Patriarch DIMITRIOS and searched for a proper "place" for such a feast in their liturgical calendars. The Orthodox Services for the Creation (vespers) are today used in the Orthodox Church worldwide. The work of Patriarch DIMITRIOS is continued by Patriarch BARTHOLOMEOS I, known in the world as the "Green Patriarch".

Numerous conferences and seminars have been organised since the early nineties, about the ecological crisis and about the Orthodox vision of environmental protection. A cycle of conferences took place on the island of Halki in the Holy Trinity Monastery, on Crete, in Romania, in the USA, etc. The conferences were attended also by the members of Syndesmos – the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth.

Numerous fruitful ecological programs have been implemented in the Orthodox world. The introduction of the principles of organic farming in the Annunciation Monastery (in Ormylia, Northern Greece) belongs to the most known programs, as well as the programs of the protection of the unique nature of the Athos Mountain, which is exposed to danger by the building of new roads, higher traffic, and developing tourism. The project realised in Nera Monastery, Romania, concentrates on the linking of traditional methods of agricultural cultivation with the cultivation of remedial herbs.

It should be also pointed out that the Orthodox Church is engaged not only in its internal environmental activities but also in a broad ecumenical co-operation. The Orthodox is deeply involved in the environmental work of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches. The Orthodox Church desires to place the theology of creation in the centre of its Ecclesial life. She seeks manners of practical expression of her deepest convictions concerning the true relations between God, human beings and other creatures.



## **II. Why so many Activities?**

Instead of clean water in rivers we can see streaming waste waters; we do not breathe fresh air, but fumes; instead of cool drops of rain our faces are touched by toxic substances; around us poisoned soil, air, water... Where can we look for the reasons of such a bad condition of the environment? Who is responsible? Is it not our transgression against nature? Should not such behaviour be considered sinful? It is interesting that while we face the phenomena which testify to the violation of nature by humans, in many cases there is not the slightest suspicion that the crisis is not only scientific, but first and foremost spiritual, and then social and economic.

Orthodoxy points out the connection of environmental problems with the social and economic problem in our use of the world and of material goods. The ecological crisis is an expression and a generalisation of the social problem. Church Fathers note humans' tendency to tyrannise their social and natural environment. This tendency to possess and misuse, which in the first place created the social problem, has now led to the ecological crisis. They do not isolate these problems but connect them with humans' overriding problem, a false relationship with God.

### **III. Theological Background**

What are the place and the role of Christians in general aspirations for correcting the condition of the natural world? How does Orthodoxy understand the protection of the world of nature and what can she propose to the world, which is gropingly searching for a theological and philosophical basis for ecological engagement? Each Christian is responsible for the fate of the entire world. Our natural surroundings and the creation in general cannot be excluded and isolated from human life; indeed it plays an essential role even in our spiritual struggle. Let us examine this dimension and place it within the context not only of the Scripture and the rest of the patristic tradition but also of the life of the Church's liturgy and worship.

#### **1. Nature as a Good Work of God**

Christians believe that God created the world. The whole universe is God's creation; the planetary system, climate, living creatures and the self-perpetuating system of life on earth. God is very close to the mysteries of life, death and re-birth. It is, therefore, plainly the duty of all believers to ensure that what God created is not damaged or destroyed by humanity. God called everything in creation "good". Every element in God's creation – including us – has an important and unique purpose and relationship with every other element. When one element in God's creation is harmed, it affects the whole creation.

#### **2. Complementarities of Spiritual and Material Elements**

Humans live in coexistence and direct relationship with their environment and creation in general. This coexistence and the quality of this relationship set their mark on the quality of their life. The Holy Scripture, the Fathers and the whole of the Church's liturgical tradition and life indicate ways for humans and nature to work together, opening up paths that humans are to follow in order to attain salvation. Humans and other creatures go together to their ultimate fulfilment, salvation. In this context we

can turn to the thought of St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:22-23).

According to the patristic tradition, the coexistence of humans and nature is placed on the level of friendly relations, not of conflict or oppression. Correspondingly, in the worship and liturgical life of the Church there is harmony and cohesion between the sensible and intelligible elements in creation. This vision does not permit a polarised division or a contrast between the sensible and the intelligible world, between matter and spirit, which form a harmonious synthesis. Modern philosophy and science usually look at material and spiritual independently from the Church, rejecting conflicts and contrasts between matter and spirit and trying to interpret them in unity and interdependence.

The Orthodox tradition proclaims that spiritual and material or bodily functions are not in dualistic conflict, but in a relationship of complementarity. The Church permeates historical, natural and intelligible reality and grafts it into herself, embracing the whole of creation. This is why she did not simply refuse to accept any deprecations of the material and sensible element, which was attempted in the name of “spiritual life” of the faithful or of some “more spiritual” theologies.

From the theology of the Fathers and the liturgical texts of the Church – particularly the Euchologion or Trebnik <sup>1</sup> – one can see the attitude of the Church towards the material world and the environment. This attitude is not simply positive, but above all one that takes up the world and transfigures it. The Eucharist – the sovereign element of the life of the Church, is an affirmation of the worth of materiality, raising it to participation in the true life which is Christ. Correctly understood belief in the incarnate Word of God also gives the Church a proper position and orientation vis-à-vis matter. Thus she does not reject matter like the Manicheans, nor worships it like the pagans, nor regards it as theologically indifferent, but confesses her faith through the mouth of St JOHN of Damascus when he says: “I worship the Creator of matter Who became matter for my sake, Who willed to take His abode in matter; Who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease honouring the matter which wrought my salvation! I honour it, but not as God... [but] because God has filled it with His grace and power.” <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of Needs* contains occasional services, prayers and blessings.

<sup>2</sup> St JOHN of Damascus, *On the Divine Images* (tr. ANDERSON David). Crestwood, 1980. 23. (I.16, PG 94.1300AB)

Creation communes with God; every created thing presupposes God's love and is present in the mind of God, this communion being crowned and consummated in interpersonal relationships. When communication between humans and God is removed, relations between them are disrupted, and the consequence is the misuse of creation and the violation of the environment. Only when humans have a relationship with God and creation which is in accordance with nature can we speak about a true communion and the attainment of salvation ("salvation" means being safe, sound and whole), since keeping to what is in accordance with nature is regarded as a precondition for the increase by grace in the community of rational beings.

### 3. Transfiguration of the World

The event of the Transfiguration underlines the importance of the human body. The Transfiguration is a consummate affirmation of the worth of the sensible and of matter. When Christ was transfigured on Mount Tabor, His divine glory was manifested in His body and the disciples saw Him with their material eyes. Because of the divine Incarnation, the glory of the Godhead was manifested as the glory and beauty of the body and creation which as a "vessel" receives the divine energy. As the glory of Christ is not the glory of the divine nature only but also of the human nature, there is an analogy with the glory of the saints. Their transfiguration does not involve only the soul but also the body, which is "deified together with the soul according to the participation in deification appropriate to it."<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate affirmation of the human body is evidenced in the Orthodox Church with the honour paid to holy relics, which stems directly from her faith and theology. As St. GREGORY Palamas notes, just as Christ's divinity did not abandon His deified human body during His three-day burial and resurrection, even so the grace of God which deifies the saints does not abandon their bodies after their biological death. The belief in the ultimate transfiguration and renewal of the world offers a real possibility for extending the theology of holy relics to the rest of creation.

At the Second Coming the whole of material creation will be renewed. This is why during this period of waiting for the Last Day, the Church venerates with honour not only the relics of the saints, but also their clothes, the places where they lived, the things they used and anything else connected with them. It is not only the bodies of the saints that are sanctified; the material objects that surround them also participate in sanctification. The doctrine of the transfiguration of the world – which takes its starting point from Christ's coming and His presence in this world – and of the

<sup>3</sup>MAXIMUS the Confessor, *Gnostic Chapters*. 2.8. (PG 90.1168A)

body's participation in the life of grace, received its consummate formulation and expression in the writings of the Fathers – MAXIMOS the Confessor (†662), St. SYMEON the New Theologian (†1022) and St. GREGORY Palamas (†1359).

#### 4. Iconography

The iconography of the Orthodox Church stresses the close bond between humans and creation. In its various presentations of themes mainly from the Old and New Testaments, it depicts the harmony and peace of creation, always in a relationship of perfect concord with humans. The fact that humans, as the crown of creation, are always put in the foreground while the rest of creation is arranged as a background, not only shows humans' dominant position in creation but also the responsibility they have for rightly coexisting within it. One of the themes in Byzantine iconography "recounts" in summary the two creation stories in Genesis that refer to humans' relationship with creation.

Another theme arises from the prophecy of ISAIAH (Is 11:6-9): "The wolf will live with the lamb, the panther lie down with the kid, calf, lion and fat-stock beast together, with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like the ox. The infant will play over the den of the adder; the baby will put his hand into the viper's lair." The prophet sees the vision of a future peace in the world, without any discord between humans and creation or within creation itself. When later on Christian art becomes historical and narrative, once again creation is depicted schematically alongside humans, in order to stress that they go hand in hand towards their ultimate renewal and salvation. Thus the icon is a sign of the triumph of God's grace over the dark elements of matter, a vision of the restored creation.

#### IV. Who are the Human Beings?

How do the Holy Fathers and Orthodox theologians define the place and role of human beings in the world of the creation? The most important place in the Orthodox vision of the environmental protection and the position of human occupy considerations about Eucharistic and ascetic dimensions of life in the Church. So, what can we say about humans?

##### **1. The Human Being is not the Owner but the Receiver of a Gift**

All creatures belong to God. God is the only Lord and ruler. In Psalm 24 we read: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." The creation should be wisely and sensibly managed and safe-

guarded. God's wise and full of love treatment of creation can be a pattern for humans. It is possible for us to look attentively at the great love of the Creator towards creatures and the deep love and admiration of the creatures towards God. There are texts in the Bible saying how creatures pray God for their existence. They remain with their Creator in a particular relation. We are not able to understand it fully. All creation bears the stamp of God's glory, by God's economy it is given to human to bring this potential to its fulfilment.

## 2. The Human Being is an Image and Likeness of God

The theological idea of the creation of human being in the image and likeness of God is a basic for understanding the human's position in the order of creation. It is useful to explain the resemblance of humankind with God and the difference in comparison with other creatures. The notion of the "image of God" is to be understood in terms of Jesus Christ, since he is explicitly identified with it: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2Cor. 4:4).

Thus for humankind to be an image of God means to be assimilated to Christ. This is a matter of grace and not a matter of nature, because only Christ is by nature God's image as God's eternal and natural offspring, God's only begotten Son. The "likeness of God" is often connected with the grace of the Spirit who assimilates us to Christ.

In the created world only the human being combines material and spiritual elements. The Church Fathers often speak of the human being as a "little world", a "microcosm" of the whole creation. The human body contains in it all the levels of existence of the natural world which preceded it in the order of creation, and considered the physical elements which make up the human body as in no way different from those which constitute the physical world. The natural world is thus fully integrated with the human being and the whole of the creation.

Humanity, created in God's image and likeness, transcends the material world because it participates in God spiritually and consciously, unlike the rest of creation. Humankind then stands on the boundary (methorion) between the material and the spiritual world as a connecting link. It is directly related to the earthly aspect of created existence as well as to the uncreated existence of the Creator.

The human being is made in the image of the Triune God as well. This is why human beings are interdependent and co-inherent. No man is an island. We are "members of each other" "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of

one body" (Ephesians 4:25). No one falls alone and no one is saved alone. According to DOSTOEVSKY's old wise man Zosima in "The Karamazov Brothers", each of us is responsible for everyone and everything.

### 3. The Human Being is a Lord of Creatures

Many people concerned about the environment see the Christian tradition as the source and not as the solution of the environmental crisis. Some even see the root of the crisis in the supposed "license for exploitation" provided by the commandment to "Fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing" (Gen. 1:28). This suggestion has been refuted often enough, with profound and detailed explanations of what this mandate does and does not mean in the Christian understanding.

Central to the Christian understanding of the world is not human, but God. It is in God, the Master and Creator of all that we relate to all creatures. It is in God's image that we have dominion over all other living creatures. Indeed, the ancient Syrian translation of the Bible makes the connection crystal clear by saying, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, in order that they may have authority...'

Whatever "dominion" we have, it is in the image of God, the God "Who is King forever and has wrought salvation in the midst of the Earth" – which means on the Cross, in the ultimate humility of His death for the life of the world. Therefore to practice "dominion" is to start with the "beasts" within ourselves; as St GREGORY of Nyssa makes plain, it is no use ruling over the wild beasts outside while we give free rein to those within us.

### 4. The Human Being is a Guardian, Manager and Steward of Creation

God has through the Holy Scripture formulated a double ecological principle as the goal of our activity within the natural environment. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Thus the purpose is "to till", which expresses the means of performing the work through which human derives benefits from the natural environment. (nowadays it is called "cultivation" or "exploitation").

The second infinitive, "to keep", expresses human's efforts to conserve the environment. It is related to the modern "protective principle". The two principles together supply a right (to till) and impose a duty (to keep). The linking of the action of exploiting with the action of conserving encompasses the principle of good management. The duties of a manager or steward are included in the goal of our relationship with nature.

St GREGORY the Theologian says that we are fully involved with the material creation by virtue of our physical existence, and the materially created reality is deeply involved in us. If we moved to the direction of deification,

our human nature will somehow carry the created material world with it. If, however, we move to the opposite direction, the created world will suffer with us as well (cf. Romans 8:19-22). We are called to exercise dominion over all creatures on Earth as stewards (oikonomoi) of God's material world, caring for it, maintaining it in its integrity and perfecting it by opening it up to God through our own deification.

### 5. The Human Being is a Priest

To understand the role of the human as a priest, we have to look at the way we use material things in our liturgical life. The fasts certainly give us an example of a frugal use of resources, schooling us to accept even the simplest of foods with thankfulness. But fasting is only one aspect of liturgical life: we also feast. There are times when we also learn how to give thanks for the abundance of good things that God has bestowed on us – while the awareness that these are always gifts should prevent abundance from leading to contempt.

Love sometimes involves waste in material terms: like the mounds of flowers brought to church for Easter, or Good Friday, or the Exaltation of the Cross. But this generous use of the world has nothing to do with the waste of resources that accounts for the environmental damage. Modern societies see resources as ours by right, guaranteed to remain freely available as long as we can pay for them. By contrast, when we use flowers and branches to adorn the church, we are offering something precious back to God who “opens His hand, and all things are filled with good”. When we take first-fruits of the material world not for our own consumption, but to offer them back to God, it is an expression that “the rich have become poor and gone hungry; but they that fear that the Lord shall not lack any good thing.”

To be a priest means, above all, using natural resources with thankfulness, offering them back to God. This is incompatible with wastefulness. It also means treating the other creatures as gifts, provided by God to satisfy our needs. They are not ours to abuse and waste. From the Eucharistic ethos of the Church our reverence for matter streams. It would be hard to miss this attitude in the worship of the Church: we make the sign of the Cross, we venerate icons, we bless water, and we receive Christ Himself in the Eucharist, which helps us to treat all things in our daily life in the same way.

We worship as a community, not as individuals. We stand together before God, and we hold in common the earthly blessing that God has given to humankind and all creatures. “Not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs” – Saint John CHRYSOSTOM reminds us. Just shar-

ing with other people does not only involve using less of the finite resources. It also precludes enjoying conveniences and luxuries for which others have to pay the hidden environmental price, living with the toxins used in their manufacture and the pollution caused by their used and disposal.

## 6. The Human Being is an Ascetic

In the Orthodox Church, there is a long ascetic tradition, which underlines wilful restraint regarding the use of material goods, and which leads to a harmonious symbiosis with the environment. When one curbs one's own desire to consume, one guarantees the existence of treasured things for those who come after us, and the balanced functioning of the ecosystem.

Restraint frees us from selfish demands, so that we may offer what remains and place it at the disposal of others. This is the result of our freedom from avarice, which has its roots in the lack of faith and in making a god out of matter, which is idolatry. Restraint is an act of self-control and confidence in God; but it is also an act of love. This ascetic spirit gives us the example according to which we may live by being satisfied with what is needed, without collecting needless things, without consumerism, which lead to exploiting and lording over nature.

This wilful ascetic life is required not only from the anchorite monks but from all Orthodox Christians, according to the measure of balance. Asceticism is not negation, but a reasonable and tempered utilisation of the world. One who has lost the self-consciousness of one's divine image created in the likeness of God, has lost one's divine destiny. This person has lost one's self-esteem as a human being which reflects the image of God and tried to make upon for this loss by increasing the material goods over which one has control.

Because one's "being" is lessened, one increases one's "having". Consequently, the consciousness that a Christian has about one's own existence, makes unessential the need for consumerism and one's accumulation of material goods. For this reason Saint JOHN of the Ladder (†649) said: "a monk who has no possessions is the master of the world" and Saint Paul recommends the avoidance of avarice when he writes: "but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1Timothy 6:8).

Ascetic life is not an escape from the society and the world, but a way of self-sufficient social life and behaviour, which leads to the reasonable use and not the abuse of material goods. The opposite view leads to consumerism, excessive drawing from the productive ecosystem, the reversal of its balance, its destruction, an inability to survive, and thus it destroys the environment of our fellow human beings. It is a passive and not an impressive method to face the environmental problems. Although it is not spec-

tacular, it can change the world. The power of the Orthodox ascetic attitude pours out from the close co-operation (in Greek: *synergia*) with God.

## V. The Message of Orthodoxy to the World

There is a deep personal dimension in the environmental protection. This is you and we and I, who are responsible for ourselves, for others, for the whole creation. When we abuse and hurt creation we hurt others and ourselves. We show that we do not care about the gifts of God, thus we reject God. If we love God we will love God's creation and use it in ways for which God would bless us. Hence, we should treat God's creation in the way God wants us to and fix things that we and other people have damaged.

This is why one young Orthodox Christian wrote to his priest: "I am a person made in the image and likeness of God. I am called to be a good caretaker of the gifts God has given to me. The earth, sea, plants, animals, my family, friends, and neighbours, as well as my own body, mind and soul, are gifts given to me to use the way God wants me to." This text sounds like a personal promise and engagement.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the message from the Orthodoxy to the world is a call to repentance. This "repentance" begins as a change of heart for the sake of our survival and for the transfiguration of the whole creation. The concern for God's material creation is one of the most vital ways in which Orthodox and other Christians are called to bear witness today to the faith in the living Saviour of the world.

### Suggested Reading

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### **Krzysztof LEŚNIEWSKI: A teremtmények világa és az emberi gondoskodás: A környezetvédelem ortodox szemszögből**

A tanulmány példákkal szolgál az ortodox környezet(védelm)i tevékenységre, megvilágítja ezek teológiai háttérét, megmagyarázza az ortodox keresztények elkötelezettségét e téren. E kötelezettség a szellemi és az anyagi összetevők kiegészítő szemléletéből fakad, amely ugyanakkor a természetben Isten jóságos művét ismeri föl. A világ beteljesedésének tana pedig kiemeli az emberi test fontosságát. A tanulmány bemutatja azt is, hogy az ortodox egyház ikonográfiája miként hangsúlyozza a szoros köteléket ember és teremtés között. Tárgyalja még az ember helyét a teremtmények világában. Szót ejt az emberről mint Isten képéről és hasonlatosságáról. Ennek egyik oldala, hogy az ember nem a teremtés birtokosa, hanem ajándékba kapta azt, okosan kell gazdálkodnia vele és meg kell őriznie. A másik oldalról nézve ő a teremtés birtokosa, aki közelebb hozza az egyetlen Úr uralkodásának idejét, és bemutatja Isten országát. Az ember hátaltelt szívű pap, aki visszaajánlja a természetes erőforrásokat Istennek. Aszkéta is, aki tartózkodik az anyagi javak használatától, s ez elvezeti a harmonikus együttélézéshez a környezettel. A törődés az isteni teremtéssel a leginkább közhető formája a mai keresztények azon törekvésének, hogy továbbítsák a hitet és a világnak szóló ortodox üzenetet: tartsunk bűnbánatot.



### **Krzysztof LEŚNIEWSKI: Troska o stworzenie: Prawosławne spojrzenie na środowisko**

Wykład podaje przykłady prawosławnych działań na rzecz ochrony środowiska oraz ich teologicznego uzasadnienie, tłumacząc nim zobowiązanie prawosławnego chrześcijanina do ochrony środowiska. Wynika ono z postrzegania przyrody jako dobrego dzieła Boga oraz z komplementarności duchowych i materialnych elementów. Doktryna przeobrażenia świata podkreśla ważność ludzkiego ciała. Wykład ukazuje ścisły związek między człowiekiem a stworzeniem również w prawosławnej ikonografii. Porusza on też zagadnienie miejsca człowieka w świecie stworzenia. Człowiek jest obrazem i podobieństwem Boga. Nie jest on właścicielem stworzenia, ale otrzymał je jako prezent, którym powinien mądrze dysponować i się opiekować. Jest panem stworzenia, który jedynie przybliżył czas panowania prawdziwego Pana i wprowadza Królestwo Niebieskie. Człowiek jest kapłanem, używającym naturalnych zasobów z wdzięcznością, oferując je z powrotem Bogu. W końcu jest on ascetą powstrzymującym się od używania dóbr materialnych, co prowadzi to harmonijnej symbiozy z otoczeniem. Troska o boskie stworzenie jest jednym z najważniejszych sposobów, na jakie Chrześcijanie mogą dzisiaj dawać świadectwo swojej wiary, a posłaniem dla świata od Prawosławia jest wezwanie do skruchy.

**Krzystof LEŚNIEWSKI: Péče o svět stvoření:  
Pravoslavný pohled na problematiku  
životního prostředí**



Článek uvádí příklady aktivit pravoslavné církve v oblasti životního prostředí a jejich teologického pozadí a vysvětluje vědomí povinnosti pravoslavní podílet se na jeho ochraně. Tento pohled vychází z pojmání přírody jako dobrého díla Božího a vzájemného doplňování jeho duchovních a materiálních prvků. Učení o konečné theósi světa zdůrazňuje důležitost celého člověka, tedy i lidského těla. Článek poukazuje i na to, jak je v pravoslavné ikonografii zdůrazněna úzká spojitost mezi člověkem a stvořením. Zabývá se též místem člověka ve světě stvoření. Člověk je obrazem Božím. Není vlastníkem stvoření, dostal je jako dary o které má moudře pečovat a chránit je. Je pánem stvoření, který přibližuje čas vlády jejich jediného Pána a nastoluje Boží království. Člověk je knězem, užívajíc s vděčností přírodních zdrojů, nabízí je zpět Bohu. Nakonec člověk je i asketou. Zdržení se materiálních věcí jej přivádí k harmonické symbióze s prostředím. Zájem o Boží stvoření je jednou z nejdůležitějších cest, na kterou jsou křesťané voláni, aby dosvědčili svou víru. Poselstvím pravoslavní je volání k pokání.

**Krzysztof LEŚNIEWSKI: Der Vortrag behandelt einige  
Beispiele orthodoxer Umweltaktivitäten  
und ihren theologischen Hintergrund**



Ausserdem wird erklärt, warum orthodoxe Christen sich für den Umweltschutz einsetzen sollten. Das alles basiert auf der Überzeugung, dass die Natur von Gott gut geschaffen wurde und auf der Symbiose der spirituellen und materiellen Ebene. Die Lehre der Veränderung der Welt unterstreicht die Wichtigkeit des menschlichen Körpers. Im Vortrag wird gezeigt, wie die Ikonographie der orthodoxen Kirche die enge Verknüpfung von Mensch und Schöpfung unterstreicht. Ausserdem wird der Platz der Menschen in der Welt der Schöpfung diskutiert. Gott schuf den Menschen als sein Ebenbild. Die Menschheit besitzt die Schöpfung nicht, sondern er hat sie vielmehr als ein Geschenk erhalten und dieses sollte sie weise handhaben und sicher beschützen. Der Herr der Schöpfung bringt die Zeit der Herrschaft des einzig wahren Herrn näher, und er leitet das Reich Gottes ein. Die Menschen sind Priester, welche die natürlichen Rohstoffe dankbar annehmen und sie Gott wieder anbieten. Letztendlich sind sie Asketen, die Nutzen aus materiellen Dingen ziehen, und das führt zu einer harmonischen Symbiose mit der Umwelt. Das Interesse für Gottes Schöpfung ist einer der vitalsten Wege, auf dem Christen heutzutage ihren Glauben bestätigen können, und die Nachricht der Orthodoxie an die Welt ist ein Ruf nach Reue.