

UNIT 1A: ORTHODOX FAITH AND LIFE

6: The Human Person

The Human Being as an Integrated Person: Body, Soul and Spirit

T. S. Eliot opens and closes the poem, “East Coker,”—the second poem of “Four Quartets”—with the words, “In my beginning is my end,” and in the final section of that poem he challenges each of us with the words: “Home is where one starts from. As we grow older/The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated/Of dead and living. Not the intense moment/Isolated, with no before and after,/But a lifetime burning in every moment/ And not the lifetime of one man only/But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.”¹ Eliot was writing in 1940, when there was indeed “a lifetime burning in every moment.” Yet he is writing of more than war and death, when he closes “East Coker” with the words: “We must be still and still moving/Into another intensity/For a further union, a deeper communion/ Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,/The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters/ Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.” Eliot’s words hint at the challenge that confronts us as human beings—to “be still” before God “and “still moving into another intensity, for a further union, a deeper communion.” To learn how to “be still” before God, while “still moving” into the “further union” and “deeper communion” that God intends for each of us is a life-long challenge—a challenge to live out our baptism as a progressive renewal of our life in and with God.

Some one thousand nine hundred years before T.S. Eliot, in about AD 51, St. Paul, in the final chapter of 1 Thessalonians—possibly his earliest canonical letter—confronted us with a similar intensity to T. S. Eliot with a prayer that the present moment of our lives would “be preserved complete” and lead to a complete unity with Christ. However, whereas Eliot had stated unequivocally in the opening stanza of “Burnt Norton”—the first poem of “Four Quartets”—that “If all time is eternally present/All time is unredeemable,”² St Paul prayed that it is precisely through the redemption of the present moment of each of our lives that we move “into another intensity” where the past, the present and the future are together redeemed within each person. St. Paul’s prayer, to be found in his first letter to the Thessalonians, was short but profound and practical: “Now may the God of peace Himself,” he wrote, “sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (5:23-24). Here then is a

¹ “East Coker,” in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 182-183.

² “Burnt Norton,” 171.

reframing of Eliot's desolate cry that "In my end is my beginning" with a magnificent Pauline vision of the possibility of being both still before God and yet continuing to move in "spirit and soul and body", a tripartite search for "a further union, a deeper communion" with God in Christ, both on earth and in heaven. Perhaps it is impossible for us here on earth to set targets for the precise union we seek with God, but we can seek to live out that union, which we already have in some measure, without understanding fully where we are going or what we will achieve. The very fact that we have committed ourselves to search for some kind of oneness with God is a sign that we are already on the way to achieving that deeper communion with God that we each seek.

Such a union is not a mystical experience open only to great ascetics but rather a practical possibility open to each of us, as we learn precisely who is "the human person;" and we each decide how to live out the present moment of our lives. As Metropolitan Kallistos has pointed out in *The Orthodox Way*, citing those verses from 1 Thessalonians, St. Paul has set before us "the three elements or aspects that constitute the human person"—the body ("the physical or material aspect of man's nature"), the soul (those human faculties of mind, emotion and will, together constituting, "the life-force that vivifies and animates the body") and the spirit with a small 's' ("the 'breath' from God [Genesis 2:7], which the animals lack").³ These three aspects of the human person are, as Metropolitan Kallistos states, "strictly interdependent; man is an integral unity, not the sum total of separate parts."⁴ Thus the challenge before us—framed in different ways by T. S. Eliot, St. Paul and Metropolitan Kallistos—is to learn how to integrate our bodies, souls and spirits in the present moment in such a way that the abstract idea of "the human person" becomes a unique, concrete experience for each of us in the present moment—an experience available to every Orthodox Christian who makes a personal decision in their own free will to seek oneness with God, both now and in the future. We are confronted with that decision now: are we going to seek oneness with God in our lives? Let us, therefore, now consider how we can learn to live as unique human persons, finding our calling in free will from God in order to achieve that union.

Learning to Live as a Human Person: Finding Your Calling in Free Will

The outcome of this search for the unity of the human person in and with God is not preordained, neither is it set down before us as a sort of pre-prepared script. Yes, St. Paul is right that Christ is faithful; He calls us; and He can indeed bring to pass unity with Him. However, the degree of unity with Christ that each of us achieve in this life is very much guided by our thoughts,

³ [then] Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised Edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 47-48.

⁴ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 47.

choices and actions in the present moment. Whatever our attitude to God, the words of the German philosopher and politician, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) remain relevant: “Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”⁵ In more formal, theological language, as Metropolitan Kallistos has written:

Fundamentally, the image of God in man denotes everything that distinguishes man from the animals that makes him in the full and true sense a person— a moral agent capable of right and wrong, a spiritual subject endowed with inward freedom. The aspect of *free choice* is particularly important for an understanding of man as made in God’s image. As God is free, so likewise man is free. And, being free, each human being realizes the divine image within himself in his own distinctive fashion.⁶

The end of humanity according to the teaching of the Orthodox Christian faith is deification or transformative union with God by whom and in whom our humanity is being perfected. How we achieve that blessed state is the ascesis of the person—a relational purification in the love of God by a freely willed human response. The Ever-Virgin Mary and Theotokos is the prototype of that new humanity in Christ, for of her own free will she not only became the Ark of Salvation in the Incarnation but also, being saved through her loving obedience, she attained the crown of theosis as a partaker in the resurrection of her Son. She is what we all can become.

At first, it may seem overwhelming that each of us can become like the Ever-Virgin Mary, giving birth to God’s plan for our lives. However, this is possible if our *human* spirit in free will learns to be open to the *Holy Spirit*, who has been sent to each of us by God, the Father. At times, like the apostles in Jerusalem gathered after the crucifixion of Christ, before His Ascension, we too must *not* leave our homes and commitments “but wait for what the Father had promised”— the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Like the apostles, we too often need a time of waiting, of prayer, of searching. Slowly, we can learn to be both “still and still moving” in the sense that before we discover what Christ has prepared for us, each of us must first confront our own human nature, with all its unique strengths and weaknesses.

In a helpful management-oriented study, Stephen M. R. Covey, the son of the more famous “seven principles” Covey, has reflected on human relationships in *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*.⁷ He points out that if we each wish to live our lives with integrity, we need to learn to trust ourselves; and it is this ability for “self-trust” that creates “congruence”

⁵ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, at: www.iep.utm.edu/goethe .

⁶ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 51.

⁷ Covey, *The Speed of Trust* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

between our intentions and our behaviour.⁸ The word “congruence” is readily found in any English dictionary, but in few personal vocabularies of spoken or written English. In geometry, two or more figures are “congruent” when they are “identical in size and shape;” and it is this mathematical agreement that Covey has transferred into human relationships in the sense that we should seek full agreement between our intentions and our actions, so that “every time we make and keep a commitment to ourselves—large or small—we increase our self-confidence.” In Covey’s view, once we have learned to trust ourselves it then becomes possible to trust others: “self-trust” can lead to “relationship trust”.⁹ Although we often judge ourselves by our good intentions, we tend to judge others by their actions. All of us face the challenge of turning our good intentions into actions. Yet for all this there is a dual aspect to trust. At the same time that we learn to match our actions to our intentions through a developing self-confidence, we must also learn that our understanding and capacity for right action also depends on a radical trust in God so as to acquire by grace His wisdom, power and direction. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

In a continuing theological context the reality that God has created us in His “image,” according to His “likeness” (Genesis 1:26)—a point to be considered in further detail later in this lecture—empowers us to respect ourselves and others. (It is not flippant but eminently true that God often has a higher opinion of our abilities and potential than we do!) If we truly believe that the Theotokos is the prototype for all of humanity in Christ—and the prototype especially for each of us—then we are challenged to make our lives on earth as congruent as we can with God’s intention for our lives. As we learn to live as human persons, learning to trust ourselves and others and God, we are faced with a paradoxical challenge. On the one hand, “as created beings, we can never be just ourselves alone; God is the core of our being, or we cease to exist.” As Metropolitan Kallistos has written:

Existence is always a gift from God—a free gift of his love, a gift that is never taken back, but a gift none the less, not something that we possess by our own power. God alone has the cause and source of his being in himself; all created beings have their cause and source, not in themselves, but in him. God alone is self-sourced; all created things are God-sourced, God-rooted, finding their origin and fulfilment in him. God alone is noun; all created things are adjectives.¹⁰

⁸ Covey, “Core 1—Integrity: Are You Congruent?”, 57-72.

⁹ Covey, “The First Wave—Self Trust,” 41-124, esp. 67; “The Second Wave—Relationship Trust,” 125-232.

¹⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 45.

Precisely because each of us are in a very real sense “adjectives” who are attached to “the noun” and Creator God, we are dependent upon Him and do not stand alone.

However, on the other hand, paradoxically, there is also an important context in which in the midst of our dependence on God, we are each unique human being. In the words of Metropolitan Kallistos:

In God’s heart and in his love, each one of us has always existed. From all eternity God saw each one of us as an idea or thought in his divine mind, and for each one from all eternity he has a special and distinctive plan. We have always existed for him; creation signifies that at a certain point in time we began to exist also for ourselves.¹¹

Thus as we “begin to exist also for ourselves” we start to seek our own callings in free will. Cardinal John Henry Newman’s understanding of that calling is entirely Orthodox:

We are not called once only, but many times; all through our life. He calls us from grace to grace, from holiness to holiness, while life lasts. He calls us again and again—and again and again, and more and more, to sanctify and glorify us.¹²

The challenge is to make this lifelong calling a personal experience in each of our lives. The words of the psalmist remain true: God has crowned each of us “with glory and honour.” (Psalm 8:5). Reflect then on what is your calling.

What Is Your Calling?

As noted above, the calling of each of us in a broad sense is leading to deification or transformative union with God. This is not an abstract calling, but a deeply personal experience. However, as Cardinal Newman also wisely noted: “I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.”¹³ Yet often, it is not at all clear what the next step might be in one’s calling, either because one is unsure what the Lord has planned or because one is unwilling to listen to a possibility that is unexpected or not seen as attractive. Therefore, it is helpful to understand precisely how deification relates to the human person.

¹¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 45.

¹² John Henry Newman, card from the ordination of a nun at a C Carmelite Monastery, in Quidenham, Norfolk NR16 2PH, United Kingdom.

¹³ Newman, same card from ordination of the Carmelite nun.

Deification is much less frightening to us when viewed as a process rather than a goal. As Father John McGuckin has pointed out: “Deification is the process of sanctification of Christians whereby they become progressively conformed to God . . . The notion is first found in 2 Peter 1:4” where Christians are urged to “become partakers of the divine nature.”¹⁴ This does not imply that Christians become divine in the sense of being consubstantial with the Trinity, but rather that each of us become aware that the Holy Spirit “abides with you and will be in you” (as set out in the Gospel of St. John 14:17). The Alexandrian theologians—St. Clement, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril and Origen—further developed this theme of deification in the context of what Father John has called “the incarnation of the Logos, wherein the divine Logos assumed flesh so that all humankind could be lifted up into the mystery of the divinity.”¹⁵ However, it is the practical aspect of “the transformative effects of grace”¹⁶ that draw each human person to find a vocation through experiencing a closer union with God.

In seeking to discern one’s own vocation, a helpful resource is the collection of papers drawn together by Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides, *Christ at Work: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Vocation*, especially her insightful introduction.¹⁷ Dr. Bezzerides points out that our vocation is “our response to God’s initiative in first creating and loving us, and in offering his only begotten Son for the salvation of our souls.”¹⁸ Furthermore, “God-given vocation is borne out in community because it is a response to the call to love the neighbour.”¹⁹ The Dean of Hellenic College, Dr. Demetrios S. Katos, sums up the Orthodox perspective on vocation with a theme that has already been implied in this lecture: “A vocational quest that is founded upon the belief that we are in the image of God engenders persistence in the search for the optimal role to play in life.”²⁰ In other words, because we know we are formed in the image of God we are deeply encouraged to persist in finding our unique calling from God and then seek to fulfil it.

How Can Body, Soul and Spirit Be Integrated in a Human Person? Two Approaches

Precisely how each of us should seek to integrate body, soul and spirit is a personal and somewhat private quest but it is necessary in order to fulfil our vocation. In seeking to discover own unique vocations, it is helpful to consider carefully the context of the Biblical quotation given

¹⁴ Father John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), entry on “Deification,” 98-99.

¹⁵ McGuckin, 98.

¹⁶ McGuckin, 99.

¹⁷ Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides (ed.), *Christ at Work: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Vocation* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 1-12.

¹⁸ Bezzerides, 10.

¹⁹ Bezzerides, 10. See also the blog of Dr. Bezzerides at: www.soundingblog.com/index.php/blog/Ann-Mitsakos-Bezzerides.html

²⁰ Demetrios S. Katos, “In the Image of God: Mystical Theology and Secular Vocations” in Bezzerides, 135.

above. 2 Peter 1:4 urges each of us to “become partakers of the divine nature,” but then continues that if we can achieve this, we will have “escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” Furthermore, in the very next chapter the first accusation that St. Peter makes against false prophets is: “Many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.” (2 Peter 2:1-2). The temptations that faced the early Christians of which St. Peter was well aware are still present today; in fact, there are perhaps a greater number of “false prophets” following “their sensuality” who are maligning the “way of truth” today than was the case 2,000 years ago.

The English word “lust” means “strong sexual desire” and is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “desire” or “appetite.” Furthermore, there is a sense of wanting, craving or coveting something or someone, which may also be intended by St. Peter, because he indicates that “the way of truth is maligned” by those who “in their greed . . . will exploit you with false words” (2 Pet 2:3). That appeal to appetites—both sexual and financial—is strongly evident in contemporary societies in many countries today.

In seeking to integrate body, soul and spirit in each human person, Orthodox Christianity offers two rather different approaches. The traditional path is that set out by Father Dumitru Staniloae in *Orthodox Spirituality* in which each human being learns by experience and prayer to move through the purification of passions, to illumination in faith, to union in love.²¹ Within this perspective, passions are, in Father Dumitru’s words, “the fermentation of inner and interpersonal disorder;” and passions are themselves “the thick wall between us and God, the fog covering our nature made transparent by God.”²² Therefore, “self-control freely exercised by a believer” is essential,²³ as demonstrated by the many different approaches of the Desert Fathers and Mothers to confront their own lusts.²⁴

Over the centuries, many Orthodox Christians, both lay and clerical, married and monastic, have walked along this path of purification toward deification. However, an alternative path, complementary, perhaps lesser known but just as challenging, is described by Philip Sherrard in *Christianity and Eros: Essays on the Theme of Sexual Love*. This is to see sexual love itself as a sacramental form in which there is, in Philip Sherrard’s words:

²¹ Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary Press, 2002), 69-374.

²² Staniloae, 83.

²³ Staniloae, 148f.

²⁴ Benedicta Ward (trans.), *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin, 2003), Chapter 5, “Lust,” 33-52; and Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian/Liturgical Press).

. . . a mutual awareness and recognition which is a total act of the soul. We tend to distinguish between the love of God and the love of one person for another—to distinguish between *agape* [i.e. Christian brotherly or sisterly love] and *eros* [the Greek word for “sexual love”]—and to regard the second as a rather debased form of the first. . . . In a sexualized sacramental love there is no such distinction. . . and there is but a single communion, a single participation of the man and the woman and the divine in each other, although it must be remembered that however transparent the two human beings become to each other in its light, the divine itself always remains hidden and inaccessible in its essence.²⁵

For Sherrard, and for some other Orthodox Christians, this sacramental form of human love is, as Sherrard phrases the experience:

... not simply a human emotion or impulse or even a created cosmic or elemental force. Still less is it to be identified simply with a bodily or psychosomatic energy. It is, in its origins, a spiritual energy. It is rooted in divine life itself, and its principle, so to say, is placed by God in man and woman in their creation. Hence, to be united in this love is to find oneself returned to oneself, to one’s full being and primal condition. In this sense, it is not simply to be born in beauty. It is also to be regenerated in God and to have the divine Paradise revealed to one. In other words, it is a form of sexual relationship which has a spiritualizing influence on the two people concerned in it. . . .²⁶

As Sherrard recognises, in this kind of communion between a man and a woman, there may be no genital expression, “simply because the kind of communion they experience makes such expression superfluous—a descent into a lower key.”²⁷ Furthermore, the Greek theologian and philosopher, Christos Yannaras, has urged that “the starting point for approaching the fact of existence in itself is the reality of the *person*. And the mode of this approach which makes the person accessible to knowledge is *eros*.”²⁸ That is quite a statement from a contemporary highly respected lay Orthodox theologian. Is it possible to reconcile these two approaches to integrating

²⁵ Philip Sherrard, *Christianity and Eros: Essays on the Theme of Sexual Love* (Limni, Evia, Greece: Denise Harvey/London: SPCK, 1976), Essay 1: “The Sexual Relationship in Christian Thought”, 2.

²⁶ Sherrard, 3.

²⁷ Sherrard, 3.

²⁸ Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), xiii. trans. Norman Russell. Original Title in Greek: *To prosporo kai o eros*, Athens, 1987.

the human person—to reconcile the purifications of the passions with an affirmation of sexual love?

Reconciling the Two Approaches to Integrating the Human Person

The differences between the traditional Orthodox understanding of purification of the passions and the radical perspective of Sherrard and Yannaras may not be as great as first appears. Both perspectives affirm Christian marriage as a sacrament; and both approaches require a deep seeking of the meaning of love. Metropolitan Kallistos has noted that St. Irenaeus spoke in the second century of “the Son and the Holy Spirit as the ‘two hands’ of God the Father;” furthermore, in the words of Metropolitan Kallistos:

... in all His work of creation, redemption, and sanctification, God is always using His two hands together; marriage and monasticism are likewise the ‘two hands’ of the Church, the two complementary expressions of the one royal priesthood. Each needs the other, and in her mission the Church uses both her hands together.²⁹

The practical implications of the importance of marriage in the Orthodox Church have been highlighted by Deacon John Chryssavgis in *Love, Sexuality and the Sacrament of Marriage*, where he reflects that: “In the last analysis, it is the Church which served to unlock the meaning of sexuality by declaring marriage to be a sacrament.”³⁰

Thus our understanding of the Church is remarkably relevant to our approach to marriage as a relationship. On the closing page of the final chapter on “The Sacrament of Marriage,” Deacon John comments:

The Church is precisely a communion of persons, a union between mortal and immortal, humanity and God. Marriage grants the possibility to live in the Church, that is to say, to live in a personal relationship through which *eternity* is revealed. Outside the Church any physical relationship merely postpones death. Only in the Church can two people participate in the life-giving death of Christ, transforming mere survival into authentic life. There is no question of abstract idealism here, for

²⁹ Kallistos Ware, “The Monastic Life as a Sacrament of Love, in *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 2 (1981), 697-699. Quoted by Deacon John Chryssavgis in “Sources” for *Love, Sexuality and the Sacrament of Marriage* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 99.

³⁰ Chryssavgis, *Love, Sexuality and the Sacrament of Marriage* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 5. Deacon John has dedicated his book “For Philip Sherrard (1922-1995), an inspiration and a friend ‘from a distance.’”

a sacrament is precisely a reality and experience wherein both humanity and God act. This cooperation (or *synergy*) is the underlying significance of the great 'mysterion' [i.e. sacred mystery] of marriage.³¹

Whether one chooses in free will to be single in the world, to be a monastic or to be married, every Orthodox Christian can be engaged in the process of deification, grounded in experience of life, awareness of Tradition, prayer, Bible reading and theological study. Let us now close this lecture with an extended reflection on how finding the vision of God in our own lives is grounded in our understanding of the human person.

A Final Reflection on the Human Person: Finding the Vision of God in Our Own Lives

Salvation for the Orthodox Christian is about forgiveness and reconciliation with God through a repentance that opens the kingdom of heaven through faith. But it is much more than that. The Holy Spirit is given that we might recover what was lost through our primal disobedience—the fullness of the very life of God Himself. That the human person has the capacity for such growth into God is the basis of an Orthodox Christian anthropology and this must now be considered in the light of Scripture and Tradition in more detail.

It must always be remembered that human beings are embodied souls. Whatever approach one takes to human sexuality—focusing on self-control and abstinence or the joy of sexual intercourse in Christian marriage—human life cannot be reduced to either biology alone or a spiritual essence that has no need of the body. Both these reductions are heresies, being, respectively, materialistic and dualistic, the latter a false spiritualism. Genesis records that God not only took dust as his raw material but that he also animated this with his own breath (as set out in Genesis 2:7). The soul was not the breath itself (as those who falsely suppose a divine aspect to have replaced a created one), but rather this divine breath indicates the divine origin of the created soul. It is this soul that makes us capable of achieving the purpose of our creation—our deification.

In brief, the soul is that which works with the body, governing it through the spiritual intellect (or *nous—the spiritual element of creation*) to direct it toward salvation. However, the call to ascetical labour can be progressively abandoned if disordered passions of any kind are allowed to pull the soul away from God. This tragic development is made possible by the disobedience of our first parents through which death and corruption entered the world, and thereby yet more sin. The soul, therefore, must resist any temptation to either intellectual deceit

³¹ Chryssavgis, 35. [Emphasis in original.]

or disordered passion. St. Paul interprets this struggle as between “flesh” and “spirit.” By this he does *not* mean that the body is sinful and the spirit or soul is not. Such spiritualised dualism is entirely foreign to Christianity. Rather, St. Paul means that there is a conflict going on inside every human person (at some stage at least) between God’s will and divine life, on the one hand, and the unregenerate principle of death contending with that divine life within each of us.

St. Paul explains the nature of this conflict clearly in Romans 8: 1-11:

There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

In other places St. Paul also talks about the human spirit, variously described as the nous or spiritual intellect, for example: “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God”. (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Then how does this presence of the human spirit within each human person tie in with our understanding of the soul and its role in our salvation? Some Fathers of the Church distinguish the spirit of a man from his soul quite clearly (Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ephraim the Syrian), others less so if at all, (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. John Chrysostom, St. John of Damascus). The patristic resolution of this apparent dilemma is beautifully resolved by St. Diadochus of Photike, a fifth century bishop and theologian, who stressed that: “The Grace of God dwells in the very depths of the soul, that

is to say in the nous”³²—which in this context is best defined as the “spiritual intellect” that arises from the spirit. Therefore, with the human spirit aligned with and transformed by the indwelling Spirit of God in the heart, (both the centre and extent of the human person), the soul leads the disciplined body and the transformed mind into a harmonious ascent to the Father.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the 4th century Cappadocian Fathers, taught in *The Life of Moses* that this ascent is infinite.³³ The end of this ascent without limit is God himself who divinises the human person by his uncreated energies. The true end of Man therefore is a partaking of the divine nature, as set out earlier in 2 Peter 1:4, or more strictly we should say a partaking of the divine energies, whilst yet retaining every aspect of a perfected humanity. This is *theosis*—an acquisition of the divine *likeness* proper to the *image* of God in the human person. This distinction between the *image* of God and the *likeness* of God is a necessary corollary of the relationship between what is to be found from God in human nature (the divine image) and what is to be acquired by our cooperation with God’s grace in the virtues (the divine likeness).

This lecture on the human person has sought to clarify how each of us as Orthodox Christians can reach out to seek God and find His glory in the fullness of a perfected humanity, while God reaches out to each of us. This is not part of a modern quest for self-fulfilment, but rather a reflection on the insight of St. Irenaeus in the second century that has come down to us in a Latin text as *Gloria Dei est vivens homo*—literally “The glory of God is a living man.”³⁴ That text concludes with the ten words: “the life of the human is the vision of God.”³⁵ May we all share that vision of God together, as shown by how we live our lives in and for Him.

³² See G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherard and Kallistos Ware (eds.), *The Philokalia. The Complete Text*, I, 251 (London: Faber & Faber, 1979).

³³ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham Malherbe, Everett Ferguson and John Meyendorf (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978).

³⁴ See Father Patrick Reardon, “The Man Alive: Irenaeus Did Not Teach Self-Fulfillment,” *Touchstone*, September/October 2012. Search for “The glory of God is man fully alive.”

³⁵ St. Irenaeus, *A Treatise Against the Heresies*, Book 4, Chap. 20.

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