

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Creation ***needs to be reintegrated***, but this can happen only if it is once again put into communion with the Lord, so that it can find its fullness of purpose and its transfiguration.

Humanity can no longer ignore its responsibility to protect and preserve it. In order to do so, however, humanity needs ***to learn to treat creation as a sacred offering to God, as an oblation, a vehicle of grace, an embodiment of our aspirations and our noblest prayers.***

*In the same way that bread and wine are given as an offering for the sanctification of the world and of all in the Eucharist, a sacramental approach to creation is necessary for its reintegration.*

*The Lord created His universe and everything in it as an integrated whole. Today, we have brought disintegration to what God intended to be integrated. We call on individuals, nations and churches to realize the vision of a just harmony between the human dimension and the mineral, vegetable and animal dimension of creation. In body and spirit, we are called to offer all of creation to God anew as a sacrament and a clean, pure, restored offering for him to sanctify.*



## IN THIS WE BELIEVE V



### HEAVEN

***It is the place where the throne of God is***, beyond time and space. It is the abode of the angels, as well as of the saints who have departed from this life.

We pray, "*Our Father who art in heaven...*" Although Christians live in this world, ***they belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, and that kingdom is their true home.*** But heaven isn't just for the future. Nor is it a distant place billions of light-years away situated in a nebula "*beyond.*"

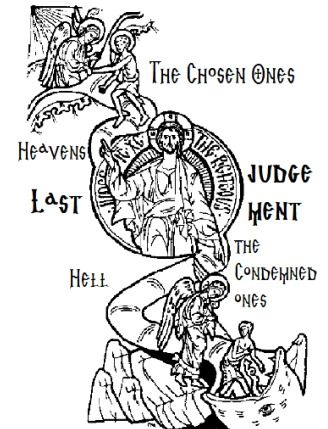
For the Orthodox, *heaven is part of Christian life and worship.* The true architecture of an Orthodox Church temple is designed so that the building itself partakes of the reality of heaven. The Eucharist is heavenly adoration, ***it is Heaven on Earth.*** St. Paul teaches that we have been raised with Christ to the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), that we are "*fellow citizens with the saints and the servants of God*" (Ephesians 2:19).

At the end of the age, ***a new heaven and a new earth will be revealed to us*** (Revelation 21:1).

### HELL

As unpopular as it may be to the modern mindset, ***it is real.*** The Orthodox Church understands hell as ***a place of eternal torment for those who willingly reject God's grace.***

Our Lord once said, "*If your hand causes you to fall, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, than to go with two hands to hell, to the fire that cannot be quenched, where their worm does not die and the fire is never quenched*" (Mark 9:43-44, KJV)).





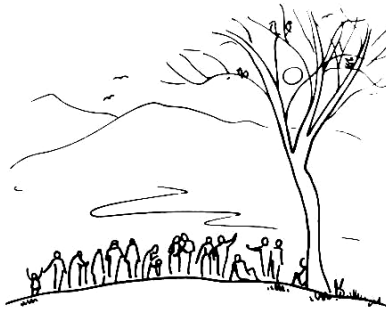
He challenged the hypocrites with this question: "How will you escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33, KJV).

His answer is, "For God has not sent his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).



**The day of judgment is coming, and there is a place of chastisement for those who have hardened their hearts against God.** We make a difference with the way we live our lives. Those who of their own free will reject God's grace and mercy will forever bear the consequences of their choice.

#### THE CREATION



Orthodox Christians **confess God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth** (Genesis 1:1, the Nicene Creed).

Creation did not come into existence by itself. **God did it all.** "By faith, we know that the universe was formed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3).

Orthodox Christians **do not believe that the Bible is a scientific book** about creation,

as some mistakenly think, but that **it is God's revelation about Himself and His Salvation.**

In the same way, **we do not see scientific books**, however useful, **as revelation from God.** They may contain both known facts and speculative theories, but they **are not infallible.**

Orthodox Christians refuse to build an unnecessary and artificial wall between science and the Christian Faith. Instead, **they regard honest scientific inquiry as a potential incentive to faith**, for all truth is from God.



#### SCIENCE



**It is not against God or the doctrine of the Church**, on the contrary, it is a manifestation of the glory of God, who created human intelligence and gave it that wonderful power to always move forward and discover new things.

**Every new discovery proves to us more the existence of God and his truth**, for as science advances, it discovers that everything is subject to the most exact laws, no matter how complicated the mechanism may be, both in the great and in the infinitely small... **and this calls for an Infinite Intelligence: God.**

#### THE VALUE OF CREATION

The value **of creation** is seen not only in the fact that it is **intrinsically good**, but also in the circumstance that **it has been designated by God as the home of living beings.**

The value of natural creation is revealed in the fact that it **was created by God** (beautifully expressed in Orthodox iconography) **to be the context of the Incarnation of God and the deification of humanity**, and as such, the beginning of the actualization of the Kingdom of God.

We can say that the cosmos provides the framework in which humanity moves from creation to deification. Ultimately, however, **the whole of creation is destined to become a transfigured world, for the salvation of mankind necessarily includes the salvation of its natural home, the cosmos.**

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Revelation 21:1).*

