



God the Creator and Creation by Man

Theological Speculations on the Eve of the Basle Assembly

Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it (Ps. 90. 17)

We are labourers together with God (1 Cor. 3. 9)

Five years ago the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Vancouver, called on the Christians of the world to cooperate for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It thus named the key aspects of humanity's existence today. The absence of peace, the lack of justice in socio-political life and the mounting ecological problems have seriously disturbed man in the last quarter of the 20th century. The position in these spheres is critical, and man is looking for a way out of the crisis. The arms race and the nuclear menace; local wars taking millions of lives; the injustice resulting from the immense gap between the wealth of the developed countries and poverty and starvation in many countries of the Third World; the infringement of human rights and lack of respect for the personality; lastly, the pollution of the environment and violation of the ecological balance in nature, which threaten man's health and very life—these are only some of the grave problems confronting mankind. Finding a way out of the crisis is not an abstract, but a very concrete problem, a life-or-death issue for the human species. Indeed, if there is no peace among nations, mankind (and perhaps all life on our planet) will be doomed to physical destruction; if there is no justice among people, the community of man will be threatened with disintegration and death as a society through fratricidal conflicts, national clashes, terrorism and the like; finally, if there is no ecological balance in nature, man will have to face energy and food

shortages and ecological catastrophes which will likewise culminate in the physical destruction of large numbers of people or even of all mankind. All this makes the present crisis an existential reality to any sober-minded person.

Therefore, it is not accidental that the three problems form a single complex and, as such, have been made the subject of a special programme of the World Council of Churches. It envisages, as one of its central events, a World Convocation on Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation, to be held in 1990. A year earlier, in May 1989, the Peace and Justice European Ecumenical Assembly will meet in Basle. It will be a landmark in implementing the programme at the regional level. Not sponsored by the WCC, the assembly will be held by two regional organizations: the Conference of European Churches (CEC), which includes the Orthodox and various Protestant Churches, and the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), speaking for the Roman Catholic Church. The roughly 700 delegates from almost every country of Europe will represent 120 CEC Member-Churches and 25 Bishops' Conferences, members of the CCEE. The biblical device of the gathering will be: "Righteousness and Peace Will Kiss Each Other" (Ps. 85.10). Although peace and justice alone figure as the theme of the assembly, it will also concern itself with ecological problems, which in the ecumenical terminology are summed up in the concept of the "integrity" (or "protection") of creation. The



three issues are so closely interlinked that it is impossible to separate any of them from the others. The Basle assembly will undoubtedly become a milestone in Europe's Christian life. On the eve of the assembly, Christians in Europe are pondering the various aspects of its theme. The present speculations—an attempt to fathom the problems concerned from the viewpoint of the Orthodox teaching on the creation—are meant as a contribution to this process.

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Job, the Old Testament righteous man, overcome by misfortune and deprivation, calls on God for justice. He seeks to recover the peace and truth that formely marked his earthly life, but cannot find them and is desperate. He feels he has committed no sin, he believes his conscience is clear, and he endeavours to *dispute* with God so that he might *be delivered for ever* from his *judge* (Job 23.7). But what answer is he given by God? *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding* (38.4). And the Lord tells the sufferer about the magnificence of His creation (38.5-39.30). When, further on, Job enquires about moral truth, God speaks—amazingly!—about the animals: *Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee... He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him* (40. 15, 19). *Which I made with thee*—the Creator reminds Job that he, like the animals, is His creation, and it is an animal, not man, that is called here *the chief of the ways of God*. So, in reply to his questions, God draws Job's attention to the unknowable mystery of the creation. God is the Maker of the Universe, so it is impossible to *disannul His judgement* (40.8). And when Job, amidst all his suffering, ultimately says Yes to God, when he submits and repents *in dust and ashes* (42.6), we realize that, in the view of the Scripture writer, man, no matter how strongly convinced of his righteousness and innocence, is always wrong before his Creator, for man is His creation. Conversely, he can only attain righteousness and peace in unity with the whole of God's creation, in the consciousness of its magnificence and unknowability.

Biblical parables were readily understandable to the man of antiquity, who was fully under the sway of the powers of Nature, incomprehensible to him. Nature was to him the living and direct manifestation of God's omnipotence, a source of fear and awe. This also applies to the Middle Ages. But in the modern age, the ideology of non-religious humanism evolved an entirely new attitude to Nature, treating it as something to be "subdued", "conquered", something one should not "expect favours from" but actively use for one's own ends. The steadily accelerating development of science and technology did enable man to direct certain natural processes and feel less and less dependent on natural phenomena. This optimistic ideology of "subjection", unclouded by serious doubts, was epitomized in the Jules Verne view of the world

of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Those who held that view would have failed to understand the reasoning contained in the Book of Job, even if they had listened to it. For even in Job's day man *made his sword to approach* unto behemoth and leviathan and attempted to enter *into the springs of the sea* and walk *in the search of the depth* (Job 40.19; 38.16). But coping with the leviathan has proved not so simple as it seemed initially. Two destructive world wars showed that the works of man's hands serve to subject not only Nature, but man and that it was precisely the high level attained by science and technology that enabled certain people to annihilate millions of other people. And two recent events—the accident in Chernobyl and the pollution of the Rhine—demonstrated the calamitous consequences man's activities may have, even if serving quite "humane" purposes. Apart from this, the "conquest" of Nature results in the rupture of vital ecological links fraught with unpredictable consequences. All this once again brings home to man the imponderability of God's created world. God's message to his Old Testament righteous servant assumes a new clarity and significance for man.

However, so many things around us are the creation of our hands. Almost everything that surrounds us today is a product of human activity; we are accustomed to this and believe it is impossible for us to live differently from how we live now. Man has usurped the title of creator, and is therefore reluctant to recall his Heavenly Creator. Man is filled with pride, he boasts of the works of his hands and aspires to still greater achievements. This state of affairs makes us call special attention to the questions: What ought man's attitude to God's creation really to be like? What is man's proper place among God's creatures? Further: what is *the work of our hands* (Ps. 90.17) before the almighty Creator of the universe? May we call ourselves creators, and if we may, then in what sense? And last but not least: do the works of our hands bring us closer to righteousness and peace, or do they, on the contrary, lead us away from it?

These are, essentially, questions of the Christian world outlook. Of course, non-Christians are also aware of them in one way or another, however the secular mentality, as it were, turns these problems into "two-dimensional" ones, eliminating their "vertical", metaphysical aspect. This mentality is concerned solely with the prospects for the survival of human society and man on the planet Earth in connection with the achievements of science and technology, with the course technological progress should take in the future. Contemporary philosophers, sociologists and futurologists are giving a great deal of thought to this. Let us examine their views in some more detail before we present the Orthodox understanding of the created world and creative work. These views are of no concern to us in themselves, and a full survey of them lies beyond the scope of our task. What is important to us here is to see the types of world outlook and intellectual attitude that underlie them. Probably each of us looks for answers to questions concerning



the significance of scientific progress and the prospects for mankind, if not at the philosophical level, then at least at that of our empirical notions. The scientists' views themselves in part form these notions, and in part are their reflections and product. So we will speak about the **predominant** types of modern man's world outlook, as crystallized in various philosophical and sociological teachings.

Two main tendencies may be singled out. The first is expressed in the views of such American sociologists as Daniel Bell,² Zbigniew Brzezinski³ and Alvin Toffler,⁴ the authors of the theory of the "post-industrial" society. They admit that modern developed industrial society is in a state of crisis and needs radical change. It will be replaced by the "post-industrial"⁵ society, in which scientific and technological progress will attain a qualitatively new, higher stage and will, as a result, transform the whole of mankind and help it cope with the present crisis. Representative of this school of thought is Toffler's book, *Future Shock*, which provides "technotronic"⁶ solutions to every problem, ecological, social, ideological, cultural and even moral. For instance, mankind's demographic problems are to be resolved by building cities on the seabed and implanting gills in humans.⁷ The problems of inherited disease, deformities and the like are to be taken care of by gene engineering, when scientists can manipulate the genes to create altogether new versions of man;⁸ acquired diseases are to be treated by implanting artificial organs.⁹ The socio-psychological problem of uniform thinking and uniform living will be settled by providing an increasing variety of consumer goods and services, when not only man's basic, but any, even the most out-of-the-way desires will be met.¹⁰ Finally, the difficulties of the present-day family and the upbringing of children will be overcome by enabling would-be "parents" to buy () an embryo of the desired kind at a "babytorium".¹¹ The person about to enter the post-industrial era is not burdened by any moral considerations. He gives no thought at all to the morality or otherwise of letting himself be carried away by the breathtaking prospects of progress at a time when millions of people in the Third World live in poverty and starve. Toffler's book is thoroughly immoral, totally devoid of the ethical dimension. The only "non-technotronic" problem facing man is, in Toffler's view, the problem of psychological adaptation to the achievements of progress, of overcoming the "shock" of man's clash with the future (hence the title of the book).

So the world outlook of the theorists of the "post-industrial" society, as exemplified by Toffler's book, is based on faith in the limitless possibilities of technological progress. No obstacles can halt that progress; whatever problems are created by the development of science and technology will sooner or later be resolved, at a higher level, by science itself. The enduring popularity of Toffler's book testifies to the vast appeal and spread of such views.¹² Characteristically, it was this world outlook that gave rise to the Strategic Defence Initiative, which rests on the

conviction that the menace presented by nuclear weapons can be overcome not by renouncing them, but by adding another round to the arms race.¹³

Now for the other tendency in modern philosophical and sociological theories. It is best illustrated by the views of Erich Fromm (1900-1980), an American philosopher, sociologist and neo-Freudian psychologist and psychoanalyst widely known in the West. His social theory is set forth in his books *The Sane Society* (1955),¹⁴ *The Revolution of Hope* (1968)¹⁵ and most fully in his last work, *To Have or to Be* (1976).¹⁶ Fromm's views differ greatly from those of the "post-industrialists." He sees the way out of the present crisis not in continued material progress, but in orienting people to a new system of moral values. In *To Have or to Be*, he sharply denounces all social systems "based on the principle of unlimited consumption as the goal of living"¹⁷ and, in particular, gives a detailed critique of the consumerist industrial society with its ailments and vices.¹⁸ He believes that "for the first time in history the physical survival of the human race depends on a radical change of the human heart"¹⁹ and that man's goal is "not control over nature but control over technique."²⁰ He is convinced that the philosophy of "having" must make room to the philosophy of "being": what matters is not what one has but what one is. These are reasonable ideas, which one can only agree with, and the appeal for a moral reassessment of man does Fromm credit. But the question arises: what does he mean by "being?" What must man be? Fromm's answer is absolutely anthropocentric: man's goal is to become himself.²¹ Fromm describes this rather vague answer as "radical humanism." When it comes to defining what is good for man, Fromm, tendentially interpreting a passage from Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* (Q.3, art.122), says: "The human good is determined neither arbitrarily by purely subjective desires..., nor by God's arbitrary will. It is determined by our rational understanding of human nature and of the norms that, based on this nature, are conducive to optimal growth and well-being"²². So what we have is a vicious circle: the renunciation of unlimited consumption appears to be a renunciation of one's own interests in the name of something higher; however, this *something higher* is ultimately reducible to the task of becoming ourselves—again for one's own optimal development and welfare.

Fromm's attitude to religion is highly indicative. He widely quotes from and mentions Holy Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers and mediaeval Christian mystics. With equal enthusiasm he refers to Buddhism, Lao Tze's Taoism and the Talmud. He urges people to address themselves "to the spirit of the gospel"²³ but maintains that in the new society "social life itself, in all its aspects..., will be the expression of the religious spirit and no separate religion will be necessary"²⁴. Instead of the two antipodes—the "City of God" and the "Earthly City of Progress"—he puts forward a synthesis, "The City of Being," which he conceives of in the spirit of non-



religious “radical humanism.” So the belief in the Living God, the heart of religion, is here replaced with abstract moralizing. The place of religion is taken by a “humanistic morality.”

As we assess Fromm’s theory and compare it with that of post-industrialism, we arrive at an unexpected conclusion. For all the apparent distinctions, both proceed from one and the same basic assumption—the belief in the self-sufficiency and unlimited possibilities of man “on his own,” taken in his “selfhood.” The only difference is that in one case man “on his own” overcomes the crisis with the aid of technological devices of his own making, while in the other he likewise acting “on his own,” without God, on the basis of a rational understanding of his own nature, decides to become “moral” and builds “The City of Being” for the sake of his optimal development and welfare. The antipodes merge at a deeper level, nor could it be otherwise, since both theories are non-religious.

Modern non-religious philosophy and sociology thus give different answers to the question concerning the prospects for mankind and the *work of his hands*, but this difference, as we see it, can be reduced to the two tendencies described above.²⁵ Our attitude to them should not be wholly negative. The “post-industrialists”, though immoral in principle, do bring home to us the “future shock”. And Fromm’s “radical humanism” contains many positive elements, above all the defence of moral values, which is vital in this day and age. But to the Christian, the most positive and soundest aspects of any non-religious philosophy are merely a pale reflection of the Truth enunciated to man by the Orthodox doctrine. Let us proceed to it now.

As we enter the sphere of Christian thought, we see the world assume a new, “vertical” dimension and are lifted up above the level of materiality.²⁶ Here every event, every phenomenon is related to God. Speaking of man and his future, we cannot fail to think of his Creator. As V. Lossky points out, the creation of the world and man “is not a truth of a philosophical order, but rather an article of faith.”²⁷ This faith is clearly formulated in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed: “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ ...by Whom all things were made.... And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life.” These words, relating to three different verses of the Creed, express the faith in the participation of the Three Hypostases in the Creation. The story of the creation of the world, in Genesis, Chapters 1-3, squarely places the foundation of the Christian faith in the Creator of the universe. No human being seeking to fathom the significance and purpose of the Creation can bypass this great narrative. The Holy Fathers have supplied an extensive commentary to these chapters, so we will not go into the details of the Biblical story. What is important to us in this context are the words summing up the individual acts of the Creation: *And God saw that it was good* (Gen. 1.10, 12, 18, 21). This is how the Scripture writer describes the primeval goodness of that

which was created by the All-Good God. The whole of Holy Scripture testifies to the goodness of God’s acts. For instance, in one of its closing texts, St. Paul says: *Every creature of God is good* (1 Tim. 4.4).

On the sixth day, God created man, and He created him in His own image. Now in what kind of relation did the Creator place the first man He had created towards the things He had created earlier? He blessed the first humans and said to them: *Replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth* (Gen. 1.28). And so: *subdue it and have dominion*. Was it not these words of the Lord that gave rise to the ideology of the “conquest of Nature”? Are they not, in fact, a religious sanction for such an attitude to the created world? No, not at all. Those who wish to interpret these words as such a sanction, forget something very important, something which absolutely rules out such an interpretation of the Biblical text. They forget that these words were said to man before the Fall.

When creating man, God gave him “creaturely freedom”. Father George Florovsky says: “Creaturely freedom is disclosed first of all in the equal possibility of two ways: to God and away from God”.²⁸ God created man free to do His Divine will or act against it. St. Gregory of Nazianzus said: “God legalized man’s self-determination”²⁹. The Fall, the abuse of freedom for an evil end, the contra-posing of man’s will to God’s (Gen. 3), caused man’s fall from God’s truth, the forfeiture of His beneficial proximity. With the Fall, peace and justice were lost in relationships between humans, as follows from the story of the murder of Abel by his own brother (Gen. 4.1-12). However, the Fall had disastrous consequences not only for man himself, but also for the whole of God’s created world. Here is what God says to Adam after the Fall: *Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee* (Gen. 3.17-18). God curses the ground for man’s sake: the whole of the creation is degraded through man’s fault. This is also what St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans: the whole creation was made *subject to vanity and groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now* (Rom. 8.20,22). Commenting on this passage, St. John Chrysostom likewise stresses that it was through man’s fault that the creature was made *subject to vanity and destruction*.³⁰

We have arrived at a very important question. How are the diametrically opposite statements of Holy Scripture on the created world to be reconciled? The book of Genesis maintains that everything God had made was *very good* (1.31), and John the Divine says *the whole world lieth in wickedness* (1 Jn. 5.19). St. Paul is convinced that *every creature of God is good* (1 Tim. 4.4), but elsewhere the same apostle speaks of the whole of creation groaning and travailing in pain (Rom. 8.22). Yet are we not ourselves often conscious of the same duality in



perceiving the God-created Nature around us? On the one hand, we admire the harmony and beauty, expediency and inner balance of the creation. This admiration is beautifully expressed in St. Basil the Great's *Hexaemeron*, and is also present in the works of other thinkers and scholars, and of course of poets and artists. On the other hand, however, life just as frequently appears to us nonsensical, evil, a chaos of chance happenings. The destruction of certain creatures by others in the struggle for survival, natural calamities, the diseases and sufferings afflicting living creatures, and their very mortality — all this impels us to deny the goodness of the creation.³¹ This denial was given the most extreme expression in ancient Gnosticism, which strove to “free” man from the fetters of matter and taught that the demiurge, the creator of the world, was not the almighty and all-good God.

The solution to this contradiction is provided by the Christian teaching on the Fall, set forth above. There is no questioning what Genesis says: the world created by God is *very good* — but only in its original form, unspoiled by man's Fall. It is good in the Creator's non-temporal conception of the world. As St. Basil the Great says in his commentary on this passage of Genesis, to God “that is beautiful which ...aims at achieving a good end”³². But with the Fall of man, who set himself against God and thus disrupted the original harmony and integrity of creation, evil made its appearance in the world. According to Orthodox doctrines, evil “is not rooted in being, does not stem from it, is not contained in that which exists”³³; it is an imperfection, “not part of Nature, but a deficiency which makes Nature imperfect”³⁴. And in this sense the world created by the All-Good God does contain evil, indeed, *lieth in wickedness*.³⁵ And we, as we perceive created Nature, are aware both of its goodness and of its evil. This tension, this failure of creation's temporal life to correspond, in its reality, to the ideal of the Creator's non-temporal conception, constitutes the great drama of existence, both to Nature and to man.

But the next act in this drama is the sacrament of the Incarnation of God's Son and the redemption of man. *As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*, St. Paul says (Rom. 5.18). The mission of reconciling the creation with the Creator was accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, *for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven* (Col. 1.19-20). Through Christ the path was opened to fallen mankind towards reconciliation with God and among humans (Jn. 14.27), towards divine righteousness (Mt. 6.33), and, finally, towards salvation and godliness together with the whole created world, *for the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious*

liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8.21). Eschatologically, this process of salvation and assumption of godliness with the entire created world is to culminate in a new creation: *if man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new* (2 Cor. 5.17).

Our faith in the Incarnation, in the very possibility of the Divine and human natures being united without mixture and confusion, is the cornerstone and core of being united Christianity, and it is profoundly significant that this faith is associated with our vision of a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21.1). The creation is often misunderstood as a single act that was performed once and for all and represents the unchanging “scenery”, the fixed “background” of human existence. Hence, in effect, the view of the created world as a passive object of human experimentation.³⁶ This notion is fully disposed of by the Saviour's words: *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work* (Jn. 5.17). God continues to create. As S. Franc justly puts it: “The very existence of the world is nothing other than its continuing creation”.³⁷ The Holy Fathers unambiguously testify to their faith that the creation cannot be attributed to any one particular moment, a period in the distant past. St. Augustine writes: “The whole of creation owes its existence to the Omnipotence of the Creator; if this power ever ceased to govern, all the species would cease too, and all of Nature would perish”.³⁸ Some of the Fathers of the Church distinguish between the first, the second and the third creation. The first consisted in the “passage from non-being to being”; the second, in “changing from bad to good”; the third, in the “Resurrection of the Dead”.³⁹ St. John Chrysostom⁴⁰ and St. Gregory of Nyssa⁴¹ associate the second, or new, creation with the Christian baptism. One may say that to the Church Fathers Divine Providence means God's continuous all-powerful creative work in the world. Therefore, in the Christian understanding, the “creation of the world” in itself, as a finite act, is unthinkable. It is only conceived of within the single process of universal history: the creation — the Fall — Incarnation — Redemption — new creation. The Christian is always aware of the presence of the Creator, the Living God, in his own life and in that of the whole world. Without faith in the Living God the idea of Creation boils down to the deistic image of a mechanism once set in motion by a “cosmic miracle-worker” and continuing to function on its own, without his further participation.

And so God is the Creator and Providential Ruler of the world. But can the word “creator” be applied to man, one of God's creatures? St. Athanasius of Alexandria says: “God and His Word alone are capable of creation.”⁴² This is true, of course, just as it is true that real, genuine freedom is the exclusive attribute of God. However, we have already spoken of the freedom God bestowed on man as a creature. Similarly, we can speak of a capacity for creation bestowed on



him as a creature. There is a provound, essential link between these two attributes of the human personality. The freedom of volition and the freedom of creation are two manifestations of the same freedom man enjoys as a creature. God creates man not only free, He creates him a creator.⁴³ thus allowing "His creature to share in His own work of creation"⁴⁴ This is also the patristic view. For instance, St. Cyril of Alexandria unambiguously speaks of man's capacity to create, although he stresses the difference between man's work, who creates out of pre-existing matter, and the creative work of God, Who freely calls non-existent things into being.⁴⁵ The comparison the Fathers of the Church often draw between creation of the world by God and the creative endeavour of a human producing a work of art is especially indicative. In the words of St. Basil, the world is a "work of art"⁴⁶, and this already implies a recognition of man's capacity to create. Here the Holy Fathers approach the mystery of God's creative capacity "from below", with the aid of an example from the life of creatures. Moving in the opposite direction, "downward", we can, conversely, understand the creative capacity of man by analogy with the work of the Heavenly Creator.⁴⁷

God bestows on His creatures the capacity to create. But just as man can use his freedom as a creature for evil ends, so he can use his creative capacity to contrapose himself to God. It is man's calling to communicate with God, to subordinate his will to God's. Yet, he may forfeit the Lord's fellowship by obeying his own will instead of that of the Most High. Man is called upon to be "a fellow worker and vehicle in carrying out God's plan for creation",⁴⁸ "an active collaborator in God's creative work"⁴⁹; however, he may proceed to create things that run counter to God's design, he may oppose the work of his hands to the acts of the Creator. The fruits of such creation for evil ends are especially evident today, at the close of the 20th century. People employ the most sophisticated inventions of the mind to cause damage to and destroy other people. The manufacture of arms, especially of mass destruction weapons, which by definition cannot be used exclusively for defence,⁵⁰ is the most striking instance of creation directed against God. On the other hand, it increasingly often happens that even when people create for what seem to them good ends, Nature, which they make use of, only rewards them with *thorns and thistles* (Gen. 3.18): human activity is seen to be fraught with unpredictable destructive consequences. All this is the direct result of encroachments on the primeval integrity of creation.

As we said above, the path to restoring the integrity of creation, and the salvation of man and humanity, lies through the God-Man Jesus Christ. Only through the incarnated God can man as a creature and the whole world of creatures, become deified. It is the basic tenet of Christianity that man is incapable of recovering the forfeited communion with God with his own resources. Man is saved by God, for God

Himself *so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (Jn. 3.16). Yet man cannot be saved against his will: he must respond to God's love, respond by denying himself (Mt. 16.24), repenting (Mt. 3.2.8) and following Christ (Mk. 8.34), by sharing in the all-embracing God-Man salvatory work.⁵¹ This is why people, in their creative activity, must become *labourers together with God* (1 Cor. 3.9). Then their activity will be a means of salvation and deification of the creature world.

This is the answer to the question raised at the beginning of these notes, the question concerning the nature of the link between creation by the Almighty God and creation by man. In a nutshell: man, created by God in God's image, who is responsible for the creature, must become a labourer together with God in Christ for the sake of restoring the integrity of creation and deifying the creature world. This cooperation, or "synergy", is the key to justice and peace between God and man and among humans.

Hence the need to change the general trend of human activity, to give what is now regarded as the progress of civilization and culture a new direction. Christianity emphatically opposes the boundless faith in technological progress as allegedly providing the universal means for the solution of all problems facing mankind, a faith which finds expression, in particular, in "post-industrialism". The disastrous consequences of man's activity cannot be overcome by continuing and perfecting the same kind of activity. The uncontrolled drive "forward and forward", to ever greater material well-being and power over Nature, inevitably takes man further and further away from God and hardens his opposition to Him.

As Father Pavel Florensky justly points out, "we are so accustomed to believing in culture [or progress — Yu. A.] instead of God, that to the majority it seems impossible to distinguish between the concept of culture and the cultus of our time, so that the indication that the course of culture must of necessity be changed, is equated with a call to return to the life of the troglodytes."⁵² Indeed, by urging the need to set culture and civilization onto a new course Christianity is by no means calling for a renunciation of all the material achievements of mankind. It calls for making a distinction between creative activity which is welcome to, "synergetic" with God and activity opposed to Him. The achievements of progress embodying man's active love for his fellow humans, e. g., those in the spheres of philanthropy, health and medicine, must be retained and further improved. The same applies to activities involved in winning the "daily bread" in any of its forms: food, energy, etc. What the Lord Himself asked for in His prayer cannot estrange us from our Creator. But where the satisfaction of man's vital, daily needs turns into satisfaction of his whims, we reach the line where work for evil ends begins, whatever humanitarian phrases are used as a façade. The most depressing thing about it is that we see an abundance



of the diversest consumer goods and services in some countries and poverty and starvation in others. Extravagance immoral in itself, becomes the more immoral when it rubs shoulders with destitution. Finally, the manufacture of armaments, an activity aimed at the extermination of other people, is the clearest challenge to God. Apart from this, man must remember that any achievements, even those apparently serving good ends, cannot, be welcome to God if they involve the uncontrolled destruction of God's other creatures. There is no challenging the legitimacy of technological progress, but far from allowing it to become an all-engulfing end in itself, mankind must make it submit to the demands of morality.

"Radical humanitarianism" of the Fromm type also advocates moral criteria for human activities. But there is a fundamental difference between it and the religious world-outlook. The device of the former is "Man for himself".⁵³ It urges man to realize himself without God. But the human Ego unrelated to God is devoid of all content — merely a mathematical point in space, ready to submit to the power of evil. Let us recall St. Augustine's immortal dictum: "When man lives by man, not by God (*secundum hominem, non secundum Deum*) he resembles the Devil".⁵⁴ It is Christianity's paradox and supreme truth that in order to realize himself man must deny himself for love of God and his fellow humans.

In serving people and God the Church is guided by her profound faith in the abiding validity of the Christian truths. She regards as an important part of that service her social activities, the search for ways that would enable present-day humanity attain justice, peace and ecological stability. In this work the Church makes common cause with all people of goodwill, whether believers of other denominations or atheists, and expresses her attitude, positive or negative, to specific decisions of political leaders. However, the Church is, essentially, a "different entity" from civilization, a body which is not merely human but both divine and human. She is not a political force, but a moral and religious one. We should not expect social recipes or political slogans from her. The Basle Assembly is to concern itself with topical social and political problems. One should stress on its eve once more: the most radical, most practical and concrete answer to these problems for a Christian is the one first given almost two thousand years ago and reiterated by the Church to one and all ever since: *Repent ye, and believe the gospel* (Mk. 1.15).

NOTES

¹ The corresponding German and French expressions, "Bewahrung der Schöpfung" and "sauvegarde de la création". mean, respectively, "preservation of creation" and "protection of creation". In Russian usage, the term "tselostnost tvoreniya", a loan translation of "integrity of creation", has become established. Further on we touch on the correctness of the variants of this expression in different languages and the true meaning of the "integrity" of creation.

² Daniel Bell — the U.S. scholar who coined the term "post-industrial society" (see his *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, N. Y., 1973).

³ Zbigniew Brzezinski — U.S. sociologist and politologist; from 1977 to 1981, Assistant to the U.S. President for National Security Affairs (Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technotronic Era*, N. Y., 1970).

⁴ Alvin Toffler — a U.S. sociologist very popular in the West. Visited the Soviet Union in 1986 as a participant in the Issyk-Kul international forum of philosophers, writers and journalists organized by the Soviet author Chinghiz Aitmatov (Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, N. Y., 1970).

⁵ Bell's term, "post-industrial", is the commonly accepted one. Brzezinski calls this type of society "technotronic"; and Toffler, "super-industrial".

⁶ Brzezinski's term formed by combining the words "technological" and "electronic".

⁷ A. Toffler, *Future Shock*. N. Y., 1981, pp. 188-191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-209.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-73.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹² Since the publication of the first edition, in 1970, more than 5 million copies have been sold; the book remains an international bestseller.

¹³ For a detailed analysis of the SDI ideology and practice see the collection, *Kosmicheskoe oruzhie: Dilemma bezopasnosti* (Space Weapons: A Security Dilemma). Edited by E. Velikhov et al. Moscow, Mir Publishers, 1986.

¹⁴ Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*. N. Y., 1955.

¹⁵ Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope*. N. Y., 1968.

¹⁶ Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be*. Toronto, 1981.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. XXVIII.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. XV-XVI.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XXXI.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ We do not touch the teaching of modern Marxism here. It has points of similarity with both described tendencies. However, it is increasingly guided by moral criteria, as is shown by the Soviet philosophy of home and foreign policy, expressed in the "new political thinking". This is also evident in the works of I. Frolov, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences and President of the USSR Philosophical Society. See his books, *Progress nauki i budushchee chelovechestva* (The Progress of Science and the Future of Mankind), Moscow, 1975, and *Perspektivy cheloveka* (Man's Prospects), Moscow, 1979.

²⁶ It is not the author's task to deal with the Orthodox teaching on creation in all its aspects. This cannot be done within the limits of one article. The fundamentals of the Orthodox patristic teaching on the subject are brilliantly set forth in the writings of V. Lossky (see the relevant sections in his works "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church" and "Dogmatic Theology", both in the collection *Theological Studies*, No. 8, Moscow 1972, pp. 50-72 and 144-163, and in Father George Florovsky's article "Creation and Creaturehood" in his book *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont (Mass.), 1976. The present author sees his task in answering the questions posed at the beginning of this article. He takes as his guide the teaching of the Orthodox Church as formulated in the writings of the Church Fathers and distinguished Russian Orthodox theologians and thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

²⁷ *Theological Studies*, No. 8. Moscow, 1972, p. 50.

²⁸ George Florovsky, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁹ *Patrologie cursus completus*. Accur. J.-P. Migne. Ser. Graeca. P., 1858, t. 36, col. 661.

³⁰ *PG*, t. 60, col. 530.

³¹ Highly indicative in this respect is E. Trubetskoy's account of the feelings he experienced watching, in a film, beetles devouring other beetles (see E. Trubetskoi, *Umozrenie v kraskakh: Tri ocherka*



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o russkoi ikone [Speculation in Colours: Three Essays on the Russian Icon.] Paris, 1965, p. 9.

³² *PG*, t. 29, col. 76.

³³ *PG*, t. 3, col. 693.

³⁴ *Theological Studies*, No. 8, 1972, Moscow, p. 161.

³⁵ This is why we cannot agree with the construction the Roman Catholic theologian P. Smulders puts on the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* (2 Macc. 7. 28). In his view, it means, essentially, that the world contains "nothing that does not depend on God's action; all goes back to Him" (see: P. Smulders, H. Gross, A. Darlap.— In: *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopaedia of Theology*. Ed. by K. Rahner. S. J. et al. London, 1968. Vol. 2. p. 24). The fact is, however, that the world does contain something not created by God, not traceable to Him: namely, evil. God did not create evil. He does not want it, but He permits its existence in the world for the purpose of His Economy. For the true meaning of the *creatio ex nihilo* see: V. Lossky "The Mystical Theology...", p. 51; E. Trubetskoi. *Smysl zhizni* (The Meaning of Life), Moscow, 1918. pp. 105-106.

³⁶ A diametrically opposite idea deriving from the same notion is that of "protecting the creation" (see Note 1). One can and must "protect" and "guard" concrete creatures made by God, such as plants and animals, but not the created world as such. The creation as the integral result of the Almighty God's act of creation does not need our protection.

³⁷ S. Franc. *Realnost i chelovek: Metafizika chelovecheskogo bytiya* (Reality and Man: The Metaphysics of Man's Being). Paris, 1956, p. 394.

³⁸ *PL*, t. 34, col. 304.

³⁹ *PG*, t. 32, col. 264.

⁴⁰ *PG*, t. 61, col. 712.

⁴¹ *PG*, t. 45, col. 302.

⁴² *PG*, t. 26, col. 204.

⁴³ E. Trubetskoi. *Smysl zhizni*, p. 123; S. Franc. *Op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁴⁴ S. Franc. *Op. cit.*, pp. 290-291.

⁴⁵ *PG*, t. 77, col. 1133.

⁴⁶ *PG*, t. 29, col. 17.

⁴⁷ Cf. Archpriest Sergiy Bulgakov. *Nevesta Agntsa* (The Bride of the Lamb). Paris, 1945, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁸ E. Trubetskoi. *Smysl zhizni*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ S. Franc. *Op. cit.*, p. 291.

⁵⁰ "Message of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on War and Peace in a Nuclear Age", 2, 16-20.— *JMP*, 1986, No. 6, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ The idea of God-manhood strongly appeals to Russian religious thought. Beginning with Vladimir Solovyev's *Chtenia o Bogochelovechestve* (Talks on God-manhood) (V. Solovyev, Collected Works, Brussels, 1966, Vol. 3, pp. 3-185), many Russian theologians and thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries discussed the subject in their writings.

⁵² Father Pavel Florensky. "Christianity and Culture".— *JMP*, 1983, No. 4, pp. 57-60; No 5, pp. 68-73.

⁵³ *Man for Himself* is the title of a book by Erich Fromm (1947).

⁵⁴ *PL*, t. 41, col. 409.

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