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ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF PERFECTION IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

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Studies of the image of a perfect person in Orthodox theology developed within the framework of the Christological doctrine about Jesus Christ, the connection between divine and human nature, the incarnation, the Resurrection, and the resolutions of the Ecumenical Councils. Their decisions determined the key aspects of the transformation of the doctrine of man. The Orthodox teaching of man must be considered as an organic, inseparable connection with soteriology, pneumatology and anthropology, since the religious and church life of the Orthodox Church finds its embodiment in the spiritual sphere of the life of society. Revealing the image of a perfect person in Orthodox teaching in general and understanding the nature of Jesus Christ in particular, will make it possible to reveal the originality of the teaching about man in its connection with the tradition of the early Christian Church. The anthropological system of beliefs in Orthodoxy and the views of individual theologians of the East were formed in different socio-historical conditions and cultural-linguistic traditions, leading to the use of different terms and concepts, the meaning of which was nullified. This is especially evident in the process of analysis of the texts of the patristic literature, imbued with metaphoricality and, accordingly, excellent content. The purpose of the article is to analyze the image of a perfect person in Orthodox teaching. Understanding the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, as well as the analysis of philosophical and religious studies devoted to general and specific questions of anthropology, requires the involvement of scientific works on church history and religious philosophy. It is methodologically balanced to turn to the period of formation of triadological and Christological teachings, aimed at overcoming religious movements, which undermined the basis of the Christian faith with their doctrines. Therefore, the coverage of various aspects of anthropological problems by theologians, primarily of the Orthodox East, became quite obvious. Interest in the complex issue of the image of a perfect person is due to the transformation of anthropological teaching within the boundaries of Orthodox theological thought.

Key words: *philosophy of religion, anthropology, church, Orthodoxy, religious cult, soteriology, pneumatology, Christology, spirituality, identity.*

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АНТРОПОЛОГІЧНИЙ ВИМІР ДОСКОНАЛОСТІ У ПРАВОСЛАВНІЙ ТЕОЛОГІЇ

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Дослідження образу досконалої людини у православному богослов'ї розвивалися в межах христологічної доктрини про Ісуса Христа, зв'язку божественної та людської природи, втілення, Воскресінні та постановках Вселенських соборів. Їх рішення визначили ключові аспекти трансформації вчення про людину. Православне вчення про людину необхідно розглядати як органічний, нерозривний зв'язок із сотеріологією, пневматологією та антропологією, оскільки релігійне та церковне життя Православної Церкви знаходить своє втілення у духовній сфері життя суспільства. Розкриття образу досконалої людини у православному вченні загалом та розуміння природи Ісуса Христа зокрема, дасть можливість виявити оригінальність вчення про людину у її зв'язку з традицією ранньохристиянської Церкви. Антропологічна система віровчення у православ'ї та погляди окремих богословів Сходу формувалося у неоднакових соціально-історичних умовах та культурно-релігійних традиціях, зумовлюючи використання різних термінів і понять, значення яких нівельувалося. Особливо відчутно це проявляється у процесі аналізу текстів святоотцівської літератури, просякнута метафоричністю й відповідно відмінним змістовним наповненням. Метою статті є аналіз образу досконалої людини у православному вченні. Осмислення догматів православної віри, а також аналіз досліджень філософсько-релігійного характеру, присвячених загальним і конкретним питанням антропології, потребує залучення наукових праць з церковної історії та релігійної філософії. Методологічно виваженим є звернення до періоду формування тріадологічних і христологічних вчень, спрямованих на подолання релігійних рухів, які своїми доктринами підривали основу християнської віри. Тому цілком очевидним стало висвітлення різних аспектів антропологічної проблематики богословами, насамперед православного Сходу. Інтерес до складного питання образу досконалої людини зумовлюється трансформацією антропологічного вчення у межах православної богословської думки.

Ключові слова: філософія релігії, антропологія, церква, православ'я, релігійний культ, сотеріологія, пневматологія, христологія, духовність, ідентичність.

Formulation of the problem.

Orthodox anthropology was formed on the basis of the Christological doctrine of Jesus Christ, the connection between divine and human nature, the incarnation, the Resurrection, and the resolutions of the Ecumenical Councils. The decisions of the councils determined the key aspects of the transformation of the doctrine of man. Orthodox teaching about Christ in general and about man in particular must be considered as an organic, inseparable connection with soteriology, pneumatology and anthropology. However, it is a difficult task to carry out an in-depth analysis of the various aspects of Orthodox anthropology within the scope of one study. Considering the close connection between the religious and church life of the Orthodox Church, which is manifested in the liturgy, philosophical

and religious heritage and finds its embodiment in the spiritual sphere of society, these dimensions should not be ignored. Therefore, revealing the image of a perfect person in Orthodox teaching in general and understanding the nature of Jesus Christ in particular, will give an opportunity to reveal the originality of the teaching about man in its connection with the tradition of the early Christian Church.

Considering the anthropological system of beliefs in Orthodoxy and the views of individual theologians, we note that Eastern theology was formed in different socio-historical conditions and cultural-linguistic traditions, leading to the use of various terms and concepts, the meaning of which was nullified. This is especially evident in the process of analysis of the texts of the patristic literature, imbued with metaphoricality

and, accordingly, excellent content. The evolution of anthropological ideas within the Orthodox theological thought was considered by church leaders and theologians in I. Zizioulas and H. Yannaras. Religious anthropology is studied by Ukrainian religious scholars A. Kolodny, M. Babii, K. Vergeles, T. Havrylyuk, V. Yelensky, P. Yarotsky, L. Filipovych and others. A thorough analysis of the anthropological dimensions of Orthodoxy in the context of the relationship with Christology was carried out by theologians K. Uare, O. Kleman, D. Stanuloa and I. Vlahos.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the image of a perfect person in Orthodox teaching.

Research methods. Understanding the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, as well as the analysis of philosophical and religious studies devoted to general and specific questions of anthropology, requires the involvement of scientific works on church history and religious philosophy. It is methodologically balanced to turn to the period of formation of triadological and Christological teachings aimed at overcoming religious movements, which undermined the basis of the Christian faith with their doctrines. Therefore, the coverage of various aspects of anthropological problems by theologians, primarily of the Orthodox East, became quite obvious. We draw your attention to the fact that the interest in the complex issue of the image of a perfect person is due to the transformation of anthropological teaching within the boundaries of Orthodox theological thought.

Discussion and results. Orthodox theology interprets man through the prism of dynamic reality, which in the process of his formation determines his attitude to God. He was created in the image of God and must achieve His likeness through the spiritual experience that a person acquires in being together with God. This process determines the acquisition of self-sufficiency, which ensures a person's ability to fully develop, release and use his internal

potential, and its optimal use for successful adaptation and productive life. A constant presence in God's communion, as an internal need of the individual, contributes to the formation of love and freedom, which involves its liberation from negative thoughts and sinfulness through the existential state of theosis (deification), which will be a manifestation of its perfection.

Therefore, Orthodox anthropology forms the image of a perfect person who ceases to be a natural being and rises to the reality of his existence. Christ restores the lost unity of God and man. The human and divine natures of Christ determine the dual nature of man, which allows one to know God and communicate with Him [1: 33–34]. The changes that a person experiences in life through the creation of his own world as a creative being occur under the influence of Christological teachings. The union of divine and human nature in Christ leads to a change in the state of the human being through the acquisition of a real possibility of deification and ontological renewal of the entire psychophysical and spiritual state of man [2: 55]. He breaks out of the imaginary circle of "birth-death", frees herself from the pressure of civilization, ceases to be renounced, since God himself became a man. A person is given the opportunity to be involved in becoming. Christ restores in Himself the lost unity of man and God, which opens the possibility of knowing God to man, and the instrument of this cognitive process becomes the "heart", the inner world of man.

The introduction of the wording "two beings, one hypostasis" allows Orthodox anthropology to assert that there is no change in the Godhead during the incarnation, and beings have communication through this complex hypostasis. In order to avoid misinterpretation of the relationship between the natures of Jesus Christ in the Chalcedonian Oros, the following wording is used: "... the two natures are inextricably, unchangeably, attached, inseparable..." [3: 93]. In essence, all

these four definitions (inseparable, immutable, unmerged, unchanging) apophatically outline the mystery of the Incarnation, forbidding to imagine how it could have happened. On the one hand, the wording "unmixed, unchanging" indicates the mixing of two natures into one, the immutability of the Deity in the flesh. On the other hand, "inseparable, integral" denies the separation of natures in Christ, as well as the temporality of this connection. For anthropology, the term "indissoluble" is a guarantee of the preservation of a person's personality in connection with the divine. "Unchangeable" defines the preservation of the human nature, which does not change or disappear, just as the divine nature remains unchanged.

The next aspect of the Orthodox teaching about Jesus Christ is the dogma of his sinlessness, since sin is not a property of human nature as such, but is only a distortion of this nature. He is free from any desire or intention to sin, free from any inward temptation. The non-autonomous existence of the human being should be pointed out as a justification for such an opinion. In this regard, the naming of Christ as the New Adam is characteristic, since He fulfills what the old Adam did not fulfill [4: 214–215]. Christ accepts the human nature in its fullness, fully and naturally accepts the male gender in its perfection. Justifying the reality of the Son of God's adoption of human nature, denying the pretense of incarnation, Orthodox thinkers prove the possession of Christ by human will.

The problem of free will in Christ was raised by Gregory Nazianzen in the framework of the Trinitarian controversies, but the final formulation of the Orthodox view on this problem belongs to Saint Maximus the Confessor. He claims that "actions" and "wills" are related to the two natures of Christ, and not to one Hypostasis [5: 458]. The presence of two different freedoms does not inevitably mean that they are divergent. In this union of the human will with the divine, the union of all created being took place in Christ. In

Him, a person combines the material world and the spiritual world, breaks out of existence into eternity. Thus, combining one's will with the will of God, a person joins the divine presence, acquires a harmonious relationship with God and eternity. The Theologian distinguishes between "natural will" and "gnomic will". The first will, in his opinion, is inseparable from human nature, is its essential expression. The second will is related to the way of life of a person, its sphere is our daily life – vicious or virtuous. That is why Maximus the Confessor attributes the right to choose between good and evil to the "gnomic will", which is an integral part of the human personality. In the original nature of people, no acts of free will were observed. However, as a result of the fall, when a person showed a desire to know good and evil, he was endowed with a "gnomic will", which leads to the distortion of natural drives, the result of which is self-destruction [6: 307]. A person's choice between good and evil is evidence of belonging to evil, which leads to the loss of attraction to God, and, therefore, the inner freedom of the essence. Christ has no "gnomic will", He accepted the "natural will", which is organic to human nature.

One of the fundamental provisions of Orthodox anthropology is the need for a person to renounce his will in order to imitate Christ. In the light of Maximus the Confessor's teaching about the gnomic will, it becomes obvious that it is not necessary to abandon the natural will, but its distorted version. If the Orthodox teaching defined only one Divine action in Christ, then it confessed Him only as God, who does not have a human being. Conversely, if Christ had only a human action, then He was recognized as only a man. The denial of His divine and human action led to the denial of His essence. By singling out only one action, it is necessary to prove whether it was created or not. If it is created, then this leads to the recognition of one entity in Christ, if, on the contrary, it is a sign of one uncreated entity. Thus, an understanding is formed

that action is identical with being, their separation leads to the impossibility of existing and being known. Based on these considerations, the denial or non-recognition of human will in Christ denied the possibility of redemption. It should be emphasized the interdependence of various aspects of Orthodox teaching, without which it would be impossible to reveal Christology, soteriology and anthropology in the dimensions of this church [7: 495–496]. Thus, Christology is the goal, and its end result is anthropology. The nature of man, which desires perfection, acts as a means in relation to Christology. As much as the goal determines the means, so Christology determines anthropology, forming the image of a perfect person, which is defined by the presence of all-encompassing love, assimilation to the divine image, communion with God through the contemplation of uncreated light, spiritual virtue and sinlessness.

The Orthodox concept of "man as the image and likeness of God" reveals the peculiarities of the doctrine of man as a divine image. In general, Orthodox theology is characterized by a thorough and thoughtful attitude towards man. There is a clear awareness of the complexity and multidimensionality of the human phenomenon. At the same time, its nature is recognized as incapable of transformation into both a lower (material) and a higher (spiritual) one. Such a natural feature does not prevent a person's ability to change and become God by grace or a lower essence due to its loss. The basis for such an understanding of human nature is the definition of a person as a vessel, leading to the fixation of the fundamental property of the human soul – an abyss filled with emptiness. This feeling does not give peace and needs to be filled. Due to its bottomlessness, it cannot be filled with finite things and phenomena, it seeks absolute infinity, which is defined by excessive fullness. This inexhaustibility of the human soul with created objects makes it difficult to understand.

Yes, many Orthodox ascetics see the soul with spiritual vision. The subject of contemplation interprets such an insight not as an exit to another (transcendent) reality, but as acquiring the ability to see the surrounding world in all its fullness of divine ideas (logos). Despite the contrast between the spiritual and material worlds, a person belongs to them. Both worlds are immanent to her, therefore, according to the divine design, contemplation of the spiritual world is more natural than its denial. That is why the creation of man is significantly different from the creation of the rest of the world. First, the human body is created, which receives life. Between the creation of man and woman there is a temporal gap. Only after the creation of man does God find the world perfect.

The nature of man is twofold – he stands on the border of two worlds: material and spiritual. Man is created in the image and likeness of God. The image of God in thought, mind, is the very essence of the human soul. Similarity – what is received from the Holy Spirit is the properties of the soul [8: 456–457]. Man is created free, reason and freedom are interconnected, because without freedom reason becomes senseless, as well as freedom without reason. Freedom in Orthodoxy is considered in two aspects: as the ability to act in accordance with one's nature and as the ability to choose the implementation of the will. Thus, by committing evil, a person loses his freedom and becomes dependent on it. In the light of the Orthodox understanding of freedom, arbitrariness can most appropriately be called the manipulation of consciousness.

As a result of the successful manipulation of the consciousness of the primitive man (the Fall), man loses his godlikeness (holiness), and the image of God in him is obscured, and the internal hierarchy of the parts of the human being is disturbed. The evil that is not natural to a person is combined in it with the good that is natural to a person. From the state of natural existence, a person passes to the unnatural. The loss

of paradise is accompanied by changes in the human body – the acquisition of flesh. In this context, Orthodox anthropology distinguishes the body from the flesh. The human body is a material shell, the "temple of the soul", it inherits eternity and is a collaborator of the spirit. Thus, the body is not the source of sin, on the contrary, sin arises due to the wrong attitude towards the body. Man is called to know God, to be a friend of God, to share His bliss. The goal of Christian life is assimilation to God to the extent of human existence.

Theosis, which is the achievement of perfection for man, is man's vocation. Theosis is the coexistence of human personalities and the Personalities of God. This possibility of communion with God is returned to man by incarnation. The lost integrity of a person is being restored, but he still has to learn how to properly behave with his renewed being. Human nature has been renewed, but each individual still has to make a choice – to go towards perfection or nothingness, to master himself. From the point of view of Orthodox soteriology, in order to acquire the ability to improve an individual, baptism and churchization are necessary [9: 374].

From the point of view of Orthodox anthropology, perfection cannot be achieved solely by human efforts – it is a divine gift. A person can only wish to receive it and prove the sincerity and seriousness of his intention. The process of achieving perfection (theosis) is a mutually directed striving of man towards God and vice versa.

The spiritual work of a person on his way to perfection has two directions (ways of life): monasticism and life in the world (closely connected with family and marriage). These directions have a lot in common, they organically merge in the church, creating a hierarchy of ethical, ontological and epistemological orders. Monasticism is man's aspiration to the ideal of perfection and restoration of the lost godlikeness.

Marriage can be defined as a metaphysical union of two personalities in one nature. Monkhood in relation to

married life is a higher step, which indicates higher requirements for a person and opens up wide opportunities. Within the monastic way of life itself, there are various stages of approaching the ideal of assimilation to Christ. According to many Orthodox ascetics, the spiritual path in general and the monastic path in particular is a path of gradual and continuous ascent to spiritual self-improvement. However, worldly life is natural for man, monasticism, on the other hand, is supernatural. Because of the exclusivity of this way of life, it requires much greater concentration, seclusion, greater attention to the inner life, greater moderation, prudence, masterful leadership. A layman lives a less stressful life, nevertheless, the principles of his organization are also quite strict, the difference is only in the tension of efforts and approach to perfection.

The basis of a believer's spiritual practice is prayer. From the point of view of Orthodoxy, it should be sober, which involves understanding with the mind what the heart feels and what happens in the inner life of a person. This sobriety involves straining all mental forces in order to protect the heart from thoughts that will distract a person from this process [10]. This approach avoids the sacralization of natural experiences and feelings. Grace is objectively independent of human expectations, while sacralization is subjectively caused by human effort. Hence the warning not to get carried away, not to pay attention to mental urges and sensations.

A necessary condition for spiritual action is "repentance" as a special reflection consisting of several stages. It involves focusing on one's inner world, recording all movements, feelings, desires, thoughts, moods that arise. Such a fixation takes into account a certain period of time between the urge to act and the act itself, which allows it to be evaluated from the standpoint of goodness. The next stage involves the alienation of negative or assimilation followed by the implementation of positive impulses. The peculiarity of

repentance is constancy and the special mood that accompanies it. Alienation (the negative side of repentance) involves assimilation (the positive side), which forms obedience and submission. Discovering in the process of self-reflection the inconsistency of the model, the individual feels negative emotions about his worthlessness. On the other hand, an individual's experience of the revelation of God as infinite Love and Mercy causes positive emotions regarding the real possibility of acquiring integrity and perfection [11: 123].

Orthodox spiritual experience is necessarily inherited. The life of the church is built on the basis of transmission – oral stories, traditions, church etiquette, ceremony, written works of the fathers and teachers of the Church. The most important aspect of transmission is the implementation of the sacrament of the Eucharist – the heart of the life of the Church. Transmission also acts as a sacrament of leadership. The centuries-old experience of Orthodox asceticism shows that without guidance it is impossible not only to achieve perfection, but also to obtain salvation in general.

The relationship between the confessor and the ward (child) is intimate and individual. The peculiarity of any person determines an individual approach, requires an understanding of his personal path, degree of maturity, awareness of opportunities and limits [12: 137–138]. The Orthodox practice of spiritual action is characterized by the instruction to follow the middle path, which involves cutting off extremes. Any extreme is passion, virtue between extremes is the golden mean. Passion cannot quell an unbridled feeling in its manifestation, just as shameful deeds cannot destroy evil, so it is necessary to reject both extremes.

Since human nature is dual, spiritual practice involves caring for both the soul and the body. There are a number of physical feats, the purpose of which is to restore the hierarchy of human forces and human integrity. Bodily feats are only means of transforming the whole

person. They are considered as the first, but necessary steps on a person's path to perfection.

All these features of the Orthodox practice of spiritual action (sobriety, humility, prudence, spiritual guidance, continuity of experience, repentance and bodily feats) retain their relevance on the individual's path to perfection. At first, they can be perceived as strict limitations of human freedom and bright passions of his soul. After some time, a person is convinced by his own experience that it is these means that allow him to gain true freedom, harmonize his inner world and relationships with other people. What at first requires effort, as a result of self-compulsion, later acquires the character of an inner need, brings joy and comfort and becomes valuable. Such a change occurs due to the fact that the individual understands the effectiveness of these means in achieving the desired goal. It is in the rejection of his old self that a person finds himself in the taming of being and receives the supernatural.

Spiritual work, which at first seems like a strict occupation, later shows the beauty and secrets of divine creation, opens the joy of communion with God and communication with people in God, frees for knowledge and creativity, prepares for theosis all those who decide to accept the gift of divine love.

Conclusions. The conducted analysis of theological and scientific sources and literature gives reason to assert that a proper religious study of the phenomenon of human perfection has not been conducted. The disclosure of this issue presupposes the observance of important postulates: a person's achievement of perfection is one of the most important aspects of his existence from the point of view of the relationship between man and God; multidimensionality of the phenomenon of perfection; the relationship of human and divine perfection, the source of which is God; human perfection cannot reach the divine degree of perfection; denial of the idea of human perfection as a divine creation and bearer of His image

loses its meaning; full disclosure of divine perfection in man is the figure of Jesus Christ; the concept of the image and likeness of God in man is the basis on

which the concept of human perfection is built; the practice of spiritual work and asceticism is a method of achieving human perfection.

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