

Christian Anthropology and the relation with Positive Psychology and Human Flourishing in the 21st Century through the Orthodox Christian Teaching¹

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Creation, including humankind, is a gift of God, expressing his love and revealing the divine intention. In creation, God brings into existence human beings with the freedom to love both God and their fellow creatures (Rom 1:20). Human beings are created according to the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26–27). The fact of human being created in the image of God means that humanity, right from the moment of creation, was endowed with a royal character. God is love and source of love: the divine Creator has drawn this feature on human faces too. Man struggles for his eudaimonia. Christian tries to obtain eudaimonia through the orders of God and the unity with Him. Man has been dealing with the human flourishing since the creation of societies and the progress of culture. This human flourishing is connected with the two-fold of human nature, body and soul. For Christian, the ability to reflect God can be traced in all aspects of human life. Thus the image is what is given at the outset, conferred on all of us as persons, whereas the likeness is attained through our free cooperation (synergeia) with grace. In the 21st century Christians have to face up the combination of Christian Anthropology, Positive

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Psychology and Human Flourishing and they should not be trapped in the jail of modernity which connects Positive Psychology and Human Flourishing with only materialistic goods.

Key Words: Christian anthropology, positive psychology, human flourishing, eudaimonia, image and likeness of God, creation, humankind.

1. Introduction

The word “anthropology” comes from two Greek words, *ánthrōpos*, which has the general meaning for man or human being, and *lógia*, which infers study or science. In its most basic meaning, anthropology means the branch of science, which studies humankind. Christian Anthropology deals with who we are and how we relate to God. Whether people are inherently good or inherently sinful is crucial in determining how our relationship with God can be restored. Whether the souls of human beings carry on after death determines in large part our view of our purpose in this world. Christian Anthropology helps us to understand ourselves from God’s perspective. When we delve into this subject, we get a clearer understanding of our fallen nature, and this leads to a sense of wonder at the love of the Savior who saw our helpless state and went to the cross to redeem us. When we accept that sacrifice and receive it as our own, our natures are transformed by God who creates in us a completely new person². It is this new person who can relate to Him as we should, as His adored children. A key verse on Christian Anthropology is the Psalm: “*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well*”³.

Today many Christian scholars try to show that Christian anthropology is the basis of a positive psychology and human flourishing, giving them the right parameters within which man and especially the Christian must move. Gable and Haidt give the meaning of the positive psychology: “*Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions*”⁴ and in this meaning we will add the opinion of Murphy who points out how important is the Christian anthropology – theology to be the pillar of human flourishing related to psychology: “*I claim*

² 2 Cor. 5:17

³ Psalm 139:14.

⁴ S. L. Gable, & Haidt, J. (2005). “What (and why) is positive psychology?” Review of General Psychology, 9, 104.

that Christian theology is properly the source of concepts of human flourishing that should inform the hard core of any research program in psychology"⁵.

In light of the strong and rich tradition of Bible, we can find out that the Bible has much to say about human flourishing and positive psychology. Also in the patristic theology, there are many references that connect God with the Human Anthropology, Positive Psychology and as result of these, there is the human flourishing. So human flourishing is in fact a key biblical theme woven through the whole canon, one which, when recognized, explains and enhances some foundational aspects of the Bible's testimony, including the very nature and goal of God's redemption for us in Christ, who, after all, promises us eternal and abundant life⁶. That is, the Bible, across its whole Christian canon of both Old and New Testaments, is providing its own God-of-Israel-revealed-in-Jesus-Christ answer to the foundational human question of how to flourish and thrive⁷.

To sum up Christian theology promotes human flourishing by identifying human beings as connected with God, others and the created world; by seeing people as holistic beings; by positing an external goal for human flourishing; and helping to explain how suffering and flourishing are not necessarily incongruent.

2. Christian anthropology based on Bible and patristic theology

the Christian view of man is understood in terms of the Old and New Testament and the Church Fathers. The creation of man is a special act of God within His creation. Man is the highest point, the summit and crown of creation. Christ Himself is the purpose of creation, but man, being in the image of God, is also the purpose of creation. Creation is for us. Man is a king and so his kingdom was being prepared for him⁸. Gregory of Nyssa talks about all of creation being adorned with its beauty and being prepared for man. The land is full of its animals

⁵ Murphy, N. (2005), "Philosophical resources for integration" In A. Dueck & C. Lee (eds), *Why psychology needs theology: A radical-reformation perspective*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 25.

⁶ *Chr. Terezis*, *Orthodox Christian vision on human being and human education*, Patras 2018, p. 3-4.

⁷ *Hugh Whelchel*, "Four Defining Characteristics of Biblical Flourishing", 2014, <https://tifwe.org/four-defining-characteristics-biblical-flourishing/> [accessed 15 October 2018]

⁸ Gen 2:4-3:24

and plants; the earth is full of produce; the Trees are fruitful; there are mountains and hills and everything that makes nature beautiful; birds are singing and rejoicing and all of nature is full and alive. But no one was there yet to share it. The animals were there and they have a higher life than the plants, but they don't have the rationality that we do to enjoy nature as we can. All was created but man was necessary to fulfill it. The kingdom has been prepared⁹.

In Bible we can find in many passages that man is the result of God's creation. In the first chapter of Genesis alone the fact of man's creation is stated repeatedly,

*"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'"*¹⁰.

Although man was formed from the dust of the ground, God personally 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being'¹¹. Man's life is thus not the result of spontaneous reorganization of molecules within his body, nor is it derived by evolution from any animal or 'lower hominid', as theistic evolutionists teach¹², but is a direct gift from God. This is further emphasized in the Bible by Luke's genealogy of Adam, where he designates Adam as being not the son of an anthropoid ape¹³, but 'the son of God'¹⁴.

The human race was created in the image of God and more particularly in the image of Christ. This teaching was to be found in St Paul's epistle to the Corinthians: "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man"¹⁵. So, the man was created as the image of God. This refers to the immaterial part of humanity. It sets human beings apart from the animal world, fits them for the dominion God intended them to have over the earth¹⁶, and enables them to commune with their Maker. So man was not cre-

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* I, 5.

¹⁰ Gen. 1:26-27 (New King James Version).

¹¹ Gen. 2:7 (New King James Version).

¹² Wayne D. Rossiter, *Shadow of Oz: Theistic Evolution and the Absent God*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene 2015, p. 62-85.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Luk. 3:38

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 15:49 (New King James Version). Philip Kariatlis, "The Importance of the Eastern Doctrine of Deification of the Theology of Grace", <https://www.sagotc.edu.au/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Binder12.pdf>, p. 100

¹⁶ Gen. 1:28

ated simply by the imperative Word of the Triune God, but by His own hands. The primal formation of man is called creation rather than birth, because creation was made by the hands of God, while birth is a successive process¹⁷. From all creation only man is the one who was made by the hands of God. According to other parts of Bible, the “*image of God*” does not mean that man was created to look like God because God is a spirit¹⁸. However, man is in the image of God in the sense that he was created as God’s representative to rule and exercise dominion over all the earth and its creatures.

Man is the image of God mentally, morally, and socially. For the phrase after His image clearly refers to the side of his nature which consists of mind and free will, whereas after His likeness means likeness in virtue so far as that is possible¹⁹. The image of God included intellect and rational ability such as to exercise dominion and carry out responsibilities²⁰. This is evident with respect to man’s ability to understand and interpret God’s revelation from His Word²¹.

Further, body and soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other. The simultaneous creation of body and souls in the creation of man must be emphasized²². Gregory of Nyssa underlines:

“But as man is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of his existence is one, common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the other were a later addition; but we are to say that in the power of God’s foreknowledge, all the fullness of human nature had pre-existence, and in the creation of individuals not to place the one element before the other, neither the soul before the body, nor the contrary, that man may not be at strife against himself, by being divided by the difference in point of time. For as our nature is conceived as twofold, according to the apostolic teaching, made up of the visible man and the hidden man, if the one came first and the other supervened, the power of Him that made us will be shown to be in some way imperfect, as not being completely sufficient for the whole task at once, but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn”²³.

¹⁷ John Damascene, *En Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 12.

¹⁸ Jn 4:24.

¹⁹ John Damascene, *En Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 12.

²⁰ Gen 2:15, 19-20.

²¹ 2Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17.

²² John Damascene, *En Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 12.

²³ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the making of man*, XXIX, 1-2, Transl. by H.A. Wilson, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, Vol. 5, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Buffalo, NY:

Also, Gregory Nazianzen supports that man is a ‘double being’²⁴, the one who consists of two different and opposite elements, body and soul²⁵, or spirit and flesh²⁶. By his soul man is an image of God, whereas by his body he is blended with the mud of the visible earth²⁷. Most of Church fathers’ attitude to the body is dual: it is both friend and enemy, friend as a companion of the soul, enemy as an obstacle in ascetical struggle²⁸. The soul, on the contrary, is highly estimated by church fathers: it has divine origin, being a breath of God²⁹, a part of God³⁰, ‘a piece broken off the invisible deity’³¹. The same things were taught by many other church fathers. We will refer two characteristic fathers, John Damascene and John Chrysostom. The first agrees that the man was created with soul and body³². So the man is bond between spiritual and material word. The same teaching was supported by the latter³³, some centuries before.

Not only the dichotomy of man is referred by church fathers, but also they speak about trichotomy. Ireneaus of Lyon describes human nature as threefold: consisting of spirit, soul and body:

“the complete man is composed-flesh, soul, and spirit. One of these does indeed preserve and fashion [the man]-this is the spirit; while as to another it is united and formed-that is the flesh; then [comes] that which is between these two-that is the soul, which sometimes indeed, when it follows the spirit, is

Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893, rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm>.

²⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, The Oration on Holy Baptism, Discourse XL.8.1

²⁵ *Idem*, In Defence of His Flight to Pontus, and His Return, After His Ordination to the Priesthood, with an Exposition of the Character of the Priestly Office, Discourse II, 17. 15; 18. 12; *Idem*, On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ, Discourse XXXVIII, 11, 10–12.

²⁶ *Idem*, On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ, Discourse XXXVIII, 11. 19–20.

²⁷ *Idem*, On the Love of the Poor, Discourse 14, 6–7.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Gregory Nazianzen, Poem Dogmatic 8,1.; *Idem*, On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ, Discourse XXXVIII, 11, 11–12.

³⁰ *Idem*, On the Love of the Poor, Discourse 14, 7.

³¹ *Idem*, Poem Dogmatic 8, 73. Hilarion Alfeyev, “St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition”, Oxford Scholarship Online, (2011), DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198270096.003.0009, p. 3 (1–20)

³² John Damascene, En Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, II, 12: “He creates with His own hands man of a visible nature and an invisible, after His own image and likeness: on the one hand man’s body He formed of earth, and on the other his reasoning and thinking soul He bestowed upon him by His own inbreathing, and this is what we mean by after His image. For the phrase after His image clearly refers to the side of his nature which consists of mind and free will, whereas after His likeness means likeness in virtue so far as that is possible. Further, body and soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposes”.

³³ John Chrysostom, On the obscurity of the Prophecies II, 5, PG 56, 182.

*raised up by it, but sometimes it sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts. Those then, as many as they be, who have not that which saves and forms [us] into life [eternal], shall be, and shall be called, [mere] flesh and blood; for these are they who have not the Spirit of God in themselves*³⁴.

Here, we should explain that from one side, the terms “soul” and “spirit” are interchangeable in the Scriptures³⁵. The body and the soul-spirit make up the unity of the “living soul” in life and in death³⁶. Finally, God’s ultimate goal is for every believer to be in the likeness of Christ, who Himself is not only God, but the perfect “image of the invisible God”³⁷. But there are some biblical passages that separate the soul and spirit: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart”³⁸.

Gregory of Nyssa teaches the trichotomy of human nature, body, soul, spirit. He distinguishes soul and spirit based on ethical meaning of these two words. If a person remains attached in the materialistic world, he is *psychikos* and *sarkikos*-carnal. If he deals only with the spiritual things and how to be united with God, he is a spiritual person. So Gregory of Nyssa follows the teaching of the Apostle Paul and says:

*“so that man consists of these three: as we are taught the like thing by the apostle in what he says to the Ephesians, praying for them that the complete grace of their body and soul and spirit may be preserved at the coming of the Lord; using, the word body for the nutritive part, and denoting the sensitive by the word soul, and the intellectual by spirit. Likewise too the Lord instructs the scribe in the Gospel that he should set before every commandment that love to God which is exercised with all the heart and soul and mind: for here also it seems to me that the phrase indicates the same difference, naming the more corporeal existence heart, the intermediate soul, and the higher nature, the intellectual and mental faculty, mind”*³⁹.

³⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, V, 9.1, transl. Roberts–Donaldson, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html>

³⁵ Jn 12:27-29; Jn 13:21; Mt 11:29-31; 2Co 2:13.

³⁶ Gen 2:7; Mt 10:28.

³⁷ Col 1:15; Ep. 4:24

³⁸ He 4:12. (New King James Version).

³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the making of man*, VIII, 5, transl. by H.A. Wilson, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 5*. Ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893. revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm>.

The same idea about the trichotomy of man's nature is presented a century later by Cyril of Alexandria and Isidore of Pelusium⁴⁰. Of course, we should explain that it is thought that the spirit is not the "*idion*" part of human nature, but it is the Spirit of God. The latter is obligatory in the life of every man in order the human being to be united with His Creator. Another view was presented is that the soul was regarded as, on the one hand, immaterial, and on the other, adapted to the body. In so far as it appropriated the nous or pneuma, it was regarded as immortal, but in so far as it was related to the body, as carnal and mortal. The most familiar but also the crudest form of trichotomy is that which takes the body for the material part of man's nature, the soul as the principle of animal life, and the spirit as the God-related rational and immortal element in man.

Theodoret Chyrrus refused the trichotomy of the man, because he argues that this isn't based on Bible. On his argument we will clarify that the soul "*psyche*" and the spirit "*pneuma*" are used with great frequency in Scripture does not warrant the conclusion that they designate component parts rather than different aspects of human nature⁴¹. A careful study of Scripture clearly shows that it uses the words interchangeably, as we referred above. Both terms denote the higher or spiritual element in man, but contemplate it from different points of view⁴². It should be pointed out at once, however, that the Scriptural distinction of the two does not agree with that which is rather common in philosophy, that the soul is the spiritual element in man, as it is related to the animal world, while the spirit is that same element in its relation to the higher spiritual world and to God⁴³.

On the other hand, man was created according to likeness of God that means the creation of man doesn't mean automatically perfection. It means that God made man with all the possibilities to become perfect and to "*conquer*" his deification⁴⁴. God's goal of sanctification in the life of every believer is to conform him to the image of Christ⁴⁵. "*Christ is himself the archetype and first instance of human flourishing, and other human beings flourish by participating in Christ's divine-*

⁴⁰ Eirini Artemi, "The sublimation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the people, according to Isidore of Pelusium and the Cyril of Alexandria", 1&2, 2012, Pemptousia, <http://www.pemptousia.gr/2012/12/ta-charismata-tou-agiou-pnevmatos-a>

⁴¹ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Cambridge 1996, p. 192.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 193.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 193. Eccl. 3: 21; Rev. 16: 3; 6: 9; 20: 4; Isa. 42: 1; Jer. 9: 9; Amos 6: 8; Heb 10: 38; 6: 18, 19; Mark 12: 30; Luke 1: 46; 23: 46; Jas. 1: 21; Eccl. 12: 7; I Cor. 5: 3, 5. Gen. 35: 18; I Kings 17: 21; Acts 15: 26; 7: 59; Ps. 31: 5; I Pet. 3: 19; Heb. 12: 23; Ps. 10: 1, 2; 104: 1; 146: 1; Is. 42: 1; Luk. 12: 19.

⁴⁴ Clement Of Alexandria, Stromata, II, 22.

⁴⁵ Rom 8:28-29.

human life"⁴⁶. Moreover, God uses and has predestined all things and every situation to accomplish this.

In Patristic theology, it is taught that, in the fall, humanity lost the likeness but retained the image. In their view, according to G. L. Bray,

"the Christian life is best conceived as the restoration of the lost likeness to those who have been redeemed in Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, who communicates to us the energies of God himself, so that we may become partakers of the divine nature"⁴⁷. The energies of God radiate from his essence and share its nature; but it must be understood that the deified person retains his personal identity and is not absorbed into the essence of God, which remains for ever [sic] hidden from his eyes"⁴⁸.

Man will obtain the likeness to God, when he participates in the attributes of God, he will be covered by the Holy Grace and he will not be united in the divine essence. Gregory Palamas affirmed the possibility of humanity's union with God in His uncreated energies, while also affirming that because of God's transcendence, it is impossible for any person or other creature to know or to be united with God's essence⁴⁹. The idea of deification must be always understood in the light of the distinction between God's essence and His energies. Union with God means union with the divine energies, not with the divine essence. The Orthodox Church, while speaking of deification and union, rejects all forms of pantheism.

To sum up, it should be underlined that the likeness to God will take place when man puts off the old sinful human nature and puts on Christ, the new man. The first factor for this is the baptism of man. Basil of Caesarea says that the Baptism on the one hand, destroys the body of sin, which it may never ripen into death; on the other hand, our coming to life in the Spirit, ripening and having our fruit in holiness⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Christopher A. Beeley, "Christ and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology", Paper presented at the Christ and Human Flourishing Consultation, Yale Center for Faith and Culture, Dec. 2014, p. 3 (1-24)

⁴⁷ 2 Pet. 1:4

⁴⁸ G. L. Bray, "Deification," New Dictionary of Theology, ed. S. B. Ferguson, D. F. Wright and J. I. Packer; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988, p. 189. Robert V. Rakestraw, "Becoming like god: an evangelical doctrine of theosis", JETS 40, 2 (June 1997), p. 258 (257-269)

⁴⁹ John Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics", Greek Orthodox Theological Review, continuation of an article begun in 6, 2 (1960-61), p. 249. George C. Papademetriou, "The Human Body According to Saint Gregory Palamas", Greek Orthodox Theologies Review, 34, 1 (1989), p. 6. Georgios Mantzaridis, The Deification of Man, trans. Liadain Sherrard Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Basilus of Caesarea, Homily XIII, 3, PG 31, 429A.

As conclusion it should be underlined that Christian Anthropology bases on Bible and is developed by Church Fathers. God created the human person as the only being existing for its own sake. The Christian understanding of the dignity of human nature thus proposes that we are the crown of the material creation. It is even possible that the whole universe was created for us. Christian anthropology contains the relationship of God with humanity; sin and redemption; the significance of grace; brokenness and healing; and the meaning of death and resurrection. In the next parts of this brief treatise, we will survey the connection of christian anthropology to positive psychology and human flourishing.

3. Positive psychology and Orthodox Christianity

Positive Psychology is the field of Psychology which was founded in 1998 by Martin Seligman⁵¹ and its aim is the enhancement of the psychological and physical health of a person, the development of his/her potentials, the creation of harmonious interpersonal relationships as well as positive relationships at work and the achievement of his/her personal goals. Positive Psychology does not replace the other fields of Psychology but, in the contrary, it complements the existing theories⁵².

Orthodoxy projects a particular type of person, who engages and experiences life through holy Eucharist, that is, on condition of its absolute positive interpretation and use. Orthodox Christianity perceives him "*in the image*" of the Trinitarian and personal God, that is to say, as being beyond the existential autonomy and self-sacrificing goals and as a factor which contributes to a strictly communicative finality. The real man in Christ is free from the instinct or the intent of a self-centered selfish self-realization characterized by an uninterrupted reflective redrafting of his relation to what surrounds him. He conceives its freedom precisely in that communicativeness which is empty of individualism. Thus, he performs dynamically under his unity with the attributes of the Triune God⁵³.

Man in orthodox theology does not rationalize everything in the context of a secularized individualism and does not objectify his relationships through

⁵¹ <https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/martin-seligman-psychology/>

⁵² Shelly L. Gable & Jonathan Haidt, "What (and Why) Is Positive Psychology?", Review of General Psychology, 2005, Vol. 9, No. 2, 103–110, DOI: 10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.103, p. 104

⁵³ Chr. Terezis, Orthodox Christian vision on human being and human education, Patras 2018, p. 10.

the formal function of duties, duties and rights. He submits, through elaborate reconstructions, his presence as an ecstatic creation with the purpose of meeting with his fellow man and confronts any situation with which he is related as a possibility of exclusion from his ever-present hell⁵⁴.

Nowadays, the connection of positive psychology and Orthodox Christianity is thought difficult and sometimes unable to take place. Ellen Carry and Russell Kosits argue:

*"Psychological science and Christian theology, it would seem, are two very different disciplines with meager reasons for collaboration or friendship and many reasons for suspicion and isolation. Objections to friendship from both parties contain valid concerns and insights, but also misunderstandings and blind spots. Properly understood, however, Christian theology has much to learn from positive psychology, and positive psychology has much to gain from Christian theology. Still, the fruitfulness of this friendship will be limited until psychology embraces a worldview pluralism in which all psychologists are given appropriate space to explore the pre-theoretical influences on their work"*⁵⁵.

So, Christianity and psychology intersect and interact, one can in principle either look at Christianity from within some psychological framework or look at psychology from within Christianity.

In Christianity, if the believer lives near God and sees Him, after God's revelation to man, the latter will be happy and calm for everything. The real love for God and for the other people gives happiness to believers. The love of God is the sure foundation of our faith in Him. His love gives us the absolute assurance that we are never alone or without help. God's love for us is unfailing, it never stops, and it is eternal. God's love is the reason we are alive. The more we become rooted and grounded in God's love, the more we will become happy, fruitful and fulfilled:

*"Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"*⁵⁶.

Christian can have a positive psychology, although the difficulties and the problems that exist in his life. A very good example is the apostle Paul who suf-

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Ellen T. Charry & Russell D. Kosits (2017), "Christian theology and positive psychology: An exchange of gifts", *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12:5, 468-479, p. 468 DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2016.1228010

⁵⁶ Eph. 3:17-19 (New King James Version).

ferred severe persecution, everywhere he went, because he preached the life saving gospel of Jesus Christ, while facing the hatred of the religious leaders. In the midst of all the pain and warfare he experienced, Paul wrote these incredible words:

*"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"*⁵⁷.

Paul knew from his own experience that it is God's burning love that kept him, during even the worst trials. And it was the compassionate love of God that motivated him to keep fighting the good fight of faith, to reveal Jesus Christ to the world. God had poured out His own mercy in the heart of Paul⁵⁸. Because of God's love, Paul was happy and had positive attitude for life and he can face the hatred, rejection, offense, betrayal and even torture from his enemies. His positive attitude to life based on God's love for them goes beyond their wildest dreams:

*"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)"*⁵⁹.

The orthodox Christian should face any difficulty with the calmness and a positive thought with trust in God. This is a common place in positive psychology and in orthodox Christianity and general to Christian teaching. Christian believers can embrace the findings of positive psychology, even if its source is secular science. As St. Augustine of Hippo writes in his treatise On Christian Doctrine: *"Let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master"*⁶⁰.

Entwistle and Moroney⁶¹ support that human beings are thought neither as good, nor evil and morally neutral. In the person, there is an intense dialogue between good and evil. In Christian theology, it is underlined that after the Fall, the human nature is defaced, though not obliterated. Paul says that

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;

⁵⁷ Rom. 8: 38-39 (New King James Version).

⁵⁸ 2 Cor. 5:14.

⁵⁹ Eph. 2:4-5 (New King James Version).

⁶⁰ Augustine of Hippo, On Christian Doctrine, II, 18,

⁶¹ 2011, p. 298.

for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”⁶².

Although, it is obvious that Christianity and positive psychology have happiness as a common place, the things are quite different. Kern and Benecchi⁶³ think that the positive psychology focuses on

“socially-valued outcomes, including better physical health, longer life, good social relationships, career advancement and success, lower levels of divorce, less mental illness, and greater creativity, among other benefits”⁶⁴.

On the contrary, Christian teachings see happiness as deriving from one’s relationship with God, not one’s circumstances⁶⁵. Purely material things cannot bring Christians ultimate happiness. In order to find happiness souls and bodies of Christians must be rightly ordered to God. The happy man is the blessed man according to the beatitudes.

“The beatitudes contain within them all the power of Jesus’ teaching. They actually dominate His teaching through the appeals and promises which they formulate and the paths of life which they trace... It is always a question of blessedness God gives to those who believe in His word and His promises, and who put His law into practice. Their happiness is the work of God”⁶⁶.

⁶² Rom. 7:15-20.

⁶³ Positive Psychology and Biblical Thinking from a Christian Perspective Margaret L. Kern¹ and Susan D. Benecchi² (2018), p. 8 (1-37)

⁶⁴ E. Diener, & M. Y. Chan, (2011). Happy people live longer: Subjective well-being contributes to health and longevity, *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 3, 1 – 43. B. L. Fredrickson, (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226. B. L. Fredrickson, (2013a), Positive emotions broaden and build. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 47, pp. 1–54). San Diego, CA: Academic Press. The Bible and Positive Psychology 25. B. L. Fredrickson, (2013b), *Love 2.0: Creating happiness and health in moments of connection*, New York: Hudson Street Press. Howell, R., Kern, M. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). Health benefits: meta-analytically determining the impact of well-being on objective health outcomes. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 13, 1092–1104; Lyubomirsky, S., King, L.A., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 803–55; Pressman, S. D., & Cohen, S. (2005). Does positive affect influence health? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 925–71.

⁶⁵ Phil. 4:12-13.

⁶⁶ Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Pursuit of Happiness—God’s Way: Living the Beatitudes*, Alba House 1998, p. 25.

For an Orthodox Christian the goal is the happiness in God, which comes from the unity with God. This happiness sometimes derives from difficulties of life. The latter are thought as barriers from Satan. Without the help and the grace of God our self-efforts to create happiness are all in vain. Whatever, we seek through our own will is temporary. In the end it does not satisfy. Our souls seek more, something that is beyond our own will. True and lasting joy only comes from God. It comes when we are in touch with what is divine and above our human will. It brings us lasting life-giving warmth, peace, inner cheerfulness, and an unbothered conscience. True joy is liberating.

St. Nectarius of Aegina, bishop of Pentapoleus says that

“How mistaken are those people who seek happiness outside of themselves, in foreign lands and journeys, in riches and glory, in great possessions and pleasures, in diversions and vain things, which have a bitter end! In the same thing to construct the tower of happiness outside of ourselves as it is to build a house in a place that is consistently shaken by earthquakes. Happiness is found within ourselves, and blessed is the man who has understood this. Happiness is a pure heart, for such a heart becomes the throne of God. Thus says Christ of those who have pure hearts: “I will visit them, and will walk in them, and I will be a God to them, and they will be my people”⁶⁷. What can be lacking to them? Nothing, nothing at all! For they have the greatest good in their hearts: God Himself!”⁶⁸.

So, for Orthodox Christian the hunting of happiness has nothing to do with material goods, but with the purification from passions and the fruits of virtues which lead to the knowledge of God and unity with Him.

To sum up, positive psychology is the study of topics as diverse as happiness, optimism, subjective wellbeing, and personal growth. Positive psychology concentrates on positive experiences at three time points: (i) the past, centring on wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction; (ii) the present, which focuses on concepts such as happiness and flow experiences; (iii) the future, with concepts including optimism and hope⁶⁹. A goal of positive psychology is to understand and explain happiness and subjective well-being and to accurately Positive

⁶⁷ 2 Cor. 6:16.

⁶⁸ Nektarios of Aegina, bishop of Pentapoleos, Path to Happiness, 1, <http://ascensiongoc.com/assets/files/bulletins/2015%20Bulletins/Aug%2030%20-%20Sep%205Bulletin.pdf>

⁶⁹ Andrew W. Fleming, Positive Psychology “Three Good Things in Life” and Measuring Happiness, Positive and Negative Affectivity, Optimism/Hope, and Well-Being, master thesis, Counselor Education Master’s Theses. 32, New York 2006, p. 5-27. http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/edc_theses/32

Psychology 6 predict factors that influence such states⁷⁰. Finally, Positive psychology focuses on mental health rather than mental illness. An objective of positive psychology is to identify characteristics and strategies that people can use⁷¹. Keyes and Haidt referred to the aim of positive psychology as *"to help people live and flourish rather than merely to exist"*⁷²

For Orthodox Christianity happiness has nothing to do with products, fame and human glory. Products are necessary for man to survive in this world for practical reasons, but many products are unnecessary. The marketing world does a stellar job at convincing man that unless he has a certain product that he is somehow not complete. The reality of course is that people are made complete in and through our life in Christ. What people really desire are things that money can't buy. Happiness and positive Christian psychology according to orthodox Christian theology can only be achieved by looking inward to find God and learning to enjoy whatever life has and this requires transforming greed into gratitude. The true happiness and peace will be found not in worldly things and materialism but in spirituality with God.

4. Confliction or agreement among Orthodox Christian views and secular teaching for human flourishing in the 21st century

Human Flourishing, according to Aristotle, the teacher of Greek Macedonian King Alexander the Great, has eudaimonia as an exemplar or prototype for the idea of human flourishing⁷³. In most literature, human flourishing is perceived and put forward as an ideal aim of education and medical science⁷⁴. Philip Gorski analyses:

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 14.

⁷² C.L.M., Keyes, & J. (Haidt, 2003). *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well lived*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, p.3.

⁷³ Aristotle. 1097b the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by David Ross and edited by Lesley Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁷⁴ Philip Gorski, "Human Flourishing and Human Morphogenesis: A Critical Realist Interpretation and Critique", Chapter 2, from book *Morphogenesis and Human Flourishing* (pp.29-43) in March 2017, p. 30 , DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49469-2_2

“The etymology of the term also points beyond any purely hedonistic or utilitarian reading. Eu means “good” and daemon means “spirit”, so to be “eudaimon” literally means to be “of good spirit.” Eudaimonia is not just physical or psychological in the modern senses of those terms. It is something more. These are some of the reasons why many neo-Aristotelians believe that “human flourishing” is the best rendering of eudaimonia”⁷⁵.

In Bible, we don't have only a vision for human flourishing but also the means by which humanity can obtain the achievement of these. The Orthodox Church underlines that Christian must articulate a Christian worldview for the twenty-first century, with all of its accompanying challenges and changes, and to show how such Christian thinking is applicable across all areas of life. At the heart of these challenges and changes Christians should have in their mind that may times the secular view of human flourishing ignore or reject truth, morality, and interpretive frameworks of biblical teaching. So Christians have to take care of the progress of human flourishing to be based on Christ's and church fathers' teaching. By this way, flourishing can only be achieved because we receive something from outside of ourselves – salvation imparted to us by God's Holy Spirit, which restores our original relationship with the creator. God is glorified when the man and all the creation flourish according to His commandments, His truth.

Today, the human flourishing becomes synonym with happiness, the defense of diseases; the “good” death or with other way euthanasia and generally this kind of flourishing is represented by technological enhancements, from social media to bio-genetic, transformative technologies, including transhumanist dreams of transcending the body and sometimes it should be compromised with the personal ideas of some sexual, racial, social, religious minorities. To this kind of human flourishing, Christian should make a careful critique. The goal of this critique and of this secular flourishing more broadly, is to provide theological guidance for integrating technology into a view of human flourishing grounded in Christian anthropology⁷⁶. A long-standing Christian view of human flourishing that focuses on the incarnation provides the factors for the conversation between human flourishing without God and a christian perspective for human flourishing with God. For patristic theology God's re-creation of humanity in the incarnation shows that salvation, the apex of human flourishing, is “*theosis*,” the transformation of the total human being, body and spirit, into godlikeness. Salvation,

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁷⁶ “Christian Flourishing in a Technological World”, <https://www.christianflourishing.com/about> [accessed 5 November 2018]

to use another orthodox term, is “Christification”⁷⁷, becoming Christ-like⁷⁸. Early Christians viewed self-denial, life in service to the world, and hardship as preparatory training for their future existence in a transformed body fit for the glorified existence demonstrated by Christ’s post-resurrection life. Our project will use this Christian anthropology to assess modern dreams of human flourishing⁷⁹.

The Christian Church and mainly the Orthodox should face up the human flourishing and many other subjects that come from this goal with responsibility and a great care for the progress of Christians and of society with the challenges of the 21st century and always as base the Christian anthropology. Especially, some of these subjects that the Orthodox Church of Greece should examine carefully and they have relation with human flourishing are: Organs transplantation and brain death, the choice of gender, eugonia assisted reproduction, abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy, cloning. Many people including Christians must make painful decisions about the dying process; other people suffer from the problems associated with infertility; other people must make decisions about “spare” embryos. These decisions should be received according to Christian theology and ethics.

We will focus on the decisions that the Orthodox Church of Greece should take and we will try to deepen the reasons for its every decision which comes against or is in favour of human flourishing. Father Stanley Harakas argues that

*“The very existence of Orthodoxy implies that there must be a direction and guidance on these topics for the people of God. Consequently, that direction cannot be arbitrary and unstudied. It must reflect the commonly accepted faith of the Church and be rooted in the fundamental affirmations of Orthodox doctrine, reflecting God’s revelation to His Church. Only in this sense can Orthodox Christian ethical reflection come to some conclusions about these new issues and problems related to bioethics”*⁸⁰.

Eastern Orthodox Christian ethics faces human flourishing based on its ethical judgments on Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition.

⁷⁷ Jordan Cooper, “Defining Christification”, 5 November 2014, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/justandsinner/defining-christification/>: “Christification is the ontological union of God and man, initiated through the incarnation, which the Christian partakes in through faith. Through this union, that which belongs properly to Christ, namely divine incorruptibility and immortality, is transferred to the believer by faith. This union is increased and strengthened as one participates in the sacramental life of the church, and it is demonstrated through growth in personal holiness”.

⁷⁸ “Christian Flourishing in a Technological World”, <https://www.christianflourishing.com/about> [accessed 5 November 2018].

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Stanley S. Harakas, “For the Health of Body and Soul: An Eastern Orthodox Introduction to Bioethics”, <https://www.goarch.org/el/-/for-the-health-of-body-and-soul-an-eastern-orthodox-introduction-to-bioethics>

*"Holy Tradition consists of the "mind of the Church" and is discerned in the decisions of ecumenical and local councils, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, canon law, and the penitentials"*⁸¹.

Let's examine one by one the previous factors for organs transplantation and brain death and etc by the view of the Holy Synod of Orthodox Church of Greece and the special bioethical committee of the Holy Synod. They recognize organs transplantation with particular sympathy, understanding and gravity. It understands the size of the problem and the possibilities that transplantation provides, and its large debt to society, to the medical profession, to other donors and to potential donors. It wants to help the recipient wants to help, but on the other hand to respect the donor⁸². According to this Syndic Committee it is a common belief that the reason and role of Orthodox Greek Church for transplants in Greece is central. Transplantation is perhaps one of only a few issues in which the state has the direct need of the Church. This creates in the Church social rights and great obligations. With the idea that transplants can easily lead to abuse and violation of fundamental ethical principles and values and there are huge differences between secular and ecclesiastic ethic, the Orthodox Greek Church should be very careful in its actions and sparing in words. With the cooperation of the state, the Church sets out clear terms, so that not to take responsibilities for cosmic decisions and actions which will probably become completely different in spirit and purpose.

The absence of a formal ecclesiastical position on the subject led to an arbitrary or reckless rejection of transplants by specifically competent non-commissioned persons. This has caused confusion, sometimes divisiveness, between the faithful and the theological world. Currently, the Greek Orthodox Church clearly and with low tones declares that it could accept the organs transplantation under strict terms to avoid the easy acceptance of them and any easy refusal for the organs transplantation⁸³.

As far as the choice of gender, the Bioethics Committee of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece condemns the government's legislative initiative to vote the legislation about the identity of gender. Among other things, the Commission states: *"It cannot be acceptable; it is a law that allows the unconditioned change of sex according to the will of the person and regardless of his biological sex"*⁸⁴. Finally, the

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² Special holy Synodic Committee, "Basic positions of the ethic for organs transplantation", <http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/committees/bioethics/k0005.htm>

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴ Bishop of Messinias, Chrysostom Savvatos, "Vertically negative the Church with the gender change legislation", <https://www.tharrosnews.gr/news/content/%CE%BC%CE%B>

choice of sex in in-vitro fertilization treatment is only allowed to avoid a sex-related hereditary disease (article of Law 1455§ 2). Thus, sex is neither freely chosen nor freely altered. By way of exception, Greek law mentions the term «gender change» in Law 344/1976, article 14 (Changes in civil registry data) and in Article of Law 11 § 3 (information about patient) Law 3418/2005 which based on the Code of Medical Ethics.

Bishop Mesogaia and Lavraiotikis Nicholas supports about the eugonia assisted reproduction:

“The embryo has both a human beginning and a human perspective. Its cells, genetic material, morphology and physiology are entirely human. Moreover, its potential to develop solely into a perfect human being, and nothing else, confirms its human nature... The Church proposes a non-secularized perception of life that guarantees simplicity, peace, abstinence and mutual trust between spouses. She does not oppose resorting to medical help, but, at the same time, suggests that we render our life into the hands of God... Finally the Church should clarify that She finds it difficult to bless the practice of assisted reproduction (unnatural and asexual conception, surplus embryos, preimplantation genetic intervention and modification, etc.) and adopt policies foreign to Her spirit; (v) when childbearing disturbs the normal family order (unwed mothers, fertilization with deceased husband’s spermatozoa, childbearing by older women, heterologous fertilization techniques, surrogate motherhood, etc.) it is evident that the Church cannot possibly agree”⁸⁵.

Abortion for the Orthodox Greek Church is thought as as premeditated murder. As such, She strongly opposes it because God demands the protection of all innocent human life, including that of the unborn child. The humanity (personhood) of that child exists from conception, a scientific fact that has always been recognized and unquestioned in Orthodox theology from the very beginning. Indeed, conception and not birth is the moment of the union of soul and body. The deliberate destruction and desecration of a human being is unthinkable for

7%CF%84%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%AF%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%83%CE%B7%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%AC%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B7-%CE%B5%CE%BA%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%87%CE%AD%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%AE%CF%82-%CF%86%CF%8D%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%B2%CE%AF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B5%CE%BF [accessed 6 November 2018]

⁸⁵ Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavraiotiki, “The Greek Orthodox position on the ethics of assisted reproduction”, RBMOnline. Vol. 17 Suppl. 3. 2008 25-33 Reproductive BioMedicine Online; www.rbmonline.com/Article/3548 on web 1 October 2008, p. 31,32,33 (25-33).

a true-believing Orthodox Christian. God created Man in his own likeness and image, man is a living icon of flesh and blood, in which God gave the breath of life. Killing an innocent human being can be seen as an act of blasphemy against God – it is the ultimate act of iconoclasm⁸⁶.

As far as Surrogate Motherhood and cloning, the Orthodox Greek Church cannot regard as morally justified the ways to childbirth disagreeable with the design of the Creator of life. If a husband or a wife is sterile and the therapeutic and surgical methods of infertility treatment do not help the spouses, they should humbly accept childlessness as a special calling in life. In these cases, pastoral counsel should consider the adoption of a child by the spouses' mutual consent. Among the admissible means of medical aid may be an artificial insemination by the husband's germ cells, since it does not violate the integrity of the marital union and does not differ basically from the natural conception and takes place in the context of marital relations. However, manipulations involved in the donation of germ cells do violate the integrity of a person and the unique nature of marital relations by allowing of a third party to interfere⁸⁷.

By all these above suggestions, it becomes clear that the Orthodox Greek Church and generally all the Orthodox Churches in all over the world are in favour of human flourishing and the progress of bioethics with the term that they should be comprise with the biblical and patristic Christian anthropology and the ethics of the Church which bases on Christ's teaching and the tradition of the Church. This fact creates many times a confliction between Orthodox Church and Secular opinion about the human Flourishing.

Conclusions

In summary, God created man in His own image to be a spiritual, moral, intellectual, volitional, and emotional representative of Himself. Fr. Seraphim Rose says: *"Everything in this life passes away - only God remains, only He is worth struggling towards. We have a choice: to follow the way of this world, of the society that surrounds*

⁸⁶ Fr. John Protopapas, "Abortion: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on the Sanctity of Human Life", Pro-Life, 29/1/2011, <https://orthodoxword.wordpress.com/2011/01/29/abortion-an-orthodox-christian-perspective-on-the-sanctity-of-human-life/>

⁸⁷ Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, "The Greek Orthodox position on the ethics of assisted reproduction", RBMOnline - Vol. 17 Suppl. 3. 2008 25-33 Reproductive BioMedicine Online; www.rbmonline.com/Article/3548 on web 1 October 2008, p. 30-33 (25-33).

*us, and thereby find ourselves outside of God; or to choose the way of life, to choose God Who calls us and for Whom our heart is searching*⁸⁸.

Christian anthropology supports that there is an absolute respect for the human person, not as a form of fleeting biological existence, but as an eternal and immortal being, is a presupposition for a kind of medicine that contributes to life in a beneficial and helpful way. The human flourishing and the positive psychology should have their foundations on Christ and the revelation of divine Truth into people through prophets, church fathers, apostles and the incarnation of Logos.

Professor Scouteris underlined that the Patristic anthropology and the Orthodox Church are realistic, but at the same time intensely ascetic and eschatological. What determines human life is not biological behaviour or existence, but rather it is that which the human person can attain through ascetic practice and the fruits of that ascetic practice within Christian society. In the Orthodox tradition the whole existence of the human person is illumined by what is going to happen. Thus, future life bears more weight than this present life. In the conscience of the Church what we are certainly counts, since in the Eastern tradition the future, the eschaton⁸⁹.

To sum up, the Christian anthropology should walk near the progress of medical technology and theories about the human flourishing and the positive psychology, but it should have as only compass the words of Christ and the teaching of the apostles and fathers. Christian should examine everything concerning human nature the potential to become like God. The human flourishing should be based on the realization of Triune God's likeness within each person.

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⁸⁸ Theotokos: The life-giving fount [spring], <http://saintandrewgoc.org/home/2013/5/13/thetokos-the-life-giving-fount-spring.html>

⁸⁹ Constantine Scouteris, "Bioethics & The Ethos of Orthodoxy", <http://theology.balamand.edu.lb/index.php/local-events/708-scouteris-bioethicssummary> [accessed 12 November 2018].

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