

THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNION AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR CREATION. ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT

The study is a Christian theological analysis of environmental protection issues, emphasising the notion of the spirit of communion (κοινωνία) and man's responsibility towards nature. Orthodox tradition has the capacity to propose its own approach to the relationship between man and the environment. Orthodox theology can contribute to the contemporary dialogue on sustainability and environmental protection by proposing an understanding of man's spiritual responsibility towards nature – God's gift – and how this responsibility can be taken up in modern research on sustainability. The concept of κοινωνία (communion) refers to the relationship between humans and the connection between humanity and the whole of creation. The idea of 'community' can inspire models of cooperation between communities, governments and organisations to protect the environment. The world is not simply a resource to be exploited, but a sacred gift from God to be respected and protected. The Orthodox Church can encourage the faithful to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle based on principles of simplification, gratitude and respect for life. Orthodox theology can play an essential role in addressing environmental issues by offering a spiritual and ethical perspective that complements scientific and political endeavours. By emphasising human responsibility as a servant of God and the sacramental dimension of creation, the Orthodox tradition can inspire concrete action to protect and restore the environment, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future for all living beings.

Keywords: Orthodox theology, environmental protection, spirit of communion, responsibility, creation, ministry.

INTRODUCTION

Protecting the environment has become one of the most pressing and urgent issues of the 21st century, attracting the attention not only of the scientific and political community, but also of religious voices around the world. The seriousness of the current environmental crisis calls for a genuine interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together perspectives from diverse fields – from science and technology to philosophy, ethics and, crucially, theology. In this context, the religious perspective is not only complementary but fundamental to a deeper and holistic understanding of the relationship between man and nature. It offers a framework of interpretation that transcends economic calculations and technical solutions, integrating the spiritual dimension of the ecological crisis. Orthodox theology, with its specific emphasis on the communion between man, God and creation, and on the sacramentality of the natural world, offers a distinctive and profound approach to the ecological question. In the Orthodox tradition, nature is not seen as a