

MAN IS GOD-CREATED

Declaration of Orthodox Christians in Sofia

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible.

The Creed, Art. 1

Thus begins the confession of our faith, a must for every Christian. In the very first words of the Creed, every believer in Christ confesses their unshakable certainty that everything that exists, visible and invisible, did not come into being by itself, but was created by the Almighty Creator according to His free will. This initial confession is not just some random words; it is the foundation of the whole edifice, the foundation of all life. If we do not acknowledge and confess this primary fact of being, our faith is futile, our hope is vain, our love is meaningless; both salvation and redemption lose all meaning, it appears that Christ came in vain, and all the treasures of Christian reliance crumble into dust.

Our duty as Christians is to keep the milestone of our confession as steadfast and unwavering as our faith as a whole. But what are we to do if the world around us mocks over our trust? What are we to do if quite different notions are generally accepted in our time, if modern science, the greatest authority for our contemporaries, teaches in a thousand text-books and a million lectures the spontaneous appearance of the universe, the evolution of living beings, and the descent of man from the ape? Shall we back down, shall we be ashamed of the Word of God, affirming the truth of Creation, as of an old fable, as of one of the myths of the ancients? If so, we should be ashamed of our Savior, too!

Since the official Church authorities are silent on this issue, which has long troubled the minds and wounded the consciences of millions of believers, we, a group of Orthodox Christians from Sofia, Bulgaria, together with all those who agree with us and share our views, dare to speak out in defense of the teachings of the Word of God before our fellow believers around the world and before the unbelieving modern world at large. As warriors of Christ, we rush in where the stronghold of faith is most threatened, and draw the spiritual sword boldly. With full awareness of our duty and our great responsibility before God, we declare the following:

1. We respect modern science and use its fruits in our daily lives, but we do not regard it as an authority in matters of revelation and faith. The authority of our Lord and Savior, who died for us on the cross, is above all things for us, and we will follow Him even if the whole world despises us as fools and madmen. While treating scientific knowledge with due respect, we also note the wide variation of scientific knowledge over time, the great variability and diversity of scientific theories and constructs. What is authoritative and generally accepted today may be discarded and replaced with the same degree of authority by something else in 50 or 100 years. Divine revelation, on the contrary, is one, absolute, and immutable. Christian doctrine cannot be changed to suit the changing fashions of this world, and be adapted to the ideas and views of different peoples and ages.

2. We respect the evolutionary position of modern science, but we do not accept it because it is not biblically sound or Christian. While respecting the viewpoint of the majority of today's biologists, we also acknowledge the negative view of Darwin's teachings of many prominent scientists of our day. At the same time, we note that Darwin's theory serves an important ideological function in modern society. Even in Darwin's lifetime it was greeted with enthusiasm by anti-Christian circles in Europe. Even Darwin's earliest followers used it as aggressive propaganda for godlessness. To this day, its primary function is to keep people's minds submissive to atheism and materialism. Whole generations have been subjected to this aggressive brainwashing; many millions have been lost to Christ. The incredibly violent reaction against any, even the mildest, criticism of this doctrine shows, it seems to us, not so much the mental unsoundness of its adepts as the malice of the original enemy of mankind.

3. Without claiming authority in the scientific controversy, we nevertheless note the serious problems of Darwinian evolution that are accessible to the unbiased eye. The bewildering complexity, order, and beauty in the structure of living organisms testify to an intelligent Creator, not a blind and chaotic development; chaos only begets chaos. The virtually complete absence of transitional species, intermediate links, is, in turn, a devastating argument against the theory of evolution. The huge gaps in the supposed evolutionary ladder call into question its very existence. Also unresolved for evolutionists is the question of the origin of life, for which they have never been able to provide a single credible explanation. All of this testifies that Darwinism is more ideology than science, and that it remains as unproven as at the time of its appearance. But even if it were fully proved and confirmed, we would still prefer the *foolishness of faith* (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23) to all the wisdom of this world.

4. While respecting what is nowadays considered scientific knowledge, we also respect the "pre-scientific" common human tradition, that one common human Tradition, which in the legends and traditions of the most diverse and distant tribes and peoples affirms in an astonishing way the same truths - the existence of a supreme heavenly God, Father of spirits and men, the origin of mankind from one human couple, the "golden age" of Eden, the flood and many other things. We believe that this striking unanimity of the tribes and peoples of the earth, which has so shocked anthropologists and folklorists, testifies in fact in favor of the biblical tradition, and not the other way around. It is not the "myths of the peoples" that testify to the mythicity of the Biblical revelation, but, on the contrary, it is that primordial, primary mythic narrative to which all the partial and imperfect narratives of the myths and legends of the various ages and peoples ascend.

5. In strict accordance with the Divine revelation, we declare our conviction that God created freely, out of goodness and love only, by a direct, self-contained and absolute creative act out of nothing ("ex nihilo") everything that exists, the spiritual and material world, the universe, living beings and man. Unlike Plato's Demiurge, the biblical God does not need the assistance of any outside agency or the mediation of any other forces: neither pre-existent matter, nor the evolution of nature, nor the self-development of creaturely processes and phenomena. The perfect Creator creates perfectly.

6. In strict accordance with Divine revelation, we declare our conviction that by virtue of His creative omnipotence and His perfect love, the Creator has made everything that exists complete and perfect, as He Himself testified, saying, "*Everything... was very good*" (Genesis 1:31). The only cause of creaturely imperfection is the fall of man, which caused the corruption of the material world under his dominion (Genesis 3:17). But even in its present damaged state,

nature is qualitatively stable. There is no “evolution” and “progress” in it, there is not and cannot exist a passing from lower to higher entities.

7. We do not share the modern idolatry of such concepts as “nature” and “matter”. Unlike the deistic Deity, the God of the Bible did not withdraw after Creation and leave the world He created to its own fate. Contrary to some philosophical doctrines and to the dominant ideology in science today, we bear witness to the Christian belief that nature is not autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-governing; the material world is not a source of self-motion and self-development. At every moment of its existence, the whole universe is under the full and absolute authority of its Creator, who governs every particle of it self-governingly in accordance with the laws He Himself has established and can freely change or violate.

8. Along with this, we celebrate the supreme dignity of nature - much higher than cold, sentient, objectifying reason can imagine. Nature not only has a stable and solid foundation in the incorruptible Design, in the incorruptible ideas of the Divine Mind, but it is filled in every particle with life-giving grace, with the energies of the Godhead, -with a living and gushing divinity. The beauty of the world is a reflection of the incorporeal Beauty, a living image of the Godhead. The rationality, the meaningfulness of the world is the rationality of the Divine Logos. The life of the world, the energy of being, is nothing other than the flow of the Spirit of God, all-filling, all-life-giving.

9. We note with profound satisfaction that true science leads to God, as all the great scientists of the past unanimously testify - to a reverently believing people. All those astonishing pictures of the finest beauty and the most bewildering order on all the planes of creation, which modern scientific knowledge unfolds before our shocked gaze, testify with great conviction and insistence precisely to the existence of a great Artist, a wise Master and Creator. Both through the microscope and through the most powerful cosmic telescopes, the universe cries out to us, cries out to man about its undoubtedly intelligent origin: “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Psalm 18/19:1).

10. At the same time, we suffer the fact that science today has become dependent on an ideologized and biased scientism-materialism approach, grossly distorting and essentially reducing to zero all perspectives of knowledge of the world around us. Instead of generating awe at the amazing wisdom of the Creator, mankind's modern knowledge of nature, which in some sciences reaches incredible beauty and depth, is used in our time to propagate the most vile and vulgar impiety.

11. The tragedy of modern man, brought about, among other things, by the wretchedness of one-sided scientism-materialist ideology, is that he has drifted too far from that childlike warm trust in the Creator, the Fountain of Life, which has sustained mankind for millennia, enabled him to live in peace with the Earth and nature, and ennobled prophets, geniuses, and sages in all fields of culture and world-knowledge. Today, that connection is deeply broken, if not severed. By renouncing his divine origin, by rejecting his heavenly Father, man has become an orphan and a pariah in this world - and is successfully destroying it, dehumanizing himself and taking away the future of his children.

12. *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Genesis 1:1). In strict accordance with Biblical revelation, we affirm that God created the universe - space, time, and matter - out of nothing (“*ex nihilo*”). The act of creation is absolute and not dependent on any antecedent factors - neither “original time” nor “pre-existent matter.” We are pleased to note that the view

of modern physics and cosmology which posits the beginning of the universe in time comes close to the biblical doctrine of the emergence of the material world out of nothing. At the same time, we emphasize that our faith in Creation is based not on any natural-scientific knowledge or philosophical argument, but only on that foundation which no quivering of the eternally wandering human mind can shake - the Word of God.

13. *Thus God made... every living thing... according to their kind* (Genesis 1:21). In strict accordance with Divine revelation, we affirm that God created the entire world of life in its inexhaustible richness and diversity, from the highest orders of living things to the most elemental and lowest, according to the stable and unchanging paradigm of genera and species. The world of life is ordered and hierarchical. Being an embodiment of one of the many facets of the wise and perfect Conception, every living being is complete and perfect unto itself, and needs no refinement or development. The unity of the living world is a unity not of evolutionary descent from common ancestors, but a unity of Divine Design embodied in living nature.

14. All *kinds*, the Holy Scripture speaks about, are stable. The distinctive features of each genus are fixed by the Creator in the genetic code, which as a rational message, a text, bears witness to its Author. Evolution not only does not exist as a phenomenon, it is intrinsically impossible, just as any random and chaotic transition from one strictly systematic quality to another is impossible. Nature is conservative, and the free transformation of some objects into others, of some beings into others, exists only in fairy tales. Evolutionary theory is an uncritical transfer of phenomena existing in human life and history to the natural world.

15. Nor can we avoid an ethical assessment of the problem. We note the close connection of Darwinism with the totalitarian political ideologies of the twentieth century, and especially with the ideology of fascism. Within the fierce evolutionary struggle for survival, in which the fittest wins, the emergence of ethical ideals and values is impossible, and even if they were to emerge, they would be harmful, not helpful. Fascists are entirely consistent when, on the basis of Darwin's view of the world, they deny fraternity among men and affirm war and the extermination of the "inferior races" as beneficial to humanity. It is impossible for Christians to see in a loving God and Father the author of a bloody evolutionary strategy in which perfection is accomplished by perpetual war of extermination between species, imposing suffering and doom on the millions of "unfit."

16. In strict accordance with Divine revelation, we affirm that man was created by God as the crown of creation and as the image and likeness of God. *So God made man; in the image of God He made him; male and female He made them* (Genesis 1:27). Just as the universe was created out of nothing, man was created out of dead matter (Genesis 2:7), which rules out his evolutionary origin from any ancestors. Man did not originate from apes, but from God. We are all descendants of Adam - hence the ontological unity of humanity and the unshakeable brotherhood between people, members of one human family, children of Adam and children of God. The blood-kinship-brotherhood of all men on earth precludes any superiority of one nation over another, of one race or civilization over another. The descent of every human being through Adam from God sanctifies him and gives him divine dignity and mission.

17. *Male and female He made them* (Genesis 1:27). In strict accordance with Divine revelation, we affirm that there are only two sexes, male and female, and that this blessed duality is an inexhaustible source of beauty and goodness. Thus any gender-quackery regarding

human nature is ruled out. Man should accept his sex with gratitude and reverence. Any attempt to change or dilute God-given gender is sacrilege against the Creator. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). Love, sexual communion, and marriage can only be between a man and a woman. All other kinds of eros are forbidden by God. Sex outside of love and marriage is evil. And in this, as in every other matter, we unfurl before the world our Christian banner and declare that we are not ashamed of our faith and of the Word of God which instructs us thus.

18. Divine Love created man for eternal life and bliss, but man did not stand on this height. Yielding to the suggestions of the spirit of evil, Adam broke God's command and fell. Seducing the first men, the devil unmasked them, deprived them of immortality, and stripped them of the garment of grace. Thus sin and evil entered the human world (Romans 5:12), and the forces of destruction entered material nature, setting in motion the tragedy of fallen history and the tragedy of fallen nature. This means that prior to the fall of the first man, all the key phenomena of Darwin's "struggle for survival"- suffering, destruction, death - did not and could not exist, which for Christians is yet another argument against man's supposedly pre-existent evolution.

19. *God did not make death, neither does He have pleasure over the destruction of the living* (Wisdom of Solomon 1:13). The imperfection of the material world and living nature that we observe today is not part of the Divine Design. God did not intend it and does not want it. The blame for the tragic distortion of the Divine paradigm of creation rests entirely on man. Science studies the world as it exists today as the only possible world, but Christians cannot consider a state of distorted nature the norm. The Christian hope awaits not only the redemption and resurrection of man, but also the restoration of the norm of creation - of that original cosmos that once came forth good and incorruptible from the hands of the Creator.

20. The Word of God teaches that man by his own strength could not be restored to his original height and saved from the yoke of death. God Himself came down into the world to do this. In strict accordance with Divine revelation, we emphasize our belief that the Savior, the incarnate Word of God, was not the offspring of apes, and that He became incarnate and died not for the offspring of apes, but for the sons of God, for God-like, though sin-marred and sin-captive creatures. Contrary to Darwin-Marx-Freud and their followers, we defend the wondrous God-likeness of man, who came forth as the perfect image of God from the hand of God, from the bosom of God.

21. For centuries the treasure of faith, and in particular the authentic Christian doctrine of the Creation of the world and the origin of man, has been guarded steadfastly by great men, lamps of the spirit - by the Fathers and Teachers of the Church. Many of the eminent holy men recognized as pillars of the Church - John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, John of Damascus, Gregory the Theologian, Augustine of Hippo, and others - have left commentaries on the Book of Genesis. All of them followed Biblical revelation exactly and taught in full agreement with it and with each other the same thing: that everything that exists was created by Almighty God and did not come into existence by chance appearance or self-development. We are happy to note that the fathers and teachers of Christianity were not ashamed of the Word of God and did not bow to the opinions of pagans. Their "common mind" (consensus patrum) serves as an unwavering witness to the Church's uniform and unchanging teaching on this matter.

22. Nowadays, theologians, ashamed of the Word of God and ready to bend and adapt themselves to the wandering spirit of this world, have created the theory of so-called “theistic evolution,” that absurd hybrid between atheism and Christianity, between secular ideology and belief in God. This doctrine is an attempt to reconcile Darwinian evolution and biblical Creation, attributing to the good Father in Heaven the authorship of Darwin's inhuman laws of the struggle for survival and mutual extermination. Thus setting the terms and rules of evolution, God was supposedly guiding it toward a necessary goal. We need not dwell particularly on the absurdity of this anti-natural construction, which is neither a scientific theory nor a theological concept of its own, has its roots neither there nor here, and is rejected equally by secular scientists and believing Christians. We will only note that all attempts to incorporate foreign and even hostile elements into Christian doctrine, substantially distorting it to please the secular anti-Christian age and the anti-Christian world, are nothing but *heresy*. Founded on the teaching of the Word of God and on the agreed opinion of all the holy fathers, we reject the heresy of “theistic evolution” and declare that, like every other false doctrine that has existed in history, it is contrary to our faith and destroys it to its foundations, too.

23. We feel sorry for Christians who dare not defend their faith before the world and are even ashamed of it, ashamed of the Bible - the Word of God - and of God Himself. This is an *apostasy phenomenon*. Apostasy, the mass apostasy of the last days, is foretold in Scripture (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and is unfolding before our eyes today. We are reminded that apostasy, as a malady afflicting the body from within, is primarily a disease of Christianity itself. It is not the godless, the pagan, and the atheist who become apostates, who have never had anything to do with God, but the people called to be His sons and daughters. We find that apostasy has spread widely throughout Christendom today. Not only are many key centers and sees of Christendom being taken over by apostates today, but also quite a few important educational and spiritual institutions. Less stricken by apostasy is Orthodoxy, but it too is subject - where there is no strict confession of faith - to its creeping erosion.

24. We note that in our time Christians are becoming more and more divided into apostates and believers, and each of us must choose whose side to take. Faithful Christians need to know the signs of apostasy, the symptoms of the disease: along with such phenomena as the acceptance of LGBT and gender ideology, tolerance of abortion, female priesthood, same-sex marriage, “prosperity theology”, unprincipled ecumenism where Christians pray together with pagans and other-believers, spiritual omnivorousness, eclecticism, mixing of faiths, disrespect for the Word of God and the authority of the Church, attempts to revive ancient heresies such as the idea of “universal salvation”, and other similar phenomena, the attempts to smuggle evolution, Darwinism, and the other doctrines of this world into the fortress of Christ are also obvious signs of apostasy.

25. We hereby call upon the hierarchs and theologians of the Orthodox Church to come forward with an authoritative Church-wide position in defense of the Christian doctrine of Creation, which is under so much fierce attack and attempts at false and misrepresentation in our time, not only in a secular-atheistic, but also in a Christian environment. We note with regret the silence of the Church on this matter, so important for believers, and ask her to finally break it, so that *these little ones* will no longer stumble (Mat. 18:6). Shepherds! You are responsible for us before God. Who but you should teach the people and instruct them in the truth? Who, if not God-appointed teachers, should defend the treasure of faith handed down to us by the Savior?

26. We call upon Orthodox Christians and all believers in Christ not to yield to the apostasy wave, not to succumb to this seeping evil. Amidst the inconsolable wilderness of this world, we alone keep the living water; amidst the darkness, we bring light. Let us not let the world rob us and take away our treasure! In spiritual matters, fear and cowardice are betrayal. Let us be cheerful, let us be fighting! Brothers! Let us confirm our fidelity to the Word of God, let us defend our faith! Let no soldier of Christ depart from the bulwark, let no one turn his back on the enemy!

May the Lord enlighten with His grace the minds and hearts of all people and protect the truth and the right faith. Amen.

Initiative Group of Orthodox Christians

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