

Respect for and Protection of the Human Person (Angelos Alekopoulos)

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People have their being and are regarded always as a whole and as a person. They aren't a conglomeration of disparate substances and elements (such as soul and body) but each is a unique persona, involving the soul and body.



In the human person, the body and soul are not independent entities but are hypostatic realities. In other words, the soul and the body don't exist and can't be conceived by themselves, outside or earlier than the persona, because they don't have their own persona. The soul and the body exist only within the human person, as personal realities and dimensions of the person.

On this basis, the prime concern of the Church is respect for and protection of the human person as the distinctive feature of human existence. The person isn't an individual. An individual is to be understood as a unit, isolated in itself. A person is

an identity, a particular presence, which emerges from his or her relationships with other people. It's been said that the secret of the personhood is free relationships with others and the practical recognition of each person's differences in a loving relationship with other people. These relationships aren't a luxury for us, but a necessity, if we're to be a real person, unique and irreplaceable, a free being and identity. It's not possible for a person to live alone.

According to Orthodox tradition, the provenance of people and of every created thing separately- Creation as Creation- is from nothing, 'ex nihilo', through the free gift of the love of God. It's this origin and perspective of our existence which reveals its sanctity. And recognition of this sanctity of the human person is a necessary condition for the respect for life and our existence.

Note: this text is part of a doctoral thesis entitled 'Bioethical Problems in the Intensive Care Unit', by Angelos Alekopoulos, as part of the programme 'Studies in Orthodox Theology' at the School of Humanitarian Studies of the Greek Open University, with Dr. Nikolaos Koios as supervisor. Pemptousia is publishing it as a series of articles.