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## **Living in the 20th Century**

*The Canadian Orthodox Missionary*

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IF YOU MENTION "ECOLOGY" TO MANY ORTHODOX people, you get many responses. The three worst responses are: "Oh, I've heard of it, but I really don't care much about it." Or "Never heard of it" or "Orthodox Christians should not be concerned about such things."

God gave man a clear responsibility for the condition of the earth. If Orthodox Christians are the most exact followers of God and His commandments, then Orthodox Christians have the greatest responsibility for their attitudes and actions with regard to the condition of the earth and its atmosphere.

One of the more pressing ecological problems of our day is the destruction of the ozone layer in our atmosphere. The ozone layer was placed around the atmosphere by God to regulate the sun's rays. It blocks harmful radiation that can cause skin cancer and lets in only as much of this "ultra-violet radiation" as the earth needs. Now scientists have discovered that we are destroying this ozone layer, allowing dangerous radiation to come through to the earth's surface. Man is attacking and destroying something that God created especially to protect us – and Orthodox Christians are just as guilty as everyone else in this terrible sin.

*"God entrusted the earth to our care. He did not  
give us a license to destroy it, but we are..."*

What happens when this ozone layer is destroyed? Too much ultra-violet radiation harms all living things. In mankind, it means increased and more dangerous forms of skin cancer and eye damage. It also means that agricultural crops will decrease and plant life in the ocean will be destroyed. This will result in food shortages all over the world.

What is destroying the ozone? We are, or rather, the "convenience" chemicals we use. These chemicals are called "chlorofluorocarbons" and "halons." When we use these chemicals or things made from them, they drift up into the upper level of our atmosphere and destroy the precious ozone which God, in His wisdom, placed there....

These chemicals are used in every aerosol can you use in your home: your hair spray, spray paint, instant starch cans, the aerosol oil used in frying pans, insecticides and many other "spray can" items. These chemicals are also released into the air from foam egg cartons, the styrofoam cups and dishes we use on picnics or which are used for coffee and food in fast-food restaurants, or anything else made of styrofoam.

How bad is the problem? It is very serious. Even a small decrease in the ozone layer can cause an epidemic in skin cancer, and this is already happening around the world. The decrease in ozone already experienced has caused crop reductions in vital food crops, but the problem is becoming worse each year.

What can we do? We can, and must, do our part in fighting this problem. If everyone leaves the action to "someone else," then nobody will do anything, and we will be joining in a mass suicide caused by greed, selfishness and indifference. We will be committing a great sin against God and His creation. What can we do?

- ◆ Find alternatives to the aerosol products we are using. People lived for thousands of years without them and we can certainly find alternatives.
- ◆ Use paper products in place of styrofoam items. Purchase eggs in cardboard cartons and let your grocer know that you do not want to buy eggs packaged in styrofoam.
- ◆ Use cleaning liquids sold in spray bottles rather than in aerosol cans.
- ◆ Use fiberglass or cellulose insulation rather than styrofoam.
- ◆ Try to become as well informed as possible about the problem and discuss it in the parish hall over coffee, or at parish meetings.

Remember, God entrusted the earth to our care. He did not give us a license to destroy it, but we are. Each one of us will have to give an account to God for our stewardship over His creation. To sin against the ecology of our earth is to sin against our neighbor and against all mankind. We will surely have to answer to God for that....

"While most of us are aware of the ecological crisis around us, few of us realize that our Orthodox faith is profoundly concerned with ecology on the highest order. Indeed, if we actually tried to live our faith, we would be the foremost ecologists as well."