

# Cultivating the Soul and Growth in Christ - Our Recomposition & Life Toward Paradise!

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## The Church's Purpose

To turn the whole human being and toward and to provide the means to journey into that the state in which God created humanity to live.

It does this through, (1) the recapitulation of salvation history in worship via the Liturgy (2) through the sacramental life as union with God in the one body of the Church, (3) in teaching and preserving prayer as Christ taught and Apostles taught as the way for all the disparate powers of humanity to be gathered in the heart to await God. Liturgy, Sacraments, Prayer all are spiritual gifts that point us toward the ultimate life in Age to Come, the Resurrection. These are wellsprings to meet and know God and become what He created you to become, *Little Christs* by union and participation in body, soul, and heart with Him.

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## Liturgy and true Prayer is our Glimpse of the Kingdom to Come

❖ Met. Hierotheos Vlachos — “We Orthodox are not waiting for the end of history and the end of time, but through living in Christ we are running to meet the end of history and thus already living the life expected after the Second Coming.”

*(Orthodox Psychotherapy)*

◆ "Now the Creator-Word, determining to exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible creation, I mean) fashions man; and taking a body from already existing matter, and placing in it a breath taken from Himself (which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul, and the image of God), as a sort of second world, great in littleness, He placed him on the earth, a new angel, a mingled worshipper, fully initiated into the visible creation, but only partially into the intellectual; king of all upon earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal; visible and yet intellectual; halfway between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh; spirit because of the favor bestowed on him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been raised; the one that he might continue to live and glorify his benefactor, the other that he might suffer, and by suffering be put

Saturday, June 26, 2021

in remembrance, and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness, a living creature, trained here and then moved elsewhere; and to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God.” (St. Gregory the Theologian)

◆ “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...” (St. Gregory of Nyssa)

❖ We are called to follow the commandments and in our attempt and varying degrees of success we experience Age to Come, either as Heaven or Hell. It is through that practice of the commandments that we know death that sin brings and life that virtue brings. This is the teaching of St. John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Colossians*.

◆ St. Gregory says, “the passion embroiled states are foretastes of hell’s torments, just as the activity of virtues is a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

❖ The Liturgy is the Kingdom of Heaven

❖ St. Gregory of Sinai — “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the tabernacle which was built by God, and which He disclosed to Moses as a pattern (Exodus 24:40); for it too has an outer and an inner sanctuary. Into the first will enter all who are priests of grace. But into the second — which is noetic — will enter only those who in this life have attained the divine darkness of theological wisdom and there as true hierarchs have celebrated the triadic Liturgy, entering into the tabernacle that Jesus Himself has set up, where He acts as their consecrator and chief Hierarch before the Trinity, and illumines them ever more richly with His own splendor.”

❖ St. Nicholas Cabasilas — “What is the Kingdom if not the Holy Bread and this Holy Cup”

❖ The arts of the Church are symbolic and diabolic

◆ “The Church uses her symbolic art to heal our broken and torn reality, thereby restoring the diabolic breach between man and creation caused by the Fall. If in the Garden of Paradise the serpent’s work was diabolic (*dia-bolos*, literally meaning ‘tearing apart’ of two things; eg reality and life), then in the Second Garden, the Church’s liturgical work is symbolic (*sym-bolos*, literally meaning

'brining two things together).

The symbolic aspect of the Church's art must be seen as a unification which ties the innate *sacramentality* of this world to the reality of the heavenly world... this tie was made into an indestructible reality through the Incarnation of Christ."

- ◆ As *symbol* the liturgical arts and therefore Liturgy are also simultaneously materially and spiritually unitive.
- \* Each person has a role in the worship and each component of the person's soul is guided and toward Christ: nous, rationality, will, and desire.
- \* Materially the Liturgy and the music, instruments, objects, icons, and ritual which are the components of the Liturgy are a revelation of the New Creation and manifest the "continuity between the creation and Christ" the logos of creation. (Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*)
- ◆ The Church does this by having a *canonical regulation* for her arts. All art and all forms of that kinds of art are not used. Since its goal is to present 'heaven on earth.'
- \* The arts to be genuinely part of and coming from the Orthodox mindset must be also be 'iconographic' and sacramental that is they need to make "visible reality which doesn't only represent but somehow makes an unseen reality visible." (Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*)
- Liturgical art has its basis not on philosophic or natural thought that arrives at product with 'religious meaning,' rather ecclesial art is born from the Church's symbolic understanding of the world, given by God first on Sinai then grown into the Church's visible structure.
- It is both symbolic and canonical so that it leads the worshipper from the image, sound, smell, taste, and touch to the archetype, from earthly sensory input to Heaven.
- It all liturgical art is Iconic!

## The Saints are at peace with Nature and Creation — A further glimpse into the Kingdom to Come

❖ "The beasts of the field and the birds of the air which were brought to Adam are our irrational senses, because beasts and animals represent the diverse passions of the body, whether of the more violent kind or even of the more temperate... God granted to you the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that you may be induced to form a judgment on all of them. God called them all to your attention, so that you might realize that your mind is superior to all of them." (St. Ambrose of Milan)

❖ "The humble man approaches ravenous beasts, and when their gaze rests upon him, their wildness is tamed. They come up to him as to their Master, wag their heads and tails and lick his hands and feet, for the smell coming from him that same scent that exhaled from Adam before the fall, when they were gathered together before him and he gave them names in Paradise. This was taken away from us, but Jesus has renewed it and given it back to us through His coming, This it is that has sweetened the fragrance of the race of men." (St. Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies 77*)

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## The Resurrection

❖ "All await the same salvation of the complete man, that is, the soul and body." (St. Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies 4:20*)

❖ For as seeds sown in the ground, we do not perish when we are dissolved, but as sown we shall arise again, death having been destroyed by the grace of the Savior." (St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation 21*)

### ❖ Earthly Death

❖ Romans 8.18-21 cf. II Peter 3.11-16

◆ "...the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Saturday, June 26, 2021

- ❖ St. Symeon the New Theologian equates a body that is 'dissolving into the elements' after it dies, to the remelted and reworked metal with which God will make the new earth as it "becomes partaker of the brightness proceeding from the Divine Fire."
- ❖ The re-fashioning of Earth will occur along with the Resurrection
  - ◆ Creation sought to rebel and destroy Adam for causing it to become corruptible but God "commanded that creation should remain in submission to him" (St. Symeon the New Theologian) giving corruptible fruit to a corruptible man, until the redemption and return to incorruptibility. Creation and Man's redemption are linked!
  - ◆ St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches, "It is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of the resurrection and to become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures. But just as in the beginning, first the whole creation was created incorrupt, and then from it man was taken and made, so also it is fitting that again first all the creation should become incorrupt, and then the corruptible bodies of men also should be renewed and become incorrupt, so that once more the whole man might be incorrupt and spiritual and might dwell in an incorruptible, eternal, and spiritual dwelling. (cf II Peter 3.10-13; Matthew 24.35; Psalm 101.27)"
  - \* The Age to Come will be a revelation of God's holy people, "For then, in the general resurrection, with the coming of the Son of God, the sons of God are to be revealed, their beauty and glory are to be manifest, and they will become entirely, that is, in soul and body, light-bearing and most glorious, as has been written: *Then the righteous, that is the sons of the righteous God, will shine forth like the sun* (Matthew 13.43)."
  - \* For St. Symeon and really all the Fathers our personal death and the death of this earth are nearly identical. That is they work in the same way. The form of our body and of the earth is remade somehow similar to what a metalworker does by melting it and then forming to make a new work.

❖ Creation in the Resurrection will be renewed along with Humanity just as it fell because of Humanity. Right now it is sustained to give corruptible fruits to corruptible people by the command of God.

◆ “[Now our bodies are] material, sensuous, changeable, having need of sensuous food, but then it is a spiritual body (I Corinthians 15.44) and unchanging, such as was the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, after the Resurrection, He being the first born from among the dead, which **body was incomparably superior to the body of first-created Adam.**”

\* The same will occur to the rest of creation. "Thus also the whole creation, after it shall be burnt up in the Divine Fire, it is to be changed..." to be a suitable dwelling for the spiritual body of resurrected mankind. (St. Symeon the New Theologian)

❖ What will resurrected bodies be like?

❖ We have hints in the accounts of Christ showing His resurrected body ie in the Eothinon Gospels.

◆ Read facing North a proclamation to the evil powers defeat in by the Resurrection.

\* The West (top of map) is the land chaos and bringers of it; the South (right of map) is civilization and brings it from there to the North; East (bottom of map) the sacred place or direction; North (left of map) is associated with the abode of evil.

◆ Physical but not limited by materiality and fallen laws of creation

\* Physical dividers are meaningless (appears in rooms suddenly then disappears)

\* He can eat, not a ghost/spirit or phantasy (the broiled fish and honey comb and meal on the road to Emmaus)

\* His wounds are present and a way to identify Him as who he is, but they are not a hindrance to him (prints of the nails and spear)

Saturday, June 26, 2021

\* Somehow people don't recognize him by mere sight (Mary thinks he is a gardener and walking and talking with Cleopas on the road to Emmaus)

❖ "In this manner, all members of each one of us individually become the members of Christ, and all unsightly members He will make pleasing to sight, adorning them with beauty and glory of His Divinity. ... you are not afraid or ashamed to acknowledge that my finger is Christ, and my sexual member? But God was not ashamed to become like you..." (St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Divine Hymns*)

◆ Our resurrected bodies will be fully male and female, yet bodily union no longer has a purpose. We must understand Christ's words "people neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Mk 12:25; Mt 22:30; Lk 20:35 ) as not having to do with sex / gender but only with sexual relations. Especially when paired with Paul's teaching that "there is neither male and female in Christ" (Gal 3:28).

\* It is important to note the switch in the conjunctions from "nor" for the divisions of race and class to "and" when speaking of sexual distinction. The Fathers take this as the implication that sexual differentiation remains eternally for Humanity, even if "being given in marriage" (Matt 22:30) will not remain, but that "nationality" and earthly class distinction may be nullified.

- We will still be sexed, and our relational connections established in Christ will be in place, though with no passionate or sexual desires and longing in the Resurrected state.

◆ We will be as we Adam and Eve were in Paradise (clothed in glory, passionless, immortal and incorruptible), but our wills will be firmly established (we won't be changeable from this state) therefore we will experience God's Light as positive or negative.

\* God can no longer be ignored.

\* Some will experience this eternal unity with the Holy Trinity as joyful Light and Love while others who have rejected God will experience this a Fire and Rejection and burning.

- It will be a full stepping into eternity without going back, and then there will be the establishing of human beings in God's Eternity permanently.