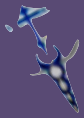




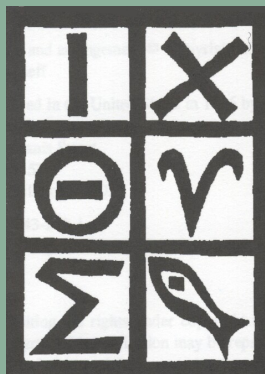
## Christianity: A Life Giving Love

Eastern Christian faith is centered on healing

The emphasis is on restoring our original creation in the image and likeness of God.



Eastern Christians are direct descendants of early Christians



◆ Eastern churches are rooted in tradition and sense of continuity with the sacred past.

◆ The Fathers of the Church are the teachers and authority figures for Eastern Christians.

◆ The foundation of Eastern Christian faith is based on pattern of never ending growth and development toward union with God, toward God-likeness.

◆ Thus, theology for the Early Church Fathers, the teachers of the faith, is all about love.



Бог



PENTECOST

According to the teachings of the Church Fathers, Christianity is *not* a “religion,” in the sense of how it is conceptualized today

- It is not about God directing human history from “somewhere out there” and man employing different rites to negotiate this separation.
- Christianity is not about attempting to alleviate a sense of powerlessness in this world by projecting hope toward a future life

Nor is Christianity a “philosophy,” a systematic formulation of concepts derived by man’s own intellectual efforts.

3



Christianity is a communion of God and man, of heaven and earth, of the living and the dead.



## EARLY CHURCH PERSPECTIVE ON SALVATION AND HEALING

### Salvation



The Ladder of Divine Ascent

Salvation comes from the Greek word, "soteri": to heal

To be *saved* is to to be *healed from our fallen condition* and restored to our original creation in the image and likeness of God.

Salvation is accomplish through union with Christ: *theosis*



*At the heart of Christianity and healing is the Incarnation: God's entry into the world changed everything - the physical world is now infused with the divine.*

## Christ: Physician of Our Bodies and Souls



As a divine Person, Christ took on flesh and assumed the fullness of human nature - "enhypostasized" human nature.

*Christ totally restored human nature by the power of His own divine nature, reuniting and conforming it in Himself to divinity.*

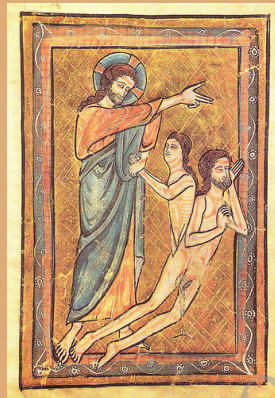
As the New Adam, Christ fully accomplished the divine plan, which the first man failed to do.



By His Incarnation, *Christ has overthrown the barriers which separated our nature from God and has opened human nature once more to the deifying energies of uncreated grace.*

Only Christ can deliver mankind from the consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression and from sin itself..

Christ's saving work is not imposed, rather is offered to man's free will and presupposes man's acceptance and free collaboration.



*Healing implies mankind's return to the state of his original creation:*

- God's *very own life* penetrates and sustains our own, so that once again, we share in God's immortality.
- By the Holy Spirit, we *experience* the depth and breadth of Christ's love so intimately that we actually *enter into* the very love of the Holy Trinity.

# THEOSIS

*Do not say that it is impossible to receive the Spirit of God .  
Do not say that it is possible to be made whole without Him.  
Do not say that one can possess Him without knowing it.  
Do not say that God does not manifest Himself to man.  
Do not say that men cannot perceive the divine light, or that it is impossible in this age!  
Never is it found to be impossible my friends.  
On the contrary, it is entirely possible when one desires it.*

*- St. Symeon the New Theologian, Hymn 27, 125-132  
(Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, 1986, preface)*



Icon of the

**Theosis means to be transformed into the very image of God, by Christ's very presence within.**

**By the Grace of God, man becomes a participant in the Divine, a partaker of the Energies of God. This is also referred to as "divinization".**

**Theosis is a lifelong process of restoration and healing....**

## *Theotokos of the Sign*

*"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you this sign: the Virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel."  
- Isaiah 7:14*

**This icon depicts Christ having been formed in the Theotokos' sinless womb, in whom the divine and human, uncreated and created meet**

**With Her arms raised in prayer, Mary summons us to respond to the call of God with the same faith and obedience as she did in order that Christ be formed in us as He was formed in Her.**

**We cannot be Christians unless Christ dwells within us and we in Him in the context of His body, the Church.**







## *“Let Us Make Man in Our Image and Likeness...”*

The Book of Genesis reveals that God’s creation was wholly good (Gn1:31).



God created man “after His own Heart” and for Himself.

Adam & Eve were created with the vocation *to become one with God*, gradually increasing in their capacity *to share in His divine life*.

By receiving the “*breath of life*” from God, the Fathers saw in *this breath the human soul* as well as the divine Spirit.

The Fathers teach that man was created from the dust of the earth, initially making him corruptible and mortal, but with the promise of incorruptibility and immortality.

Because Adam’s soul and body were penetrated with divine energies, they possessed supernatural qualities. (Larchet, 2002, pg. 21)



# Ancestral Sin



Expulsion from Eden

The expression, “original sin,” was unknown in the early church, and only appeared in the western Church with the works of St. Augustine.

Ancestral sin has a specific meaning quite different from the juridical implications of the commonly held conceptualization of original sin in the West today: an angry and offended God punishing Adam and Eve for their transgression; nor does it carry the concept of disobedience, or of being “stained” with a personal guilt that is passed from one generation to the next.

By eating the forbidden fruit, rejecting God and their vocation, Adam and Eve were the cause of their own death.

The forbidden fruit was condemned to be communion with self, not with God.

*Spiritual death came first: the soul lost the uncreated grace of God. Without the Light of Life illuminating the soul, it became darkened. [Analogy: a darkened mirror.]*

Bodily death followed. The darkening and dying of the soul was transmitted to the body.

[Analogy: branch breaking away from vine = without life giving “Sap” flowing through its “veins,” it begins to physically decay and die]

*“Our nature, became diseased... through the sin of one”*

- St. Cyril of Alexandria (Hughes, 2004, p. 2)



Sin entered through death and began to reign over creation.

Ancestral sin implies that man withdrew from God - lost divine grace - resulting in blindness, darkness and death of the "nous," the part of the soul once intimately connected to Divine Life.



Since the nous retains the image of God in man and has the potential to be linked with God from the moment of man's creation, it cannot be destroyed - instead this image became soiled, or darkened, by sin.

Thus, according to the early Fathers, *guilt* is not what is inherited by Adam and Eve's transgression; instead, what is inherited is a condition: disease and death.

## *The Church and Healing*





## “Theo” “logos”

In Greek, “theos” = god; “logos” = word thought, reasoning, knowledge

In the Eastern Church, *theology is associated with spiritual knowledge received as a gift of Grace as one moves toward union with Christ.*

Thus, Eastern spirituality is “mystical” - it looks to Christ and the teachers of the faith as living contemporaries.

“Mystical” derives from the Greek term *mystikos*, which mean “hidden,” “secret”

A mystical spiritual tradition is an experiential one, whereby we come to *know* divine realities by our individual *prayerful experiences* of Divine Love.

- ❖ The Church is a place of encounter, where God is not so much learned about as met. She is the “place” of theophany.
- ❖ Church, derived from Greek, “ekklesia” = assembly), is where the early Church gathered for the eucharistic assembly: the “eighth day” - the day of the Eucharist - the day of the Lord (Rev 1:10).
- ❖ The Church is at once the assembly, where Christ is tabernacled and present, and the believer: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and the Spirit of God dwells in you... the temple of God is sacred and you are the temple. “ (1 Cor 3:16-19).



*The Church heals the whole person - body and soul.*

БОЛУ



PENTECOS

*The work of the Church is to bring Christians to the state of deification:*

*to behold Christ, have His divine life within; and in Him, be brought into the love of the Holy Trinity - beginning in this life!*

*Our healing depends on being restored to this original image.*



The goal of the Church is to help determine 'how' each man will see that Glory: whether 'as Light' or as 'a consuming fire.' (Archbishop Chrysostomos, 2007, p. 88)

From the Eastern Christian point of view, "the destiny of every man on earth is to see the Glory of God (which) Christ first reveals to man in this life (the Paraousia)... to those who decide... to follow... the path of (spiritual) therapy' and which all men will see... at the Second Coming of Christ.'" (Archbishop Chrysostomos, 2007, p. 88)

# The Church: Spiritual Pool of Bethesda

**Bethesda has five porches. *"In these lay a great multitude of the sick, blind, lame paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water"* (Jn 5:3)**



Healing Pool at Bethesda

**The Church too is a Pool, a spiritual Bethesda.**

*To heal, one must participate in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. The Holy Mysteries (Sacraments), especially the Holy Eucharist (the "Medicine of Immortality") and Reconciliation, are essential for one to heal.*

**"Earthly life - this brief period - is given to man by the mercy of the Creator in order that man may use it for his salvation, that is for the restoration of himself from death to life." - St. Ignatius of Antioch (Mileant, 2005)**