



The Transfiguration as a Divine Mystery in Orthodoxy

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Abstract

The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ is connected with His baptism. Only on two occasions in the Synoptic Gospels, is a voice from heaven heard. The initial time is at the baptism, while the second time is at the Transfiguration of the Lord. The baptism indicates the opening chapter of Jesus' public ministry, while the Transfiguration initiates the climactic stage. The Transfiguration brings to us a jubilant message, and a confirmation that God is indeed accessible to any personal experience. Before we can hope to see Jesus Transfigured in Glory as the Son of God our eyes as well as our spiritual eye must be opened and enlightened by God through His Grace. Humanity cannot assume they will get to see Christ transfigured unless it becomes enlightened by His Glorious radiance. Peter, James and John are permitted a revelation of who Jesus categorically is. We see clearly in the Transfiguration that Jesus is on the level with God because, Jesus, the Logos, is God incarnate. The Transfiguration thus revealed Jesus as the Lord of Glory. The Orthodox church views the Transfiguration as a prefiguration of our Lord's Resurrection and His Glorious Second Coming.

Keywords: Transfiguration, transformation, metamorphosis, regeneration, divine mystery.

Introduction

"Thou wast transfigured on the mount, O Christ God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine upon us sinners. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee" (Festal Troparion of the Orthodox Church).

The Transfiguration is undoubtedly a highly thought-provoking miracle and it comprises one of the five chief markers in the gospel narrative of Jesus, along with Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension (Guroian, 2010: 28). This miracle is unique since the miracle befalls Jesus himself (Barth, 2004). The event of the Transfiguration is chronicled in three of the four Gospels (Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36). Peter mentions it in 2 Peter (1: 10-19), and it is made reference to circuitously in other passages of the New Testament *inter alia* Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 3:2-31; 2Corinthians 3:7-18; John 1:14; 12:27-30; Acts 9:3). The Transfiguration may also be understood as a divine ratification of Peter's confession of the role of Jesus as the Messiah (Smith, 1985). In 2 Peter 1:16-18, the Apostle Peter pronounces himself to be an eyewitness "of his magnificence". Jesus takes Peter, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John, the Apostle, and goes up to an unnamed mountain. Matthew 17 asserts that disciple John was present during the Transfiguration, but the Gospel of John has no description of this (Andreopoulos, 2005: 43-44). The spirit of the Transfiguration is exposed in its various symbols. "The mountain is a silent, solitary place which makes it easier to engage in prayer and helps us unite our restless mind with God. The name "Tabor" translates as purity or light. Whoever comes to an awareness of his actions and repents of what he has committed is freed of spiritual uncleanness and is able to see the divine uncreated Light. Christian teaching sees the spiritual



meaning of life precisely in the attempt to acquire this Light and deify human nature” (Seraphim Rose, n.d.).

Nonetheless, from the 3rd century, some have acknowledged Mount Tabor south of the region of Galilee, on the northern part of the Jezreel Valley, as the site of the Transfiguration, including Origen (Meistermann, 1912). Mount Tabor has for centuries being a place of Christian pilgrimage and is also the site of the Church of the Transfiguration. Various scholars have diverging views on the actual location (Lightfoot, 1825; Alford, 1863; France, 1987; Whittaker, 1984). This is however not important as the essence of the Transfiguration story is all that matters. The Early Church Father Irenaeus in the 2nd century, was captivated by the Transfiguration: "the glory of God is a live human being and a truly human life is the vision of God" (Louth, 2003). The word Transfigured, designates a total complete metamorphosis of the form and substance of Jesus. The Transfiguration is echoed in different places in the NT, such as in the stories of Saul of Tarsus conversion to Paul, and the latter tells the Corinthians that believers 'are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Patristic theology attaches the connotation of the Transfiguration to ascetic effort (the "high mountain apart" to which the apostles were led) and to the transfiguring power of noetic prayer (Rossi, n.d.).

The whole of Saint Marks Gospel is built around three key moments in the life of Christ, which reveal the precise beginning, middle and consummation of His earthly mission: His Baptism, Transfiguration and Crucifixion. Each of these events is a transfiguring theophany, a showing-forth of the glory and reality of God. Each of these theophanies is a moment of extreme metamorphosis (the English form of the Greek word for "transfiguration"): the Baptism signaling the metamorphosis of the Uncreated Logos assuming a created human nature, the Transfiguration, the moment when the human nature of Christ reveals the glory of the Divine nature; the Crucifixion, the moment when sin and death are transformed by Christ's supreme sacrifice. Each of these sublime moments of metamorphosis contain a cluster of motifs –images or actions that are similar in each, linking the three theophanies together as a triptych of "transfiguration" through parallel sacred, symbolic images. These images are sacred because they reveal the Divine presence, and they are symbols because they are images of creation transformed by the uncreated energies that reveal the Uncreated Divine Presence. (Rossi, n.d.).

On the mountain

While they were on the mountain Jesus was Transfigured and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became glistening white. Luke tells us that Jesus's resolution was to pray (9:28), and despite the fact that Jesus was praying to His Father He experienced the Transfiguration, and "the appearance of his face changed, and His clothes became dazzling white" (9:29). Matthew 17:2 informs us that Jesus "was transfigured before them; his face shining as the sun, and his garments became white as the light." The prophets Elijah and Moses manifest and Jesus speaks to them (Lee, 2004). When Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah, the subject is His 'exodos' or departure and the three disciples are worthy to be present. In II Peter 16-21, Peter received divine confirmation of Christ's power. He was an eye-witness during the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration is essentially proof of the power and majesty of Christ on earth. Jesus white robe invariably is symbolic of the glorified Resurrection body as it is believed in Judaism as well as on Mount Tabor. The three disciples are afforded by God a total awareness of who and what Jesus really is in His being and salvific role. They see clearly is the visual image of the reality of



the Son's unity with the Father. This is basically hidden from the naked eye and it resides in the deepest dimension of reality. Christ was exposed in His glory, and He was linked to Moses and Elijah to indicate that He was about to fulfill the Law and the Prophetic utterances, and that death could not destroy the glory follows those who are in God's Grace. Moses and Elijah were and are alive, and are thus glorified. Jesus confronted death, but death in God's service is ultimately the way to Glory.

The context of the gospel is significant as the surge was turning against Jesus various people were trying to scandalise Him. So Jesus then asks what people said about Him, and what the disciples thought. As Jesus begins His ultimate salvific action, He turns towards Jerusalem and His crucifixion. He is transfigured in front of three disciples on the top of a mountain. This action ought to have fortified the disciples that irrespective of what happened in Jerusalem, Jesus was still the Lord. In this context, the Transfiguration is a critical moment, and the mountain becomes the converging point of the temporal and the interminable, and it is Jesus who becomes the nexus between earth and the heavenly realm (Lee, 2004: 2). Thomas Aquinas reflected on the Transfiguration as being "the greatest miracle" because it hugely complemented baptism and displayed the flawlessness of Heaven (Healy, 2003: 100). So awesome was this sight, that Luke informs us that the disciples who observed Jesus's meeting with Moses and Elijah were petrified by what they observed.

The account of the Transfiguration as described in Matthew (17, 1-9) informs us that:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.' And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, 'Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead.'

The story does in no way suggest it was told to show what Jesus could do, but rather shows in all details who Jesus is. Luke also describes this experience as the three apostles observing Jesus's 'glory' (9:32). Jesus's holiness and spirituality was allowed to shine through and it transformed his physical presence. It may be that Luke is pointing us to the future glory which would come to Jesus after His crucifixion, about which he was going to speak with Moses and Elijah, who 'appeared in glory' with him (9:31). While Moses mediated the law, Christ mediated Grace and truth. Additionally, God has never been seen but Jesus made him known (1:18). Jesus is then the revealer rather than in Moses' case the recipient of divine revelation. The glorification of the Son of Man as stated earlier is the theme of the talking down from heaven (12:23–34).

Moses and Elijah appeared then, with Christ, and were speaking to Him "of his departure (exodos) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31; see also Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4). Sybrowsky (2003) states that Moses and Elijah, and their very presence at the Transfiguration, are symbolic of the Jewish Law and Prophets. Both Moses and Elijah held important positions with Moses as the amasser of Israel, and Elijah as the holder of the power to seal the heavens



(Exodus 3:7–17; 1 Kings 17:1–7; 18:1). The transfiguration account, by not merely placing Jesus in the company of Moses, but by elevating Him exceedingly, is a revelation of the divine sonship of Jesus, which is in fact what the voice from heaven declared.

Elijah and Moses presence is also understood in the vision since they were in the heavenly kingdom. Moses had also experienced God on the mountain (Exodus 24:15-18), and was the first and most likely the paramount prophet to Israel and God knew him ‘...face to face’ (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). Elijah was equally a great prophet and performed miracles (1 Kings 17:1-17). Luke asserts that Jesus, was ‘a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people’ (Luke 24:19), and was the one whom Moses foretold the Lord would raise up in future (Deuteronomy 18:15; Luke 7:20), and it was conjectured that he might even be Elijah returning (Luke 9:8, 19). St. John Chrysostom elucidates that Moses signifies the Law and Elijah the Prophets of the Old Testament and both had revelations of God. The Transfiguration “It presents the Gospel in microcosm” (Trites, 1979). The accounts of the transfiguration in Matthew and Mark are fundamentally analogous with small variances. Luke’s account though, has more dissimilarities. Where Matthew and Mark mention a period of six days between Jesus’ formerly reported teaching and the event of His Transfiguration, Luke speaks of ‘about eight days’

In Luke’s description of the Transfiguration the glory of Jesus is collectively supported by Moses and Elijah looking ahead with Jesus to his ‘exodos’, or ‘leaving’ which He accomplished in Jerusalem (9:31). Luke could be suggesting that the Transfiguration took place before the Resurrection. Moses symbolizes the dead and Elijah, given that he was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, represents the living. Luke tells us that when the their assignments and tasks were accomplished, Jesus alone would henceforth lead people to everlasting life in His Glorious Kingdom. The early Church considered the Transfiguration to be one of the supreme miracles of Jesus and what makes it exceptional is that it happened to Him, rather than was executed by Him.

Tabernacles, a heavenly voice and bright clouds of glory

Peter acknowledged how good it was for them to be at hand and communicated the wish to construct three booths/tabernacles for Moses, Elijah, and Christ. The booths might suggest that this event ensued during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when the Jews would generally be sleeping outdoors out in the fields for the harvest season, possibly relating to the forty years of wandering in the wilderness documented in the book of Exodus. The Old Testament contexts (tabernacles, and Elijah) are significant to understanding what is happening in the story.

Jesus said that some would not taste death before they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28). On the mountain, Peter sees Christ in all His glory. He may thus have anticipated the coming Kingdom and wanted to make the booths for the great celebration since Zechariah made it plain that in the kingdom the people will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, after all the promises are apparent. In any event in the New Jerusalem, the tabernacle would be rebuilt (Tobit 13 10) and the throne of wisdom was in the pillar of cloud, and it ministered before God "in the holy tabernacle" (Sirach 24).

Jeremiah alluded to the notion that “the Lord [shall] disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen, even the Cloud ...”. The six days possibly relate to the six days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:16). “And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves”. (Mark 9:2). The event parallels the events at Mount Sinai in Exodus 24. God’s glory covered Mount Sinai for six days and on the seventh day



God then called out to Moses (Exodus 24:15-16). Moses was also accompanied by three people as he went to the mountain, namely Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Exodus 24:1,9).

The three tabernacles may be understood as Peter's endeavor to retain the prophets' presence (Lee, 2004). Then, however, a bright cloud appears, and a voice from the cloud says: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). The disciples then fall to the ground in dread, but Jesus approaches and touches them, and He tells them not to be frightened. When the disciples eventually turn their gaze upwards, they no longer see either Elijah or Moses (Lee, 2004). The perfect experience on Mount Tabor made Peter keen to extend the time there it and he says: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

The heavenly voice fits in well with the idea of a divine encounter as evidenced in the baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist as recorded in all four of the Gospels: Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-9, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:31-34. John the Baptist, was chosen by God to announce His coming, and was preaching in the wilderness and was baptizing all those who would respond to his message calling on them to be penitent. In essence, John was directing the people toward the one who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus went to John at the Jordan to be baptized. John would not do this, saying that Jesus should be baptizing him, however, Jesus said to John, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness (3:15). John complied and baptized Jesus. As Jesus alighted from the water, the heavens suddenly opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and perched on him. Then God spoke and said "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Christ's baptism was thus a "theophany," or manifestation of God to the world, because it was the beginning of His public ministry. The voice on the mountain echoes the sentiments of God the Father as expressed at the baptism of the Son, Christ.

In Matthew 17, we read the disciples were frightened when they heard God's voice and fell on their faces. Jesus comforts them and says "Get up. Don't be afraid." When the disciples again looked up, they only saw Jesus. The experience on the mountain mirrors the involvement of Israel on Mount Sinai. In Exodus (19-24) the glory of God lingered on the peak and God spoke as He did at Mount Tabor. God could not be seen but was heard (Deuteronomy 4). What the people saw thus convinced them the Decalogue was indeed from God, and so Gods voice is loud and clear.

Clouds are often confirmed bridges between heaven and earth in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, and are often anticipated in communication between heaven and earth but the voice is most important as it offers a divine confirmation of Peter's confession (Mark 8: 29) and also Jesus' forecast of His impending passion and glorious resurrection (Mark 8:31). Consequently, the disciples see at the Transfiguration not simply the glorious Jesus, but Jesus in God's presence and glory. The Transfiguration of Christ is thus a theophany, and an appearance of God that exhibits His uncreated divine energy. In the Transfiguration we celebrate the divinity of Christ as God.

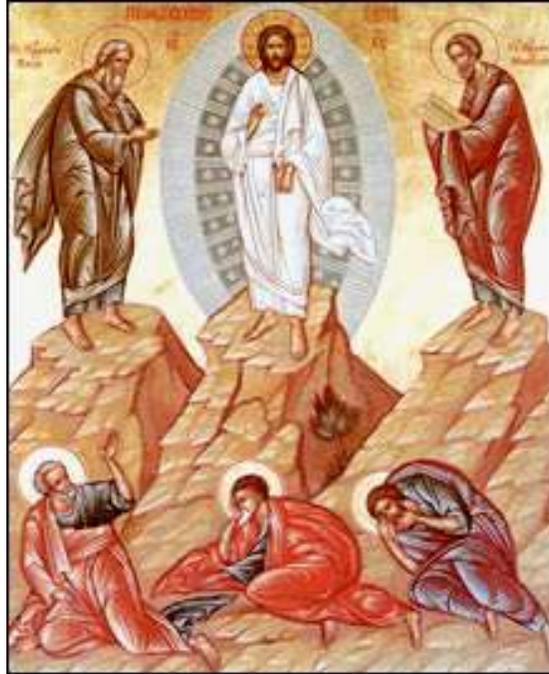


Figure 1. Icon of the Transfiguration

Source: http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/transfig_glory.html

As Jesus and His disciples descended from the mountain, He told them not to express what they had seen until He had risen from the dead. The instruction that Christ gave Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone of the happenings until after His resurrection can clarify: "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matthew. 17:9; Mark 9:9). Thus they deliberated on the Transfiguration among themselves (Mark 9:10), and Luke says, "they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (Luke 9:36). Nonetheless, the disciples are described as inquiring among themselves as to what Jesus intended by "risen from the dead" (Hare, 1996).

Some view the Transfiguration, as a resurrection appearance, which was transferred to the life of Jesus as a Transfiguration account. The happenings of the Transfiguration are amazing and overwhelming because they have to do with the appearance of God and "...the experience of His divine presence by human beings. No discontinuity exists between the divine and the human, and indeed the natural and the mystical, or even the historical and the eschatological, the earthly and the heavenly realities... And the connecting link which brings together and holds together these realities is precisely the person of Jesus Christ. This is especially true when we, like the three disciples on the mountain, are blessed to experience Jesus as the Christ, transfigured in the brilliant radiance of his divine and uncreated glory" (Chamberas, n.d.). Jesus's transformation revealed that Jesus's transfigured was an epiphany, and the presence of God. Because Jesus's appearance changed during His Transfiguration some critics propose that it took place after the Resurrection, that would then be some time during the forty days prior to His Ascension.

Luke states the risen Christ continued to appear to His apostles and communicated with them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1: 3). There are also numerous passages in the gospels which signpost that the Resurrection transformed Jesus's physical appearance so that He was not



acknowledged at first (e.g. Matthew 28:17, Luke 24:17, John 20:14, 21:4). The disciples were given a vision by God which permitted them to see some degree of the significance and glory of Jesus and it "...was not an objective transformation of Jesus' physical countenance and material body" (Williams, 2002).

Significance in Orthodoxy

The holy Transfiguration of our Jesus Christ is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on August 6th as one of the major fixed Feast days of the Church calendar. The Transfiguration is one of the twelve great feasts, and it held a central place in the Church calendar in the in the 4th century. In fact St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, established a church on Mount Tabor, the traditional site of the Transfiguration, and it was dedicated to the feast.

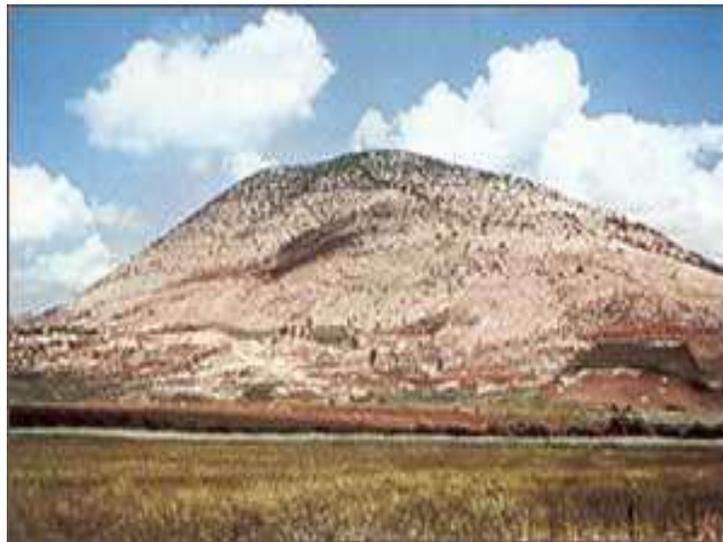


Figure 2. Mount Tabor –Site of the Transfiguration
Source: http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/transfig_glory.html

The astonishing occurrence of the Transfiguration of Christ and its solemn and jubilant festivity in the Orthodox Church is principally expressive of Orthodox Christianity in general. The feast day was initially introduced in Jerusalem in the 5th century as a feast day, which was enhanced significantly throughout the centuries due to the growth of hymnography, iconography and the festal discourses of the Early Church Fathers. The great mystery of the Transfiguration is not a theme that we can readily approach (Allison, 1993). Pious Orthodox adherents are gripped by a sense of awe and anxiety engulfs them when they reflect on the celestial mystery of the Transfiguration and contemplate its message. The present world, with all of its many evils such as strife, greed, corruption, crime, suffering and grief, can be transformed and transfigured by the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by the magnificence of the transfigured Christ, shining in the hearts and minds of humans. A revelation requires a response and while human nature instinctively fears and we may fall on our faces before His Glory, we need to submit to Jesus and worship and obey Him.

The Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Christ, the Theanthropos, and the establishment of the Church at Pentecost, have for their purpose, not only the glorious confirmation of the Divine nature in Christ, not only



the divinization (theosis) of humanity in Christ, but also the total transfiguration of all of creation, animate and inanimate. An exclusive emphasis on an anthropocentric (human-centered) interpretation of the Transfiguration event is therefore a serious limitation, not to say, distortion, of the fullness of Orthodox teaching on the subject, which is at once Trinitarian, Christological, anthropological (doctrine of man), cosmological (doctrine of creation) and eschatological (doctrine of the end times) (Rossi, n.d.)

The Early Church Fathers taught that, when God created Adam and Eve, they were both clothed in the Divine light of God Himself. But, once they sinned, they lost God's Glory, thus we lost our pure past due to sin. Christ however redeems us and "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). We thus move towards deification or *theosis*. *Theosis* refers to how Jesus Christ introduced immortality and incorruption into our human nature. It is rational and coherent to accept the presence of a personal sensitive God, and it is equally reasonable to also agree to the appropriateness of supernatural Divine Revelation. In his composition "Against Heresies" St. Irenaeus states:

We would not have received incorruptibility and immortality, had we not become united with someone who is incorrupt and immortal. But how could we have become united with someone incorrupt and immortal, had not the incorrupt and immortal one first become as one of us, in order for our corruptibility to be absorbed by incorruptibility, and our mortality to be absorbed by immortality.

Saint Gregory Palamas speaks of the 'Divine Light':

There was a time when sunlight was not contained within an orb as within a vessel. Light was first-born, while the orb was made on the fourth day of Creation by the One Who made everything. He united the light with the orb and thus created a luminary which gives day to people and shines during the day. In the same manner the Divine light existed before it became contained in the body of Christ as in a vessel. This light is pre-eternal, while the adjunct obtained from us by the Son of God – human flesh – was created later, for our sake; having taken on Himself the fullness of Divinity, He – the Son of man – became a divinely creative and divinely radiant luminary. Christ's face shone like the sun, while His garments became white as snow. The Evangelist Mark says: "...His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." Thus, both the body of Christ and His garments shone with the same light, but unequally: His face became radiant as the sun, while His garments shone from contact with His body. He thus showed us the nature of that garment of glory, in which will be clothed those who will be with God in the eternal age, and also the nature of that garment of sinlessness, which Adam lost through his transgression and, seeing his own nakedness, was ashamed.

The Hesychasts of Byzantium believed that a vision of Divine Light which was uncreated, was in essence the zenith of a mystical experience. St. Simeon the New Theologian's (949-1022 CE) works are replete with the notion of Divine and Uncreated Light. When one experiences God's energies, they take the form of Light and they experience transformation in soul and body.

In many respects, the visually dramatic features of the Transfiguration exceed those of any other part of the Gospels, with the possible exception of Luke's account of the Ascension (Williams,



2002). A divine and uncreated light surrounded not only Jesus, but also Moses and Elisha and the three disciples and they participated actively and were immersed in the divine light which stemmed from the Transfigured Lord. The Church Fathers assert that the Transfiguration of Christ infers and presumes the spiritual rebirth and transfiguration of human beings by the grace of God. As a prophet, Jesus is the bearer of God's Word to the Israelites but the Transfiguration also reveals the spiritual transfiguration of fallen human nature as well. Jesus, shining in intact exquisiteness and unfading glory:

...reveals in His human nature the natural, the original condition of the human person - created in the image and likeness of God. This is the condition of Paradise which man has lost and which he seeks to regain in Christ. In Christ, in the transfigured Christ, we see exactly this pristine state of human nature restored to its original natural beauty and glory. But this also indicates the natural and spiritual potentiality of every human being who chooses freely to be united through faith and love with Jesus Christ - the light and the life and the savior of the world (Williams, 2002).

We require renewal and regeneration as we strive for a spiritual way of life and put away greed and desire for material things. Paul advises us that we can live "as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; ...as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Corinthians 6:9-10). The Transfiguration was the visual appearance of God's Kingdom on earth and it raises our gaze up to our original destiny, which St. Peter asserts "[Our Lord's] divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... and through his great and precious promises, [we] may be partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world." (2 Pet 1:3, 4). Thus all of humanity may be participants in the divine nature and Jesus taught "Abide in Me and I in you... As the Father loved me, I also have loved you...". This lofty call, it is for our return to our original calling and requires a human makeover and ultimately transfiguration into the life of Christ and ultimately, *Theosis*.

Conclusion

The sacred mysteries in the Orthodox Church can be demarcated as "those holy acts through which the Holy Spirit mysteriously and invisibly confers Grace (the saving power of God) upon man...". Christians have confidence in the notion that God is extant universally and fills all things by His divine grace, and that all of creation is, in some manner, a "sacrament". We need to view the Transfiguration both as the revelation of Christ's glory and as a prefiguring of the Glorious Resurrection and a sacred mystery. Scripture frequently depicts high mountains as the nexus between heaven and Earth. Jesus' Transfiguration on mount Tabor demonstrates that He is the bridge that brings heaven and Earth together. The presence of Moses and Elijah throughout the Transfiguration demonstrates that Jesus accomplishes and exceeds the teachings of the Old Testament Hebrew prophets. The Transfiguration is critical to the Eastern Orthodox Churches, as it was the instant when Christ exposed the glory of the Holy Trinity. The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor has weighty consequences for creation and the natural order as a whole.

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