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(Safe) Water as the Condition for Sustainable Development in Light of the Climate Crisis: An Eastern Orthodox Reflection

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Abstract: After reflecting on the issue of (safe) water in the context of SDG 6 with the support of the most recent scientific data, the present study provides clear theological reasoning based on insights developed within the Eastern Orthodox tradition, such as ontological interconnectedness, deep incarnation, and cosmic liturgy towards an *eco*-ethos which can contribute to sustainable environmental development.

Keywords: safe water; ontology; communion; eco-ethos; sustainability; Eastern Orthodoxy

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that water is an essential element for all forms of life, both human and non-human. Although water encompasses about 71% of the Earth's surface in seas, oceans, lakes, and rivers, less than one percent of the available freshwater can sustain life and ecosystems (Randhir 2012). Water is not merely a peripheral aspect of life, but rather a fundamental, ontological element that significantly contributes to the very existence of both humans and non-humans. In this context, access to safe and clean water and sanitary conditions remains one of the most crucial human needs for health and well-being, since billions of people still lack access to these essential services.

In addition to its biological significance, water is widely used for a variety of purposes, including leisure, commercial activities, economic development, agriculture, transportation, urbanization, and more (cf. European Environmental Agency 2018). Throughout history, civilizations have flourished along bodies of water (e.g., Mesopotamia with the Euphrates and the Tigris; Egypt with the Nile) (Haug and Müller 2020, p. 1), and conflicts have arisen over the control of water resources. Water also holds great symbolic importance in many religious traditions.

The water demand is increasing nowadays (United Nations 2012) due to rapid population growth, urbanization, and rising water needs from agriculture, industry, energy sectors, and the global economy. Moreover, water availability is becoming less predictable in many regions, with droughts exacerbating water scarcity and negatively impacting people's health, productivity, and the prospects for sustainable development and biodiversity worldwide (Liu 2019; Randhir 2012). Therefore, ensuring that everyone has access to sustainable water and sanitation services is a critical strategy for mitigating the climate crisis in the coming years.

Taking into account this grim picture of the present reality, can Eastern Orthodox theology be of any help offering assistance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically in ensuring universal access to especially clean water (Goal 6)?

Considering the interconnectedness of all humans and forms of life, access to safe and clean water should be regarded as a fundamental human right. A Christian perspective that acknowledges this profound ontological connection with water recognizes water as not just a symbol but as a real means through which God purifies and sanctifies life and creation through the Holy Spirit in Christ.

After analyzing the issue in the context of SDG 6 with the help of updated scientific data, I will provide clear theological reasoning based on insights developed within the

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Christian (particularly Orthodox) tradition, such as ontological interconnectedness, deep incarnation, and cosmic liturgy. This will lead to the formulation of a specific eco-ethos. Finally, I will conclude by emphasizing the validity of the arguments for sustainable environmental development.

2. SDG 6 on Water: A Critical Time for Action

The integration of the topic of water[1] into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2010 was a deliberate choice. However, the current situation has not shown significant improvement over the past decade. The escalating risks associated with the ongoing climate crisis are posing challenges to access to clean water (and sanitation). For instance, any damage to infrastructures, caused by extreme floods, that so often occurs nowadays, can affect the accessibility to water for some time. It is thus crucial to examine the framing of the issue in SDG 6 to comprehend the challenges and urgent need for action:

> "Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene is the most basic human need for health and well-being. Billions of people will lack access to these basic services in 2030 unless progress quadruples. Water demand is rising owing to rapid population growth, urbanization, and increasing water needs from the agriculture, industry, and energy sectors. The water demand has outpaced population growth, and half the world's population is already experiencing severe water scarcity at least one month a year. Water scarcity is projected to increase with the rise of global temperatures as a result of climate change. Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is a human right. To get back on track, key strategies include increasing sector-wide investment and capacity-building, promoting innovation and evidence-based action, enhancing cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders, and adopting a more integrated and holistic approach to water management. Water is essential not only to health but also to poverty reduction, food security, peace and human rights, ecosystems, and education. Nevertheless, countries face growing challenges linked to water scarcity, water pollution, degraded water-related ecosystems, and cooperation over transboundary water basins". (United Nations 2010)

Water use has been growing at twice the rate of population increase in the last century (United Nations 2012; Randhir 2012). The rapid exploitation of freshwater resources is not only altering the quality but also the quantity and availability of freshwater, posing potential catastrophic risks for humankind (European Environmental Agency 2018). According to the United Nations (United Nations 2010), by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in watersheds facing absolute water scarcity. This situation is expected to worsen due to the impending climate crisis. Freshwater availability is approaching its limits, necessitating more innovation and changes in water usage behavior. Over the last century, water resources have increasingly been threatened by land use changes and the climate crisis, resulting in the loss of access to safe and clean water (European Environmental Agency 2018). This has serious implications for the health and livelihood of millions, especially for children, women, and marginalized parts of society. Paradoxically still, "one in nine people worldwide does not have access to clean water . . .; One in three people do not have access to proper sanitation" (The Sustainability Book 2019), which underlines the ethical-moral dimension of the whole discussion. Even today, in various parts of the world, water, this crucial resource, and environmental factors are still considered a crucial element of power games or an object of profit.

Water-related disasters, such as droughts and floods, can cause significant harm to entire ecosystems, leading to a profound impact on biodiversity. It is expected that water resources will continue to face challenges in the future due to various factors, necessitating a renewed focus on this critical resource. In addition to the climate crisis, global conflicts like the Russian invasion of Ukraine can significantly affect the accessibility, quality, and pollution of water, particularly underground waters, rivers, and urban infrastructure. Military operations can directly pollute freshwater resources through the disposal of ammunition

and war equipment, as well as the release and leaching of explosive residues. Indirectly, damage to industrial facilities can also contribute to water pollution. During wartime, water infrastructure can be directly or indirectly damaged due to military attacks, despite international conventions prohibiting attacks on water infrastructure that result in civilian damage outweighing military advantage. These attacks can result in water deprivation, sanitation disruption, and surface water and groundwater pollution (Hryhorczuk et al. 2024, p. 4).

It is important to acknowledge that fluctuations in water quantity can have significant impacts on ecosystems and regional economies. Drought-prone areas face an increased risk of depleted water supplies and poor water quality, while flood-prone regions contend with threats to property and uncertainty stemming from changes in river and coastal geomorphology.

Water quality remains a major challenge in many parts of the world. While it is relatively straightforward to address and mitigate pollution from specific point sources, addressing nonpoint sources presents a significant challenge. Sediment, a major contaminant, affects aquatic ecosystems, water storage, and economic activities dependent on water. Nutrient loss is also a major concern, leading to eutrophication of water bodies, and impacting aquatic communities and fisheries (Randhir 2012).

Pathogens are another significant contaminant, posing a risk to millions of people worldwide. Waterborne diseases (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences 2024) are among the leading causes of death, claiming 3.4 million lives annually. In addition, heavy metals, toxic chemicals, microplastics, and general water pollution all have serious implications for public health and the environment (Denchak 2023).

If that is the current state regarding the access and availability of clean and safe water, what can religious communities, especially the Christian churches, do to address the problem?

3. Is (Christian) Theology of Any Help Here? An Introduction to an Eastern Orthodox View of Water

The question above is not rhetorical. If theology has a role to play today amid various challenges and crises like the climate crisis, it must address all matters related to actual life. In this context, *ontology* can be an important interpretive tool in our theological perspective[2]. When referring to ontology, we are referring to matters of existence itself, in other words, matters of life and death. Discussing life and death is not simply a biological issue shared among all living beings, but primarily an ontological matter related to existence itself. In ontology, the inquiry into being in general, and human being in particular, takes on an absolute metaphysical priority. It is no longer a question of moral duties and values or behavior, but of the true nature of existence.

This *ontological* perspective has not always been considered acceptable, particularly in late modernity, where a certain aversion to a type of totalizing ontology in favor of *psychology*[3] (Zizioulas 2006, pp. 54, 56–57) exists due to the changeability that defines this era and echoes the uncertainties of ancient Greek philosophy. When discussing water, one of the most essential elements for sustaining life, an ontological perspective is crucial for a meaningful discourse. Therefore, theology as a discipline does not *primarily* concern ethical or moral teachings, but rather a pursuit of *meaning* for both human and non-human beings and the world as a whole, taking into serious account their existence and seeking the *well*-being, if not the *eternal* existence, of all things. This also applies to Orthodox theology in particular.

By referring to an Eastern Orthodox outlook, the present paper points to a specific hermeneutical approach when dealing with the common Christian tradition, based on a priori-*specific* theological (i.e., the Orthodox tradition) and spiritual assumptions that represent a particular conception of created reality (water included), as will be explained below. Additionally, it denotes Eastern Orthodoxy as one of the three major doctrinal and jurisdictional groups of Christianity, distinct from Oriental Orthodox Christianity since 451. Eastern Orthodoxy is distinguished by its claim of continuity with the apostolic church, its

liturgy, bold patristic heritage, and its territorial/local autocephalous churches (Ware 1963). This methodological note is necessary to clarify that, as is always the case, the article represents a specific worldview, the Eastern Orthodox Christian, without pretending to be "neutral" or free of any a priori premises.

Returning now to our discussion about water from the point of view of UN SDGs, one should pay attention to defining certain links where a specific theological vision, in other words, a certain religious way of life and spirituality, can play a role in coming to terms with the challenge of water.

Before, however, diving into the depth of the Orthodox tradition in a more systematic way, a quick look at the status questionis of the reception of water throughout the history of Christian theology, is necessary to understand the special (if any) contribution of this particular tradition to the topic. Some remarks in this direction are necessary:

> Water plays a significant role in the Bible in various instances. Starting with the Book of *Genesis*, it emphasizes the importance of water in the account of the creation of the world. Whether in *Genesis 1*, where the entire created order emerges out of the water and God makes the waters "swarm" with life (*Gen*. 1:20–21), or in *Genesis 2:6* where God makes "a stream . . . rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground," life emerges from the water. This biblical account of our dependence on water echoes the scientific evidence that water represents a vital element for life. In addition, in *Psalm 104*, the psalmist observes a water-nourished landscape teeming with abundant creatures and life, giving thanks to God for blessings that overflow like water streaming down to humans and the whole earth. Water appears to be the most suitable environment for life to emerge and thrive, similar to our common experience of the unborn infant in its mother's womb. Baptism is also associated with water in the Bible, as seen in passages such as *Matthew 28:19*, *Mark 16:16*, and *John 3:5*. Paul described baptism as a symbolic reenactment of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his turn, Jesus referred to himself as the source of "living water" (*John 4:10*) in the well-known encounter with the Samaritan woman, and elsewhere, trusting in Jesus releases "rivers of living water" (*John 7:38*) within the human heart. In these instances, water symbolizes initiation, conversion, and renewal as a mysterious signal of Christ's presence in the depths of life. (Deming 2024, pp. 1808–33; Cf. also Harper 2005; Stewart 2011)

Our intention here is not to delve in detail into modern theological literature on the topic. Discussing water in theological terms may seem unconventional, but there is indeed a particular stream of "natural theology" (Chignell 2020) that has focused on water as it grapples with the challenges posed by the evolving worldview in the Western world after the Copernican turn. Thus, already in 1734, in his book *Hydrotheologie*, J.A. Fabricius, by "observing the properties, distribution, and movement of water" attempted to "encourage human beings to love and admire the benevolence of the powerful Creator", as he explained in the subtitle of the book (Russell 2007, pp. 164–65).

N. Marais (2017, p. 70) provides an interesting typology of the various contemporary currents that focus on water as a key element of some sort of eco-theology, discerning the following three interrelated but not fully identical fields: "hydrotheology", "aqua-centric theology", and "blue theology". Aqua-centric theology is proposed by De Gruchy, a South African theologian. He begins with a concern about a contextual moment—cholera in 2008 and 2009 in Zimbabwe. Cholera, as a waterborne disease, leads De Gruchy to observe the key theological point that water created by God for life is now turned into a source of death. He accounts for this paradoxical predicament by pointing to the economic and political injustices in the sharing of the earth's resources, in particular, water. Blue theology is introduced by Ferris, an eco-theologian, and it focuses not only on the value of water itself but also on humanity's action towards water conservation (Kim 2023, pp. 30–32).

An important and well-discussed book is the one by Catholic theologian Christiana Zenner, titled *Just Water, Theology, Ethics and Fresh-Water Crises* (Zenner 2018), where the

author takes into account, among other things, the Catholic Social Teaching, as its primary source, along with the *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis to stress the importance of water as a "human right" (Zenner 2018, chps. 1, 4), following the United Nations SDG 6, while she criticizes the various cases of abuse of water and the related gendered, and generally social, injustices as a means of power and control, drawing connections between human health, social location, and ecological conditions.

When considering Eastern Orthodoxy, it is essential to recognize the pioneering role the Ecumenical Patriarchate has played in promoting global ecological awareness (Bartholomew 2010; Chryssavgis 2019, p. 91ff). However, in principle, there appears to be a lack of specific references to the importance of water for creation care and sustainability in key decisions and documents[4], despite the numerous symposia held on ships and conferences organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Chryssavgis 2019, pp. 191–94). Thus, the discussion often revolves around a traditional interpretation of the topic, like the significance of water in rituals like baptism, or the Great Blessing of Water,[5] which symbolizes purification and liberation from sin. However, this raises the question whether this is the sole approach Orthodox theology can take on this topic. Considering the various aspects related to water, an attempt is made in the remainder of this paper to provide a deeper theological understanding of water that resonates with modern ecological discussions. In the following paragraphs, we will lay the groundwork for what could be termed an Orthodox theology of water.

3.1. The Sacred Character of Creation

The Orthodox perspective on water is rooted in the theological understanding of creation as the *sacred* space where God and humanity intersect, particularly through Christ. This perspective rejects any division between the sacred and the secular, emphasizing the inherent goodness of creation. Through God's self-revelation, particularly in the incarnation, all aspects of the created order, including especially water, are encompassed by God's immanent reality. This perspective was indirectly or directly emphasized by key fathers of the Church, including Justin Martyr (2nd c.), Maximus the Confessor (7th c.), and Gregory Palamas (15th c.), as well as by the 20th c. Russian émigré thinkers like Vladimir Solovyov and Sergii Bulgakov. Especially, Maximus the Confessor's exploration of the "Logos–logoi" theory from a Christ-centered and incarnational standpoint further broadened theological perspective, integrating all immanent reality. Maximus sought to express and grasp the one Truth by "churchifying" the entire world, turning the whole cosmos into an image of the church. According to Maximus (*Ambigua* 7), there is always a "logos or divine principle for all the beings and powers of God (e.g., angels, humans, and thus for materiality and certainly water, etc.)[6] that preceded their creation and guided it" (Gallaher 2015). According to Wood's constructive interpretation of the Maximian account of the Logos–logoi theory, "the logoi are at once thoughts and wills, for God knows what he wills and wills what he knows, and what he wills and knows he wills and knows to be. And they are he. The Logos is the logoi and the reverse" (Wood 2018, pp. 84–85). He further argues, that "if we follow Maximus's suggestion and read the logoi doctrine through Christology proper, that is, as describing creation as the Word's cosmic Incarnation . . . [then] Maximus's logoi are the One Logos' hypostatic, kenotic procession into becoming the natural power of every individual creature to be. . ." (Wood 2018, pp. 84–85). Since all creatures contain logos representing the Logos, Christ himself, there is a deep interdependence between humans, creatures, and God. In other words, "creation is incarnation" (Wood 2018, pp. 84–85), since the seeds of the Word are scattered everywhere in creation (including water), to the extent that this communion and relationship among all human and non-human beings take also into account as their fundamental aspect their materiality, and even, their *waterhood*[7], if I am allowed to use this neologism, which, one way or another, represents a substantial element of the constitution of the majority of human and non-human beings. However, one should be cautious here to avoid natural conflation between Logos and creation, as "a logos institutes not just a creature's form (or nature) but its very hypostasis . . .The Logos–logoi

identity is not natural but hypostatic . . . When the Logos becomes the logoi, this betrays no natural relation between One and many . . . what becomes many is the divine hypostasis, not the divine nature as such" (Wood 2018, p. 97). One can also use here, in a similar vein, the essence–energies distinction elaborated mainly by Gregory Palamas, to further stress the deep ontological interconnectedness among human and non-human beings and God. Thus, a certain "panentheistic" perception of the God–world relationship, without, however, leading to any natural confusion among them, is a legitimate view found in patristic tradition and several modern Orthodox theologians (Ware 1975, pp. 157–68).

Maximus posits that all things created by God are intricately interconnected and have a close ontological relationship with one another. This means that every being and the elements that make it up (body/materiality and soul) continuously refer back to their creator in a dialogical manner to exist. Disruption of this chain of God's will, as exemplified today in the climate crisis, can lead (and indeed has led) to a major disturbance in the divine plan, as creatures without an ontological link with God and the entire world, as their proper ecosystem, cannot sustain themselves or continue to exist. The second crucial aspect of this doctrine underscores the inherent value of creation and its close interrelation with the following.

3.2. The Ethos of Communion

The early church fathers had a deep experience of the Eucharist, which brought about a sense of mutual dependence, solidarity, evolving love, and personal relationship. This experience led them to perceive God as the ultimate relational being. The Greek Fathers redefined the traditional Greek monistic view by emphasizing communion/relationship at the core of existence. This new perspective highlighted the significance of communion as the foundation of a new life and ethos among human beings, rooted in the Trinitarian interplay and realized through Christ as the incarnate *Logos* (Zizioulas 1985, chp. 1) to whom the various *logoi* of creation are closely attached.

This nuanced development in early patristic thought has far-reaching implications for various aspects of Church life and theology, including ecclesiology, anthropology, and Trinitarian theology. There is a strong ontological link between God, the Church, and the entire world. Therefore, as communion is considered essential for true existence, it aligns well with scientific evidence regarding water, which is known as a "universal solvent" (Sargen 2019). Water's polar nature allows it to interact effectively with other polar molecules through hydrogen bonding, leading to properties such as cohesion and life support. From a theological standpoint, and following the above *analogy* found in nature, one could argue that water, as an indispensable means of communion (as relationship), is crucial for the existence of all things and serves as a significant biological factor that contributes to the interconnectedness of all that we consider that exists.

3.3. A Christological Perspective

In this context, it is important to consider a *Christology of water*. By this concept, what is stressed is the fact that the Son of God, by his incarnation, assumed the full (human) nature, or materiality (including water as its basic component), and not just a soul or other strictly mental capacities. By reexamining, then, the doctrinal Christology as articulated by the Council of Chalcedon (451), one can extract important elements for an Orthodox theology of water.

The Chalcedonian Definition (451 AD) (Chalcedonian Definition n.d.), particularly the clauses "without confusion" and "without division", delineates the relationship between God and humanity in the person of Christ. This underscores the necessity of no separation between the created and the uncreated (i.e., including everything in the created order, and not only humans), as genuine communion at an ontological level is essential to avoid both the self-referential nature of creation and death. At the same time, the concept of "without confusion" safeguards the freedom, otherness, and dignity of both realities, without leading to any problematic conflation of the two natures (divine and human, God

and the world). These concepts converge in Christ, where communion and otherness coexist. Christ's resurrection offers the entirety of creation a triumph over death and the promise of salvation (Zizioulas 2006, pp. 250–85).

However, is this understanding of the intricate relationship between the created and uncreated in Christ adequate to address the pressing need to reverse the catastrophic process of climate change in favor of global sustainability? It appears that a more "green" Christology, defined as "deep incarnation", is imperative for further contemplation of Christology and the climate crisis.

The "deep incarnation" perspective offers a new interpretation of the historical foundations of Christian doctrine. Deep incarnation stresses the significance of both physical embodiment (including water as a fundamental component) and human consciousness in Christ. It seeks to harmonize the biological aspects of growth, vulnerability, and decay with religious awareness and views Jesus as a complete human being, considering not only his personal history, but also his human, natural, and cultural environment.

According to Niels Henrik Gregersen (2006, pp. 1–12) and Edwards (2019), proponents of this perspective, deep incarnation involves both evolutionary and ecological thinking, aiming to reshape linear and anthropocentric perspectives that emphasize the divine assumption of the entire material world of creation. Although the "deep incarnation" view does not explicitly refer to water, it is implicit that water is a vital dimension of life and is fully integrated into this perspective, representing an incarnation of biological existence and the natural system. The focus is on the cross of Christ as a divine identification with the fragility and pain of biological creatures.

The concept of "deep incarnation" has its roots in the modern Protestant tradition but also draws from early Christian, medieval, and modern Orthodox theology. It emphasizes the centrality of Christ as the sole mediator between the created and uncreated. This perspective underscores the significance of Christ fully assuming material form for the salvation of all creation. Thus, according to Gregory the Theologian, "what has not been assumed, has not been healed", (Gregory of Nazianzus 1974, p. 50), a saying which underscores the importance of Jesus assuming human form and entering the created realm to redeem and save all of creation from corruption and death.

3.4. The Cosmic Dimension of the Eucharist

Finally, one further aspect in this introductory reflection on a theology of water: In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the *Eucharist* holds a profound significance as a ritual act of the Church, too. The offering of bread and wine, basic products of human labor containing water as a fundamental ingredient, symbolizes the offering of God's creation for eternal life. This act is intended not only for the benefit of humanity but also for the transformation and salvation of the entire creation, reflecting the concept of theosis/deification on a cosmological level. Viewing the Eucharist as a *Cosmic Liturgy* emphasizes its role as a sacrament intrinsically connected to the life of the Church, to transform our interaction with and use of creation in a sustainable way.

4. By Way of Conclusion

Water constitutes 60–75% of the human body weight, and a loss of only 4% of total body water in specific circumstances can result in dehydration, while a 15% loss can be fatal (Sargen 2019; Liu 2019). Despite a person's ability to survive a month without food, surviving without water is limited to just 3 days. This is what our experience testifies. Thus the fundamental reliance on water governs all life forms. From this standpoint, water embodies an ontological element that defines the relationship among all existing entities. Without this profoundly ontological connection[8], the existence of all the organisms and the world as a whole is at risk.

The Orthodox theological tradition addresses the significance of water in our lives. By reevaluating its profound tradition, theology can contribute to contemporary discussions by providing essential elements for developing an *eco-ethos* that acknowledges the *materiality*

of the world (of which water constitutes an indispensable element) as a crucial aspect of the divine–human/world communion, imperative for fulfilling the divine plan for creation care and salvation.

Although it may seem unconventional, a *theology of water* should not be regarded as a luxury for the Church and its theology. Considering that theology concerns matters of life and death, access to safe and clean water (and sanitation) is integral to religious life and profoundly impacts the world's well-being. In this light, theological *education* and awareness of water issues across different scales are crucial for influencing the actual water use behavior and fostering consistent efforts among water consumers. Given the escalating pressures on water resources due to the climatic crisis and human intervention, an *interdisciplinary* approach linking science and theology is urgently required to sustain this vital resource for both human and ecosystem needs within their ontological bond.

Based, then, on its rich tradition, Orthodox theology has the potential to significantly enhance awareness and prompt the transformation of human behavior and lifestyle concerning both water usage and respect for the world's materiality.

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Notes

1 SDG 6 concerns both water and sanitation as clearly interwoven issues. For the purposes of the article, we deliberately focus primarily if not exclusively on water.

2 In this article, when we refer to ontology, we do not have in mind a specific understanding of the term in the context of philosophical reasoning, where it can take various meanings. It is primarily used as a concept which relates to the ultimate existential question of what or how one or something exists (see also next fn).

3 The polarity between *ontology* and *psychology*, as emphasized here, entails a fundamental distinction to avoid misconceptions. When referring to psychology in this context, the article, following Zizioulas's informal use of the word, simply denotes the absolute priority given (by philosophy or theology) to the inner self and its behavior towards others or the external world—in essence, the question of how one behaves or acts. On the other hand, ontology prioritizes being itself, addressing the question of what or how one or something exists. The former also encompasses ethics in a broader sense, while the latter underscores the significance of life-or-death issues that impact the very existence of both human and non-human beings, rather than just their behavior.

4 One should mention in brief here an important document recently published with the blessing of the holy synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, titled: "For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church", which, in passing, refers to the need of all the people to have access to clean and safe driniking water (for more information, see Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 2019, par. 71, 73), without, though, further elaborating a certain theology of water.

5 It is not our intention here to deal with the importance of water in rituals like, especially, the Great Blessing of Water (Megas Agiasmos). Although it may bear important implications for the formulation of a special eco-ethos, the present article seeks to move beyond such a ritual perspective which seems to dominate the theological discussion on water from an Orthodox point of view, dealing more closely with certain theological premises (see below: sacredness of creation, deep incarnation) that represent the very "first things" of their liturgical, or ritual implementation.

6 To avoid misunderstanding, a further explanation is needed here: By including water or materiality in general in "all beings or powers" of God, by no means are water or materiality itself understood as beings or powers of God. Instead, we would like to stress the relevance and importance of materiality and, indeed, water as an absolutely necessary element in the very constitution of beings (human or non-human) themselves. From this point of view, an extension of the "logos" terminology to water can be justified if we also connect it with the metaphor of the "Living water" that is Christ himself.

7 By this neologism, the article seeks to stress the ultimate importance of water for the survival of all human or non-human beings, but also the entire ecosystem. To the extent that water constitutes almost 75% of the human body, one can realize its relevance for the sustainability of both the living organisms and the whole planet, as without water, no life can persist at all. In other words, materiality (e.g., the human body) is closely dependent on water; otherwise, it is destined to death.

8 By stressing the relevance of water to the ontological interconnectedness of beings, we point to the fact that without water, neither humans nor non-human beings, nor the entire ecosystmem can persist. Therefore, any destruction of natural water resources is of

great importance, not only for accessibility, but primarily for the very life of all that exists on earth. In other words, the lack of safe and clean water simply ammounts to a (slow) death of creation in its entirety.

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