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# The Eastern Orthodox Doctrine of Grace with a Lutheran Perspective

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THE EASTERN ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF GRACE  
WITH A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

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Research Paper  
Systematics Department  
Fourth Year Research Elective  
Advisor: Prof. A.C. Piepkorn

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by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The intention of this study is twofold. In the first place, we are attempting to isolate the meaning of "grace" in the Eastern Orthodox Church - if indeed it can be stated in comprehensive form. In the second place, we are attempting to view the Eastern doctrine of grace in a Lutheran perspective. The primary purpose rests in the first phase, the investigation of the Eastern teaching of grace. This purpose is probably best defined in terms of the writer's personal enlightenment on the subject rather than in terms of a contribution of new findings. The subsidiary purpose, then, is in connection with the second phase (Chapter VII), the Lutheran perspective. Here it is hoped that a few of the insights gained in the first phase of study might be analyzed in the light of Lutheran teaching in order to discover the differences, both real and apparent, between the two traditions in the matter of grace.

The problems involved in an undertaking of this kind are manifold. The student must consider a vast amount of possibilities in the study of the Orthodox doctrine of grace. The most obvious reason for this is the theological nature of the concept of grace itself which must be reckoned with in the context of numerous doctrines and properly understood in those contexts. In similar fashion, Orthodox theology

spans a period of time from the early Fathers to the present day. Within this period of time we have the writings of the Fathers themselves, the first seven ecumenical councils, numerous confessional statements of varied degrees of authority, some significant historical developments, the influence of certain outstanding figures, and the commentary and viewpoint of present-day theologians. It is probably true that we could say almost the same thing about Lutheranism but Lutheran confessional theology has found its normative synthesis in the Book of Concord and is readily augmented by dogmatic writings. There is really nothing comparable to this in Eastern Orthodoxy.

As a consequence, the limitations of this study would appear to be in direct proportion to the magnitude of the topic. In the chapters treating the Orthodox doctrine of grace, we have tried to provide a variety of material representative of the numerous areas which can be considered. No one chapter can be thought of as exhausting the possibilities. So, for instance, in the chapter on grace in the Fathers, the primary sources are confined to but two of the Fathers and two secondary studies on the subject are used to fill out the investigation. What we have, then, in the end is a summary based upon a sampling in the areas of the writings of the Fathers, confessional statements, the mystical tradition, the sacraments, and present day commentary. This is not to say, however,

that what emerges as a result may not be valid but only that the scope of inquiry is limited.

In the phase of Lutheran perspective there is presented only as much material as is needed to support the cursory analysis and, with the exception of one reference, the resources for Lutheran doctrine are confined to the Augsburg Confession and the Apology. In a sense, the final chapter achieves its purpose by coming to conclusions that are little more than preliminary. The purpose is primarily to justify the comparative study of the two traditions in this context as having the potential for producing some new and valuable insights.

## CHAPTER II

### GRACE IN THE FATHERS

Our starting point in the investigation of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of grace will be an attempt to present the concept of grace as it appears in the writings of some of the early Greek Fathers. With the Fathers, as with subsequent theological writings regarded as authoritative in the Eastern Orthodox communion, the doctrine of grace is both hard to grasp and yet always there. Paradoxical as this statement may seem, it is nonetheless apparent for, on the one hand, we have no clear delineation or schematic presentation of a doctrine of grace standing by itself and, on the other hand, it is implicit in the thinking of all phases of Orthodox theology.

To illustrate further, we may refer to the remarks of Nicholas Gloubokowsky from his thoroughgoing study of grace in the Greek Fathers. He feels that, despite the fact that St. Paul's dictum in I Cor. 15:10, "by the grace of God I am what I am" was the common conviction of all early Christians, there is no dogmatic discussion of it in patristic literature because they were constantly aware of the grace of God which they experienced in their whole life. This made discussion unnecessary. "In the East during the whole patristic period, it was not so much speculation and teaching but rather appropriation and contemplation of the



reality of grace that were predominant." Furthermore, Gloubokowsky holds that we have no right now to attempt to do more than recognize tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

Be that as it may, for our purposes we must try in some way to arrive at more or less concrete ideas of the Greek patristic doctrine of grace. Ultimately, this leads us to the more solid ground of soteriology, anthropology, and the new obedience. In these areas the Fathers speak quite plainly and here the concept becomes meaningful as a working entity in the context of God's action and man's reaction. Hopefully, this approach will prove helpful without doing a disservice to the original intentions of the Greek Fathers.

In the area of anthropology, Gregory of Nyssa speaks of grace as being present at the very beginning. In his work On the Creation of Man, he tells us that, in the creation of man, God "bestowed a certain Godlike grace (Θεοειδῆ τινὰ χάριν), in planting in his image the likeness of his own excellence."<sup>2</sup> St. Basil also expresses this idea in his treatise, On the Holy Spirit. In language that echoes that of Genesis 2, he makes reference to the fact that God "breathed grace into man" (χάριν ἐν τοῦ ἑρφυσήματος τοῦ Θεοῦ). In this particular context, St. Basil speaks of Christ's breathing upon the apostles on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Here the reference to an original grace in creation is complemented by the observation that it was this in-breathed grace which man lost with the fall. St. Basil conceives of

Christ's breathing upon the apostles as a restoration or regeneration to some extent of this lost grace.<sup>3</sup> We might also inject at this point Gloubokowsky's observation that St. John Chrysostom held man's creation itself to be a work of grace.<sup>4</sup>

To follow up the previous reference to St. Basil's conception of the fall resulting in a loss of grace, it would seem that Gregory of Nyssa expresses this same motion. He describes man's condition before the fall as "τῆς μακαριότητος," "bliss".<sup>5</sup> In another context he refers to the "grace of his primary (or original) condition" (ἐξ ἀρχῆς).<sup>6</sup> Finally, we should note that, by following the thread of Gregory's thought in his On the Creation of Man, we find that he arrives at the conclusion that restoration to the original grace is the sole concern after the fall of man:

Ἀλλ' ἐπανελάθωμεν πάντες ἐπὶ τὴν  
 Θεοειδῆ χάριν ἐκείνην, ἐν ᾗ ἐκτίσθη  
 τὸ κατ' ἀρχῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὁ Θεὸς  
 εἰπὼν....?

Having thus acknowledged the presence of the grace of God in creation, in this case man's creation, and having noted the fall of man as resulting in a loss of an original grace, we should also add that Gregory of Nyssa is firm in insisting that man, acting in his own free will has fallen and become embroiled in sin and evil -- God was in no way

the author of this situation. It is God, however, who will restore man to the primal state of grace.<sup>8</sup>

Further insight in the area of Gregory of Nyssa's concept of grace is provided by A.S. Dunstone in a recent article in the Scottish Journal of Theology. This article is helpful for gaining an overall picture. He begins by pointing out that, for Gregory, the grace of God active in creation did not cease but remained evident throughout Old Testament history to the extent that Gregory is able to say that this grace was present even at Sinai and especially in the prophets. However, the bulk of the references to grace presuppose Christ. Christ was the personification of grace, the disciples were instructed by grace, and this same grace they made available to others. Furthermore, our redemption, salvation from death and the power of the Devil, is the Lord's gift of grace to those who gladly receive it. The chief gift of grace of the ascended Lord was the Holy Spirit. Through this agent of grace man achieves perfection. In two separate statements, Dunstone sums up his first section on grace from God's side by saying that, for Gregory, grace was the widest term to describe the "practical out-working of the saving activity of the united Trinity" and at its deepest it expresses the wonder of God's unmerited favor to fallen man. It is a free gift necessary for salvation. Dunstone warns against reading post-Reformation theology into this evidence, however. On the other hand, he also warns

against dismissing that which is manifestly evangelical on the basis of presuppositions about the theological understanding of the Eastern Church.<sup>9</sup>

In the Catechetical Oration, Gregory of Nyssa is driven to the crucial question, the crux theologorum, which ultimately arises when talking of the operation of grace in soteriology. God's redemptive grace indeed is His free gift and yet it is manifest that not all receive this grace. Gregory observes then,

καὶ τί δήποτε, φασίν, οὐκ ἐπὶ πάντας  
ἦλθεν ἡ χάρις, ἀλλὰ τινῶν προσ-  
θεμένων τῷ λόγῳ, οὐ μικρόν...<sup>10</sup>

God is either unwilling or unable. It is important to recall at this point that Gregory's theology of grace predicates above all the consistent and persistent goodness of the gracious God. This would seem to be a major determinant in his answer to this distressing question of, "Why some and not others?" His solution to the dilemma is to be found in man's free will which he calls "unenslavable" (ἀδουλωτόν) and "self-determined" (ἀυτεξούσιον). The goodness of God, who gives freely of his grace to all, is not impugned for the deciding factor is man's free choice of whether or not to accept this grace, i.e. his "disposition" (διαθέσεως) toward the kerygma.<sup>11</sup>

We should hasten to add that St. Gregory of Nyssa did not stand alone in his convictions on the teaching of grace.

St. Basil in his discourse on the Holy Spirit reaches essentially the same conclusion when he states that,

The grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient and full for all mankind and enjoyed by all who share it, not according to the capacity of its power (i.e., the Holy Spirit's power) but of their nature.<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the operation of grace and the question of man's free will, it might be helpful to take notice again of the study of Nicholas Gloubokowsky. He concludes in this regard that many of the Fathers are of one accord in ascribing the appropriation of God's grace ultimately to the decision of man's free will. Quoting Origen, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Macarius of Egypt, St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. John Chrysostom, et. al., he tried to make plain that freedom of the will was in all cases maintained and that original sin did not totally destroy the ability of man to opt the good. In all this, however, the supremacy and necessity of grace is foremost and man's part is conceived of as being very small.<sup>13</sup>

We continue to look at Gloubokowsky's study to investigate one final but important facet of grace in the Fathers. It has already been noted that St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil held some notion of redemption in terms of a restoration to the original state of grace lost at the fall. The question poses itself, then, as to what this restoration consists of and in what manner is it a function of grace. On the basis of what we have said thus far, it is clear that this

restoration is the result of Christ's redemptive work which is distinctly an act of God's grace. Furthermore, the appropriation of this saving grace is ultimately the decision of man's free will to accept what the kerygma proclaims, as we have seen in the statements of St. Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>14</sup>

To follow these statements up, then, with Gloubokowsky's observations, we see that those who have made the initial decision to accept God's gift of grace are regenerated or "recreated" as the apostle Paul states in II Cor. 5:17.

At this juncture we encounter the emphasis on the concept of "divinization"\* which is very much present in the writings of the Greek Fathers when they speak in the context of re-creation or regeneration. For Gregory of Nyssa the divinization of man is the higher stature that man achieves when he has been restored to the fashion of the pure Adam. Using the word "recreation", Gregory of Nazianzus concurs by asserting that it is a condition more divine and of a higher nature than before. For Gregory of Nyssa the process of divinization somehow involves an increase of grace to those who are regenerated and, further, this grace is offered in the Church through the sacraments.<sup>15</sup> It is safe to conclude from the context of Gloubokowsky's study that divinization

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\*The word "divinization" is chosen as the translation of the greek words theosis or theopoesis which are also translated frequently with the word "deification".

would include what has been called the "new obedience" of the regenerate Christian. It would be rash to assume, however, as tempting as it might be, that we can impose upon regeneration and divinization the foreign categories of "justification" and "sanctification". Indeed, our author is clear in his observation that there is no real evidence for thinking that the Fathers drew any distinction between the grace operative in regeneration or recreation and that which is predicated in the process of divinization.<sup>16</sup>

Though brief, our look at the Greek Fathers and especially the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa has presented us with some important themes of the doctrine of grace as they perceived it. To summarize: we find, first of all, that grace is applied to God's work in creation and, in the creation of man, a certain "godlike grace" was bestowed on him. (Supra, pp. 5-6 .) Furthermore, it is this original grace that is lost with the fall as a result of man's freely choosing the evil. The restoration of this grace is accomplished by God. (Supra, pp.6 - 7 .) This restoration is the regeneration of man accomplished by Jesus Christ who is grace personified and, through him, salvation from death and the power of the Devil is freely given to those who gladly receive it. Yet though God's gift of grace is indeed freely given, necessary, and supreme, man must still play a part by his choice of the grace that is offered - man's ability to choose the good was not destroyed with the fall. (Supra, pp. 7-10 .) Finally,

regeneration or recreation involves the process of "divinization" which not only constitutes a restoration of the lost original grace but a more excellent condition. This divinization is also effected by grace but there is no distinction between the grace involved here and that which accomplishes man's regeneration. (Supra, pp.10-11.) It might be worth noting that even the small part left to the free will of man can still be considered a function of grace in the sense that free will is a surviving attribute of the grace bestowed upon man at creation. In his concluding statements, A.S. Dunstone describes St. Gregory of Nyssa's use of the word grace as an "umbrella word".<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this judgment can be applied to some extent to the bulk of Greek patristic thought.<sup>18</sup>



## CHAPTER II REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Nicholas N. Gloubokowsky, "Grace in the Greek Fathers (to St. John of Damascus) and Inter-Church Union," The Doctrine of Grace, edited by W.T. Whitely (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Creation of Man," Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J.P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), XLIV, 149. Hereafter Migne's editions will be referred to as MPG.

<sup>3</sup>St. Basil, "On the Holy Spirit," MPG, XXXII, 140.

<sup>4</sup>Gloubokowsky, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, "The Catechetical Oration," MPG, XLVI, 33.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., cols. 36, 40.

<sup>7</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, "The Creation of Man," col. 256.

<sup>8</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, "The Catechetical Oration," cols. 33, 40.

<sup>9</sup>A.S. Dunstone, "The Meaning of Grace in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa," Scottish Journal of Theology, XV (1962), 235-238.

<sup>10</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, op. cit., col. 76.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>St. Basil, op. cit., col. 109.

<sup>13</sup>Gloubokowsky, op. cit., pp. 75-83.

<sup>14</sup>Supra, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Gloubokowsky, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>17</sup>Dunstone, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>18</sup> An interesting study of Cappadocian thought which discusses at length the matter of divinisation and its relationship with the earlier recapitulation theory of Irenaeus can be found in Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp.95-125.

## CHAPTER III

### GRACE IN CERTAIN OF THE CONFSSIONAL WRITINGS ACCEPTABLE TO THE EASTERN CHURCH

In addition to the writings of the Fathers, the churches of the Orthodox East also accept the decisions of the seven ecumenical councils prior to the schism of East and West as authoritative expressions of Christian doctrine. To attempt any discussion of the vast amount of theology that comes under discussion in these seven councils and how it might pertain to the theology of grace in the Eastern Church is far beyond the scope of this study. However, we might note as a matter of interest one of the more obvious rulings that speak directly on the matter of grace. Here we have reference to the condemnation of Celestius who shared the heresy of Pelagius, the better known of the two. This condemnation is recorded in Canon IV of the Third Ecumenical Council, the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. The excursus on Pelagianism, which attends this Canon in Percival's edition, points out that the position of Pelagianism regarding grace was quite simple: it was unnecessary. His position, as such, is the conclusion of his denial of original sin and his belief that man could live without sin. He thereby affirmed a total freedom of the will and relegated the grace of God in Christ to the position of being a gift of a helpful

by which to guide our lives.<sup>1</sup>

If we may be allowed to speculate for the sake of interest, the figure of Pelagius also draws our attention to the so-called African Code of A.D. 419. We might describe the ecumenical authority of this Western document as "thrice-removed". Briefly, the code in question was given acceptance in Canon II of the Council in Trullo (Quinisext), A.D. 692.<sup>2</sup> Quinisext in turn was given at least some degree of acceptance by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, II Nice, A.D. 787.<sup>3</sup> The implication follows that the Second Council of Nice thereby ratified the canons concerning Pelagius in the African Code. This African document condemns Pelagius (Canon CVIII), affirms the reality of original sin with the consequent necessity of baptism of infants (Canon CX), and attributes both the remission of sins and the aid to sin no more to the grace of God (Canon CXI).<sup>4</sup> On the face of it at least, these canons would seem to affirm the supremacy of grace in the salvation of man. While this writer sees nothing here that would clash with the Eastern position, it must be stated again that we can only speculate on the authority of these latter canons within the Eastern Church because of their dubious ecumenical authority and because of their obvious Western origin. Furthermore, it may be suspected from the fact that Nestorius is condemned in Canon IV of the Council of Ephesus<sup>5</sup> that the concern was more Christological than anything else if we consider that the Pelagian

man tends to complement the divided Nestorian Christ. In any event, by accepting the canons of Ephesus, the Eastern Church is preserved from the extremes of the Pelagian anthropology with its implications for the doctrine of grace.

As in the case of Pelagius, Arius, and others it is often the appearance of heretical teachings that brings forth from the Church some of its finest theological and doctrinal statements. In the Eastern Church it was the curious figure of the 17th century Patriarch of Alexandria and Constantinople, Cyril Lucaris, whose Protestant tendencies ultimately brought forth as a reaction the first confession we propose to study. The history behind the theology of Lucaris is interesting in itself but our remarks will be brief. In 1629 Cyril published his Confession of Faith which is set down in eighteen brief articles. All in all, it is a manifestly Reformed theology that is expressed. Some crucial examples: III and XIV espouse the absolute predestination of man after Calvin and the dead and unregenerate nature of free will, respectively. In IX and XIII he confesses justification by faith alone without works. Works are not rejected but are necessary as a testimony to our faith and a confirmation of our calling.<sup>6</sup>

Three months after his death in 1638, a Synod was held in Constantinople. Both Cyril and his Confession were anathematized. Other councils of condemnation followed and in 1672 the Council of Jerusalem was convened by Dositheus,

Patriarch of Jerusalem. This council also reacted to Lucaris and his Confession with a condemnation.<sup>7</sup> The decrees of this council constitute the Confession of Dositheus which clearly defines the council's point of view over against Reformed theology. We begin by quoting here a portion of Decree III.

We believe the most good God to have from eternity predestinated unto glory those whom He hath chosen, and to have consigned unto condemnation those whom He hath rejected; but not so that He would justify the one, and consign and condemn the other without cause. For that were contrary to the nature of God, who is the common Father of all, and no respecter of persons, and would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; but since He foreknew the one would make a right use of their free-will, and the other a wrong, He predestinated the one, or condemned the other. And we understand the use of free-will thus, that the Divine and illuminating grace, and which we call preventing grace, being, as a light to those in darkness, by the Divine goodness imparted to all, to those that are willing to obey this-for it is of use only to the willing, not to the unwilling-and co-operate with it, in what it requireth as necessary to salvation, there is consequently granted particular grace; which, co-operating with us, and enabling us, and making us perseverant in the love of God, that is to say, in performing those good things that God would have us to do, and which His preventing grace admonisheth us that we should do, justifieth us, and maketh us predestinated. But those who will not obey, and co-operate with grace; and, therefore, will not observe those things that God would have us perform, and that abuse in the service of Satan the free-will, which they have received of God to perform voluntarily<sup>8</sup> what is good, are consigned to eternal condemnation..

It is clear at the outset that the prime target here is the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The conclusion reached can also be considered as consistent with the concern of Gregory of Nyssa to preserve the goodness of God from

intimidation. The picture here is not one of predestination and foreknowledge being one and the same thing, as with Calvin, but, rather, predestination is a result of what God foreknew, i.e. who would make the right and who would make the wrong use of his free will. The pivotal point, as in the Fathers we have discussed, becomes man's decision of whether or not to co-operate with the will of God.

What follows is a curious and delicate distinction between "preventing" and "particular" grace. It is apparent that the latter of these two is that grace which justifies and sanctifies but the exact function of the former is a little uncertain. "Preventing grace" is the gift of God to all men which they can obey or co-operate with if they choose. This choice cannot, however, be considered the equivalent of saving faith in this context for it is merely an appropriation of the grace which enables a man to receive the "particular grace" which justifies. Furthermore, it is stated in Decree IX that salvation or justification cannot be achieved without faith.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Decree XIV also states that works play a part in a man's justification as well. These works are of no use to salvation outside the context of faith, however. Despite the fact that a man can choose to do a good work, this work can in no wise be of any spiritual value without his choosing to co-operate with "preventing grace".<sup>10</sup>

We should be careful in our evaluation of terms such as "preventing grace," "particular grace," "justification,"

and "sanctification" for these would seem to indicate the definite influence of Western theology. The concept of "preventing grace," for instance, would appear to be taken over from Roman Catholic theology. In the Roman doctrine of grace this is conceived of as man's necessary precondition to the first decision of the will that leads along the path to salvation. In this way the Roman doctrine seeks to avoid the error of the Semi-Pelagians who would say that God's grace does not take effect until man's initial decision for God.<sup>11</sup> In our cursory view it hardly seems that "preventing grace" here could have the same significance as it does in Roman Catholic doctrine and still follow logically the emphasis on free will noted in Decree III. However, more decisive study on this point is limited by space.

In light of the evidence we have seen it seems safe only to conclude that what Dositheus does say is that man's free will is not destroyed but is exercised in co-operation with God's grace. Grace, however, is the predominant and necessary agent of salvation and faith and works in combination are both necessary.

We can correlate these findings as well with a later confessional work of 1839, the Russian Catechism of Philaret. In the opening section of preliminary instruction the point is immediately established as in Dositheus that both faith and works are an inseparable part of saving faith.<sup>12</sup> This viewpoint is complemented by two statements from the section



on the Fourth Beatitude where Philaret describes those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" as those who, not trusting in their own good works but acknowledging their sin, "hunger and thirst after the justification of grace through Jesus Christ." Their filling of this hunger consists in the "acquisition of strength to do good, given by justifying grace."<sup>13</sup>

That grace is supreme in soteriology and that our dependence upon it is ultimate is brought out very nicely in the section treating the First Beatitude.<sup>14</sup> However, in speaking of predestination, Philaret is consistent with Dositheus in asserting that the choice of man's free will is determinative.<sup>15</sup>

To bring the Eastern Orthodox confessional picture up to the present date we should also look briefly at The Greek Orthodox Catechism of C.N. Callinicos. In the realm of anthropology we notice that man's fall is described here as a loss of grace. Yet the image of God which included "free choice" was not totally destroyed but "blurred."<sup>16</sup> This leaves the door open for the assertions concerning free will that are consistent with the above two confessions.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the combination of faith and works is maintained as requisite for salvation.<sup>18</sup>

## CHAPTER III REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Henry R. Percival, editor, The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, XIV (Second series; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 229.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 496-497.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>George A. Hadjiantoniou, Protestant Patriarch (Richmond: John Know Press, 1961), pp.141-143.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-102.

<sup>8</sup>The Confession of Dositheus in Creeds of the Churches, edited by John H. Leith (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.), pp. 487-488.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 491.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 497-498.

<sup>11</sup>J. Pohle, "Grace," The Catholic Encyclopedia, edited by Charles G. Herbermann, et. al., VI (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909.) 292-293, 297.

<sup>12</sup>The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church in Creeds of Christendom, II, edited by Philip Schaff (New York: Harper and Bros., 1919.), p. 445.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 516.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 514.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 464-465.

<sup>16</sup>C.N. Callinicos, The Greek Orthodox Catechism (New York: Greek Archdiocese of No. and So. America, 1960.), pp. 22-23.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

## CHAPTER IV

### GRACE IN THE MYSTICAL TRADITION OF EASTERN ORTHODOXY

No discussion of any aspect of Eastern Orthodox theology can fail to consider the strong mystical tradition which is an integral part of it. In order to appreciate the mystical expression of the theology of grace, we shall consider three sources, all of which involve the predominant figure of the 14th century Byzantine teacher, St. Gregory Palamas. It should be stated at the outset, however, that St. Gregory Palamas is not the starting point in the mystical theology of the East but rather he is heir to a far more ancient tradition of Christian mysticism. He is chosen because he presents us with a fully-developed doctrine of grace. Also, we can observe in his involvement with the hesychasts some important distinctions that must be made in further discussion of the matter of divinization. Finally, it is in this regard that the Trinitarian theology which is the heritage of all orthodox Christianity, East and West, has provided the matrix from which has developed certain theological accents distinctively Eastern Orthodox. It is well to note that what follows here can be traced back to the statement of St. Athanasius, "God became man that we might become God."<sup>1</sup>

For our starting point, we consider the essay of Jon Gregerson concerning the teachings of the hesychasts. The

were monks of a mystical tradition who believed that their vocation was to attain the vision of God. They believed that this vision could be achieved by the way of contemplation. To aid in their contemplation, they often made use of certain disciplines similar to those employed in the practice of yoga. It was in the 14th century that Gregory Palamas was called upon to defend them against charges of gnosticism, blasphemy, and pantheism. The effectiveness of Gregory's defense on their behalf was in his ability to demonstrate that their teachings did not contradict the exoteric tradition of the Church, despite the fact that the pure practice of hesychasm was restricted to a few. In sum, the goal of their concern and contemplative exercises was an awakening - a direct experience of God and divinisation in Him.<sup>2</sup>

A more specific description of this awakening would include the notion that it is an awakening from the illusions of prelest, the condition of fallen man which is conceived of as a wandering from Absolute Truth, a self-centered forgetfulness of God.<sup>3</sup> The awakening constitutes a return to the wholeness that was present before the fall. Further, the awakening is effected by Divine Grace and leads to a direct experience of the Divine Mysteries which has its culmination in the divinisation of the individual. Accompanying this is the realization that any virtue that the individual may possess has its origin in God and is dependent upon his grace. The consequence of the awakening is the

liberation of the holy man from the sinfulness and illusion of his fallen state and from the yoke of the Law. The result of this in turn is his ability to spontaneously live a virtuous life without recourse to law.<sup>4</sup>

Palamas, though not a mystic himself, took up the cudgel in defense of the hesychast teaching of divinization against the accuser, Barlaam of Calabria, a philosopher.<sup>5</sup> Here we are deferring to John Meyendorff's treatment of the subject in his article on St. Gregory's doctrine of grace. The main thrust of Barlaam's criticism was concerned with the concept of the Divine Presence or Image in man which, when combined with the yoga-type practice of contemplating the navel, gave the impression that the hesychasts were guilty of the error of the Neoplatonists. However, Palamas pointed out that, apart from the Incarnation, introspection can only provide a vision of the corrupted man since the Divine Image was obscured with the fall. Union with God is not possible without Christ. Union with God is a direct result of Christ having taken upon himself our human nature. Christ has fused himself to each of the faithful and we are one with him by participation in his sacred Body. We become, then, the temple of the fullness of the Divinity even as the fullness of the Divinity dwells in His Body. "The salvation and sanctification brought by Christ encompasses the whole man, body and soul." For that reason, Gregory asserts over against the Neoplatonists, that Christians should not ignore the body in seeking to

actualize the grace of Christ in man.<sup>6</sup>

Recalling briefly at this point Gregerson's discussion, the significant fact is pointed out that it was by his doctrine of "uncreated energies" that St. Gregory was able to avoid the charge of pantheism that attended the teaching of the Divine Presence in man.<sup>7</sup> A study of this doctrine of uncreated energies presents us with the most systematic expression of the doctrine of grace that we have encountered thus far. For this purpose we turn to the recent work of Vladimir Lossky who, as a modern Eastern Orthodox theologian, follows Palamas and gives us a thorough discussion of the doctrine of the "energies". Lossky begins by giving us a Greek patristic definition of theology. For the Greek Fathers "theology" itself meant the mystery of the Trinity revealed in the Church. To know the mystery of the Trinity was to enter into union with God in divinisation and thereby fulfill the word's of St. Peter to become "partakers of the divine nature." This sort of mysticism to be truly Christian must grapple with the question that, if we postulate a transcendant, inaccessible God, as we must, how is God to be accessible as he is seen to be in divinisation and union?<sup>8</sup>

The answer to this question is to be found in the concept of God's energies. Quoting St. Basil, Lossky establishes that God is knowable by his "energies" and this is in contrast to the unknowable "essence" of God. St. Gregory Palamas following up this concept of energies, restricted by no means

to the writings of St. Basil, calls these energies, "divinities," "uncreated light," or "grace". Though there is a distinction between the energies and the essence of God, it is still held that God is wholly present in the energies though not by virtue of his essence. Despite the fact that it is through his energies that God creates and operates and it is in the energies that we participate, the energies do not exist "on account" of creation as a divine function but would exist regardless of creation. They are in the fullest sense uncreated.<sup>9</sup>

Following Palamas and the early Fathers further, Lossky goes on to explain that the persons of the Trinity are not distinguished by their attributes in Eastern Orthodox thought. Neither can we say that any of the energies, though the outward manifestations of God's many names (e.g. Wisdom, Love, Justice), are to be identified with any single person of the Trinity as an attribute or as a hypostatic being. They are completely outward manifestations of the Trinity whose union is one of essence and, in the same breath, of a higher variety. In speaking of the Trinity itself - theology in the proper sense - the energies are, then, the exterior forces that exist independent of creation. However, in the realm of divine "economy," which refers to theology in relation to the temporal order, the energies become the manifestations of God to his creatures. All energy originates in the Father and is communicated through the Son and through the Holy Spirit.

It is in the realm of "economy" that we distinguish the Persons by their operations. So we have the dispensations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifested by the energies.<sup>10</sup> We recall that Palamas has called these energies "graces". It follows that what we have here is further expression of the comprehensive all-inclusive nature of grace which we observed in the Fathers wherein the grace of God and the opera ad extra are identified. (Supra, p.7 .)

The point of this previous discussion is not to suggest that the Eastern Orthodox present a unique Trinitarian theology but to show how the doctrine of energies, which is distinctly Eastern, has been based on orthodox Trinitarian theology and evolved to support the mystical doctrine of divinisation against the charge of pantheism. As Lossky states, "The doctrine of energies, ineffably distinct from the essence, is the dogmatic basis of the real character of all mystical experience." The promise of Christ made in John 14:23 that God will dwell within us is fulfilled in the realm of economy by the uncreated energies. By the same reasoning we do not have to give up our transcendent and inaccessible God. Man is in divinization, then, all that God is by nature, except God's actual nature, through grace or what is the same, the deifying energies. In this way the Holy Spirit communicates the "gift" or "grace" to us transmitted through the Son from the Father.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to Meyendorff's discussion, we see that



St. Gregory Palamas taught that the divinization of the "new man" in Christ is by virtue of union with God in the energies and that this is not only in reference to certain mystics who receive special gifts but that this is the "normative state of all Christians". The Christian takes on the "form of God" (theoeides). This is accomplished by uncreated grace and by this grace in Christ we have a restoration to the condition which Adam possessed in Paradise.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we see in the teaching of divinization that the doctrine of grace and the gracious saving activity of God is brought to full circle in Eastern thought. As Meyendorff points out, the sanctifying grace of Christ (here "sanctifying" is in reference to the process of divinization), the New Adam, being completely present in the world, presents us with an eastern eschatology that is a kind of "realized eschatology". For Meyendorff, St. Gregory Palamas is the culminating point in the development of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of grace.<sup>13</sup>

For our purposes St. Gregory Palamas becomes a very important figure because in him we have a systematic presentation of a doctrine of grace that is based upon the theology of the Fathers and the Trinitarian theology of the early councils. Yet in St. Gregory we also have a development - the doctrine of energies - that really goes beyond the theological heritage of his past. Furthermore, it is perhaps in this development that we come closest to apprehending the genius of Eastern mystical theology, the doctrine of

divinization and the operation of grace in this context. An understanding of these theological accents makes it easy for us to comprehend the importance which Eastern Orthodox theology places upon the dynamic presence of God in the Church. We will take a look at this idea as it operates in the sacraments.

## CHAPTER IV REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Panagiotis Bratsiotis, "The Basic Principles and Chief Characteristics of the Orthodox Church," Anglican Theological Review, XMII, translated from the German by Thaddeus Lockard (1960), 105.

<sup>2</sup>Jon Gregerson, The Transfigured Cosmos; Four Essays in Eastern Orthodox Christianity (New York: Frederick Unger, 1960), pp. 53-54.

<sup>3</sup>"The Russian word преlestь prelest' is the term used to translate the Greek πλάνη which means 'wandering' or 'going astray'." In old Russian usage it had the meanings of enchantment, charm, or illusion with connotations of "captivity," "seduction," "dispersion," etc. Ibid., p. 58n.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 60-61, 72.

<sup>5</sup>John Meyendorff, "Doctrine of Grace in St. Gregory Palamas," St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly, II (Winter 1954), p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>Gregerson, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

<sup>8</sup>Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (London: James Clarke and Co., 1957), pp. 67-70.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-74.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-85.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-87.

<sup>12</sup>Meyendorff, op. cit., pp. 22-24.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

## CHAPTER V

### GRACE IN THE SACRAMENTS

The scope of this paper permits us to speak to the question of grace in the sacraments only in the most general of terms. According to the catechism of C.N. Callinicos, the sacraments of the Eastern Orthodox Church are seven in number: Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), the Holy Eucharist, Penance, Ordination, Marriage, and Unction.<sup>1</sup> The Orthodox Church prefers to use the word "mystery" instead of sacrament and there has been a proliferation of definitions. However, the basic definition would accord with St. Augustine's classic definition to the effect that sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace. The theological basis of the sacraments is the Orthodox belief in the divine immanence.<sup>2</sup> This accent on the immanent and dynamic presence of God in the Church was just introduced at the close of the previous chapter. It is this important theme that we will attempt to isolate.

Nicolas Zernov, a contemporary theologian of the Eastern Orthodox Church, sees a great deal of significance to the use of the term "mystery". He claims that this particular word emphasizes the part of God which is transforming and purifying. Historically, he feels that this terminology had the added effect of preventing the East from rationalizing the divine-human encounter of the sacraments in the manner of

the Western theologians.<sup>3</sup> In like manner, Ernst Benz also makes much of the divine presence. In describing the eucharistic liturgy, he points to the fact that the awareness of the divine presence is heightened by the fact that the mass is a dramatic re-enactment of the history of salvation from the incarnation to the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In his treatment, Benz de-emphasizes the importance of the dogma of transubstantiation which he feels is the impact of Roman Catholic theology and the conflicts of the Reformation rather than something typically Eastern. The real significance of the Eucharist for the Orthodox believer is the real and dynamic encounter with the resurrected Christ. The cry of the priest after the Eucharistic Prayer is therefore of climactic importance "Christ is in the midst of us!"<sup>4</sup>

G.P. Michaelides, in an article on the sacraments in the Eastern Orthodox Church, makes it quite clear that the function of the grace present in the sacraments is none other than the transforming penetration of the world by God to make man's body and soul partakers of the divine nature through invisible grace in visible signs.<sup>5</sup> The activity of grace is solely and alone in the hands of God and is underlined by the observation that the Orthodox Church does not use the Roman formulas ego baptizo te or ego te absolvo. These formulas, he feels, create the impression that the priest and not God is the dispenser of grace. Moreover, the Eastern Orthodox Church does not hold to the Roman Catholic teaching of

ex opere operato.<sup>6</sup> Further testimony to the dynamic presence of God's grace is seen by Benz in the Eastern phenomenon of not setting a limit to the number of sacraments. Though, as we have stated, the seven sacraments listed above are generally the accepted ones, this loses its significance because there is no strict distinction between sacraments and sacramentals. For Benz this seems to be what we would expect for he says, "In a certain sense the whole sphere of the Church is a mysteriogen, that is to say, out of its charismatic plenitude it can go on creating new mysteries forever."<sup>7</sup>

What we have met in our brief look at the sacraments adds nothing to what we have already said about the doctrine of grace in the sense of new information. Rather, it serves to highlight the strong emphasis the Orthodox place upon the dynamic presence of God and the transforming presence of his grace in the Church. In the light of the Palamite doctrine of energies the nature of God's immanence in the Church and sacraments is given a precise systematic explanation.

## CHAPTER V REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Callinicos, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>George P. Michaelides, "Sacraments from the Eastern Orthodox Point of View," Christendom (Winter 1941), 96-97.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolas Zernov, Eastern Christendom, A Study of the Origin of the Eastern Orthodox Church (First American edition; New York: Putnam, 1961), pp. 247-249.

<sup>4</sup>Ernst Benz, The Eastern Orthodox Church, Its Thought and Life, translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston (First edition; Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 36-38.

<sup>5</sup>Michaelides, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-104.

<sup>7</sup>Benz, op. cit., p. 32.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EASTERN ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF GRACE IN SUMMARY

As we prepare to summarize, it is well to observe that the Eastern Orthodox Church has by and large remained faithful to its theological heritage in the Fathers with respect to the doctrine of grace. One notable addition might be the expression given the teaching of grace in the development of the doctrine of energies by St. Gregory Palamas. The viewpoint of Vladimir Lossky, whose work we met in the discussion of Palamite theology is firmly founded in both the patristic teachings and the tradition of Palamas. It is significant also that Nicolas Zernov in his bibliographical comments refers to Lossky's book as "the present interpretation of Eastern Orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup>

As an aid to our recapitulation and as a further indication of present adherence to past theology we can cite two additional sources. In a recent article for the Anglican Theological Review, Panagiotis Bratsiotis cites the chief characteristics and principles of Eastern Orthodoxy and claims its central idea to be the steadfast adherence to the principles and piety of the ancient undivided Catholic Church. Quoting the Fathers he further maintains that the "material principles" are the Incarnation with emphasis on the deity of Christ with the inverse counterpart being the



theosis or deification of man.<sup>2</sup> For added testimony we can include an article by Johannes Karmiris in Kirchen der Welt. In defining the extent of grace he cites St. John Chrysostom to express the fact that salvation of man is begun and brought to its conclusion by the grace of God.<sup>3</sup> The result of God's saving grace is deification: "...die menschliche Natur gewissermassen aus Gnade vergottet wird, indem sie von der göttlichen durchdrungen wird..." Echoing the defense of St. Gregory Palamas, this divinization is not to be understood as pantheistic or substantial.<sup>4</sup> Finally, he notes that, while man is unable to contribute to his salvation and that salvation is totally God's free gift of grace, man's free will is still not passive but must take part.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, then, we can observe the following aspects as present to some extent in the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of grace from the time of the Fathers to the present day.

1. The theology of grace is an inseparable corollary of Trinitarian theology.
2. Grace is all-pervasive in the sense that since the time of creation God's actions have been manifestations of grace.
3. The divine uncreated energies can be equated with grace and their operations a manifestation of grace.
4. The salvation of man is his divinization which involves the restoration of the grace lost in creation.
5. Divinization, described as the indwelling of the Trinity

which is the inverse counterpart of the Incarnation, is according to the energies not the essence of God and is solely a function of grace.

6. Man's part in soteriology consists in the decision of his free will to co-operate with grace.
7. The divinization of Christians makes the active presence of God and his grace a dynamic ongoing reality in the Church.

## CHAPTER VI REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Zernov, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Bratsiotis, op. cit., pp. 102, 105.

<sup>3</sup>Johannes Karmiris, "Abriss der Dogmatischen Lehre der Orthodoxen Katholischen Kirche," Die Orthodoxe Kirche in Griechischer Sicht, 2 vols., edited by Panagiotis Bratsiotis, Bd. I of Die Kirchen der Welt (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959), p. 62.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-81.

## CHAPTER VII

### A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF GRACE

#### The Letter of Jeremiah II to the Tübingen Theologians

A good point of departure might well be a discussion of the letter written by Jeremiah II, Patriarch of Constantinople, to the Lutheran theologians at the University of Tübingen. In an attempt to stimulate closer ties with the Orthodox East, these Lutheran theologians carried on an extensive correspondence with Jeremiah. In 1559 a Greek translation was made of the Augsburg Confession and sent to the Patriarch for his reaction. In a recent article concerning this version, Georges Florovsky makes some comments worth noting. Apparently, there are a number of question marks involved. The authorship is somewhat uncertain through the author of the Latin preface, Dolscius, as humanist Greek scholar, is supposed to have written the entire translation. However, Florovsky suspects the work of Melancthon. Another curious aspect of the document is the fact that while the preface insists on the accuracy of the translation, the text actually varies a great deal from the accepted version of 1530. He points out that the version preserved in Acta et Scripta is similar to the Variata but not entirely the same. Another

aspect of this question was the fact that Melancthon sent a covering letter (to the effect that Lutheranism and Orthodoxy were compatible) which was apparently never delivered. Florovsky suggests that perhaps this was a document composed expressly for Eastern consumption with little thought of circulation in the West. He bases this statement on the earlier suggestions of Ernst Benz that the translators toned down the forensic and juridical tenor of the doctrine of redemption. Benz, he relates, suggested that this version of the Augsburg Confession transposed from the dimension of Rechtfertigungsreligion to Erlösungsreligion. The question remains as to what extent this version is congenial to the original intentions of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>1</sup>

Be that as it may, if indeed the language was adapted to Greek thought, the adjustment was not sufficient to being the approval of the Patriarch. His reply to the Tübingen theologians regarding the Augsburg Confession is instructive for our purposes. The letter in question has since become an accepted confession of Eastern Orthodoxy. We shall investigate the Patriarch's response to several of the crucial articles.

In regard to Article IV the major objection of Jeremiah II was the conviction of Orthodox theology that while faith was necessary for salvation it could not be spoken of apart from works. The following excerpts from the translation in Wort und Mysterium are expressive.

Die Allgemeine Christliche Kirche aber fordert den lebendigen Glauben, der durch guten Werke bezeugt wird. Der Glaube ohne Werke ist tot, wie Paulus sagt. (Gal. 5:6)<sup>2</sup>

...beides muss miteinander vermischt werden: menschlicher Eifer und die durch den Glauben von oben herabkommende Bundesgenossenschaft, zur Vollendung der Tugend.<sup>3</sup>

In Article V, which treats of the ministry and complements the assertions of the previous article, the objection voiced in this instance is basically the same, only more emphatically expressed.<sup>4</sup>

In response to Article XVIII which deals with the free will question, Jeremiah II begins by agreeing on the fact that man can do nothing without the grace of God (John 15:5). God's grace is the agent of salvation "vornehmlich". However, he cannot accept sola gratia. Grace is only supreme to the extent that it does not suppress the total freedom of the will. Therefore, he quotes Chrysostom by way of objection, "...die Gnade, obwohl sie Gnade ist, die Willigen rettet." Furthermore, he quotes St. Paul in Rom. 9:16; 11:32 to support his statement that it is after we have made our choice that God will extend his help. On the basis of Phil. 2:3 the principle is put forth that our will must be totally in accord with God's. Even in the face of Eph. 2:8,9 he finds no difficulty here in retaining a part in this for man. This he accomplishes by understanding the whole passage in the light of verse 10 which elicits the conclusion that man's virtue (Tugend) is not dead but sleeping.<sup>5</sup>

What can we conclude from all this? By and large, the real difficulty is only with Article XVIII where freedom of the will is a definite point of difference. We can say this not only of these two documents but of the whole of Eastern Orthodox theology over against the Lutheran understanding on this point. However, in the sola fide question of Articles IV and V need not really constitute a discrepancy when taken in the light of Article VI on the new obedience and Article XX concerning faith and works. Taken together, these articles, though stressing the sola fide, certainly do not reject good works.<sup>6</sup> Unless Jeremiah misunderstood his own tradition, he could see as we have seen that good works are of no merit outside the context of faith and sanctification by grace. Whatever theological gymnastics are involved beyond this point, it cannot seriously be denied that either Lutheranism or Orthodoxy denied the necessity of grace in both faith and works. It seems apparent then that the forensic statement of justification by faith apart from the law and as a category separate from the new obedience was alien to the thought of Eastern theology which saw God's grace acting itself out in the divinisation of man in which faith and works were inseparably lumped together. In this connection the comments by Ernst Benz on the Greek Augsburg Confession include a significant point. After noting the adaptations made to Eastern Orthodox thought in the language of the Augsburg Confession, he cites his conception of the

differences in theological emphasis between the two traditions and then points out that the question of justification was not a burning one in the Greek Church, whereas it was the heart and core of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Apophatic and Cataphatic Way

What we meet in the previous observation of Ernst Benz brings us to the next phase of investigation. It is perhaps worthwhile that we give consideration to the distinction that is often made between the Eastern and Western approach to theology. It seems safe to say that the doctrine of grace which we have exposed in Eastern Orthodoxy and the Lutheran doctrine of grace which we have begun to describe both express many if not most of the major themes peculiar to their respective traditions. This is not surprising when we consider the nature of a concept such as grace.

For the classical definition of the method of Eastern theology in contrast to Western we return to Vladimir Lossky's book. The dichotomy is drawn by Lossky on the basis of Areopagitica. There is on the one hand, "cataphatic" or positive theology which speaks concerning God in affirmations. This, however, leads only to some knowledge of God but is an imperfect way. The perfect way is the way of "apophatic theology" which proceeds by negations and is perfect in the sense that it leads to the elimination of all pretense of knowledge which is fitting with respect to the



unknowable essence of God. It is only through ignorance or "unknowing" that one may know him who is above all object of knowledge. Lossky continues, then, by rejecting a dialectical synthesis of cataphatic and apophatic theology once offered by Aquinas. It is rather a catharsis that is required in the mystical experience of apophaticism. Subsequently, he arrives at the further definition which makes apophatic and mystical theology one and the same. This apophatic theology is the characteristic of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It means further that even in the union of divinization God is known as the Unknowable.<sup>8</sup>

In the same context he inquires about the function of cataphatic theology. This he characterizes as "a ladder of theophanies" in which God manifests himself to us in creation - so in the energies. The "supreme theophany" of the Incarnation retains its apophatic character. The function of cataphatic theology is seen as leading us to the point where we can pursue the apophatic way.<sup>9</sup> The implication, though not explicitly stated here, is the common accusation over against Western theology is that it is cataphatic.

To be sure, the apophaticism of Eastern mystical theology is apparent in the doctrinal development of grace. However, the observation is pertinent perhaps that Lossky's identification of apophatic with mystical smacks very much of a creation after the fact and one that is bound to fit and describe mystical theology because it was formulated in terms

of it. On the other hand, it would be unreasonable to deny that at first blush, Lutheran or Western theology, would appear cataphatic insofar as its logically ordered and systematic statements have the character of affirmation. However, despite this apparent difference it also becomes apparent that both theological traditions arrive ultimately at the same conclusions with regard to God's revelation to man whether they get there by an apophatic or cataphatic emphasis. Thus, for example, we can see that on the subject of God they will arrive at the same limitations of the knowledge of God regardless of whether one chooses to speak in terms of what is known or in terms of the unknowable.

Meyendorff's position is a manifestly sane appreciation for the fact that history, more than theological method, played a determining part in the emphases that emerged. So in the West we see the influence of St. Augustine and the clash with the challenge of Pelagianism making grace a separate matter of discussion and consequent strengthening of the doctrine of original sin. In the East he cites the involvement in Trinitarian controversy and monastic spirituality which we have already met.<sup>10</sup> In light of this observation, we can move toward the conclusions of our Lutheran appreciation.

## Some Final Thoughts

To some extent, we have already encountered a part of what can be said in terms of a Lutheran theology of grace. In Lutheran theology the emphasis is on justification through faith. We are accounted as righteous for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, this faith required to grasp God's promise of salvation in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit - - the further outworking of God's grace.<sup>12</sup> This then is the gospel which is the assurance of the promise of grace in Christ, "promissio gratiae in Christo promissae".<sup>13</sup> In the area of the new obedience, faith necessarily brings forth good works as a result.<sup>14</sup> Faith renews and changes the heart and justification also means a regeneration that implies the renewal of the sinner.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we cannot ultimately separate justification from the new obedience though it is stated clearly in the Augsburg Confession, Article VI, that we should not think of the works of new obedience as merit for our salvation.

It is only fair to state that the Eastern Orthodox Church also speaks disparagingly of good works as being of any account without grace and faith. Indeed, though they insist on saying that faith plus works is necessary for salvation, what they really seem to referring to is not the cause of salvation, which they ascribe totally to God's grace in Christ, but rather to the nature of salvation. Therefore, divinization

being the nature of redemption and regeneration in their thought, requires the constant co-mingling of these two. On the other hand, the Lutheran theologians who would not ultimately separate justification and regeneration, were concerned with the abuses of Roman Catholic works - righteousness and wanted to emphasize the objective nature of justification and re-emphasize the doctrine of grace as God's unmerited love in Jesus Christ. Therefore, in both cases the unmerited grace of God is the central agent and, though the East does not speak in terms of justification, they implicitly accept the fact that the forgiveness of sins is objectively accomplished by Christ and that the believer may thereby expect salvation to eternal life.

Yet we should also notice that the concept of divinization is conceived as a process which will eventually restore the whole cosmos. Though it would be rash to say that this approach has no room for the Lutheran emphasis on being justified as an immediate reality. However, the emphasis on sola fide, sola gratia involved in the Lutheran doctrine of justification is indeed missing in the Orthodox doctrine of divinization. Actually, what this constitutes is more of an apparent than a real difference. By stressing the doctrine of divinization the Eastern Church appears to be content with the entire process of the redemption and regeneration of man without feeling the need to delineate its component parts. This, then, is the equivalent to what the Lutheran

dogmatic tradition has described as sanctification in the "wider sense". That is to say, this terminology describes the entire gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the life of man from the creation of faith to the complete renewal at Judgment Day.<sup>16</sup>

The crucial point of difference we have discovered is not really a part of grace per se but rather belongs to the realm of anthropology. This is dogged persistence of Eastern Orthodoxy to preserve the freedom of the will in at least its initial decision to accept the working of God's grace. We have observed this phenomenon ever since we noted Gregory of Nyssa's treatment of the crux theologorum in which he protects the goodness of God. In a recent statement by Karmiris, whom we have already met, he defines the Orthodox position over against Lutheran thought in strong terms by stating blankly that Eastern Orthodoxy is not "monergistic" but "synergistic".<sup>17</sup> If it is, however, it is properly so-called in a very subtle form. Certainly, it cannot be said to be the spirit of the Fathers who gave such eloquent testimony to God's love and grace to think in semi-Pelagian terms. So also with St. Gregory Palamas, it is God's grace that is praised and extolled. Furthermore, the emphasis on the presence of God in the Church, constantly bestowing his grace, would seem to express Eastern Orthodox thought accurately. For Lutheranism, even the smallest part cannot be allowed the free will for the appropriation of God's grace.

This, of course, is definitely required by the teaching of original sin which predicates not merely a blurring of God's image but a loss.<sup>18</sup> This constitutes a real difference.

However, as we conclude our perspective, it must be stated that, despite the real gap at the juncture of freedom of the will, we have in Eastern Orthodoxy a doctrine of grace that is not at all incompatible with Lutheran theological thought despite differences in emphasis.

## CHAPTER VII REFERENCE NOTES

Note: All references to the Augsburg Confession and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession refer to the text as it is presented in Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (4. durchgesehene Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959).

<sup>1</sup>Georges Florovsky, "The Greek Version of the Augsburg Confession," Lutheran World, VI (September 1959), 153-154.

<sup>2</sup>Wort und Mysterium; Der Briefwechsel über Glauben und Kirche 1573 bis 1581 zwischen den Tübinger Theologen und dem Patriarchen von Konstantinople, Herausgegeben von Aussenamt der der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1958), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-103.

<sup>6</sup>Augsburg Confession VI; XX.

<sup>7</sup>Ernst Benz, Wittenberg und Byzanz (Marburg: Elwert-Gahe, 1949), pp. 108-111.

<sup>8</sup>Lossky, op. cit., pp. 25-43.

<sup>9</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>11</sup>Augsburg Confession, IV, 1-2 (Latin text).

<sup>12</sup>Apology, IV, 111-116.

<sup>13</sup>Apology, IV, 388.

<sup>14</sup>Augsburg Confession, VI; XX, 29.

<sup>15</sup>Apology, IV, 125.

<sup>16</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, III, translated from the German by Walter W.F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 3.

17 Karmiris, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

18 Augsburg Confession, II.



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