

reciproco (cf. Gv 13,31-35; 15,12-13), riflesso e realizzazione antropologica delle relazioni d'amore vissute nella Santissima Trinità, è dunque chiamata a scoprire in Maria il suo archetipo e la sua forma generatrice. Solo così, dove si vive l'*agápe* secondo lo stile di Maria, il Corpo di Cristo viene anche esistenzialmente configurato, a partire dalla grazia sacramentale, come *koinonia* che annuncia, testimonia e dona Cristo Salvatore al mondo. La vita di Maria, plasmata e condotta dallo Spirito, sia nel suo itinerario terreno sia nell'esercizio della sua missione dal seno della Trinità ov'è assunta, è sempre e solo un "*lasciar che accada*" nella storia della salvezza *l'avvento del Dio uno e trino salvezza della storia*.

Mi pare, in tal senso, che vada attentamente meditata l'affermazione che troviamo nella descrizione della terza parte del "segreto" di Fatima: "E vedemmo *in una Luce immensa che è Dio...*"<sup>19</sup>, cui segue una narrazione simbolico-profetica del significato della storia del '900 per la Chiesa. Tutto è visto *in Dio*. La storia umana, con i suoi drammi e le sue tragedie, palcoscenico della libertà umana, è avvolta, penetrata e indirizzata dall'amore del Padre che ha inviato il Figlio suo nella carne, nato da Maria, e lo Spirito Santo. Come scrive il Card. Ratzinger: "Da quando Dio stesso ha un cuore umano ed ha così rivolto la libertà dell'uomo verso il bene, verso Dio, la libertà per il male non ha più l'ultima parola. Da allora vale la parola: 'Voi avrete tribolazione nel mondo, ma abbiate fiducia; io ho vinto il mondo' (Gv 16,33). Il messaggio di Fatima invita l'umanità ad affidarsi a questa promessa"<sup>20</sup>.

Piero Coda

<sup>19</sup> In Congregazione per la dottrina della fede, *Il messaggio di Fatima*, cit., 21.

<sup>20</sup> Cit., 43.

Justification and Theosis  
(deification)  
The Joint Declaration on  
Justification and the Dialogue  
between East and West

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Ecumenical events of great importance are rare, at least in our days. When they occur, as when Pope John Paul II during his journeys meets with leaders of other churches, they most often have a symbolical value, not obliging the parties to a mutual and permanent commitment. Exceptions from this rule, however, do happen at times. One such occurrence during the last few years was the well-known signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between member churches of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in Augsburg on October 31, 1999.

To the best of my knowledge this declaration is in fact the first official agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and any of the churches grown out of the Reformation. Earlier there has been a long series of consensus documents, yet no officially undersigned agreement.<sup>1</sup> The only parallel to this Augsburg agreement as far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned are the Joint Declarations on Christology between the Pope and different Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. This is in fact an important parallel, because in both cases a "differentiated consensus" was established, and consequences drawn for the lifting of anathemas.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of The Joint Declaration on Justification.

In my view, the historical importance of the Joint Declaration on Justification will not be so much its content. There is nothing

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene. Hg. u. eingel. v. Harding Meyer, Damaskinos Papandreou, Hans Jörg Urban, Lukas Vischer. Paderborn/Frankfurt am Main. Band 1: 1931-82. 2. Neubearb. Aufl. 1991. Band 2: 1982-90. 1992.*

<sup>2</sup> *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Bd. 1, pp.527-42, Bd. 2, pp.568-80.*

new in it, and the declaration does not intend to be a new consensus paper either. As early as in 1971 the first international dialogue commission between LWF and the Roman Catholic Church in the so-called "Malta Report" stated a "far-reaching consensus" on the doctrine of Justification. Yet, it took 28 years until this consensus was agreed upon in an officially undersigned declaration. In the meantime this "far-reaching consensus" was substantiated by continuing dialogues, not least at regional or national levels. Two of those dialogues ought to be mentioned here, as they obviously have acted as important investigations into remaining differences as well as elucidations of possible ways of formulating the far-reaching consensus in a way to which the two churches officially would be able to commit themselves. First we have the volume *Justification by Faith*, the result of the national US-american dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Secondly the German project "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era, Do They Still Divide?", an investigation into the historical and actual relevance of the anathemas, carried out with perfect German *acribia*.<sup>4</sup>

The Joint Declaration therefore should be seen as an important summing-up of the dialogue-results from the last four decades on the doctrine of Justification. That this summary of a well-established consensus has been put to paper and solemnly undersigned — this gives such great importance to the Declaration. The happy consequence is the lifting of anathemas, however limited and conditioned that may be. The Joint Declaration on Justification must be seen as a mile-stone on the way to communion between Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

The so-called "differentiated consensus".

Yet there may also be a certain risk or danger hidden in the very solution of the declaration. I am not only referring to the fact that

<sup>3</sup> *Justification by Faith. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*. Ed. by H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess. Minneapolis 1985.

<sup>4</sup> *Lehrverurteilungen — kirchentrennend? I: Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*. Hg. v. Karl Lehmann und Wolfhart Pannenberg. Freiburg & Göttingen 1986.

crucial questions like ecclesiology, ministry and the sacraments have been excluded from the consensus. It is well known that these are remaining questions on the way towards unity. Rather, the so-called "differentiated consensus" itself may be a very ambivalent thing. Does this mean that there is no intention to proceed further to a common discourse? Is "differentiated consensus" an appropriate solution to questions raised fundamentally within the same theological discourse?

As to the provenience of the concept of "differentiated consensus", although the Declaration itself does not mention this concept, it is rightly used in order to characterize the kind of consensus agreed upon here.<sup>5</sup> In § 40 the Declaration states:<sup>6</sup> «The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding basic truths.» Concretely this relation between "basic truths", on the one hand, and "differences open to one another", on the other hand, can be seen in the Declaration with respect to every single topic touched upon. First there is a common formulation introduced by "We confess together..." Then follow two paragraphs alternately beginning with "According to Lutheran teaching..." and "When Catholics say that..." The different traditions are interpreted and explicated in view of the critical objections arising from the other

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Harding Meyer, "Die Prägung einer Formel. Ursprung und Intention", pp.36-58 in: *Einheit — aber wie? Zur Tragfähigkeit der ökumenischen Formel vom 'differenzierten Konsens'*. Hg. v. Harald Wargner. Freiburg 2000 (Quaestiones Disputatae 184).

<sup>6</sup> For the English version of the Declaration, including the official responses see *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service*. No. 98 (1998/III), pp. 81-100, for the so-called "Official Common Statement", with annex, which was added to the Declaration at the signing, see: *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service*. No.103 (2000/I-II), pp. 4-6.

side. This is a promising way to overcome a situation where the consensus is reaching far, although not yet all the way. However, we might wish to ask whether this method of differentiated consensus will in fact lead to the goal of full communion, or is only a step in that direction.

When I am opting for the latter alternative, this is not because I wish to judge the Lutheran doctrine of Justification with the instrument of Roman Catholic doctrinal formulations, nor because I would like to eliminate all differences of formulation. Rather I am convinced that the method of "differentiated consensus" has a lasting value, which can be confirmed and substantiated with the help of examples from the history of the Church. This is why I have chosen as my theme for this lecture "Justification and *Theosis*. — The Joint Declaration on Justification and the Dialogue between East and West." The relation between eastern and western theology points precisely in the direction of a "differentiated consensus". The different perspectives or options of the Greek East and the Latin West once led to Church Division, to separation between the two halves of Christendom at the beginning of the second millennium. Yet, during the Middle Ages the sense of belonging to the One Church was never lost on either side of the divide, and today we must state the fact that the main differences between East and West, i.e. the *filioque* question as well as the question of the relation between the universal and the local Church, can only be solved within a perspective of differentiated consensus.

#### Justification and the difference between East and West.

As far as the question of Justification is concerned, until this day the difference between East and West has not led to any Church-dividing debates. The Reformation conflict over this issue was an internal western conflict. As is well known, in the early Church before St. Augustine, there was no such thing as a doctrine of Justification, and until this day it is absent from Eastern Theology. Even if Eastern Theology has received the Pauline message of justification, it has not made this to its main catalyser in the doctrine of salvation and

grace. Orthodox theologians would perhaps not directly contradict JD § 18, "Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine". Yet, they would certainly be much happier with the following sentence: "It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other." Moreover they would assent to the demand of the official response of the Catholic Church that a "deeper reflection on the biblical foundation" of the doctrine of Justification should be carried out: "This reflection should be extended to the New Testament as a whole and not only to the Pauline writings." (§7) This demand was further taken up by the *Official Common Statement*, the document added to the Declaration when it was signed. Here Justification is said to have a special place "within the overall context of the Church's fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith" (*Official Common Statement*, Annex 3). Although the confession of God as Trinity is common and fundamental to all Christians, it is stressed in a particular way in Eastern Theology.

It may not be surprising at all that when the official dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church began in the 1980s the first consensus document (Munich document) was given the title "The Mystery of the Eucharist and the Church in the Light of the Holy Trinity".<sup>7</sup> Christian life is described here as a life in the Church nourished by the sacraments and aiming at a participation in divine life, the life of the Holy Trinity. In this document, so clearly based on a common patristic theology, there is no mention at all of Justification. Obviously, when talking with Orthodoxy Catholic theologians have felt no need to insist on the typical western discourse on Justification. The Catholic part at least in this dialogue, is able to use both perspectives alternately, the Justification perspective and the *Theosis* or divinization perspective.

This is clearly different within the dialogues between Lutheran Churches and the Orthodox. Here both sides have an immediate interest in confronting both of these perspectives. One has to

<sup>7</sup> *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*. Bd. 2, pp. 531-41.

investigate as to whether the Lutheran doctrine of Justification and the orthodox doctrine of *Theosis* are mutually exclusive perspectives or if they could be integrated into some sort of a differentiated consensus.

In my view, this difference in approach between the Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue, on the one hand, and the Lutheran-Orthodox, on the other, may help to illuminate the validity or durability of the differentiated consensus between Catholics and Lutherans on Justification. It may well be that our respective relations to the Orthodox Church will appear crucial.

In the remainder of this article I shall first offer some comments on the results of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue on Justification and *Theosis*, and then towards attempt to offer a perspective as to how the Lutheran-Orthodox-Catholic relationships could be mutually enriching.

#### Luther and *Theosis* — The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther.

A dialogue on a global level between LWF and the Orthodox Church started in 1981, but has so far progressed rather slowly. In 1995 a common statement entitled "Understanding of Salvation in the Light of the Ecumenical Councils" was adopted.<sup>8</sup> This text, however, is of a very general character, and we need to go to the local dialogues between Lutheran and Orthodox national churches in order to come to assessable results. Such local dialogues have taken place between the Evangelical Church in Germany and various Orthodox Churches,<sup>9</sup> between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church,<sup>10</sup> as well as between

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Risto Saarinen, "Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue: A Comparative Perspective", pp. 167-81 in: Carl E. Braaten-Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Union with Christ. The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*. Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Saarinen.

<sup>10</sup> *Dialogue between Neighbours. The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970-1986. Communiqués and Theses*. Ed. by H. T. Kamppuri. 1986.

Lutherans and Orthodox churches in North America.<sup>11</sup> I would like to concentrate here on the Finnish-Russian conversations, as these seem to be the most fruitful ones so far.

In this connection it should be mentioned that this North Eastern European dialogue has occasioned a remarkable renewal of Luther research in Finland. The innovative reading of Luther by Professor Tuomo Mannermaa of Helsinki University and his pupils has become well known today among international Luther scholars.<sup>12</sup> The Mannermaa-school has distanced itself from the so-called German 'Luther-renaissance' of the first half of the last century. The Finns interpret Luther's doctrine of Justification less in a relational and more in an ontological way. The union with Christ through faith is stressed as an ontological reality, and this union, which means a real indwelling of Christ in the justified, entails a renewal of life, which can be described in a sort of *Theosis* language. *In ipsa fides Christus adest*, "in Faith itself Christ is present", is a favourite quotation from Luther by this school, which emphasizes the extent to which 'deification' language was used by Luther himself.

The Finnish theologian Simo Peura, a pupil of Mannermaa, has thoroughly explored the way in which Luther understood Justification as both grace and gift, *favor* and *donum*.<sup>13</sup> Peura underlines, that the doctrine of the Formula of Concord, which has dominated the Lutheran Tradition ever since, and was reinforced by the German Luther renaissance one hundred years ago, does not do justice to Luther's own theology. Peura sums up:

Contrary to Luther, however, the FC (Formula of Concord) excludes gift, the renewal of a Christian and the removal of sin, from the doctrine (*locus*) of Justification. The FC indeed mentions gift, but at the same time it defines the gift in a radically limited sense

<sup>11</sup> John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds. *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*. Minneapolis 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See: Braaten-Jenson, eds. *Union with Christ. The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*. 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Simo Peura, "Christ as Favor and Gift: The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification", pp.42-9, in: *Union with Christ*.

compared with Luther. — The FC /then/ excludes from gift everything else that according to Luther is included in it. Regeneration, renewal (*renovatio*), vivification (*vivificatio*), and God's presence in the sinner (*inhabitatio Dei*) do not belong to the doctrine of Justification but are consequences of God's declarative act (imputed righteousness).<sup>14</sup>

According to the new Finnish interpretation, in Luther it is the other way round: The gift of renewal is given at the same time as God declares the sinner righteous. The renewal does not only follow the imputation of righteousness, but in a certain sense is included in it. Grace and gift go hand in hand, and the presupposition of both is faith in Christ, or to express it more accurately: the presence of Christ in faith, entails not only the imputation of Christ's own righteousness to the sinner, but the gift of it in an effective way. Christ inhabits the faithful, and effects through his presence the effective renewal. Peura explains:

Justification is not only a change of self-understanding, a new relation to God, or a new ethos of love. God changes the sinner ontologically in the sense that he or she participates in God and in his divine nature, being made righteous and 'a god'.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of this the Finnish theologians emphasize the extent to which Luther uses renewal language, and even speaks of deification of the sinner in Christ. There is a real *unio cum Christo*, a *conformitas Christi* of the justified sinner, through which believers are made "gods or sons of God".<sup>16</sup> Peura continues:

Luther is well aware of the concepts of participation as well as of divinization. God, he says, lets a human being receive faith and truth so that he is truthful in front of God, and not as a mere human being, but as God's child and a god. This deification is based on

<sup>14</sup> Peura, p.45.

<sup>15</sup> Peura, p.48.

<sup>16</sup> Peura, p.51.

God's indwelling, or inhabitation: a Christian is a god, God's child and infinite, because God indwells in him. Deification means for the Christian participation in God and in his divine nature: "*pars Christi vel sors Christi in terris fuit deus, sed partialiter.*" Theosis is a culmination of the train of Luther's thought as he claims the effective aspect of Justification.<sup>17</sup>

Critical points in the search for a Lutheran-Orthodox consensus.

In view of this background we ought not to be surprised that the Dialogue documents from the Finnish-Russian dialogue stress the affinity of the doctrines of Justification and *Theosis*. Although not reaching a full agreement with the Russian Orthodox on the matter, the Finnish Lutherans strongly tend to equate or even identify the Justification doctrine that has emerged from their own Luther research with the Orthodox doctrine of divinization. The Kiev common statement of 1977, for example, employs both terms alternately when it says: "Christ is the basis of our Justification and deification" (II.6), and further states "a remarkable unanimity on the essence of justification and deification when they are regarded as the most important aspects of personal salvation" (IV).<sup>18</sup>

That such statements should have an impact upon the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue is quite natural. Before I shall assess this remarkable convergence from a Catholic perspective, I should, however, like to underline that the Finnish Lutherans must be seen as the *avantgarde* of Lutheranism. In local or regional dialogues other than the Finnish-Russian Orthodox, many Orthodox theologians "still experience that the notion of deification is simply unacceptable for Protestants".<sup>19</sup> Professor Mannermaa himself has told the story of a German Lutheran remarking to him: "Immer wenn Sie, Herr Mannermaa, über Theosis reden, bekomme ich Magenschmerzen!" — "Every time You talk about Theosis, professor Mannermaa, I get

<sup>17</sup> Peura, p.51.

<sup>18</sup> Pp. 74 and 75 respectively in *Dialogue between neighbours*.

<sup>19</sup> Saarinen, p.171.

stomach pains".<sup>20</sup> Moreover it must be said that the Orthodox in their conversations with the Finns, though welcoming the convergence between Justification and *Theosis* doctrines, often make critical points similar to those in Catholic theology. Thus, for instance, the Kiev document states that grace "never does violence to man's personal will", a statement which the Finnish Lutherans assented to. The Orthodox, however, the document adds, understand this as presupposing a "cooperation between God's saving grace and man, i.e. freedom of will" (IV.7). Further, it seems to me, that in Kiev's common statement the Orthodox distinguish between Justification as the beginning of Christian life through baptism, and deification as an ongoing process under the influence of the Holy Spirit, where "faith is permeated by love." (IV.4).<sup>21</sup>

In the Finnish Lutheran perspective sanctification although it is, of course, seen also as a process, the main emphasis is on the indwelling of Christ and hence the simultaneity of imputative and effective righteousness. It seems to me that the crucial difference between the traditional interpretation of Luther and the new Finnish one, is that the latter stresses the effectiveness and ontological reality of Justification in itself, as both grace and gift. The gift naturally effects a continuing renewal in the justified, but this is seen more in terms of the favourite Lutheran aspect of the fruits of faith, than as a dynamic process leading to participation in divine life. The Finnish Luther-interpretation pays more attention to *Theosis* as an already accomplished fact through the indwelling of Christ in faith, than to *Theosis* as an ongoing dynamics with a strong eschatological direction. Even this new interpretation of Luther remains, in my view, remarkably mute, when reflecting and commenting on the "already now" but "not yet". From a Catholic and also from an Orthodox perspective the gift that God gives in baptism/justification — if we call this 'created and infused grace', the 'energies of God' or simply, like Peter Lombard, equate the gift with the Holy Spirit, does not matter — sets the justified free to willingly be transformed through

<sup>20</sup> Saarinen, p.171.

<sup>21</sup> *Dialogue between neighbours*, pp.75 and 76.

grace on the way to eternal life. Not so the *donum* of the Finnish Luther-interpretation. It seems to remain under the spell of the *mere passive*.<sup>22</sup> So, with their stress on the indwelling of Christ through faith and their use of *Theosis* terminology and of ontological language, the Finns have contributed both to a possible further advance in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue and in the Lutheran-Orthodox. Yet the moment of personal involvement in faith, the possibility on the part of the justified to freely contribute to his or her transformation in grace, must be made clear.

#### Divinization language and the Doctrine of *Theosis*.

I have spoken of *Theosis* in terms of an ongoing dynamics with a strong eschatological direction. In my understanding this is the point of the eastern doctrine of *Theosis*. In this connection, however, I feel compelled to add some further critical remarks on the Finnish Luther research. First, it seems clear to me that the Finns do not distinguish between, on the one hand, the use of such terms as deification, participation, indwelling, 'sons of God' etc, and, on the other hand, a developed doctrine of *Theosis*. It is well known that the traditional phrase — going back to Irenæus and Athanasius — that the "Word (Logos) became man, in order that we should become gods" is used continually even in Western tradition and hence taken over by Luther himself. The tradition of 'deification' or of the *admirabile commercium*, 'the happy exchange' is in fact strong in the Latin liturgy, in sermons and in spiritual theology all through the Middle Ages. It is the merit of Finnish Luther research to have shown to what a great extent Luther was connected with that tradition. Yet, to state with professor Mannermaa, that Luther has a *Concept*

<sup>22</sup> If this objection might be considered to be biased, I would add that even the Finns must at least clarify how they would interpret what in the Joint Declaration 21 is formulated in this way: "When they /Lutherans/ emphasize that a person can only receive (*mere passive*) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word".

of *Theosis* would seem to me to overstate the facts.<sup>23</sup> For, Luther cannot be said to have a concept or doctrine of *Theosis* in the eastern sense.

According to an analysis by the late Cardinal Congar, the Eastern Doctrine of Deification contains three elements:<sup>24</sup> First, vocabulary. Here, there is a great affinity or similarity between East and West. Both traditions use deification language. Second, eastern deification doctrine supposes a specific anthropology, namely the distinction between image and likeness of God. In western theology those words normally are seen as synonymous, as indeed in Gen.1:26-27 they should be interpreted as a parallelism. In Eastern Theology, however, even if image and likeness denote the same thing, viz. man as created by God, they have different connotations. Human beings are created *eis eikon kai homiosin to Theou*, "to the image and likeness of God", which means that they constitutionally *are* images of God, whatever this concretely should mean, as e.g. free will. This divine image is undestroyable and is not lost through original sin. Likeness, the *homiosis* or *similitudo*, on the other hand, has a teleological connotation. Human beings should grow up and develop into the likeness of God through grace. This process came to a halt through the Fall but was renewed through Christ and will be brought to its goal by the Holy Spirit, with which human beings cooperate, the *synérgeia* of Orthodox theology. This dynamic Orthodox anthropology, which I have summarised here all too briefly, seems to be foreign to the Lutheran doctrine of Justification. And even the Finnish stress on deification and participation in Luther's writings does not change this. The well-known lack of anthropology, or more generally, of creation theology, within or as a presupposition of Lutheran Justification doctrine remains a problem to Orthodox, as well as to Roman Catholic theology.

The third element of eastern *Theosis* doctrine, I will only mention briefly, as the relation to Luther's theology here is too complicated

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the contributions of Tuomo Mannermaa to *Union with Christ*.

<sup>24</sup> Yves Congar, OP, "La Déification dans la tradition spirituelle de L'Orient", pp. 257-72 in: *Chrétiens en Dialogue*, Paris 1964.

to discuss within the framework of this brief article. It is the famous distinction between the essence and energies of God. As we are not able to know God in himself, we know God only through his works, his *energeiai*, his energies. Those energies, however, are not to be seen as created effects, but as God himself present in his works. Through those energies we stand in real contact with God. The energies, or as the Orthodox often say, the divine grace, permeate creation and human beings, transform them, and hence make them participate in divine life. Divinization takes place through the energies of God, the grace of God. We become gods *kath'energeian* according to grace, not *kath'ousian*, according to substance. This clarification makes it possible for Eastern Theology to keep the distinction between God and creation, and yet at the same time to stress the real communion of creation within the life of God. This distinction between God's essence and energies further strengthens the dynamic perspective in which salvation is understood in terms of deification. Both the total dependence of created beings on their Creator and the distinctive character of being created make up for the dynamic and never problematized cooperation or synergism which characterizes Orthodox theology. It should be added, that Eastern Theology, does not tend to distinguish sharply between creation and redemption theology. All through salvation history, or if you prefer, because of the economy of God, grace or the energies of God are operating and human beings cooperating and being transformed on the way to eternal life.

#### The Sacramental Sub-structure of Justification and *Theosis*

I suppose one might be able to say that the recent Finnish Luther research and its impact on the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue represents a promising phenomenon, although many critical points and open questions remain to be discussed. In general it is my thesis that the dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics, which has come to an important preliminary result in the Joint Declaration on Justification, could advance further and profit significantly from the dialogue with Eastern tradition. As far as I can see the Catholic Doctrine of Justification and Grace has the same structure as the Orthodox

Doctrine of *Theosis*. Many critical questions which I have put to the Lutheran doctrine of Justification have also been raised by the Orthodox in their dialogue with Lutherans. They are thus voiced, however, within a different discourse, which, as the Finnish Lutherans have shown, does have a certain affinity to Luther. Relevant objections to the Lutheran "Doctrine of *Theosis*" from an Orthodox perspective — and I have presented some of them here — are not burdened with the same misinterpretations and misunderstandings as when we speak out of a Latin tradition. And hence critical theological problems can be discussed more freely and less limited by preconceived ideas.

One such misunderstanding which I have investigated myself is the Doctrine of Merit. Time does not allow me to get into details, but let me say that through my research on the history of merit theology, I hope to have been able to contribute to disarming this very acute question. Yet differences remain between the Catholic Theology of Grace and the Lutheran Theology of Faith and good works.<sup>25</sup>

To say it in brief, my research into the history of Merit Theology has led me to the firm conviction that, even beyond the terminological question, which is burdened by historical misunderstandings, the Catholic Doctrine of Grace and Justification has a similar structure as the Eastern *Theosis* Doctrine. This in turn leads me to think that many of the remaining issues, as exemplified in the Joint Declaration, may be easier to solve through a deeper confrontation, not only on the part of the Lutherans, but also from the Catholic side, with Eastern theology. The fact that the Joint Declaration has tried to solve the problems through a "differentiated consensus" may in fact be due to the impossibility to advance further within the common discourse of Western theology. A radically different discourse may, if not dissolve, so at least illuminate the oppositions.

<sup>25</sup> Gösta Hallonsten, *Satisfactio bei Tertullian. Überprüfung einer Forschungstradition*. Lund 1984 (Studia Theologica Lundensia 39); *Meritum bei Tertullian. Überprüfung einer Forschungstradition II*. Lund 1985. (Studia Theologica Lundensia 40); *Grace, Merit and Theosis in the Latin Fathers* (forthcoming).

I have also raised the differences, not to say difficulties in understanding, between the Finnish Lutheran *Theosis* discourse and the Eastern Orthodox, in terms of conclusion I would like to point to the sub-structure of the Orthodox Doctrine of *Theosis*, a sub-structure which I hope could open up for further dialogue between Lutherans and Orthodox, and as a consequence between Lutherans and Catholics. I have the sacramental sub-structure of the Orthodox doctrine of *Theosis* in mind, a sub-structure, which of course even the Catholic Doctrine of Justification and Grace presupposes. The fear of Lutherans, in confrontation with the Catholic, but possibly also Orthodox stress on the role of co-operation in Justification and *Theosis*, that this may entail a self-glorification of human beings may partly be diffused by the insight that the Orthodox doctrine of *synergeia* "does not focus on the cooperating human being, but intends to be a glorification of God, who honours man in making them cooperate in his own work"<sup>26</sup>. Yet, what in the end theologically guarantees this perspective is the sacramental structure of salvation. No doctrine will ever convince, if it is not anchored in the sacramental life of the Church. Lutheran tradition holds Baptism and Eucharist in high esteem. This could be a point of departure for further dialogue. That God uses creation and elevates created human beings to divine life can only be verified through the sacraments. The intimacy and immediacy to God which is a main concern of Luther's teaching on Justification, this immediacy can only be *mediated*. To use a passage from the Dominican Aidan Nichols: "The Catholic Christian is nourished experientially by the life of the Church, which consists in a celebration of faith and of the sacraments of faith together with all those who co-operate in such celebration. /—/the Christian nourished in this way, is also directly open to the transcendent God. The Church mediates God by immediating him, by making him — immediately present to each of her members."<sup>27</sup>

Gösta Hallonsten

<sup>26</sup> Birmelé, *Le salut en Jésus Christ dans les dialogues oecuméniques*, Paris 1986, p.441-42

<sup>27</sup> Aidan Nichols, OP, *The Shape of Catholic Theology. An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles and History*. Edinburgh 1991, p.244.

“MYSTERIUM REDEMPTIONIS”

*Do Sacrifício de Cristo à dimensão  
sacrificial da existência cristã*

**CONGRESSO DE FÁTIMA**

*(9-12 de Maio de 2001)*

**SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA**

*coordenação científica*

**FACULDADE DE TEOLOGIA – UCP**

**SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA**

**2002**