

NATURE AND GRACE :
RESOURCES FOR A THEOLOGY OF GRACE
IN THE THEOLOGY OF GREGORY PALAMAS,
THOMAS AQUINAS AND MARTIN LUTHER.

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INTRODUCTION.

PREAMBLE.

This project arises out of an interest in the theology of grace and the theological question of the relationship between nature and grace. It rests on the conviction that a complete theology of grace can only be developed if due account is taken of the different approaches to the theology of grace adopted by the three main Christian traditions , namely Orthodoxy , Catholicism and Protestantism .

It is axiomatic to this project that an adequately complete theology of grace which draws on all three traditions has not yet been developed . Another central conviction on which this project rests is that the position adopted on a fundamental theme like nature and grace will determine to a large extent one's position on less fundamental themes.

This is an attempt , then , to show how the ideas of three formative theologians on "nature and grace" can benefit the development of a comprehensive doctrine of grace today .

METHODS AND INTENTIONS.

The method adopted will be to study the thought on human nature and grace of formative theologians from the three major Christian traditions . In the light of these three studies an outline of the elements of a comprehensive theology of grace will be presented .

To clarify things at the outset, some tentative explanations of what is meant by the terms "nature" and "grace" are necessary. The two questions which form the basis for the "nature and grace" theme are these : what is a human being , and how can God be said to affect the lives of human beings ? Now the description of what a human being is constitutes an account of human nature , and the description of how God affects people constitutes an account of divine grace . A number of points should be evident simply from these explanations . Firstly, one's assumptions about human nature will to a large extent affect one's theology of grace . Secondly , following from this , an adequate understanding of the theology of grace is not possible without a clear picture of the prevailing theology of human nature . Thirdly , the theme "nature and grace" is clearly a fundamental one in any theology . Finally , it should also be clear that assumptions about the nature of persons and God's effect on them are present, implicitly or explicitly, in any theological discussion.

One of the best ways to gain an overall insight into the position adopted by a tradition of Christian thought is to consider the work of influential , formative theologians , and to this end I have selected three theologians , one from each of the three groups

mentioned, and will show how they handle the "nature and grace" theme. Having done this, in each case I will show how the theologian views the significance of Jesus and the importance of the church in the light of his view of nature and grace. These last two themes are vast enough in themselves, so they will only be considered in summary fashion in order to illustrate the implications of the given theologian's understanding of nature and grace.

On the question of whether it would not be better to use statements from councils and synods of the three groups instead of the works of individual theologians, my reasons for deciding to use theologians are as follows.

Firstly, the theologians considered, Gregory Palamas, Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, have all had such formative influences on their respective groups that councils and synods have been shaped by their theology. While it may never have been the case officially, and while it may not be the case at all today, it is true that these theologians have had a dominant formative influence on their respective groups in the past, and that today's theology cannot be considered independently of that past.

Gregory Palamas was an Orthodox monk and archbishop of Thessalonica in Byzantium in the fourteenth century. In the defense of monastic spirituality he developed a number of dogmatic insights which gave expression to the Orthodox tradition in such a profound way that he was rapidly accorded a pre-eminent position among the "doctors" of

the Orthodox church . In the words of Kallistos Ware :

His teaching was confirmed by two councils held at Constantinople in 1341 and 1351, which , although local and not Ecumenical, yet possess a doctrinal authority in Orthodox theology scarcely inferior to the Seven General Councils themselves . (1)

Thomas Aquinas was a member of the Catholic Dominican order, a mendicant fraternity dedicated to contemplation and preaching of the gospel. He lectured in university cities like Paris and Naples for most of his adult life . His synthesis of the recently "discovered" Aristotelian philosophy and Catholic theology became so revered in subsequent centuries that , like Palamas, he was regarded as one of the leading "doctors" of his church. His theology enjoyed official sanction , particularly in the counter-reformation period and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries . Many Catholics have regarded his work, written in the thirteenth century as a "classical moment in the history of Christian thought." (2)

Martin Luther's sixteenth century clash with Catholicism made him the initiator and exemplar of the Protestant Reformation. Given the less "monolithic" nature of Protestantism, one cannot say that Luther commands or commanded authority in the same ways as Palamas and Aquinas, but one can say that his theology is typical of the Protestant ethos. This , and the fact that he stands at the beginning of the Protestant tradition , indicate his reliability as a representative of that tradition. As Koenigsberger has put it, in any

study of the Protestant Reformation,

The figure of Martin Luther remains central ;
of this there can be no doubt . (3)

The order in which the three studies are presented, Palamas first, then Aquinas , then Luther, is fairly arbitrary. Palamas is considered first because of the relative simplicity of his theology , which makes his view of nature and grace a very clear initial study. Aquinas follows and this juxtapositioning should show some of the theological background to the schism between Catholic and Orthodox churches. This schism had already taken place by the time of Palamas and Aquinas; but their theology reflects the nature of the schism quite clearly. Luther is considered third, mainly because this is chronologically appropriate, Luther having lived two centuries after the other two theologians.

A chapter will be devoted to each study , and the sections into which these chapters will be divided will be the same. At the outset , a brief outline of the theological context of the theologian being studied will be given. The intention of this section will be to show the formative influences on the theologian and to highlight the theological battles that the theologian was engaged in . Important movements within the church and challenges from beyond the church will be dealt with to show what it was that the theologians were reacting against as they set out their positions.

Having done this , the theologian's view of what human nature is will be presented. There will generally be two points at issue here . The

first is to determine what exactly the theologian feels constitutes human nature, and the second is to determine what the theologian feels are the limits of human nature . These questions will not be handled systematically in exactly this form, but they are the basis of these sections of each chapter.

Then, following on from this, there will be a description of the theologian's view of the human condition . Given a certain definition of human nature, what is the central problem or predicament which confronts people ? This will depend , to a degree, on the notion of the limits of human nature. It should be borne in mind that this is the basis of the concept of salvation, because a predicament implies a solution , and the notion of salvation is the Christian understanding of the solution to the human predicament .

This will be followed by an outline of the view of grace which the theologian adopts. The definition of grace , the way or ways in which grace operates, the divisions of grace and the most important terms used in conjunction with the word "grace" will be considered. All these issues must be seen as arising out of the basic concern to discover how the theologian believes God can be said to affect a person's life.

At this point enough will have been shown to consider the relationship between nature and grace . The issue here will be to discover whether there is an intrinsic connection between the theologian's view of what human beings are and his view of God's effect on humans . It will be at this crucial point in each study

that concepts like "synergy", "deification" , "habit" , "sanctification" , "imputed righteousness" and "justification" will be explained. They are terms which characterise the approaches of the three different groups to salvation, which is the solution of the human predicament.

In the light of these preceding sections, Jesus and the church will be brought into the discussion . In the case of Jesus I intend to consider only the specific question of the role played by Jesus in the salvation of people. This topic will be discussed purely with a view to showing the implications of the theologian's understanding of nature and grace. If humans are fundamentally like this , and God acts like this, then how do the actions of the particular person Jesus fit into the picture ? In this context the essential emphases of the three traditions , namely deification , sanctification and justification will be indicated .

The understanding of the church will be handled in the same way. Given this view of human beings and this view of God's activity, what is the role of a specifically Christian group of people ?

Each chapter will conclude with a summary of the positions of the various theologians. At this point in each chapter I will extract the essential points being made by the theologians.

This is, in broad outline, the structure which will be adopted in each chapter. As the point of the study is not to prove the superiority of any of the three groups , the term "church", which

will be used from now on instead of "group", will always start with a small initial letter. This is to avoid giving the impression that one or two of the theologians belongs to the right "Church" while the other or others merely belong to "churches".

An important point to clarify at the outset is the scope of the studies . The term "grace" in particular has been used in theology in conjunction with a very large number of other terms. This is of course inevitable as it is a fundamental term, but it raises a problem of selection when it comes to analysing the term grace itself. For example the question of predestination is very often treated in the context of a discussion of grace . For reasons of space I have decided not to consider the question of predestination at all, just as I have not dealt with the ways in which law and grace are related or opposed in Aquinas and Luther. An in-depth treatment of the specific terms nature and grace is preferable.

The terms "East" and "West" will be used frequently. In the pre-Reformation period "East" is generally synonymous with Byzantine Orthodox and "West" is generally synonymous with "Catholic". In the post-Reformation period of Luther if the term "East" is used it will be synonymous with "Orthodox", and if the term "West" is used it will be specified whether the reference is to "Catholic" or "Protestant".

The terms "Orthodox" , "Catholic" and "Protestant" also need to be explained. "Orthodox" refers to the Byzantine, Slav and Russian church of the Seven Councils, often known as the "Eastern Orthodox" church. The use of the term Orthodox does not imply that the other

churches are heterodox. "Catholic" refers to the Roman Catholic church. The use of the term Catholic does not imply that the other churches have no valid claim to universality. "Protestant" refers to all the churches which stem from the sixteenth century Reformation, thus including both Evangelical and Reformed traditions. The terms used are labels of convenience , chosen for their brevity and identifiability.

Gregory Palamas, despite his authority in the Orthodox church , is not very well known amongst Catholics and Protestants. There are very few English translations of his own works and very few commentaries on his work. The correction of this is due almost entirely to the work of John Meyendorff , himself an Orthodox priest. While his work in this field is of inestimable value, it leaves non-Orthodox with the problem of not having access to debates about the interpretation of Palamas which are so important a part of reaching clarity in theology. This is mentioned to explain the reliance on Meyendorff in the chapter on Palamas. It goes without saying that the same methodological problem does not arise in the cases of Aquinas and Luther.

In the Patristic era the term "person" was used in the sense of a mask (persona) , the appearance of a thing . Palamas and Aquinas used these categories of thought and distinguished between "person" and "nature" very carefully. Luther tended to avoid such a clear distinction, and his approach is closer to the modern tendency to use the term "person" in such a way as to include "nature". In this dissertation care will be taken not to confuse these usages

anachronistically.

In the Conclusion the various emphases of the three traditions will be juxtaposed and , as far as possible , harmonised in an outline of a comprehensive theology of grace . In the course of this the question whether there was a discernible historical progression which might suggest a necessary logical development in the theology of grace from the earlier Aquinas and Palamas to the later Luther will be briefly considered .

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE THEOLOGIANS.

It is not my intention to go into great detail here, but it is important to show briefly some of the background in the Christian tradition of the three theologians.

Firstly it must be stressed that these three theologians should not be assumed to be powerful presences in each other's backgrounds. What is meant by this is that Palamas, for instance, was not writing specifically in reaction to Aquinas, although he was aware of him. Aquinas preceded Palamas chronologically, but their theological contexts were different , and Aquinas did not form Palamas , either positively or negatively. Luther's primary preoccupation was with the reformation of Catholicism, and in view of this he was not directly concerned with Palamite Orthodoxy at all. Aquinas , by virtue of being one of the pre-eminent Scholastics, was criticised by Luther. It is this connection that may be of considerable importance in understanding Luther, and so it can be said that Aquinas, to a

certain extent, formed Luther negatively in so far as Luther reacted against his theology.

Secondly the question of the roots of these theologians in the tradition must be addressed. For Palamas the theology of Pseudo Dionysius, the Cappadocian Fathers (4) and above all Maximus the Confessor (5) were the formative figures. For Aquinas the formative Christian influences were Augustine of Hippo and Pseudo Dionysius (6), while the pre-Christian philosophy of both Plato and Aristotle influenced him. For Luther, who was trained in the Nominalist tradition that stemmed from Ockham, Augustine of Hippo, a reading of the Apostle Paul and to some extent the Rhineland mystics were formative. (7)

Two points need to be made about these influences. Firstly, they were all complemented by exhaustive knowledge of the Bible. All three theologians were trained in a monastic or quasi-monastic environment in which the Bible was a staple intellectual diet. This seems so obvious as almost not to be worth stating, but it is surprisingly often overlooked. Secondly, very few of the above author's works were available to these theologians in a thoroughly accurate and reliable form. For instance, what is known of Augustine of Hippo today may, through no fault of their own, have escaped these theologians.

With this historical background in mind, it is now necessary to turn to the works of the three theologians themselves.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Ware , K. : The_Orthodox_Church. pg. 76.
- (2) Ernst , C. : Multiple_Echo. pg.233.
- (3) Koenigsberger , H.G. : Luther...A_Profile. pg.x.
- (4) Houdret, J-P. : "Palamas et les Cappadociens".
Istina 1974,3.
- (5) Garrigues, J-M. : "L'energie divine et la grace chez
Maxime le Confesseur". Istina 1974,3.
- (6) Rondet, H. : The_Grace_of_Christ. pg.217.
- (7) Rondet, H : ibid. pg 280 .

CHAPTER ONE

NATURE AND GRACE IN THE
THEOLOGY OF GREGORY PALAMAS.

THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF GREGORY PALAMAS .

Gregory Palamas , who lived from AD 1296 to AD 1359, has long been regarded in Orthodox Christian circles as having made a crucial contribution to the expression of its theology. This chapter will focus on his views of human nature and grace . The implications of these views for his ideas about the role of Jesus and the church in salvation will be indicated . In order to appreciate the significance of his approach to the nature and grace theme , an outline of the theological context in which he operated is important.

In AD 1351 his teachings were formally approved by the Orthodox church and he became regarded as one of the doctrinal Fathers of the church. He had been a monk in Constantinople, on Mount Athos and in Thessalonica, where he was Archbishop from 1347 until his death. As a theologian he was well known for developing the theology of monastic

spirituality . The monastic theology of Palamas was poised between two opposing positions : the naturalism of Barlaam the Calabrian and the dualism of the Messalians (who had roots in Manicheism) . Messalianism was dualistic in so far as it taught that only the soul could achieve any union with God , while the body and all material things were to be regarded as obstacles to true spirituality (1). This needs to be stressed, because at the time of Maximos the Confessor (580-662 AD) such doctrines did not hold much sway in the East, and the ways in which Palamas extended Maximos' thought are due largely to the pressures these movements exerted. The monastic movement , of which Palamas was part, and Messalianism both appealed to the same groups in the society and they shared some elements of spirituality (2). Palamas was actually accused of Messalianism by Barlaam of Calabria at one point in their conflict .

It was Barlaam of Calabria who represented the naturalist tendency which Palamas opposed: nominalism, humanism and the use of Aristotle were its hallmarks. Although not all Palamites were anti-humanist as such , those aspects of humanism which threatened theology were attacked. Meyendorff has described Byzantine humanism in this way (3):

The humanists, in fact, started from the assumption of a sort of autonomy for human reason, and its independence in relation to a God whom they conceived as some impenetrable and inaccessible Essence. The union of God and man, realized once for all in the person of Christ, and divine action,

effective and real, among humanity regenerated by baptism, played no decisive part in their thought.

It is clear that these movements are at the opposite poles of a logical spectrum, and hence that Palamas was fighting his battles on two fronts. Messalianism was dualistic, whereas the humanism of the time was reductionist in that in its pure form it denied the existence and influence of anything beyond the natural realm. Palamas' theology was an attempt to show how divine and human persons could relate to each other without viewing that relationship in dualistic terms. This theology steered a middle course between dualist separation of body and soul and naturalist assertion of the independence of matter from divinity. Palamas' theology insisted on the inseparability of body and soul and the absolute dependence of matter on divinity.

PALAMAS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE.

Influenced as he was by Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, Palamas often defines theological realities in Apophatic or negative terms. This approach to theology proceeds by stating what a thing is not up to the point where an intuition of the nature of the reality described has been reached. Now this approach affects even Palamas' view of human nature. He writes:

Every nature is as far removed as possible from the divine nature, and is absolutely foreign to him : if God is nature, then all the other beings are not that ; and if

every being different from God is nature,
 he is not that , just as he is not a being,
 if the others are. (4)

This passage is simply intended to stress the difference between human nature and divine nature , so that the relationship between the two could be clearly expressed without falling into dualism or naturalism . When Palamas becomes more specific and explicit about human nature , he shows that he identifies with the Byzantine Orthodox tradition.

That tradition understands man as

an "open being", naturally possessing in himself a divine "spark" and dynamically oriented toward further progress in God...(5)

This "open being" has fundamentally three elements, body, soul and spirit (or "mind, nous"). Body and soul are inseparable and the survival of the soul after death depends upon the resurrection of the body. This position was adopted by people like Maximos the Confessor against any Platonic notion of the liberation of the soul from the body. (6) The soul in this conception must be taken to mean that which animates the person : it is the vital principle.

The vital principle "impels" the human being towards God . The human becomes a "closed" being insofar as he or she remains sinfully ignorant of the ways of God . Palamas uses death as a metaphor for separation from God caused by such ignorance . He thus sees death in

two ways , literally and metaphorically .

After the transgression of our ancestors in Paradise ... sin came into life. We ourselves are dead and, before the death of the body, we suffer the death of the soul; that is to say, the separation of the soul from God .(7)

Now there was a additional element in the traditional anthropology . This was the nous : the mind or the spirit. Meyendorff suggests that the nous should be understood in three ways.

- (1) The ability which man possesses to transcend himself in order to participate in God;
- (2) The unity of man's composite nature when it faces his ultimate destiny in God and in the world;
- (3) The freedom of man , which can either fully develop if it finds God or becomes defective if it submits itself to the body. (8)

The nous is the rational element of the soul , and it is this which distinguishes humans from other kinds of creature because Palamas holds that other kinds of creatures can have souls .

This interpretation is advanced because in the sources from the period the terms for soul and mind (or spirit) are neither synonymous nor very clearly distinguished. It would seem that they are as inseparable as body and soul , and that leaves us with what is known as a trichotomist anthropology consisting of body, soul and spirit.

The notion of the person as the image and likeness of God reminds us that the Byzantine view of human nature was positive and optimistic. Palamas stresses this;

The Word became flesh to honor the flesh,
even this mortal flesh ; therefore, the
proud spirits should not consider themselves,
and should not be considered worthy of greater
honors than man , nor should they deify themselves
on account of their incorporeality and their
apparent immortality. (9)

Palamas also uses the term "heart" in talking about the spirituality of the person. The term conveys the idea of the focal point of all personal energy , and hence the threshold of spiritual upliftment. If a person could reach the "heart" , the integration of the various components of the person's nature would be effected. Thus "heart" is a term used analogically to describe the integrating core of the person. The term's history lies partly in the writings of Pseudo Macarius, who rejected the Platonic categories of Evagrius in favour of the less dualistic biblical categories. Due to the importance for this view of the unity of body, soul and spirit, a psychosomatic method of prayer known to the hesychasts or monks of Byzantium had been developed by people such as Pseudo Macarius and Nicephorus. This involved a combination of disciplined breathing and concentration which would open the person up to God. Barlaam of Calabria opposed the method, and Palamas defended it.

Thus our heart is the place of the rational faculty,
the first rational organ of the body . Consequently,

when we seek to keep watch over and correct our reason by a rigorous sobriety, with what are we to keep watch, if we do not gather together our mind, which has been dissipated abroad by the senses, and lead it back again into the interior, to the selfsame heart which is the seat of the thoughts ? This is why the justly named Macarius immediately goes on to say, "It is there one must look to see if grace has inscribed the laws of the Spirit." Where but in the heart, the controlling organ, the throne of grace, where the mind and all the thoughts of the soul are to be found ? Can you not see, then , how essential it is that those who have determined to pay attention to themselves in inner quiet should gather together the mind and enclose it in the body, and especially in that "body" most interior to the body, which we call the heart ? (10)

PALAMAS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.

The question underlying this section is "what are the basic problematic features of human existence that are solved by the Christian experience of grace ? The predicament of humanity has to be considered in the light of Palamas' definition of human nature .

Although Palamas had a positive and optimistic view of human nature, this does not imply that this is untainted. He distinguishes carefully between the human condition as it is meant to be (in the

temporal realm) and as it actually is. Palamas used the familiar method of saying that human nature has fallen through original sin from a condition of pristine excellence into a state of sin and death. As Meyendorff puts it:

To understand Palamas' thought about sin and death, it is necessary correctly to analyse his use of the word "nature". For him "nature" is not a static conception, but must always be considered in one or other of its existential states. Its state before the Fall implied life in God, for which it had been made, although that life was not its own, but that of God; this was essentially the "natural" state of nature; after the Fall, deprived of that life, it was left to rely on its own powers alone, a condition basically contrary to its destiny, and involving death. (11)

Palamas, in common with the whole Orthodox tradition, differs in emphasis from the Western view of original sin. He places much more emphasis on death as a consequence of original sin than he does on guilt. Fear of death gives rise to an urge toward self-preservation. This basic attempt to preserve one's self in the face of death is so deeply rooted that it undermines attempts at self-abandonment time and again. This undermining of one's best intentions is labelled "passion" by Palamas. This concept is often taken to be synonymous with either "lust" or "suffering" but these are not the meanings ascribed to the word by Palamas. Passion is essentially any concern

with self-preservation rather than with God. The problem is that people after the Fall seem on the whole to be incapable of concerning themselves with anything other than self-preservation in the face of death .This passionate attempt to preserve one's self leads to further corruption of the person's capacity to perceive the things of God. For Palamas, sin is essentially ignorance , which obscures the radiant light of God . This ignorance is symbolised by phenomena such as darkness , sleep and death .

This in broad outline is the Palamite assessment of the human condition. He describes the consequences of the Fall in this way:

We hold within ourselves the images of the logoi which reside within the creative Intelligence. But why have these images from the beginning proved ineffective ? Is it not because of sin, and also because of ignorance and scorn of divine commandments ? Why do we need teaching to see these images, although they are inscribed within us ? I sin not because the passionate part of the soul, roused to commit evil, has corrupted them ? Is it not because it has overthrown the power of sight of the soul , and driven it away from its primal beauty ? (12)

At this point it is appropriate to recall Palamas' idea of the death of the soul. He uses the concept as a metaphor for separation from God , the consequence of sinful ignorance of the ways of God . To suffer the death of the soul is for Palamas to be trapped in the

cycle of self-preservation , ignorance and corruption. For instance Adam's soul

was put to death ... for it separated itself from God; but in a bodily sense it remained alive for nine hundred and thirty years ..., but the death which the soul had suffered through transgression, not only made the soul unprofitable and man accursed, but also subjected his body to many sufferings and evils, and made it corruptible. (13)

It is not clear whether the human predicament was primarily a problem facing the individual or whether it was a problem facing the community as a whole. It could be assumed that Palamas' espousal of the hesychast eremiticism led him to focus on the individual more than on the community, but that may impose on Palamas an anachronistic distinction between individual and community. Although he does not deal with this theme explicitly, it is reasonable to suppose that Palamas might point to private prayer as the locus of the individual's response to his or her predicament and to the liturgy as the locus of the community's response, and that the one cannot be effective without the other.

Despite the power of sin and corruption, the dignity of the person is never obliterated, and it is in fact the liturgy which safeguards it. As Meyendorff puts it:

The central role of man in the cosmos is also reflected - better perhaps than in any system of concepts - in the Byzantine liturgy with its emphasis on the union of heaven and earth, its

sacramental realism, its rites of blessing food, nature and human life, as well as in the affirmation that, by nature, man is closer to God than are the angels themselves. The idea originates in Hebrews 1:14, and is developed by Gregory Palamas in the context of an Incarnational theology (14)

PALAMAS' VIEW OF GRACE.

In the above discussion of human nature and the human predicament, the point was being made that Palamas did not assume that the human being was an entirely autonomous entity. The human was an open being, made up in such a way that divinity was reflected in its limited nature. Humans were also caught up in a network of sin which all but trapped them into obscuring their natural openness. Now to describe people as fundamentally open raises the question of what they are open to .

What, then, is Palamas' view of grace? Once again it is the apophatic method that Palamas uses often that will clarify his concept of grace.

...the monks know that the essence of God transcends the fact of being inaccessible to the senses, since God is not only above all created things, but is even beyond Godhead. The excellence of Him who surpasses all things is not only beyond all affirmation, but also beyond all negation; it exceeds all excellence

that is attainable by the mind. This hypostatic light, seen spiritually by the saints, they know by experience to exist , as they tell us , and to exist not symbolically only , as do manifestations produced by fortuitous events; but it is an illumination immaterial and divine, a grace invisibly seen and ignorantly known. What it is they do not pretend to know. (15)

This rich passage contains a number of terms which are crucial for understanding Palamas on grace : essence, light, knowledge by experience and illumination. These terms are crucial for Palamas because spiritual knowledge was described in terms of being illumined by God's light. This raises the question of whether it was possible to experience divine illumination by knowing the essence of God , and this in turn raises the question of whether God's essence was revealed to persons by grace. (16)

Thus it is clear that Palamas could only talk about grace if he answered the question of how God related to persons. This is because that relationship is precisely what the language of grace is all about .

This grace is in fact a relationship, albeit not a natural one; yet it is at the same time beyond relationship, not only by virtue of being supernatural, but also qua relationship....

But as to the essence of God, that is unrelated, not qua relationship, but because it transcends

the supernatural relationships themselves. Grace is communicated to all worthy of it , in a way proper and peculiar to each one , while the divine essence transcends all that is participable. (17)

The significance of this passage depends on Palamas' very important distinction between the essence and energies of God. He developed this distinction to show how God could remain transcendent while being involved in the experience of creatures. The subtlety of the theory can be appreciated in the light of the fact that the nominalist humanists tended to deny human experience of a transcendent divinity , while the dualists tended to deny that a transcendent deity could have anything to do with contingent reality. Palamas refuted both positions by arguing that God's essence was beyond anything conceivable or knowable , but that his energies , such as "love", "truth" or "light" are the ways in which he reveals himself to humanity .

But you should not consider that God allows Himself to be seen in his super-essential essence, but according to his deifying gift and energy, the grace of adoption, the uncreated deification, the enhypostatic illumination. (18)

It is important to stress at this point that while Palamas distinguished between the essence and energies of God, he at no stage tolerated the idea that they were separable. God was fully present in each and all of His energies, and they did not represent either

lesser mediations of parts of divinity nor intermediate beings of any sort. Grace is God's deifying gift of Himself, given as an energy. Palamas deals with the question of grace at many points in *The Triads*, which was written against Barlaam the Calabrian. He does not deal with the theme systematically, rather it is allowed to touch upon every other theme he considers. In the conclusion to the chapter on "Apophatic theology as positive experience", he says (19)

So the Fathers tell us that the divine grace of the suprasensible light is God. But God in his nature does not simply identify himself with this grace, because he is able not only to illumine and deify the mind, but also to bring forth from non-being every intellectual essence.

The point of this is to stress that God's grace is not bound by any necessity, and that its scope of operation is limitless.

Palamas goes on to describe the Hesychast method of prayer, stressing the transformation of the body by the energies of God. The dual purpose behind this stress was, of course, to counteract the dualism and reductionism prevalent at the time. If God really was the cause of the discernible transformation, then the nominalist position would have to be adapted, and if it was really the human body that was transformed then the dualist denigration of matter and the human body would also have to be corrected. Palamas puts it as follows: (20)

... this spiritual grace in the heart, alas, you call "fantasy of the imagination, presenting to us a

deceptive likeness of the heart." However, those judged worthy of this grace know that it is not a fantasy produced by the imagination, and that it does not originate with us, nor appear only to disappear, but rather it is a permanent energy produced by grace, united to the soul and rooted in it, a fountain of holy joy that attracts the soul to itself, liberating it from multiform and material images...

This position underlines Palamas' stress on the real, intrinsic activity of grace within the person. Grace is not an illusion or a product of the imagination but an energy of God which can be participated in by people.

A term that in Palamas is generally synonymous with grace is "deifying light". Palamas tends to use images and analogies a great deal. This is a consequence of the apophatic approach he inherited from Pseudo Dionysius, and its effect today is that it is sometimes difficult to identify the precise meaning of terms he uses. Having distinguished between the essence and energies of God, Palamas faced the criticism that the energies of God were created realities and therefore distinct from God. This criticism was raised by Palamas' opponents, who were trying to show Palamas' infidelity to Orthodoxy by accusing him of slipping into Orthodoxy a misunderstood version of the Western doctrine of created grace in the guise of divine energies. This however was not the case - Palamas did not accept any suggestion that grace could exist independently of God and still really be grace. It is in this context that he used the image of

light.

You might as well claim that God is a creature , as declare that his essential energies are created! For no intelligent man would say that the essential goodness and life are the super-essential essence of God. The essential characteristic is not the essence which possesses the essential characteristics. As the great Denys says , "When we call the superessential mystery "God" or "Life" or "essence", we have in mind only the providential powers produced from the imparticipable God." These, then are the essential powers; as to the Superessential... that is the Reality which possesses these powers and gathers them into unity in itself. Similarly, the deifying light is also essential, but is not itself the essence of God. (21)

In this context it is important to stress that the deifying light experienced by people is an energy of God and is not itself the essence of God .

In conclusion it must be said that Palamas does not develop his doctrine of grace as systematically as many of the Western theologians do. The divisions of grace that are so important in the Thomist outlook are not developed in Palamite thought. Meyendorff argues that Palamas accepts the concept of "created grace" but that

this should not be regarded as synonymous with what Meyendorff calls the "created supernatural" of Aquinas. It seems to me that the interpretation is an inaccurate one , as it misunderstands the Western notion of the "created supernatural" and also because it reads too much into this passage from Palamas, who was simply trying to stress the importance of clarity when one uses the word grace:

Sometimes it is the object given gratuitously which is called grace, but sometimes it is the very act of giving; at other times neither of these senses apply to the word "grace" which designates , so to say , the beauty, the beautiful appearance , the ornament and the glory of each nature, and in that sense we speak of the grace of words and of conversation...(22)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

In the thought of Palamas it is very difficult to define and analyse the concepts "nature" and "grace" independently of each other . Nature is by definition open to God's grace , and grace effects the salvation of nature known in Orthodox theology as divinisation (Theosis). The consequence of this is that co-operation between nature and grace is a vital element of Palamas' thought. The term generally used to name this co-operation is "synergy". Victor White has summed up the impression that this phenomenon of the inter-relatedness of nature and grace makes as follows:

The Eastern approach , as I understand it , so far from opposing grace to nature , tends

rather to emphasise what may be called "the naturalness of grace" and "the graciousness of nature". (23)

It is important not to read too many ontological implications into what is essentially an attempt to stress the mutual orientation of nature and grace. Grace can be said to lay hold of human nature and to transform it, not because it is closed off to goodness itself but because it is caught in a cycle of sin and death that prevents it from functioning as it should. Grace does not violate nature in redeeming it. Rather, it draws out and magnifies the good tendencies and suppresses the evil in nature. The good tendencies of nature co-operate with grace in the salvation of the person. It is this sort of co-operation that synergy implies. As Meyendorff puts it (24)

All along man's road from his fallen state to union with God, divine grace helps him to overcome corruption, then to surpass himself, and finally shows God to him.

This "synergy" of grace and human effort is for Palamas an obvious axiom. The effect of grace is "to establish the inner powers of soul and body, and make them act in conformity with their nature".

(*The Iriads* 1,3,15). But that is only a secondary aspect of our redemption, the goal of which is to make us contemplate God, that is to say to surpass ourselves.

Nature and grace co-operate in a dynamic process in which human efforts at contemplation of God , together with the deifying action of grace lead to the deification of the human being . Grace instils the "inner powers" of humans and then co-operates with those powers . There is a striking emphasis in Palamas on the dignity which God accords human beings . God does not , according to Palamas , ever force the salvation of humans ; rather it is a question of humans deepening their knowledge of God in harmony with grace . As this dynamic process progresses the human "image and likeness" of God is more clearly manifested .

By ... taking up again the Patristic conception according to which "nature" does not possess an autonomous existence , but supposes grace and communion with God, in order to fulfil its own true destiny , Palamas affirms that the likeness too is an effect of grace while presupposing the collaboration (synergy) of man: hence man needs God to attain the likeness, but God can only give what man accepts ... (25)

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between nature and grace according to Palamas it may be useful to contrast it with with the Western phenomenon of Semi-Pelagianism , which was a doctrine of the relationship between nature and grace which accorded a greater role to grace than Pelagius had done , but which fell short of Augustine's emphasis on grace .Semi-Pelagianism has been defined as follows:

Semi-pelagianism divides salvation between

God and man in a primitive synergism: man begins his salvation by his own unaided powers ; then God responds to this independent " good will " by granting the grace to complete the work of salvation . (26)

Now one of the differences between this and the Palamite position is that the Palamite approach is not "primitive synergism". Palamas would not accept that man begins his deification by "his own unaided powers" : he begins his deification by his natural powers but he only has the capacity to actualise these powers because of the grace of God. The vital point in all of this is that according to Palamas nature and grace co-operate throughout the process of deification .

NATURE , GRACE , DEIFICATION AND THE CHURCH.

Christian theology has a superabundance of terms to describe the goal of humanity . Today , words like redemption , salvation and liberation are used , each with different nuances of meaning . In the Byzantine era , Orthodox theology used words which have been translated as "deification" and "divinisation". The basic point that is involved in all these terms is that Christianity asserts that the gap between persons and God, which is the gap between creatures and creator, can and will be and has been bridged, and that this "bridging the gap" is the person's real goal. I have chosen specifically to consider the question of the role Jesus has or had in enabling people to "bridge the gap". Palamas' account of the role of

grace and nature in deification will be set out , and then some of the implications of these ideas for the role of Jesus will become clearer, as will the role of the church.

Human nature , mind (spirit) , body and soul is transformed by grace and co-operates with that grace in the process of deification. The energy of God involved in deification is also described in Palamas as the "grace of adoption". The grace of adoption is what leads man to become God by participation , and when that occurs it does not mean that the person's nature has been changed into God's, it means that the natural energies are so permeated by the divine energies that in a sense people have become gods by participation in the energies of God. (27) This of course never means that the divinity is ever "reduced" to the scale of humanity . In the case of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity the human and divine wills and energies were not confused. Incarnation is not simply synonymous with deification , however , for Palamas' often repeated warning that in deification one is not talking about unity of divine essence and human nature. Incarnation differs from the deification of other people because the subject of the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity is God by essence and not by participation . The link between incarnation and deification lies in the Cappadocian idea that God became man so that man might become God.

In one of his Homilies , Palamas succinctly expresses his view of the redemption . (28)

By a single death , that of his own flesh,
and by a single resurrection , that of

that same flesh, he has healed us from a double death and delivered us from a double captivity , that of our soul and that of our body .

Some of the points in this brief statement need to be elaborated so that their importance is clear. When Palamas places the burden of the redemption on the death and resurrection of Jesus , he is avoiding any idea like that of Peter Abelard in the West of an exemplary theory of atonement . In terms of the exemplary theory Jesus' moral excellence serves as an example to inspire his followers, and his death and resurrection do not have any intrinsically redemptive effect as they do in Anselm's theory of the atonement . Because guilt and moral excellence are not the fundamental problem and virtue respectively for Palamas, neither Abelard's nor Anselm's theories could help. For him the fundamental problem was the mortality that stems from original sin , and the consequent cycle of sin which tempted and trapped human nature . It follows then that to solve this fundamental problem people must overcome death and the instinct of self-preservation . Jesus , by being resurrected after dying voluntarily accomplished both and thus broke the power of death for people.

Thus the whole work of redemption is conceived in terms of death-life , corruption-immortality . We have seen above that the transmission of Adam's sin was essentially understood by Palamas as a hereditary corruption entailing at the same time mortality of the flesh and sinfulness; the voluntary death and resurrection of Christ delivered

man from this vicious circle of death and sin . (29)

Persons are linked up to the triumph over death that Jesus' resurrection gained by being baptised into the church. Baptism secures the resurrection of the individual's soul because the meaning of baptism is inclusion in the "body of Christ" , which is to be put in touch with the power that overcomes death and sin . Meyendorff has described Palamas' view of this. (30)

In this perspective , death and mortality are viewed , not so much as retribution for sin , ... as means through which the fundamentally unjust "tyranny" of the devil is exercised over mankind after Adam's sin. From this baptism is a liberation , because it gives access to the new immortal life brought into the world by Christ's Resurrection . The Resurrection delivers men from the fear of death , and , therefore , also from the necessity of struggling for existence .

The effort required of people in their deification is to open themselves up to grace so that they can experience the deifying "Light". This light has three aspects. There is the divine uncreated light that Jesus is ; intellectual light by which to see truth ; and created light by which to see material objects . Deification involves the permeation of the person by all three forms of light , and the image most often used to express this is the Transfiguration. The importance of this lies in the fact that for Palamas Jesus , the

church and deified people have an iconic significance which is typical of the whole of Palamas' theology . The light of the grace of God transfigures human nature , transforming it into an icon or "picture" that enhances the deification of others . As Kallistos Ware put it :

God is Light , and therefore the experience of God's energies takes the form of Light. The vision which the Hesychasts receive is (so Palamas argued) not a vision of some created light , but of the Light of the Godhead Itself - the same Light of the Godhead which surrounded Christ on Mount Thabor . This Light is not a sensible or material light , but can be seen with physical eyes (as by the disciples at the Transfiguration) , since when a man is deified, his bodily faculties as well as his soul are transformed. The Hesychasts' vision of Light is therefore a true vision of God in His divine energies ; and they are quite correct in identifying it with the Uncreated Light of Thabor . (31)

For individual Christians the response to grace is nurtured and shaped by their participation in the Church . Baptism includes them in the "body of Christ" , and the Eucharist is bread and wine changed into the "body of Christ" received by the faithful at communion . It is the celebration of the eucharist which is the main expression of the church's life for Palamas, and to participate in the eucharist is

thus one of the most effective ways of being "put in touch with" Christ.

Apart from this sacramental participation , which explicitly symbolises and actually promotes the synergism between nature and grace , there are other practises which facilitate deification which can only be performed in the context of the church, either because they are communal and ecclesial by nature , such as liturgy , or because without the Church the individual would not have known of the practice . An example of the latter would be the psycho-physical method of hesychast prayer , which purifies the mind of all sensible and insensible images so that the person is more receptive to grace . Contemplation and prayer are guided by spiritual directors , and the study of scripture is made possible by the commentaries other Christians have written . The sacramental life depended on priestly ministry , and moral purification could only be guided and understood in the context of relationships with other people, including other Christians. The church , in short puts individuals in touch with the Orthodox Tradition , and this tradition shapes the experience and understanding of its adherents.

Writing on Palamas , Mascall points out that

Thus, he insists that progress in the Christian life is the fruit of the sacrament of baptism and that it takes place within the sacramental life of the Church; that the whole man , body and soul together , is deified by grace through his union with Christ ... (32)

SUMMARY.

In his theology Palamas opposed both dualism and naturalism. His anthropology consisted of body , soul and mind (or spirit). The latter was the rational element of the soul. Palamas' concept of human nature conceived of persons as essentially open beings , dynamically orientated towards God. His view of human nature was very positive and optimistic , in spite of the effects of original sin. The soul , which was the vital principle of the person , was known in spirituality as "the heart" , and this was for Palamas the "throne of grace". Before the Fall human nature experienced life "in God" , participating freely in the energies of God. After the Fall human nature became subject to death , an instinct for self-preservation , passion and sin (which was essentially ignorance of the ways of God), but despite this the dignity of the person is not obliterated.

Palamas distinguishes between the essence and the energies of God . When God communicates Himself to humanity it is by energy and not as essence. Grace is one such self-communication , and it establishes a relationship between persons and God's energies.

Nature and grace cannot be defined separately , because nature is by definition open to and dependent upon grace , while grace presupposes nature and perfects it in the process of deification. Grace and nature co-operate and the name given to this co-operation is synergy.

Palamas' view of the role of Jesus in deification did not bear a resemblance to the Western theories of "example" and "satisfaction".

These theories assumed that guilt was the fundamental consequence of original sin , and tried to show how Jesus removes human guilt , either by serving as the example of a sinless life or by "repaying" to God the debt incurred as a result of sin. For Palamas, however , the fundamental consequence of original sin was death , and so redemption was for him first and foremost a matter of overcoming death. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is central, his role being primarily to break the power of death , so that others could avoid the egoism of self-preservation in the face of death.

As the church is the "body of Christ" , by being baptised and included in the church one is put in touch with the power that overcame death. Participation in the eucharist is the main way that one takes part in the life of the church . The church puts individuals in touch with tradition which shapes the experience and understanding of adherents .

The word "divinisation" (theosis) sums up Palamas' theology of nature and grace . Through synergy nature and grace co-operate to divinise the human creature .

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Pelikan , J. : The Iliads . Introduction . Pg. 2.
- (2) Meyendorff , J. : A Study of Gregory Palamas. pg.33.
- (3) Meyendorff , J. : ibid. pg.27.
- (4) Palamas ,G. : 150 Physical, Theological, Moral, and Practical Chapters. cited in Meyendorff, op.cit. pg.162.
- (5) Meyendorff , J. : Byzantine Theology. pg.139.
- (6) Maximus the Confessor : Ambigua 7. cited in Meyendorff,J. Byzantine Theology. pg.141.
- (7) Palamas , G. : Homilies 11 cited in Meyendorff , J. A Study of Gregory Palamas. pg.122.
- (8) Meyendorff, J. : Byzantine Theology. pg.142.
- (9) Palamas, G. : Homilies 11 cited in Meyendorff , J. Byzantine Theology. pg. 142.
- (10) Palamas , G. : The Iliads I,ii,3. pp.42,43.

- (11) Meyendorff , J. : A_Study_of_Gregory_Palamas. pg.122.
- (12) Palamas, G. : The_Iriads I,i,3.cited in
Meyendorff,J. ibid. pg.122
- (13) Palamas , G. : cited by Meyendorff ,J. ibid. pg.123.
- (14) Meyendorff, J. : Byzantine_Theology. pg.142.
- (15) Palamas, G. : The_Iriads II,iii,8. pg.57.
- (16) cf. Moeller,G. & Philips,G.
: The_Theology_of_Grace. pg.3.
- (17) Palamas, G. : The_Iriads II,i,29. pg.85
- (18) Palamas, G. : ibid. III,i,29. pg.84.
- (19) Palamas, G. : ibid. I,iii,23. pg. 40
(Meyendorff's chapter heading)
- (20) Palamas, G. : ibid. II,ii,9. pg.50.
- (21) Palamas, G. : ibid. III,i,23. pg.81.
- (22) Palamas, G. : Against_Akindynos III,9. cited in
Meyendorff A_Study_of_Gregory_Palamas.
pg.163.

- (23) White, V. : God_The_Unknown. pg.151.
- (24) Meyendorff, J. : A_Study_of_Gregory_Palamas. pp.164,165
- (25) Meyendorff, J. : ibid. pg.121.
- (26) Rahner,K & Vorgrimler,H: Concise_Theological_Dictionary. pg.471.
- (27) Palamas, G. : Apology cited in Meyendorff,J.
A_Study_of_Gregory_Palamas. pg.177.
- (28) Palamas, G. : Homilies 16 cited in Meyendorff,J.
ibid. pg. 158.
- (29) Meyendorff,J. : A_Study_of_Gregory_Palamas. pg.158.
- (30) Meyendorff,J. : Byzantine_Theology . pg. 146.
- (31) Ware ,K. : The_Orthodox_Church. pg. 78.
- (32) Mascall, E.L. : "Grace and Nature: East and West"
appendix 3 of The_Openness_of_Being.
pg. 223.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURE AND GRACE IN THE
THEOLOGY OF THOMAS AQUINAS.

THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THOMAS AQUINAS.

Thomas Aquinas , who lived from 1225 to 1274 , taught theology as a member of the mendicant Order of Preachers which had been founded by Dominic de Guzman only a generation before Aquinas began his studies. This is significant because the mendicant orders embodied a view of Christian life that was somewhat different from regular diocesan or monastic structures. Unlike diocesan clerics , mendicants could be sent by their order from diocese to diocese to do specialist work such as preaching in the case of the Dominicans and also teaching in the specific case of Aquinas . Unlike monks who took a vow of stability and lived enclosed lives , the mendicants had much greater mobility . They lived together in community , but went out each day to go about their various tasks . This flexibility and openness threatened many people , particularly when Aquinas and his fellow Dominicans and the Franciscans took over from the diocesan clergy as

the instructors at the university of Paris . Aquinas was deeply committed to the engaging openness of the new lifestyle , and this is reflected in the engagement with the world that is evident in his theology .

A particular example of this engagement with the world was his encounter with the philosophical and theological trends of the day. The dominant theology was an other-worldly , supernaturalist theology which tended to view natural things negatively . On the other hand , there was the secularism of the "Latin Averroists" like Siger of Brabant , who used Averroes' rendition of Aristotle as the basis for their secularist view of natural things . Aquinas tried to avoid these two problems by arguing that natural reality is good , and further that its goodness stems from its origin , which is God. To expand on this , it is clear that Aquinas wanted to stress to its limits the capabilities of nature , and at the same time to stress the dependence of nature , for its real activity , on God. To this end , Aquinas did not hesitate to use the insights of Aristotle's philosophy , but he did so critically. At this time the theological agenda also included grappling with the problem of the schism between Catholic West and Orthodox East and how to overcome it . This involved, among other things , a close consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity , due to the "filioque" controversy .

AQUINAS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE.

In considering Aquinas' theological context , the question of Aristotelianism arises . Aristotle was "discovered" by Western

Christians in the generations just before Aquinas. In most cases the translations available had made their way from Greek via Syriac and Arabic to Latin, and were thus not always very reliable. The contribution of the Muslim scholar Averroes was crucial in one of these translations, and it was his interpretations of Aristotle that were followed by the group known as the "Latin Averroists". Aquinas was not satisfied with their results, and commissioned his own translations of Aristotle. To do this, he had an expert on Greek do a direct translation into Latin. However, all this did not mean that Aquinas accepted Aristotle uncritically.

Schillebeeckx, among others, has pointed out that there is strong evidence of Arabic and Neo-Platonic thought in Aquinas, particularly in his understanding of human nature. (1) We have already seen that the range of influences on Aquinas' thought is very complex, but it is enough to say here that when defining what a human being is, Aquinas does not simply opt for the Aristotelian tradition over against the Platonic tradition. Briefly put, the Aristotelian tradition held that the soul is to the body what form is to any matter, while the Platonic tradition saw matter as somehow a shell containing the soul. Aquinas tried to steer something of a middle course between these two positions by accepting the essential relationship between soul and body of the Aristotelians and the notion of the soul's survival of the body's death of the Platonists.

Copleston has summarised clearly how this was accomplished. (2) For Aquinas all living things had souls, in so far as they all had vital principles. What distinguished humans from animals was that in the

case of humans the soul was rational. The rational soul was what made the human being human , and it was the vital principle informing the matter of the human body . Aquinas held that soul and body were inseparable , forming one composite whole , an individual human being. Thus when a human dies , its material elements disperse but his or her soul survives as the vital principle awaiting the resurrection of the body.

Aquinas takes the soul to be "the first principle of life in living things about us" (3) , as we have seen above . The question now arises concerning the nature of the soul . The fundamental property of the human soul is that it is a rational soul . Aquinas is careful to show that having a rational soul does not mean that humans have three souls , vegetative and sensitive as well as rational (4) . Humans have only one soul , the rational , which animates the thought and activity of the person .This rational soul has distinct faculties, however , and these are of great importance . They are sensation , intellect , emotion and will (5) . Emotions (or "passions" as they are usually called in Aquinas (6)) and sensations are faculties that the human person has in common with animals , while intellect and will are the specifically human faculties. The integration of the human being depends on the freedom with which the will and emotions are moved to act in accordance with the truths known by the senses and intellect.

By accepting a basic distinction between intellect and will Aquinas does not imply that the two can be separated but that their operations can be distinctly seen , as for instance when a person

knows something should be done but cannot summon the will to do it . The intellect is superior to the will , and the explanation for this reveals more of Aquinas' definitions of the terms . Intellect and sensation enable people to "apprehend" things , to know them (7) . Emotion and will , on the other hand , enable people to strive towards objectives ; they are the "appetitive" powers (8). Now Aquinas bases his argument that the intellect is superior to the will on the premise that it is better to have something in mind , to know something, than it is to merely have something as an object to strive towards.(9)

The anthropology outlined above does not simply exist in a fixed , static state, it has certain orientations . These are not two contradictory understandings of what human nature is , but two different aspects of the concept. In itself "nature" is the principle of motion , but motion implies an object and human nature is never simply "in itself" . It is always related to other beings (10).

The view of what a human being is that arises out of these strands is as follows . For Aquinas human beings are naturally "in motion" , that is oriented towards objects. Objects are here understood as goals rather than material things (11). This sense of "motion" includes the notions of growth and all the other developments in animal and vegetative capacities. Secondly , for Aquinas human beings are naturally open to other natures , be they animal , human , angelic or divine . Human beings have a natural orientation to God , and this is what makes descriptions of nature as open to supernature significant (12). This openness is not unqualified : without divine

assistance humanity cannot reach divinity . There is a slight difference of emphasis between Aquinas and Palamas on this point ; Palamas attributes a greater role to human initiative in the process of "reaching" divinity .

It is the distinctive feature of man's "nature" that he is open to an end which is only within his reach by the assistance of God's grace . (13)

The soul cannot simply be identified as part of nature . It is the rational principle of life , and as such it integrates the natural capacities of the human being . It is not , therefore , one of those natural capacities itself ;it is spiritual and incorruptible and is directly created by God , which for Aquinas is another way of saying that it is not naturally or materially generated (14) . The human being, then , is made up of natural capacities of growth and openness as well as of a rational soul with its faculties of sense and emotion, intellect and will. The latter integrate and orientate the former to their ends , and it is at this point that the question of the human condition or predicament becomes vital .

AQUINAS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN CONDITION .

In discussing Aquinas' doctrine of the human condition it is very important to distinguish between ontological and moral categories , since it was the former that primarily occupied Aquinas' attention rather than the latter (with which Luther was particularly concerned). By an ontological category I mean a concept that deals with the essential constitution or being of humanity , while a moral

category deals with what humanity is disposed to do , given a particularly ontology . This is not to suggest that Aquinas regarded moral questions as unimportant ; he simply worked on the assumption that moral life is based upon an ontological foundation . Hence the human condition is determined at its deepest by the ontological structure of human life , particularly the limitations of human nature . The limitations that humans share with all created natures are the limitations of space and time (15) . The really crucial limitation they are subject to is that by virtue of having a rational soul and a natural orientation to God , humans are aware that their goal lies "in God", but they have not the capacity to reach that goal of themselves (16) . Now this perspective is somewhat different from that of , for instance , Luther . The latter focusses on the moral and existential concerns of sin and guilt , while Aquinas focuses more on ontological problems . For Aquinas human nature before and after the Fall remains fundamentally the same . Sin does not change human nature as such ; it disrupts the harmonious subordination of sense and emotion to intellect and will. People do not lose the capacity for God - its fulfilment is made more difficult by sin (17).

The fundamental problem for humanity is thus rooted in human ontology. People have a capacity for God but cannot realise it of themselves. Kenny expresses the same point slightly differently.(18)

In the 13th century , Thomas Aquinas , while not neglecting man's sorry beginnings , turned resolutely forward towards man's end , the beatific vision . Hence he delivered a superior theology of elevating grace : we need God's self-communication not first and foremost

because we are sinners , but more radically because we are not God , but puny creatures called to interpersonal communion with the three-personal God in heaven.

Having considered this view of human nature and the human condition , it is necessary to consider the orientation of supernature to human nature , or in the theological shorthand of Aquinas , to consider the grace of God.

AQUINAS' VIEW OF GRACE.

There is a problem of selection in considering Aquinas' view of grace. This is because the theme is handled in a large variety of contexts in his writings , and also because many different terms are used to describe Aquinas' doctrine of grace .

The Catholic tradition stemming from Aquinas has spawned a large number of terms in its theology of grace . It is sometimes difficult to penetrate that tradition and unearth Aquinas' precise concerns .

Hinwood argues that there are basically ten contexts in which the concept of grace is used by Aquinas, (19) i.e. the orientation of all people in and to Christ; salvation history and its elements; the mystical body of Christ; the adopted divine sonship; the working of the Holy Spirit; the indwelling of the Holy Trinity; participation in the divine nature; love; qualities of the created soul and the nature-grace structure.

To this I would add the question of predestination , but this may have been excluded on the grounds that it falls under the heading of "Salvation history and its elements" or that it is handled by Aquinas as a sub-section of the "nature-grace structure". At any rate our concern is more with the nature-grace structure than with any of the other sections.

Mascall has also analysed a range of terms used in the Catholic tradition's theology of grace , and what he says of this range applies equally well to the range of terms used by Aquinas in his own theology of grace :

all these dualities and contrasts arise from the mysterious truth that grace relates personal God and personal man.(20)

Before considering Aquinas' technical terms , it is important to remember that grace is understood in three basic ways in Aquinas : firstly as God's self-offer to people , secondly as God's actual influence on people, and thirdly as the virtues , habits and dispositions which result from God's influence .

It should be clear , in spite of all these distinctions , that grace itself is not divided up. It is not a thing. The distinct ways of describing it are based on the different ways in which humans experience grace.

The distinctions that Aquinas used can be summarised as follows. There were two basic kinds of grace ; "freely-bestowed grace" and

"sanctifying grace" . Freely-bestowed grace was the grace by which humans helped other humans to salvation ; it was "non-sanctifying" in the sense that it had no effect on one's own salvation. Sanctifying grace consisted of operative grace , in which God alone acted , and co-operative grace , in which God and human beings acted together. In this co-operation God was the primary cause and the human soul was the secondary cause . Sanctifying grace was also divided into prevenient and subsequent grace, according to the order of the effects of sanctifying grace. For example , conversion may precede growth in holiness , hence the grace which brings conversion is prevenient to the subsequent grace which brings growth in holiness (21) .

Haight (22) and Laporte (23) have produced interesting analyses of Aquinas' ways of describing grace . These are that grace is "elevating", "sanctifying" and "justifying" in its effects on the human ; that grace is "created" and "supernatural" ; and finally that grace is a "habit" . It is necessary to explain how these often confusing terms are applicable to Aquinas.

Grace is elevating : This means that the function of grace is to "lift", as it were , a lower nature to the level of a higher nature . Human beings cannot of themselves realise their capacity for God , hence grace "comes from" God and enables humans to realise their capacity for God.(24)

Grace is sanctifying : This means that grace really transforms the human being , fulfilling their capacity for God . Another way of

saying this is that through grace the human being participates in God. This notion of participation in God may seem out of place given the "intellectualism" of Aquinas , but for Aquinas intellectualism implied possession of an object by the soul's intellectual faculty : that "object" could be God. Today intellectualism tends to imply abstraction rather than participation . For Aquinas the reality of the sanctifying elevation of nature by grace was fundamental .

... just as it is impossible for anything to make fiery but fire alone , so it is necessary that God alone should make Godlike, by communicating a share in his divine nature by participation and assimilation. (25)

For Aquinas it is the intellect that is the human component of this participation and assimilation .

Grace is justifying : This means that grace transforms the human from being in a state of sin to being in a state of sanctification . This is described in terms of regeneration , but this should not be taken to mean that human nature is supplanted . In Aquinas' view it is transformed by grace .

Grace is created : The purpose of this description is to stress the doctrine that grace operates inherently within the human being. Created grace is nothing other than the grace operative within creatures, and the term is not meant to imply that Aquinas thought grace could ever exist independently of God.

Grace is supernatural : This simply stresses the transcendence of God

in relation to humans by asserting that grace does not originate from human nature but from divine supernature . This is closely linked to the concept of superadded grace , the "adding on" of grace to human nature . The reason why grace is superadded to human nature is that human beings are unable of themselves to attain their supernatural goal .

Grace is a habit : This means that grace has a real effect on the dispositions of the human being . God has created human beings in such a way that they are in a habitual state of openness to God . Although this openness is part of human nature , it is an effect of grace insofar as it is created by God .

Grace ... is a kind of habitual state which is presupposed by the infused virtues , as their origin and root. (26)

Moeller and Philips use this concise definition of grace as a habit :
 ...the habitus is an active tension set up by God at work in man . (27)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

When it comes to the specific question of the relationship between nature and grace it is revealing to see how Aquinas builds on the position of Augustine . Augustine thought of grace as the healing power at work within humans to overcome the effects of sin . Now while Aquinas agrees with this, he takes the work of grace to a deeper level by seeing grace as that which elevates a lower nature to its

supernature . This is not simply another way of describing the healing of sin , it is a shift in the context within which grace was considered. For Augustine the context was morality , whereas for Aquinas it was the logically prior context of ontology (28). In other words grace affects the very being of the human , not only their inclinations and actions .

The relationship between nature and grace is not dealt with by Aquinas in a special question in any of his works. Rather it is a question he deals with in relation to other fundamental problems as they arise. This is not to say that he regards it as unimportant ; the opposite is true. In the very first question of the Summa Theologiae on the nature of Christian theology , Aquinas writes

Since grace does not scrap nature but brings it to perfection , so also natural reason should assist faith as the natural loving bent of the will yields to charity.(29)

Elsewhere Aquinas writes that grace presupposes nature (30), that "grace is proportioned to nature as the perfecter to the perfectible" (31) and that "Nature is the preamble to grace". (32)

These statements (33) show that Aquinas thought of nature as needing grace to reach its proper end , and of grace as using the capacities of nature , perfecting and transforming them rather than supplanting them. The subtlety of Aquinas' position becomes clear when it is recalled that he uses two different concepts of nature without contradiction. He used the Aristotelian concept of a being's

constitution and the Neo-Platonic concept of a being's place in the hierarchy of being . His view of the necessity of grace avoids the dangers of a Pelagian view that nature could of itself achieve its supernatural end. This is significant because his use of the Aristotelian concept of nature's orientation towards and capacity to reach its proper goals could have tempted him into a Pelagian position. On the other hand , his view of the openness of nature to its supernature avoids the temptation , to which many other scholastics fell prey , to view nature as closed off from supernature, and hence grace as something imposed onto a resistant nature. This is significant because it shows how Aquinas saw grace and nature as co-operating in harmony.

Gilby (34) has summarised Aquinas' insight succinctly:

The supernatural does not derogate from the natural, but witnesses to our human dignity , for if impotent of ourselves to scale the heights, our impulse is towards them. It is this nobility that grace takes , and makes capable of glory.

The general description of the way in which grace and nature co-operate according to Aquinas is as follows (35). The human being, moved by its rational soul , is aware of both its supernatural goal and of the fact that , of itself , it cannot attain that goal.

... by his natural endowments man cannot produce meritorious works proportional to eternal life , but a higher power is needed for this , which is the power of grace . (36)

To use some of Aquinas' categories, it is important to stress that the initial awareness of the supernatural goal is itself the result of a "prevenient" movement of grace in the soul. The growth towards God that is offered will be a "subsequent" movement of grace if the human being accepts it. God's grace is always offered whether the human wants it or not. When it does have an effect on the human being without the co-operation of their rational soul, then it is called operative grace. These effects are not the most common way in which God's grace works; they are of the order that people would regard as "miraculous".

The ordinary way in which Aquinas thought grace and nature co-operated was this : sanctifying grace is the grace by which human nature is elevated to divine supernature . It is the created grace which works within creatures, establishing a permanent disposition in the soul which orients it to its supernatural goal . This permanent disposition is known as a "habitus" or habit . Aquinas stressed the co-operative action of grace and defined it as God and the rational soul co-operating for the salvation of the human. This co-operation did not reduce God to a cause among other causes in the universe, but saw God as a primary cause moving the soul as a secondary cause to its end. In this case the secondary cause , the rational soul , has will as a component. Therefore , co-operative grace involves God activating the human will , which can only function effectively and freely the more it is activated by God , its origin and sustainer. As there is not the space to go into this question in much more depth , suffice it to say that "freedom" in this context does not mean freedom from God , but freedom from the constraints of other things

and creatures . In Aquinas God does not threaten human freedom precisely because of his view of the harmony of nature and grace. The human being is not a puppet subject to divine manipulation , but a thinking and willing being who owes any movement towards the supernatural goal to a grace which respects human nature and gives it its capacities without supressing nature. (37)

To summarise Aquinas' view of the relationship between nature and grace, Mascall's comment is interesting:

It is clear that in St Thomas' mind not only does nature need grace if its possibilities are to be realised , but also grace needs nature as the material in which it is to work. Without nature , grace would be left in a vacuum and would be an unreal fiction, for the function of grace is to supernaturalize nature. Or , in less abstract language , grace elevates man into the life of God.(38)

NATURE , GRACE AND SANCTIFICATION .

"Sanctification" is perhaps the term which best expresses Aquinas' theology of salvation . From the above it might appear that salvation is simply a matter of grace elevating nature to supernature, but Aquinas was by no means insensitive to questions of where people could see evidence of grace elevating nature, and how people could be encouraged to be receptive to grace, and why Jesus in particular was necessary for salvation. In the context of a discussion on the

cause of salvation, Aquinas writes:

There is a twofold efficient agency : namely, the principal and the instrumental. Now the principal efficient cause of man's salvation is God. But because Christ's humanity is the instrument of the Godhead, all Christ's actions and sufferings act instrumentally in virtue of his Godhead for the salvation of men. And so Christ's passion achieves man's salvation effectively. (39)

The two statements , that grace is of God and that Christ's humanity is the instrument of the Godhead, point to the notion that Christ is somehow the instrument of grace . The reception of grace by other people thus depends in some sense on what Jesus has done for them.(40) For Aquinas , the fundamental contributions of Christ were to atone for the sins of humanity, and to "save" simply by coming to be known as Lord and God in his teaching and actions (41) . Through faith in him , the believer acquires an "intellectual" possession of Jesus in the soul. In this way he is transformed by a sharing in the properties , the knowledge and the virtues , of Christ. The theory of the atonement which Aquinas upheld was basically the "satisfaction" theory of atonement which had been developed by Augustine (42) and Anselm (43). In fact , although Aquinas taught this doctrine , he was open to the current idea that God would have become human even if sin were not a factor, so as to identify completely with humanity .

The theory of Christ's atonement runs as follows in its most commonly found forms: Sin is a reality , and people seem unable to subdue or

repair the damage they have done. In the state of original justice before the fall God was surrounded by obedient rational beings. Disobedience to the will of God was the essence of the fall, and sin was its heritage. The being which subdued sin and restored the obedience of people would deserve their ultimate loyalty. Now it would only be appropriate for God to deserve the ultimate loyalty of human beings. Therefore only God could redeem man. Unless this redemption happened, God's eternal plan of the fulfilment of all would be incomplete and God would be deprived of his due honour and loyalty. This debt must either be repaid or punishment must ensue. Punishment would imply that God's plan had gone awry with no hope of restitution, so repayment was preferable, since it would restore the divine eternal plan. Now an adequate satisfaction could only be effected by God, but it is not God that owes the debt. People owe the debt and therefore they should pay it. The impasse can only be resolved if someone both human and divine makes satisfaction. Now this satisfaction is simply the restitution of due honour - how does it help other people in subsequent ages? Christ was the sinless man who died voluntarily. God the Father is indebted to Christ because the perfect human died voluntarily. The Father cannot repay this debt to Christ, because Christ is the fullness of divine incarnation and could receive no more from God than he has already. Therefore the grace that God the Father offers to Christ "overflows" to others, and in the process sin is forgiven and the divine plan is restored. (44)

In Aquinas' terms Christ's atonement is superabundant and not merely sufficient: this puts the origin of the "overflow" of grace in the

perfection of the Son rather than the indebtedness of the Father. Aquinas held that Christ could offer God an infinite satisfaction for sin by virtue of his divinity , and by virtue of his humanity he could offer an appropriate human satisfaction. In this way he was the perfect mediator between God and humanity (45) . However, the basic thrust of the argument is the same as that of Anselm and others.

He atones appropriately for an offence who offers whatever the offended one equally loves , or loves more than he detested the offence. But Christ by suffering out of love and obedience gave to God more than was required to compensate for the offence of the whole human race And so Christ's passion was not merely a sufficient but a superabundant atonement for the sins of the human race : according to "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). (46)

The voluntary death and resurrection of Jesus , the perfect human , destroys the power of sin and leads to the perfection of human capacities in him and their union with God. The conquering of sin is only important for Aquinas insofar as it enables human nature to reach its proper end , God , by removing the negative power which inhibits the intellect and will from doing good .

Although the notions of honour and debt can and should be seen in the context of medieval feudal assumptions about contracts , the vital point is the respect shown in the theory for the integrity of grace

and of nature. God could simply redeem humanity at will , but because of divine respect for human capacities, this is not done. Clearly, Aquinas' adherence to the satisfaction theory of redemption is implicit in his view that grace does not scrap nature but perfects it.

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN SANCTIFICATION .

For Aquinas the church was the historical expression of the presence of Jesus. He maintains a very close link between the work of Christ, grace, salvation and the church .

... the grace of Christ (is) transmitted to all begotten of him spiritually by faith and baptism. And this concerns not only the removal of the sin of their first parent, but the removal of actual sins and the attainment of glory (47)

The church is thought of as the body of Christ, and the life of the body of Christ is characterised by signs which indicate the process of salvation that occurs and which instrumentally cause sanctifying grace . These signs are of course the sacraments, and in Aquinas they are the expression of the Church's life. There are two questions that are concerned here : why does Aquinas see the sacraments of the church as necessary for salvation , and in what sense does his view of the sacraments of the church follow from his view of nature and grace ?

For Aquinas , participation in the sacraments is of fundamental importance:

Strictly speaking , a sacrament is that which is directed towards signifying our sanctification. There are three aspects here : the cause itself of our sanctification, which is Christ's passion; the form of our sanctification, which is grace and the virtues; and the ultimate end of our sanctification , which is eternal life. And all these are signified by the sacraments. Therefore, a sacrament is a sign that is both a reminder of the past, i.e. Christ's passion; an indication of what is achieved in us through Christ's passion , namely grace; and a prognosis, that is a prediction of future glory. (48)

For Aquinas sacraments are not simply signs or directions. They "cause" grace, not in the sense that they are the origin of grace but in the sense that they are secondary or instrumental causes used by the primary cause, God as occasions of grace. The grace involved is operative grace, rather than the more commonly experienced habitual grace.

Sacramental grace adds something over and above grace as commonly defined, and also over and above the virtues and the Gifts, namely a special kind of divine assistance to help in attaining the end of the sacrament concerned. (49)

Grace is "in" the sacraments insofar as they are signs and instrumental causes. The sacraments are necessary for salvation because they signify salvation and give rise to the grace by which God achieves salvation for people. Aquinas says of the link between Christ's redemption and the grace of the sacraments that

... it is right that the power to bestow salvation should flow from the divinity of Christ through his humanity into the actual sacraments. (50)

In what sense does Aquinas' view of the sacraments of the church follow from his view of nature and grace? There are two senses in which it follows, theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the very notion of the sacraments as instrumental causes of grace reminds one of the role of the mind in co-operative grace and the role of other persons in freely bestowed grace. The point is that God, supernatural to creation, moves created beings and includes them in the movement of grace. God does not use the sacraments in the same way as co-operative and freely bestowed grace, as we have seen above, but it is significant that the matter of creation is used as an occasion for grace. This again shows how Aquinas saw creation as being respected by God, particularly with regard to its laws of operation.

Practically, the use of familiar, natural things such as water, bread and wine in the sacraments also shows how Aquinas' view of the sacraments follows from his view of nature and grace. The very fact that his eucharistic theology is one of transubstantiation and not consubstantiation reflects this, because he is concerned with the

intrinsic transformation of human nature , not with an extrinsic mixing of human and divine.

SUMMARY.

In his theology Aquinas opposed both secularism and the denigration of matter and human nature. Hence in his concept of human nature he wanted to stress both its dependence on God for its existence and its inherent goodness. In his understanding , humans have a natural desire for God and are naturally oriented towards goals and open to other natures. The human being is composed of a rational soul and a body which relate to each other as form does to matter in the Aristotelian framework .

The rational soul consists of intellect and sensation (the apprehensive powers) , as well as will and emotion (the appetitive powers). The will and the intellect comprise the rational element of the soul which distinguishes it from other kinds of creature .

In assessing the human condition Aquinas focuses more on ontological questions than existential ones. The human being is naturally open to God and oriented to God , but has not the capacity to "reach" God by his or her own nature. For Aquinas this predicament is logically prior to that of sin, for instance , because an understanding of the very nature and principles of functioning of human capacities precedes an understanding of how these capacities might function sinfully.

Although the goal of humans is God, they cannot reach their goal of themselves. Therefore if God is to be "reached" human nature must be divinely assisted. This divine assistance is grace . In Aquinas grace is understood in three related ways. It is God's self-communication to people, God's actual influence on people, and the virtues, habits and dispositions which result from God's influence. The connection between these three understandings is this : God comes to be known by people because of the divine self-communication. This knowledge gives rise to virtues and dispositions in people which operate habitually.

This grace sanctifies individuals in two ways: as co-operative grace God and the rational soul work together , and as operative grace God works without the co-operation of the soul. When this sanctifying grace initiates a process of salvation it is called prevenient grace, and if the process continues subsequent grace is involved. When individuals help others to salvation they do so by what Aquinas calls freely-bestowed grace.

Aquinas held that grace presupposes and perfects nature . Grace presupposes the openness of nature and perfects it by enabling it to reach its divine end . Grace and nature co-operate as primary and secondary causes leading to sanctification by transforming the personal dispositions.

Jesus was the perfect example of a human whose dispositions were unfailingly oriented to God. As the perfect human his voluntary death had the effect of repaying the debt owed to God by humanity for sin. God's grace , given in response to this act , "overflows" from Jesus

to other people for their salvation. What this means, for Aquinas, is that Jesus, the perfect human who rose from the dead, saves simply by coming to be known as Lord and God, and in this way shares his qualities and dispositions with us.

The church makes Jesus present to individuals, since it is the historical expression of the presence of Christ. The sacraments are constitutive of the church in Aquinas' view. They "cause" grace instrumentally and enable the individual to participate in the "body of Christ".

The word "sanctification" sums up Aquinas' theology of nature and grace . Grace sanctifies nature , completing it and enabling it to reach its proper divine end .

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

NATURE AND GRACE IN THE
THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER.

THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF MARTIN LUTHER .

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) stood at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation and remains today one of the strongest formative influences on Protestantism. In 1505 he joined a branch of the Augustinian monastic order at Erfurt , and was ordained a priest in 1507. This detail is important , because his membership of this order exposed him to the thought of Augustine of Hippo.

At the time of his training the Scholasticism associated with people like Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas was on the decline, and the Nominalist theological movement that stemmed from Ockham was very powerful. Luther reacted against the "decadent , withering and soulless scholasticism" (1) of his day. Nominalism was such a pervasive movement at the time that it shaped the very categories in which one thought. For this reason Luther's theology bears many of the marks of nominalism , despite his criticisms of some aspects of

the movement .Nominalism has been described as a positivist theology, concerned with facts, historical particulars and tradition. It had little enthusiasm for the scholastic natural law tradition and was hostile to metaphysics. (2) Accordingly, Luther opposed what he felt was an undue emphasis on the metaphysics of Pseudo-Dionysius and the "natural theology" which used the philosophy of Aristotle so much. Rondet has suggested that

It was nominalism that governed his interpretation of Augustine, and it governed still more his interpretation of St. Paul . (3)

One of the distinctive features of Luther's theology was its personal quality . His experience of tension between the justice of God and his own sinfulness shaped his theology . He was concerned about his experience of the fruitlessness of doing things in order to earn salvation. In traditional theological terms , he was opposed to Pelagianism, and this explains why he was so attracted to Augustine of Hippo, one of the great opponents of Pelagianism. It also explains why Luther was so influenced by Paul the Apostle, because the latter's use of categories like "law" and "flesh" as opposed to "gospel" , "spirit" and "grace" was aimed at explaining why it was futile to try to merit salvation .

LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE.

Luther accepted the Pauline anthropology of body ,soul and spirit, and insisted on stressing the unity of the "whole man" . However, the terms body soul and spirit are not the terms Luther generally used .

They reflect a concern with ontology which Luther did not share . His concern was with the existential predicaments of people, and it was because of this that he wanted to show how it was that people could either be on the move towards salvation or away from salvation . The terms he used to show this are "flesh" and "spirit".

These terms have been misunderstood often by being taken as synonymous for "body" and "soul". To avoid this inaccuracy Luther emphasised that the "whole man" , body , soul and spirit, could be subject to the flesh or to the spirit. For instance , if a person is thoroughly self-centred and carnal

...the whole man is flesh, for the spirit
of God does not abide in him. (4)

Most people are , for Luther , "simul justus et peccator", simultaneously justified and sinning. This means that the whole person , body , soul and spirit is tempted by two different objects .

See how one and the same man, at the same time, serves the law of God and the law of sin , is at the same time just and sins . For he does not say "my mind serves the law of God" nor "my flesh serves the law of sin", but he says "I, the whole man , the same person , I serve both servitudes." (5)

Luther stresses the unity of the person , rejecting any notion of the soul as a separate entity from the body .

"The flesh" is the whole man , with body and soul ,

reason and will. And every man has fleshly senses , moods , affections and will who is not born of the spirit. For the soul is so imbedded in the flesh, which seeks to guard and protect it , that it is indeed more "flesh" than the flesh itself. (6)

Althaus has clarified Luther's use of the term "flesh" , saying that it is used in the Pauline sense , equivalent to the Greek "sarx". Human nature before the Fall is oriented to the spirit of God. After the Fall however , selfishness and egoism are rife and human nature is conditioned by "flesh", indeed "becomes" flesh.

The pride and self-assertion which prevent a man from achieving genuine love either of men or of God is not an occasional distortion ; it is the nature of fallen man Luther and Paul describe this condition by calling man "flesh". (7)

"Spirit" is always for Luther the spirit of God. For Luther there is never any sense in which a person can do or will good of his or her own capacities . Once again , the Pauline use of spirit (pneuma) is adopted by Luther.

Luther's general concept of human nature states that it is , (in the translation of Tillmans and Preus) "curved in upon itself". This is crucially important . Although the ontological and existential perspectives on human nature are distinct in Luther, they are inseparable. Hence it is true that for Luther human nature was not naturally oriented to spirit or naturally open to supernature after

the Fall.

... our nature has been so deeply curved
in upon itself because of the viciousness
of original sin.... (8)

It is important to note that Luther's conviction of the depravity of fallen human nature does not mean that he regards human persons as essentially evil before the Fall as well . What he teaches is that original sin has so distorted the nature of the person that it is no longer oriented to spirit in the way it was before the Fall .

The image that these ideas suggest is that of a pendulum swinging between two points , flesh and spirit. The person is always oriented towards the one but restrained by a tendency towards the other . There is seldom a time when a person is fixed at either point. Hence the language about being justified and a sinner at once .

It must be stressed that Luther was far more concerned with the particular situations and states within which human persons actually exist than with human nature as such . He says very little about human nature as such , and when he does it is always within the context of discussing the human predicament.

LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.

As has been stated , Luther's concern was with the existential human condition rather than with ontology. Althaus suggests (9) that the distinction between body, soul and spirit is anthropological,

while that between flesh and spirit is theological. In any event, it is the latter to which Luther devotes most of his attention. "Flesh" and "spirit" do not refer to human nature as such, but to possible existential states to which human nature is subject. In this section, four basic themes will be considered, namely sin, guilt, the bondage of the will and the need of grace. These themes reflect the tension between spirit and flesh.

Sin : Luther uses the term sin in two inseparable senses : original and subsequent. By original sin he means the "sin of Adam", the original disobedience to God's will. This is the sin which breaks the human orientation to will and do good. What I have called subsequent sin is simply sin which is committed by individuals as a consequence of original sin . Both forms of sin are part of a general condition of sinfulness which Luther calls flesh.

The extent to which individuals are sinners is unknown to themselves. This is because sin is such a pervasive reality that it distorts a person's self-knowledge.

... one must note , particularly at this point, the statement that no one can know all his sins. This becomes especially obvious when one takes a look at the magnitude of original sin.... Truly, therefore, sin is as stupendous a thing as He is stupendous who is offended by it. But Him Heaven and earth cannot contain. Rightly, therefore , Moses calls sin a secret thing, the true magnitude of which

the mind cannot encompass. Even as God's wrath, even as death, is infinite, so sin also is infinite. (10)

The pervasiveness of sin means that even when a person appears to be doing good their deed is subverted by egoism. A deed can appear to be good on the surface, but at the level of its motivation it is sinful.

Guilt : In his discussion of the effect of guilt Luther shows very clearly his view of the human condition . He describes two inseparable states of guilt : the guilt that stems from original sin which leaves us incapable of doing good , and the guilt that we incur by particular sins.

The notion of guilt rests on the concept of concupiscence, which Luther defines as "that weakness in us toward the good" (11). People are incapable by nature of doing the good , and they are thus in a state of guilt. When individuals commit actual sins they incur guilt. Concupiscence is so fundamental a part of the human condition that Luther can say that persons are concupiscence in the same sense that persons are flesh. Persons incur guilt when their wills give in to concupiscence, but do not necessarily incur guilt simply by being subject to concupiscence. This is the meaning of Luther's notion that people can be guilty and not guilty simultaneously.

In itself the concupiscence is guilty, to be sure, but yet it does not render us guilty unless we yield to it and commit sin. From this comes the remarkable fact that we are guilty and not guilty.

For we ourselves are this weakness, therefore it is guilty and we are guilty until this weakness ceases and is cleansed. But we are not guilty as long as we do not act in accord with this weakness, since God in His mercy does not impute the guilt of the weakness but only the guilt of the will which consents to the weakness. This twofold idea cannot be better explained than by the parable in the Gospel of the man who was left half dead. (Luke 10:30 ff.) (12)

These ideas are developed in Luther's Lectures on Romans when he discusses the verse "so then it is no longer I that do it but sin which dwells within me" (7:17). It is sin which traps the person "in" the flesh, and guilt is the objective and subjective result of this sin.

The bondage of the will : This concept was developed in Luther's treatise against the humanist Erasmus, De Servo Arbitrio. By describing the will as being in a state of bondage Luther meant that the will freely chooses evil most of the time . The thing which tempts the will to choose evil most of the time is sin. The will is so thoroughly conditioned by sin that it unfailingly chooses evil.

Original sin , the Fall, means that humanity is guilty of turning away from God and becoming egocentric. When individuals commit sins they experience this guilt . Luther's contention was that individuals

sin all the time , even when they appear to be doing good. For instance, good counsel may appear to be altruistically given, but the counsellor may derive undue pride from giving others advice. For Luther , nothing which a person can do can lead to spirit . Another way of putting this is to say that the will is "bound" to the flesh. It cannot do other than choose the flesh, according to Luther.

All that a person can do to escape this predicament is to submit in faith to the will of God and to believe in the gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ. As Gonzalez puts it: (13)

We can only will evil. Our best virtues, admirable though they are from the point of view of civil law, in no way bring us any closer to God. This is not because our will is constrained, but because it is so imbued with sin that it freely chooses evil. There is nothing left in us by which we can actively please God or even move toward him....Nothing is left to us of which we can boast. All that we still have is the passive capacity to be turned in the right direction - a capacity that is absolutely passive and that we cannot therefore turn into actuality. But for God this suffices. It is to this passive capacity of the will that God addresses himself in his Word, turning our will toward him, so that once again , even in the midst of our

sinful condition, we may have communion with God.

Luther's doctrine of the bondage of the will poses this question : if the will cannot move a person towards salvation , then what can ? In another form this is the question of the need for grace.

The need for grace : Sin gives rise to guilt and holds the will in its grip. This leaves the person absolutely powerless to do anything which could merit God's favour and bring about salvation. Another way of describing that powerlessness would be to say that a person needs God's freely given help in order to be saved. The help of God must be freely given in this sense : it is never a reward for human effort. Another term for that freely given help is grace.

Luther challenged his opponents to prove that salvation was possible without grace :(14)

Prove that it is possible by nature to love God, as you say , "with all your strength" (Luke 10:27) and without any grace. If you are without concupiscence , we will believe you. But if you live with and in these lusts, then you are no longer fulfilling the Law.

... when a person desires and loves something else, can he really love God ? But this concupiscence is always in us , and therefore the love of God is never in us , unless it is begun by grace....

Luther's view of the human condition can be summarised as follows : as a consequence of original sin the human race stands in a state of guilt before God. The individual experiences this guilt and the enslavement of the will to sin. The absolute gap between God's righteousness and the person's sin is acutely sensed , and the only remedy for the predicament lies in God. This is because all human actions are riddled with egoism and hence have no real salvific effect.

LUTHER'S VIEW OF GRACE.

The fact that Luther was less concerned with ontology than with the existential human predicament, allied to the fact that his written theology was in the form of commentaries rather than systematic works , leaves us without a clear dogmatic definition of grace. This was a distinct advantage as far as Luther was concerned, because grace was not a thing to be analysed but an initiative to be responded to. Before considering some of Luther's own comments on grace as such , an outline of his views should be drawn from some of his commentators.

In the context of discussing baptism, Althaus writes :(15)

Baptism does not give a particular grace, not not only a part of salvation , but simply the entire grace of God, "the entire Christ and the Holy Spirit with his gifts".

This implies that grace has a very wide definition in Luther, in that

it is to do with the expression or self-communication of God to creatures for their salvation. Ernst (16) says of Luther's theology that

Here grace becomes above all the experience of a God who allows himself to be encountered in a face-to-face relationship by one who deeply experiences himself to be a sinner.

Haight, (17) in comparing Luther's doctrine with that of Aquinas, shows that for Luther grace is God's favour by which people are forgiven .It is never, for Luther, a habit or quality of the soul. It is important to bear this in mind when Luther's use of the term "co-operative grace" is discussed.

Rondet raises the vital question of whether the degree of sinfulness of a person has any effect on their experience of grace. He regards Luther's definition of grace as

the certainty we have regarding a God who looks upon sinful man as though he were just. (18)

Grace is thus God's favour, available to people at baptism, operating to eradicate the guilt and bondage of the will experienced by the person .

In Haight's words, Luther sees grace as

... the relationship of friendship and communion established by God in spite of a person's sin.(19)

For Luther , grace is synonymous with the mercy of God. This mercy is shown to the sinner in order that he or she might "die to sin" or "turn away from flesh to the spirit". This grace removes the guilt that is a consequence of sin , which is another way of saying that the debt owed to God as a result of sin is cancelled by grace. As Luther himself put it :

Grace ... bestows the remission of sins. (20)

The best known context in which Luther uses the term grace is the doctrine that grace alone justifies. Justification is the setting right of the relationship between persons and God. For Luther this justification cannot be brought about by the actions of people in any way because all actions are conditioned by egoism, all will enslaved to the flesh. The implication of this is that only God can justify , and the justifying act of God is what Luther calls grace.

For we are not made righteous by doing righteous works, but rather we do righteous works by being righteous. Therefore grace alone justifies. (21)

Luther's description of grace is always attentive to the action of grace, for instance in his description of how gentiles are saved by being "grafted" onto the "tree" of Israel by grace, despite being naturally incompatible with the chosen people. He lays great stress on the gratuitous quality of grace . It is a gift, and cannot be conceived of separately from God's fundamental gift to humanity , Jesus. When discussing Paul's Epistle to the Romans (5:15) , Luther writes (22)

The apostle joins together grace and the gift,

as if they were different , but he does so in order that he may clearly demonstrate the type of the One who was to come which he has mentioned, namely, that although we are justified by God and receive His grace, yet we do not receive it by our own merit, but it is His gift, which the Father gave to Christ to give to men.... But "the grace of God" and "the gift" are the same thing, namely , the very righteousness which is freely given to us through Christ. And he adds this grace because it is customary to give a gift to one's friends. But this gift is given even to His enemies out of His mercy, because they were not worthy of this gift unless they were made worthy and accounted as such by the mercy and grace of God.

This quote clearly conveys the idea of God's imputation of righteousness into the sinner, which is the primary effect of grace for Luther.

On the whole Luther's view of grace is simple and uncluttered. Grace is God's forgiving favour which imputes righteousness to the sinner, removing guilt and the bondage of the will to evil. On one of the rare occasions when Luther's style moved from pastoral and scriptural concerns to more speculative concerns, he has a rather cryptic discussion of the distinction between operative and co-operative

grace.

For God first gives operative grace, which He allows to be used and worked with up to the point where He begins to pour into us a second kind of grace; and when this has been poured in , He lets it co-operate , even though when it was first infused it was operative and first grace, while with respect to the first grace it is second grace. For it is called first grace always with respect to itself, because it operates first, and then in the second place it co-operates . (23)

This is cryptic insofar as it is not quite clear with what the second grace co-operates and with what the first grace works. In my view this cannot mean the same as the Scholastic notion of co-operative grace in which grace and the human mind co-operate. This is because for Luther the person is entirely passive in relation to God's activity . Grace co-operates only with other impulses of grace. This speculative point does not modify the basic view of grace outlined.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

In his commentary on Psalm 51 Luther very strikingly indicates the relationship between nature and grace. (24)

From this absolute God everyone should flee who does not want to perish , because human nature and the absolute God - for the sake of teaching we use this familiar term - are

the bitterest of enemies.

This negative view of the relationship between nature and grace stems quite consistently from the view of nature as "curved in upon itself" and the doctrine of justification by grace alone. In his Disputation against Scholastic Theology, Luther opposed the view that grace presupposes nature and perfects it: (25)

On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except ill will and even rebellion against grace.

If human nature is thus closed off to grace, and if grace is to be at all effective, then it must somehow act in spite of nature. It is this conclusion that gave rise to the language of "imputed righteousness" and "extrinsic justification" that is associated with Luther's position. What this language means is that grace takes hold of the person and heals the effects of sin by cancelling them in God's eyes. The person is incapable of adequately repenting of sin and for this reason grace, and nothing but grace can do the job. The person's guilt is erased in the eyes of God, even though he or she continues to swing like a pendulum between flesh and spirit, law and gospel. The term "extrinsic" in this context means from outside the person, with no part of the person co-operating in the process of its own accord. In the Disputation Concerning Justification Luther comments on the verse in Acts of the Apostles where some unclean animals were declared clean by God: (26)

... as he pronounced those animals clean,
which according to his own law were still

unclean, so he pronounces the Gentiles and all of us righteous, although as a matter of fact we are sinners just as those animals were unclean.

This concept that people are declared righteous in spite of their sinfulness is described by Watson in this way : (27)

Deliverance came through the Gospel, not because by it he was enabled to attain perfect contrition and secure the grace that would make him acceptable to God, but because it revealed to him that God in His grace freely forgave his inability to do so and accepted him, unworthy as he was and in spite of his sin.

Luther's doctrine of imputed justification raises an important question : once righteousness has been imputed by God, does it make any difference to the everyday experience of the person ? Before righteousness is imputed, the person is wholly enslaved to the flesh. Having been "justified by faith" the person's will is freed from this absolute bondage, although the tendencies and temptations of concupiscence remain. According to Haight, Luther does assert that changes take place in the person's life. This change has three fundamental forms: being raised up, freedom from the world and freedom for the neighbour. (28)

Being raised up : By this is meant the growth in stature of the person from being in a state of guilt to being in a state of grace . The image of elevation is used to convey the idea that Christ lowers himself in order to lift the person up to his level. Luther (29) uses the image of the person as the bride of Christ to convey this. It is important to state clearly that for Luther God does not change in elevating the person :the person is changed by grace. (30) Luther's description of the experience is found in The Freedom of the Christian Man :

Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor , wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell.

Freedom from the world : This is the relative freedom enjoyed by the person in grace. It loosens the bondage of the person to the flesh, not so completely that the flesh no longer has any power to attract the person, but enough enough to enable the person to tend towards the spirit more often than not . The "world" and the "flesh" are synonymous here. Put slightly differently, then, grace imbues the natures of particular persons with an inner detachment from things

and an independence of spirit. It does not mean that one has a godlike control over the things of the world, but it is a disposition of freedom in relation to things. To quote Luther: (31)

... every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that , by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm.

Freedom for the neighbour : This experience is of doing good to other persons for their own sake. It is purely for their own sake : if it were for one's own sake it would be the pursuit of merit , and if it were for God's sake it would , in the view of Luther, not really be a genuine concern for the neighbour. This concern for others for their own sake is only possible in grace , because of the utter depravity of human nature after the Fall. There are hints in Luther that this freedom for the neighbour is only truly experienced by Jesus, but it is in principle possible for any person to experience it , given grace. As a result of being freed by grace , a person

may serve and benefit others in all that he does , considering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbour.... Here faith is truly active through love, that is , it finds its expression in works of the freest service , cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward ; and for himself he is satisfied with the fulness and wealth of his faith . (32)

NATURE , GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION .

Given the concept of nature as "curved in on itself" and grace as God's forgiving imputation of righteousness, and the extrinsic operation of grace on nature , it must be judged whether these ideas have any specific implications for the role played by Jesus in the justification of people . It is a corollary of the notion of nature being curved in on itself that people cannot of themselves merit God's favour. If God's favour is to be granted to the person then someone or something outside of the person must bring that about . Now it can only be effectively brought about by God, as Luther has stressed. Therefore God's own Word, Jesus, brings this about because of his God-given merits, which are expressed in his "being raised up" at the resurrection, his "freedom from the world" which enables him voluntarily to accept death and his "freedom for the neighbour" which demonstrated his lack of egoism.

How is it that Christ can be part of the extrinsic operation of grace on nature ? Luther's response to this was to stress that justification occurs by the grace of faith alone . If one is given the gift of faith, the subjective dimension one receives is hope and the conviction that one is indeed declared righteous. The objective dimension one receives is the Word, which comes to the individual in the forms of Jesus, the scriptures and the preaching of these. Jesus is thus present in faith to the believer and is the object of faith itself.

As regards the question of why it is Jesus specifically who effects the salvation of persons , there has been considerable debate about Luther's position. G. Aulen (33) advanced a particularly controversial theory , distinguishing three types of soteriology : the "classical", the "Latin" and the "ethical". The "ethical" type was that of Peter Abelard, among others, and in terms of this Jesus saves by being the best example of a life perfectly led. The "Latin" type was the satisfaction theory of the atonement which (as noted above) was developed by Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas. Here Jesus , the God-man, pays the debt owed by people to God by voluntarily accepting death, and secures grace for others because in his perfection he cannot receive any more grace from God himself. The "classical" type was found, according to Aulen, in the New Testament, ancient Greek theology and in the works of Luther. In this theory Jesus saves by reconciling God and people as a result of a victorious battle against the "principalities and powers" which bind humanity to the flesh. The controversy was over which of these positions best reflected Luther's position. Aulen insisted that Luther held only the "classical" position. Most interpreters of Luther today do not accept this , arguing that Luther combined the classical and Latin types, and that although Jesus does not save simply by being an example, he nevertheless is an example to Christians . It is Luther's combination of the classical and Latin positions that is the important point. As Althaus puts it: (34)

... Luther combines the classical and the Latin concepts - to use Aulen's term - but in such a way that he decisively follows the Latin line. Luther agrees with the doctrine of the Greek

theologians and of the early church when he understands the crucified and risen Christ as the conquerer of those powers of corruption which presently destroy men ; he agrees with Anselm in putting Christ's work decisively in relationship to God. Both concepts are unified in Luther's thought by the fact that he, together with Paul, treats the law as one of the powers of corruption, and that he sees the wrath of God which we feel in our conscience as that which ultimately threatens us in and behind the demonic powers.

For Luther, Jesus substitutes for people and takes on their sin and guilt although he himself had no sin and guilt. This lack of egoism meant that he was free of the flesh. By voluntarily suffering he cancelled the debt owed to God by people for sin. His motive for doing this was love, and this love was the same thing as God's grace and forgiveness of sinners. In Luther's words : (35)

... the risen Christ, was delivered up , to death, for our trespasses, to destroy them and put them to death, and raised for our justification, that it might be established and completed.

Persons cannot, by nature , redeem themselves. Someone or something else has to do it for them. The grace or favour of God comes to the believer in God's Word . Jesus' voluntary death removed the guilt which resulted from original sin, thus restoring the good

relationship between God and persons. The grace that saves people is available to them in spite of their distorted nature .

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN JUSTIFICATION .

Having seen how Jesus' role in justification is consistent with the relationship between nature and grace in Luther's view , the question arises as to how it is that people can be put in touch with the grace of Christ.

Although the individual acceptance of faith is crucial , and although Luther firmly believed in the priesthood of all believers, knowledge of the significance of Christ and the need to turn away from the flesh are not , for Luther , reached in a vacuum . They are learnt through the preaching of the Word, which is Christ in the Scriptures. This preaching is what constitutes the church.

It is the preaching about Christ, the proclamation of the Word; that is constitutive of the Church ; for if the Church is the mother of Christians it is not the mother , but the daughter of the Word. (36)

Luther himself stresses the importance of hearing the preaching of the Word, on the grounds that it is in that very hearing that people encounter Christ.

He who is to find Christ, must first find the churches ... (37)

Quite simply, Luther's assessment of the importance of the church

rests on an association of ideas something like this : the person acknowledges his or her sinfulness and participates in the church through hearing the Word preached . By being baptised the gift of grace is made available, and by sharing in the eucharist incorporation in the body of Christ takes place. The fruitfulness of all of this depends on grace. Luther uses the image of a hospital to convey the importance of the church.

The church is the inn and the infirmary
for those who are sick and in need of
being made well. (38)

Luther describes the church in various ways : it is the mystical body of Christ, the "communio sanctorum" and is "created by wisdom". The notion of the mystical body of Christ is the basis of the eucharistic unification of the church. It simply stresses the idea that one encounters Christ in the Church. The "communio sanctorum" or communion of saints was another idea about the church.

I believe that there is on earth, through the whole wide world, no more than one holy, common Christian Church, which is nothing else than the congregation or assembly of the saints, i.e. the good believing men on earth, which is gathered, preserved, ruled by the Holy Ghost and is daily increased by means of the Sacraments and the Word of God. (39)

The notion that the church was created by wisdom is intended to stress that the church is God's creation and that God "expresses himself" through the Church.

Given Luther's insistence that those who would be saved must find the church, how is the church to be recognised? There are various marks of the church, the principle ones being preaching of the Word, baptism and the Lord's supper or eucharist. The latter two are the sacraments of the church; Luther did not accept any others. There were various other marks of secondary, but by no means minimal, importance. These were things like public worship, ministry (to ensure and perform the preaching of the Word and the performance of the sacraments), authentic disciplinary authority in the community of the faithful, and the daily bearing of the cross in uncomplaining suffering by the faithful. (40)

It is in the context of the church, then, that the Christian encounters the Word and can receive the gift of faith which leads to justification. The church is not, however, a community of perfect people. It is a group of people who are sustained together in faith but who are nevertheless sinners: they have been freed from the tyranny of guilt but are still exposed to the evil of the flesh.

SUMMARY.

In his theology Luther opposed what he felt was an undue use of metaphysics and natural theology. These he encountered in the declining scholasticism of his time. He proposed a more personal theology which focussed on the existential experience of people rather than on the ontology of human nature.

Luther did not pay a great deal of attention to defining human nature as such. He viewed human nature as "curved in upon itself" as a result of original sin. For him the important question was whether the whole person, body, soul and spirit, was preoccupied with the "flesh" or with God's "spirit". This is the question of the human condition.

The human condition was to be constantly wavering between flesh and spirit. Only Jesus successfully overcame the flesh , and hence for all other people the human condition is flesh. Flesh was identified as sin, guilt and the bondage of the will. To be subject to the flesh meant to freely choose sin most of the time, if not all of the time , and to experience guilt as a result. All of this meant that the person could do no good without egoism destroying that good. Hence the person could do nothing to merit salvation in God's eyes . For Luther the human condition was to be conscious of an infinite gap between the righteous God and the unrighteous sinner. To be subject to the flesh meant to be in need of grace for salvation.

For Luther it was grace alone which made the person righteous. This grace was God's favour, available to people at baptism, operating to eradicate the guilt and bondage of the will experienced by the person.

If the person was not naturally open to grace , as Luther taught, how could grace effect the person's salvation ? By imputing righteousness to the sinner extrinsically. What this meant was that the person's guilt was erased in the eyes of God, even though he or she continued

to swing like a pendulum between flesh and spirit. This extrinsic justification changed the person by raising them from a state of guilt to a state of grace, by freeing them from undue attachment to material things , and by enabling the person to do good to others for their own sake. The basis for all these ideas was Luther's doctrine of the bitter enmity between nature and grace.

What part did Jesus play in the justification of the person by grace? There are two senses in which Luther was involved in this , for Luther. The objective , historical sense, was Jesus' atonement for the sins of humanity and his defeat of the powers of evil and the flesh. By voluntarily suffering he cancelled the debt owed to God by people for sin. His motive for doing this was love, and this love was the same thing as God's grace and forgiveness of sinners. This leads on to the subjective sense in which Jesus was important : the grace of Christ becomes available to people, in spite of their sin, in faith. Faith in Jesus was itself a gift of grace which contributed to the justification of the person. Thus Jesus contributes to the justification of the person by his past defeat of the forces which enslave the person and by his present availability to persons in faith.

Knowledge of the significance of Christ and the need to turn away from the flesh were not , for Luther , reached in a vacuum. They were learnt through the preaching of the Word, which was Christ in the scriptures. This preaching was what constituted the church. The main hallmarks of the church were the preaching of the Word, baptism and the Lord's supper .

The word "justification" sums up Luther's theology of nature and grace . Grace justifies people , removing the stain of sin which turned human nature in upon itself .

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Rondet, H. : The_Grace_of_Christ. pg.277.
- (2) Rahner, K. & Vorgrimler, H.: Concise_Theological_Dictionary.pg.339.
- (3) Rondet, H. : op.cit. pg.283.
- (4) Luther, M. : cited in The_Righteousness_of_God. pg.166 by Rupp, G.
- (5) Luther, M. : ibid. pg.167.
- (6) Luther, M. : ibid. pg. 167.
- (7) Althaus, P. : The_Theology_of_Martin_Luther.pg. 153.
- (8) Luther, M. : Luther's_Works. Vol. 25 , pg.291.
- (9) Althaus, P. : op.cit. pg.154.
- (10) Luther, M. : Commentary_on_Psalm_90:8 cited by Gonzalaez ,J.L. in A_History_of_Christian_Thought. Vol.III, pg. 48.

- (11) Luther, M. : Luther's Works. Vol. 25 pg. 340.
- (12) Luther, M. : ibid. pg. 340. Vol. 25.
- (13) Gonzalez, J.L. : A History of Christian Thought.
pg.50. Vol. III
- (14) Luther, M. : Luther's Works. Vol. 25, pg.262.
- (15) Althaus,P. : op.cit. pg. 353
- (16) Ernst , C. : The Theology of Grace. pg.56.
- (17) Haight,R. : The Experience and Language of Grace
pp.91,92.
- (18) Rondet , H. : op.cit.pg.279.
- (19) Haight, R. : op.cit.pg.90.
- (20) Luther, M. : Luther's Works . Vol. 25 pg.6
- (21) Luther,M. : ibid. pg.242. Vol. 25.
- (22) Luther, M. : ibid. pp. 305 , 306. Vol. 25.

- (23) Luther, M. : ibid. pp. 368 , 369. Vol. 25.
- (24) Luther, M. : Commentary_on_the_Psalms_(51) cited
in Gonzalez, op.cit. pg.37
- (25) Luther, M. : Luther's_Works. Vol. 31, pg. 9.
- (26) Luther, M. : ibid. Vol. 34, pg.168.
- (27) Watson, P.S. : Let_God_be_God . pg. 21.
- (28) Haight, R. : op.cit. pp. 96 ff.
- (29) Luther, M. : "The_Freedom_of_the_Christian_Man"
ex Martin_Luther_:_Selections_from
His_Writings ed. J.Dillenberger.
pg. 61.
- (30) Tillich, P. : Love_._Power_and_Justice . pp.82-86,
121-122.
- (31) Luther, M. : The_Freedom_of_the_Christian
Man.op.cit.pg. 63 .
- (32) Luther, M. : ibid. pp. 73-74.
- (33) Aulen, G. : Christus_Victor

- (34) Althaus, P. : op.cit. pg. 222
- (35) Luther, M. : Luther's Works. Vol. 25 pg. 42
- (36) Watson, P.S. : op.cit. pg.169.
- (37) Luther, M. : cited in Watson, P.S. op.cit.
pg. 169
- (38) Luther, M. : Luther's Works. Vol. 25 , pg. 263
- (39) Luther, M. : cited in Rupp, G. The Righteousness
of God. pg. 313.
- (40) cf. Watson , P.S. : op.cit.pg.170

CONCLUSION.

In this conclusion I intend to draw out the major implications of the three preceding chapters and to show that there are resources in all three traditions which should be drawn upon by anyone hoping to formulate a complete , comprehensive and dynamic doctrine of the relationship between nature and grace .

The three traditions discussed have revealed important differences of emphasis , and there are some terms which effectively summarise these differences . It is important to stress that these terms are not merely jargon , but that they express real variations in theological discourse . These terms are of course "deification" in Palamas , "sanctification" in Aquinas and "justification" in Luther . As these theologians have had such a formative influence on their traditions it seems fair to say that deification , sanctification and justification are the key verbal symbols of the theology of grace for Orthodoxy , Catholicism and Protestantism respectively .

In this conclusion , then , I shall briefly emphasise the centrality of these terms within the context of their traditions ; following this I shall consider the question whether there was a discernible

historical progression which might suggest a necessary evolution of a complete "vocabulary" for a comprehensive theology of grace . Finally, I shall outline what I consider to be a doctrine of grace which adequately indicates the roles of Jesus and the church in salvation and which draws upon all three major traditions in an inclusive , responsible and coherent manner .

ORTHODOXY AND DEIFICATION.

The Palamite notion of deification (theosis) is a term which indicates the harmony of nature and grace in Orthodox thought . Human nature is optimistically presented as open to the action of the grace of God . Grace deifies the human being progressively , and the culminating point of this process is the transfiguration of living people and the transformation of the dead "into" God . It is impossible to use literal language to describe the ultimate deification , so Orthodoxy uses two theological methods to communicate its position effectively . Firstly , at the abstract dogmatic level a distinction is made between the essence and energies of God . This enables Orthodoxy to avoid the pitfall of asserting that in deification humans become wholly and entirely God , so that the distinction between creator and creature falls away . Instead God remains essentially transcendent while the deifying energy transforms people . As Kallistos Ware has put it ,

The idea of deification must always be understood in the light of the distinction between God's essence and His energies. Union with God means union with the divine energies , not the divine essence : the Orthodox Church ,

while speaking of deification and union , rejects all forms of pantheism (1) .

Secondly , at a metaphorical level much use is made of visual iconic imagery to stress the transformation of people . God's energy is often expressed as a light which penetrates , illuminates and transforms the human person . It is for this reason that the icon of the transfiguration of Christ has such a central place in Orthodox iconography : it is the clearest symbol of deification in Orthodoxy.

CATHOLICISM AND SANCTIFICATION.

Aquinas' use of the sanctification motif reflects the difference of emphasis between Catholic and Orthodox theologies of grace . Aquinas held that people could not achieve their divine end unaided . In other words , salvation was impossible without grace . Aquinas did not teach a doctrine of synergy or co-operation between nature and grace as did Palamas . Aquinas rather stressed the tension between the human destiny in God and the human incapacity to achieve that destiny unaided . Hence in his theology of grace he stressed the effect of grace on the human being now rather than the eventual union with God . He emphasises the process of transformation more than the end-point of that transformation , and it is because of this that he goes into such detail about the divisions of grace . Sanctification is the key term here . Grace completes , perfects or sanctifies nature . This does not mean that for Aquinas there is no co-operation between nature and grace , it simply means that in order for such co-operation to take place the human beings inability to attain divinity must be changed by the divine instrument of grace . This

process of change is called sanctification . As Aquinas put it :

Grace is not said to make pleasing or sanctify by an efficient but by a formal "making" , such that by it man is justified and made worthy to be called pleasing to God ... (2)

The distinction between efficient and formal causality need not detain us here . The important point is that Aquinas sees grace as having a sanctifying role , perfecting human nature so that it is capable of its divine end .

PROTESTANTISM AND JUSTIFICATION.

Luther's doctrine of justification arises out of a pessimistic view of human nature . Because human nature is so drastically "curved in upon itself" as a result of sin , grace is needed in order for sin to be forgiven and in order for human nature to be opened up to its divine end . This "opening up" involves the imputation of righteousness that is essential to justification . In other words , grace justifies people , forgiving their sinfulness and setting them to rights in God's eyes , elevating them and freeing them from the world and for their neighbors . There is nothing humans can do to cause their own justification , because nature is so corrupted by sin. In Luther's own words ,

...the person is justified and saved , not by works or laws , but by the Word of God , that is , by the promise of his grace... (3)

The Protestant doctrine of grace therefore deals not primarily with

mystical or ontological questions of deification or sanctification , but with what one might cautiously term the moral question of justification . This tradition has been concerned more with sin and its forgiveness than with ontology or mystical theology .

THE QUESTION OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.

This is a highly complex question which , although it cannot be comprehensively dealt with here , must be given some attention as it affects how one goes about presenting a complete doctrine of the relationship between nature and grace .

The question arises in various forms . Is a more recent form of the theology of grace necessarily the more complete ? Is there a definite logical progression from the oldest doctrine to the newest ? I am inclined to deny both assertions . The circumstances in which the various theologies of deification , sanctification and justification arose were very different and it would be very difficult to argue that there was , for instance , a direct logical link between the thought of the earlier Aquinas and the later Palamas . This is because the factors which shaped Catholic theology were different from those which influenced Orthodoxy . Furthermore , the factors which gave rise to the Reformation were not present in Orthodox areas, and this makes it difficult to argue that the theology of grace necessarily evolved from the Orthodox to the Protestant position . In any event , our study of Luther's work shows strong Augustinian influence which precedes both Palamas and Aquinas and suggests that the Protestant position was a return to older seminal

traditions rather than simply a development of Orthodox and Catholic ideas . Luther's theology of grace was a rebuttal of Aquinas' in many respects .

The implication of all this is that it is not possible to interpret the historically consecutive ideas of Palamas , Aquinas and Luther as being a logical progression .

THE DYNAMIC OF GRACE .

If a complete theology of the relationship between nature and grace cannot be presented simply by stating the latest historical account of the doctrine , as would be the case if it could be shown that Aquinas' theology led directly to the theology of Palamas which in turn led directly to the theology of Luther , then a comprehensive theology of grace needs to incorporate the aspirations and strengths of each of the three traditions . These traditions provide the resources for a complete theology of grace , and to ignore any one of them or to give undue emphasis to any one of them would diminish the comprehensiveness of the end result . Due account must be taken of the fundamental concerns held in focus by each of the theologians as they developed their theologies of grace .

It has been argued that the Orthodox Palamas was primarily a mystical theologian concerned with deification ; his theology steered a middle course between naturalism and dualism . The Catholic Aquinas was concerned with sanctification as a solution to an ontological problem; his theology steered a middle course between secularism and

supernaturalism . The Protestant Luther saw justification as the solution to the moral predicament of sin , and his theology marks a reaction against what he felt were undue emphases on both metaphysics and natural theology .

The crux of my position is that a complete theology of grace needs to be constructed by recognising the equal importance of the ontological, moral and mystical problems with which these theologians were concerned . In other words due account must be taken of the structure of human nature , the moral dispositions of people and the understanding of how union with God ultimately occurs . It is surely possible to show that the influence of grace on nature is a dynamic process that begins with sanctification , moves through justification and culminates in deification . The reason for placing them in this order lies in the views of the human predicament adopted by the theologians . Aquinas viewed human nature as open to God but unable to reach God of itself . Thus the first movement of grace would need to remove this ontological problem , enabling human nature in principle to realise its capacity for God . This first movement would be what is known as sanctification . Luther viewed human nature as curved in upon itself , morally rather than ontologically , in fact rather than in principle . The second movement of grace would need to restore the integrity of human nature in the eyes of God and to begin actualising the now real possibility of union with God . Such a second movement would be what is called justification . The third movement of grace would bring about that unity with God by means of a gradual transformation of the sanctified and justified human being . This transformation would begin during human life but would culminate

only beyond death . This third movement of grace would be deification .

Such a doctrine of grace would emphasise the dynamic process that grace initiates , moving from sanctification through justification to deification . This would not be to say that any one of the three phases is more important than the others ; they would all be necessary moments in the salvation of the person .It is worthwhile at this stage to speculate further on some of the elements of such a dynamic theology of grace .

The first movement of grace is sanctification : that which makes possible the bridging of the gap between humanity and God . At this stage a clear understanding of the structure and limitations of human nature would be necessary , as it is these which prevent the ordinary union of humanity and divinity . In this regard it should be noted that today , in addition to the resources provided by Palamas , Aquinas and Luther , the disciplines of sociology and psychology have a great deal to offer in the attempt to understand human nature more clearly .

Another interesting implication of seeing sanctification as a distinct moment in the process of grace's activity is the way in which some of the traditional sacraments could be regarded as having an essentially sanctifying effect . I am thinking particularly of baptism , which is of course accepted as a sacrament in all three traditions . Catholic confirmation and Orthodox chrismation could also be considered in this context , because these are the sacraments

of initiation into Christian life . As such , they mark the beginning of the process of salvation for Christians and the granting of grace to the Christian by God . Hence these sacraments are particularly significant as sanctifying moments of grace .

The second movement of grace is that of justification : the moral purification of humanity . In this context grace could be seen to be at work in anything which contributes to the moral purification of humanity . This moral purification should not be confused with moralism : it is not morality simply for morality's sake but morality for the sake of union with God . To this end various Protestant emphases could profitably be used at this point , particularly the stress laid on scripture as normative for Christian ethics and on preaching as a way of inspiring people to better lives .

It would be important not to understand morality and hence justification in purely individualistic terms . It would be seen as both a social and individual issue , or in other words as both structural and personal . In this context social justice would have to receive as much emphasis as individual repentance . The traditions of theological reflection on questions of social justice would play an important role here .

In this context a sacramental aspect could also be brought in . The sacrament of penance , while not recognised as a sacrament by Luther , could be regarded as a sign of personal dedication on the part of Christians to live out their justification . In this way the essential experience of justification , namely the forgiveness of

sin, would be emphasised .

The third movement of grace is deification : the transformation of humanity so that union with God takes place . At this point it can be said that all those things which point to or bring about such transformation of humanity would be regarded as part of deifying grace .

At the sacramental level , then , those sacraments that are concerned with various moments of change could fit in here . The eucharist is the prime example of such a sacrament , and it is the only one which Luther would have accepted . Whatever the technicalities of the theology of eucharistic transformation , it can safely be said that all three traditions regard the eucharist as symbolic of the transformation of nature by grace . With regard to the eucharist , then , liturgy should be not merely a reflection of the actual conditions of life but a celebration of the transformation of life by grace .

Apart from the eucharist , other sacraments accepted among Catholics and Orthodox that could be considered here would be marriage , ordination to particular ministries within the church and the anointing of the sick . All these sacraments have to do with changing states of life and as such could be appropriately considered as part of the movement of deifying grace .

A further aspect that should be considered here is that of spirituality . There are vast resources in all three traditions that

show how to develop a spirituality that best expresses the movement towards eventual union with God , ranging from the iconic spirituality of Orthodoxy through the sacramental spirituality of Catholicism to the biblical spirituality of Protestantism . All three can offer elements for a rich spirituality of deification .

THE ROLE OF JESUS IN A DYNAMIC THEOLOGY OF GRACE .

The implications of such a doctrine of grace for the role of Jesus in salvation would also need to be spelled out . The Catholic notion of Jesus' death doing satisfaction for sin and causing an overflow of grace would be presented as the event which secured the availability of sanctifying grace for humanity and thus as the event which made it possible to bridge the gap between divinity and humanity .The death of Jesus would also need to be shown as the event which secured the forgiveness of the sins of humanity , thus showing how the death of Jesus should be seen as a moment of justifying grace . Finally , Jesus contributes to the deification of humanity by voluntarily submitting to the power of death and thus overcoming that power and its chain-reaction of sin and self-preservation .

The example of Jesus as the model of nature transformed and transfigured by grace should be presented in scriptural exposition in the form of study and preaching . The transformation represented by the Christ-figure should be clearly shown in the use of the sacraments .

THE CHURCH AND A DYNAMIC THEOLOGY OF GRACE.

The church would be seen as the social situation in which the dynamic of grace was most clearly operative . The pastoral life of the church should be shaped by a concern to show that the transformation of human life by grace is possible , that the forgiveness of sin and the establishment of righteousness and justice before God is a reality , and that deification is actually the end of Christian life .

In this perspective the notion of the church as the "body of Christ" could integrate these various emphases . Participation in the body of Christ could link people with the sanctifying power of grace , particularly with regard to the initial reception of grace in sacraments like baptism . A real participation and openness to others in the body of Christ (or the "communion of saints") would be the substance of the forgiveness of sin and promotion of justice experienced in justifying grace . Finally the traditions of spirituality within the church could constantly sustain the vision of the deifying end of Christian life .

SUMMARY.

The project of developing a dynamic theology of grace is not simply a matter of synthesising distinctive vocabularies . It can only be achieved coherently if due account is taken of the differences of emphasis discernible in the three traditions , and in this connection it is vital to bear in mind that while

Eastern theology is chiefly preoccupied with

finding out what , in God , makes him able to give Himself , that of the West is concerned particularly with what it is , in man , which allows him to receive God . (4)

In spite of these differences of emphasis it seems that these three traditions are not incompatible and that , if viewed as a dynamic process , it is quite possible to develop a doctrine of grace's effect on human nature which equally stresses sanctification , justification and deification by presenting them as successive stages in the dynamic of grace .

This dissertation has attempted to examine representative resources for the theology of grace in the Orthodox , Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions ; it has also presented an outline of a dynamic theology of grace that would draw on those resources in an inclusive, responsible and coherent manner .

FOOTNOTES

1. Ware , K. : The_Orthodox_Church. pg. 237 .
2. Aquinas , T. : Summa_Theologiae. 1a 2ae , iii , 1 .
3. Luther , M. : The_Freedom_of_The_Christian_Man. pg.71.
(Dillenberger edition .)
4. Moeller,G. & Philips,G.: The_Theology_of_Grace. pg. 3 .

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