

# Life in Christ

## The Unio Mystica and its Relation to Theosis



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*Huic uni ac vero Deo, Patri nostro benignissimo, qui nos in Christo Filio suo ante jacta mundi fundamenta elegit, qui in plenitudine temporis hunc Filium suum misit natum ex muliere factum sub lege, ut eos, qui sub lege, redimeret; qui ex mera gratia et misericordia per et propter hunc unicum mediatorem nostrum nos vocavit, justificavit et glorificavit, sit laus, honor et gloria in omnem nunquam finiendorum seculorum aeternitatem. Amen (Johann Gerhard. Loci Theologici. III, 520).*

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## Abbreviations

### Lutheran Confessions

CA *Augsburg Confession*  
Apo *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*  
FC *Formula of Concord*  
SD *Solid Declaration*  
Epit: *Epitome*

### Books

ANF *Ante-Nicene Fathers*  
BSLK *Bekennnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*  
CCCM *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*  
CCSG *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*  
CCSL *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*  
Dogmatik *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik*  
DTELC *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*  
Examen *Examen Theologicum Acromaticum*  
GA *Gesamtausgabe*  
Harmonie *Echt evangelische Auslegung der Sonn- und Festtags-Evangelien des Kirchenjahrs*  
Hodosophia *ODOSOFIA (Hodosophia) Christiana sev Theologia Postiva*  
Institutes *Institutes on the Christian Religion*  
LW *Luther's Works* American Ed.  
MWA *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*  
NPNF *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*  
PG *Patrologia graeca*  
PL *Patrologia latina*  
Sententiarum *Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum* (Bonaventure)  
Sententiarum *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor* (Lombard)  
Systema *Systema Locorum Theologicorum*  
Theologia *Theologia didactio-polemica sive systema theologicum*  
TNC *Two Natures in Christ (De Duabus Naturis)*  
WA *Weimar Ausgabe*  
W2 *Saemmtliche Werke* St. Louis Ed. Walch 2

## Life in Christ

### A Study of the Unio Mystica and its Relation to Theosis

Adam of old was deceived:  
 wanting to be God he failed to be God.  
 God became man,  
 so that He may make Adam god  
 (Mantzaridis. *The Deification of Man*. 13).

This *dictum* is known as the Doxastikon at the Praises for the Feast of the Annunciation in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Although it may initially seem quite strange to the western ear, it is very much in sync with western theology, Lutheranism, and above all Holy Scripture. In point of fact the following *dictum* is an ancient antiphon from the Western Church. It is used at Vespers for the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord.

O wondrous fellowship:  
 the Creator of the human race,  
 taking unto Himself a living body,  
 deigns to be born of a Virgin:  
 and becoming man from no human generation,  
 hath bestowed upon us His divinity  
 (*Antiphonale Monasticum*. 271).

The beauty of both the Doxastikon and the western antiphon is that they so eloquently encapsulate all the theology and spirituality of this entire thesis. In the same way it is the hope of this thesis that the systematization of this precious teaching does not destroy the intrinsic simplicity, beauty, or comfort of this dogma. With this aside, this thesis will now begin the study of the *unio mystica*, or the mystical union, and its relation to theosis.

One might ask, why write a paper on the *unio mystica* and its relation to theosis? Perhaps one might even wonder, what is the *unio mystica* and theosis? There are many reasons for choosing to write on this important topic. Historically both the mystical union and theosis have been prominent yet misunderstood doctrines of the church. Throughout the life of the church, many have even falsely attributed salvation to these dogmas rather than seeking the comfort intended by them. False teachings

associated with these doctrines have still not subsided and are once again regaining prominence. For this reason, a study on the mystical union and its relation to theosis is of vital importance. Furthermore any attempt to study this topic would be fruitless and destructive if the *Hauptartikel* (justification) is supplanted. Therefore the following words of Dr. Martin Luther have been continually pondered throughout the writing of this thesis. They will also serve well to introduce and guide this paper: “Nothing of this article (justification) can be conceded or given up even if heaven and earth or whatever is transitory passed away” (SA II, 5).

### **I. Why Study the *Unio Mystica***

The following are examples of present day misuses of the *unio mystica* or mystical union and theosis that clearly demonstrate why this issue needs to be addressed. First the “new” Finnish interpretation of Luther’s thought proposed by Tuomo Mannermaa and his disciples has clouded Luther’s teachings in the name of ecumenical unity with the Eastern Orthodox. These Lutherans have reinterpreted valid statements of Martin Luther by putting an Osiandrian or Palamite spin on them. After reinterpreting these statements, Mannermaa and his disciples then set these statements in opposition to the *Formula of Concord*. As will be demonstrated, these statements of Dr. Luther and others are referring to the mystical union and do not deny forensic justification.

Eastern Orthodoxy is the second example of a group that misuses the mystical union. Eastern Orthodox theology in many respects is closer to Lutheran theology than any other denomination. This is evident by the *Book of Concord’s* appeal to the practices of the Eastern Orthodox to demonstrate the catholicity of Lutheranism. If this similarity were not true, Philipp Melanchthon and later Jakob Andreae would not have sought communion with them (Mastrantonis. *Augsburg and Constantinople*. 3-24). Nevertheless similarity in doctrine does not negate the differences.

The third great threat to this doctrine in America is the New Age movement and its new ally in Post-Modernism. This movement that periodically disguises itself as Christian is nothing other than a revival of eastern religions, the mystery religions, and Gnosticism. At best it advocates a platonic concept of union with God that is essentially pantheistic. With the aid of Post-modernism, the New Age movement has become more syncretistic and more acceptable to modern America. Since the mystical union and theosis are often connected to this movement it is vital to address this dogma. Furthermore, this new acceptance of the spiritual in America may also allow Christianity to direct the unenlightened to the true spirituality of the cross. In other words, this movement could either cause a post-modernization of Christianity, or it may be used as an opportunity to teach the true spirituality of the cross as St. Paul attempted to do at the Areopagus while also showing the errors of this New Age false mysticism.

Finally, in the name of orthodoxy some Lutherans have played down the role of the *unio mystica* and sanctification for fear that it will lead to pietism. In actuality this conclusion originates in Ritschlian rationalism and has caused many to look in new places for a biblical teaching that already existed in the Lutheran church. In fact this false conclusion has caused many to stray into other denominations and cults in order to satisfy longings for mystery and communion. Fears of pietism and an overemphasis on sanctification do have merit. Yet anyone knows that if parents are reluctant to provide information to their children when they desire it, it will result in the child learning the information somewhere else. Often they will also obtain a skewed view of the subject matter. Especially in a time like the present when many in the world are seeking spirituality, one ought to address this dogma scripturally and accurately. In addition, some so-called "Confessional" Lutherans have essentially denied any real sanctification and see the Christ *in nobis* (in us) as the new man. These individuals have a corrupt view of the mystical union and deny the biblical notion of progression in sanctification.



In view of the previous points, this thesis has chosen to address the *unio mystica* and its relation to theosis. Although some polemics are involved in all true confessions, this paper desires to instruct and edify. The purpose of this thesis is to systematically present the biblical foundation of this dogma and to demonstrate how the true church has maintained this dogma in her writings. After the exegetical-dogmatic presentation, a polemical, historical, and practical section will follow. In a time when extremes are in vogue, this paper desires to return to the Scriptures (*ad fontes*) and to avoid the swinging of the pendulum once more.

## **II. Exegetical-Dogmatic Study of the *Unio Mystica***

This portion of the thesis will establish the biblical foundation of the mystical union and theosis. It will also provide patristic witnesses to this dogma from the early church on through modern Lutheranism. The purpose of this *consensus patrum* is by no means meant to determine dogma. Rather the goal of these patristic citations is to show the perspicuity of Scripture by demonstrating the single clear interpretation of the presented passages from geographically and historically diverse theologians.

### **A. Unions between God and Man**

There are two distinct unions between God and man. There is the general union (*unio generalis*) and there is the special union (*unio specialis*). The special union may be further divided into two parts. There is the gracious union (*unio gratiosa*) and there is the glorious union (*unio gloriosa*) (Chemnitz. TNC. 74-75, 108-110; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 329). The mystical union (*unio mystica*) is represented by the special union and can be equated with it. However there are two different aspects of the special union or the mystical union that will be explained. The special union or the mystical union is also distinct from the personal union (*unio personalis*). The personal union is a union between the divine and human nature of Christ which only Christ has or will experience.

The general union (*unio generalis*) refers to God's presence in all creation by virtue of His omnipresence. The Scriptural basis for this union is found in Acts 17:28 where St. Paul addresses the philosophers in Athens. St. Luke writes: *For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'* Demonstrating the same point the Psalmist writes: *Psalm 139:8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in sheol, behold, You are there.* In addition Jeremiah 23:24 and Isaiah 6:3 speak to the *unio generalis*. This union occurs in believers and unbelievers alike. Johann Quenstedt makes the following exegetical remark with respect to this union, "The general union of all men with the substance of God the creator is indicated in Acts 17:28, where the preposition 'in' expresses the general presence of God with men" (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 614; Schmid. DTELC. 484). Nevertheless this union does not communicate grace to man but rather is part of divine providence. The Lutheran Confessions make reference to this union with respect to the person of Christ which it calls Christ's repletive mode (FC SD VII, 101). Although the complete person of Christ is present in this union, the Lutheran Confessions distinguish it from Christ's presence in the Eucharist (illocal mode of presence) which conveys grace. The ancient church and the medieval church were not oblivious to this teaching and attest to it in the following remarks. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "For who, when he takes a survey of the universe, is so simple as not to believe that there is Deity in everything, penetrating it, embracing it, and seated in it" (Gregory of Nyssa. *The Great Catechism* 25; NPNF. Series 2. 5:495)? St. Ambrose of Milan writes, "For, indeed, God, Who is always present in every place, passes not from place to place" (Ambrose. *Of the Christian Faith*. 2.8; NPNF. Series 2. 10:231). Peter Lombard confirms this teaching by distinguishing it from the special presence or the mystical union and the particular presence or the personal union (Lombard. *Sententiarum*. 1.37).

Even though the gracious union and the glorious union may be categorized under the special union or mystical union, they are distinct from each other in degree. The gracious union (*unio gratiosa*)

occurs in all who have been reborn and justified. In this union the substance of God dwells in man, but God's substance does not mix or become confused with the substance of man. This union also communicates infused grace (*gratia infusa*) to man. Thus it is distinct from the general union which takes place in all things and which is not operative (Chemnitz. TNC. 247). The gracious union is distinct from the glorious union in that it occurs on earth prior to judgment day. For this reason, the gracious union does not communicate the culmination of the grace of God which will only be experienced on the last day (Hollaz. *Examen*. 933).

The glorious union (*unio gloriosa*) is a union of the substance of God and the substance of man that does not mix but which still forms a real union. This union is distinct from the general union for it only occurs in the elect from the last day on into eternity. This union is distinct from the gracious union in that illumination does not occur via the means of grace. Furthermore the gracious union is but a foretaste of the glorious union where man will experience the fullness of God's grace (Hollaz. *Examen*. 933). David Hollaz summarizes these two unions with their *sedes doctrinae* included:

The special union is partly "a gracious one, in the Church Militant, whereby God dwells in the regenerate by His substantial presence, and operates in them by His special concurrence, John 14:23; 17:11, 21" and partly a "glorious one, in the triumphant assembly of the elect, whereby God fills and delights the elect with the plenitude of His grace. I Cor. 15:28." (Hollaz. *Examen*. 933; Schmid. DTELC. 484).

## **B. Definition of the *Unio Mystica* and its Causation**

In order to discuss the *unio mystica* in further detail it is only appropriate that a definition be established for this dogma. The following is a very suitable definition from Johann Quenstedt, the librarian of Wittenberg.

The mystical union is the real and most intimate conjunction of the substance of the Holy Trinity and the God-man Christ with the substance of believers, effected by God Himself through the Gospel, the Sacraments, and faith, by which, through a special approximation of His essence, and by a gracious operation, He is in them, just as also believers are in Him; that, by a mutual and reciprocal

immanence they partake of His vivifying power and all His mercies, become assured of the grace of God and eternal salvation, and preserve unity in the faith and love with the other members of His mystical body (Quenstedt. *Theologia* III, 622; Schmid. DTELC. 482).

Now that a working definition has been established for the *unio mystica*, its causation will be presented.

The following break down of causation has its origin in Abraham Calov's *Systema Locorum*

*Theologicorum*, Johann Quenstedt's *Theologia Didactico-Polemica Sive Systema Theologicum*, and

David Hollaz's *Examen Theologicum Acromaticum* (Calov. *Systema*. X, 505-508; Quenstedt. *Theologia*.

III, 614-633; Hollaz. *Examen*. 935-946). The following outline of causation will be further expanded

throughout the exegetical-dogmatic section of this thesis. The *causa formalis* or form of the union is

defined as follows:

The form (of the mystical union) is a union (*conjunctio*) with God, not relative but true, not purely extrinsic but intrinsic, not through a bare positioning but through an intimate emanation, not only the operation of grace alone but likewise of a divine substance caused by an approximation to faith with a mystical περιχώρησι, nearer to a commixture or an essential transformation of man (Calov. *Theologia Positiva*. Cap. VIII. Thes. III. 503).

The *terminus* or point of the union is to be one mystical object with Him, by which we are certainly made one spirit with God. The *causa efficiens* or efficient cause of the *unio mystica* is the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The *extrema* or the two parts of this union are the total substance of the Holy Trinity with the human nature of Christ and the substance of man according to his body and soul. Therefore believers are called the *subjectum* (subject) of divine inhabitation and union with God. The *causa impulsiva* or the impelling cause is twofold. The internal impelling cause is that God is joined with the regenerate in a mystical bond of union through a special internal love by which He completes them. The external impelling cause is Christ according to both natures and His merits (*causa meritosa*) with which He causes true faith (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 617). The *causa instrumentalis* or means (*media*) of this union are twofold. The means on the part of God are the means

of grace: the Word, Baptism, and the Eucharist. The means on the part of man so to speak is faith yet this means or *οργανον ληπτικον* is also imparted by God. For this reason faith is not a work of man but a gift of God by which he is able to receive grace. The *finis* or goal is that God complete our gracious fullness and maintain us at every point to our glorious fullness. David Hollaz writes:

The *finis* of the mystical union is ultimately eternal life. The intermediate *finis* and effects are various: communion with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, the certainty of faith, of divine aid, of effective comfort, of provoked requests and favorable listening of them (these requests), preservation in a state of grace from which is born persistence of faithfulness, sanctification, seal of the future glory of the resurrection and of the heavenly inheritance, union of the reborn between themselves and communion of the church (Hollaz. *Examen*. 944).

### C. The Nature of the *Unio Mystica*

What is the nature of the mystical union, or in other words what kind of union is the *unio mystica*? There have been a few different answers to this question. Some have been more biblical while others have been more philosophical or logical. The goal of this portion of this thesis is to describe the nature of the mystical union as biblically as possible and to refute false notions of it. To this end, one can go only as far as Scripture since human intelligence cannot fully comprehend the grandeur of this union. Where Scripture does not speak man can only behold with awe the mystery of God.

In order to discuss the following points the biblical form of the mystical union will be restated. “The form of the union consists in a true, real, intrinsic, and most close conjunction of the substance of the believer with the substance of the Holy Trinity and the flesh of Christ” (Hollaz. *Examen*. 938; Schmid. DTELC. 483). When this paper speaks of a real union, it means an actual communion between the substance of God and the substance of man. It is neither a mere operation of grace, nor a union where one substance changes into the other, nor a union resulting in a third substance. It is also not a verbal, intellectual, moral, or voluntary union but a real and actual communion. This Scriptural union will be fully discussed after the following false doctrines about the nature of the union are refuted.

## 1. Reformed Theology: False Union

No patristic, medieval, reformation, or post-reformation theologian would deny that there is a union between God and man, although some modern scholars have rejected it. Nevertheless some have denied a real union by claiming the mystical union is something similar to a moral union or a union of wills. An example of this would be Jean Calvin, the true father of Reformed theology and Francis Turretin, the arch-theologian of Genevan Orthodoxy.

Calvin and Turretin's denial of a real union originates in the *axiom: finitum non est capax infiniti* (the finite is not capable of the infinite). This philosophical deduction led both to deny the *genus maiestaticum*, the true sacramental union, and a real mystical union. Subsequently the Reformed did not object only to part of the *genus maiestaticum* as the Scholastics did, rather they rejected any communication of divine attributes to the human nature (Turretin. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. 2:322-332). Since the human nature is not capable of the infinite, the whole undivided person of Christ cannot truly reside within the Eucharist or the faithful in the mystical union (Calvin. *Institutes*. 4.17.30; 4.17.31-32). This division within the person of Christ based upon the axiom; *finitum non est capax infiniti*, is also referred to as *extra Calvinisticum*. It is best defined as: "after the incarnation, the eternal Son of God had His existence also beyond the flesh which would divide the person of Christ" (Willis. *Calvin's Catholic Christology*. 9).

Unfortunately many in history have questioned the presence of Christ's human nature in the mystical union. But Calvin and Turretin's error is still greater, for both believe that a participation in a real union is a mixture in addition to their rejection of the presence of Christ in the union. This is asserted since neither can conceive of the substance of God and the substance of man in a true communion apart from a mixture. The reason for this error is that Jean Calvin and Francis Turretin see all unions as a communication of essence. In other words, both believe that the essence of God is being

communicated to the believer altering man's substance into God rather than a communication of the gifts of God in a real union with the essence of God. For this reason wherever they see a participation (κοινωνία) in a real biblical union, they reject it as a mixture even though a participation by definition requires two parts that are in communion and yet remain two distinct substances. This bias is made quite clear in Calvin's commentary on II Peter 1:4. Since he cannot permit a real union, he alters the meaning of Scripture (nature to quality), and claims that the real union supported by Scripture would be Manichean, destroying the substances of God and man. In this instance one can see Calvin's logic getting the better of his exegesis. Ironically Turretin states that the mystical union is "essential (ουσιωδός)," but then assert the same argument that Calvin's poses in the following commentary negating his original assertion (Turretin. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. 2:180, 2:324).

But the word *nature* is not here essence but quality. The Manicheans formerly dreamt that we are a part of God, and that, after having run the race of life we shall at length revert to our original. There are also at this day fanatics who imagine that we thus pass over into the nature of God, so that his swallows up our nature. Thus they explain what Paul says, that God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28) and in the same sense they take this passage. But such a delirium as this never entered the minds of the holy Apostles; they only intended to say that when divested of all the vices of the flesh, we shall be partakers of divine and blessed immortality and glory, so as to be as it were one with God as far as our capacities will allow (Calvin. *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*. 371).

This bias is also confirmed in Calvin's condemnation of Andreas Osiander (Calvin. *Institutes*. 3.11.10). Although Jean Calvin was correct when he rejected Osiander's view of justification, his additional condemnation of a real mystical union as a mixture has its origins in his Nestorian Christology. As a result of Calvin's philosophical speculation, not only the mystical union is destroyed, but even the person of Christ is compromised. Such a Christology can destroy the faith.

Why are the Reformed wrong? The reason that a real union must be affirmed is simply because Scripture affirms it. St. John the Theologian writes:

*John 17:21-26 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. 22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. 24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. 25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; 26 and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them."*

St. Paul concurs in 1 Corinthians 6:17: *But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

Again the Apostle writes:

*Ephesians 3:17-19 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

## **2. Byzantine Theology: Apophatic Theology and the Essence-Energy Distinction**

Apophatic theology (*via negativa*) or negative theology is based on the principle that God will always transcend man's being and comprehension. Such a concept is evident in the Scriptures which affirm that man will not understand God in a comprehensive manner. An example of biblical negative theology would be God's answers to Job concerning His treatment of Job. Likewise the Lord permitted Moses only to see His hind parts when Moses asked for a glimpse of His glory, since a fuller knowledge of God would consume him (Exodus 33:18-23). I Timothy 6:16 is also often cited in favor of negative theology. *Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.* The first chapter of Sirach develops this proper understanding of the transcendence of God as well.

At the same time, negative theology must not become an end in itself since the Father sent His only-begotten Son for salvation which allows man to have a limited yet sufficient knowledge of God.



The Lord also manifests Himself in this world via His means of grace. Although biblical apophatic theology affirms that God eternally transcends man, it does not contradict the incarnation or the means of grace by which God reveals Himself to man for salvation and much more. Nor does it contradict the beatific vision in heaven. In other words, if the *via negativa* is taken out of its biblical context and if it determines that everything which defines creator and created must be treated unequivocally, the result would be that nothing can really be known of God even by analogy. This observation is noted by John Duns Scotus. Nevertheless Scotus strayed in his demand that the relationship between the attributes of God and man needs to be defined as equivocal. Biblical Theology holds with Thomas Aquinas an analogical approach to this relationship (Isaiah 49:15; Luke 11:13; Quenstedt. *Theologia*. I, 422; Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. I, 432).

In church history apophatic or negative theology sometimes took on elements of Neoplatonism that was contrary to Scripture. At times Pseudo-Dionysius' use of negative theology had this tendency which Martin Luther criticized (Luther. W2. V, 768). An example of Dionysian negative theology would be to say that true knowledge comes only via unknowing or that God is super-essence since essence would limit God (Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works*. 54, 96). In fact the English word "definition" comes from its Latin counterpart which means "to set limits" (*de finis*). For this reason all application of words to the Godhead is fraught with danger since God is limitless. Patristic Greek theology often used such negative terms to speak of God so that the divine would not be circumscribed or hindered in any way. Such a theology is good in that it does not try to pry into the hidden mind of God. It is dangerous when it compromises what God clearly tells us about Himself in His Word.

In eastern Christendom the question of how man participates in the divine was complicated by Pseudo-Dionysius' interpretation of negative theology (Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works*. 49-50, 73, 105-109, 150 [Pseudo-Dionysius' view of apophatic theology was so influential in Eastern

Christendom and to a somewhat large degree in the west because he was believed to be the disciple of St. Paul Acts 17:34]). Although the Greek fathers maintained a union of substances and generally held to the presence of Christ's humanity in the mystical union, the medieval Byzantine theologians began to question the nature of this union due to Dionysian apophatic theology (cf. Athanasius. PG. 26: 104-4; Oecumensius in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 560). An example of a Greek father that affirms the presence of the substance of God in man is St. Cyril of Alexandria. St. Cyril says in his *Commentary on St. John*, "Hence we must understand that Christ is in us not only through love, but also by participation in our nature,' that is, He is present not only with His efficacy but also with His substance" (Melanchthon. *Loci Communes* 1543. 147). Most likely the reason the majority of the Greek fathers did not question a real union of two substances was that the pseudo author of the *Corpus Dionysicum* did not exist until around the early 500s. In addition other factors led the Byzantine Greeks to question a real union. Thus Dionysian theology by itself did not always compel one to question a real union. In fact at times Dionysius can be understood to confuse the substance of God and the substance of man in his interpretation of the *unio mystica*.

When the Byzantine Greeks under the direction of Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) explored the implications of negative theology due to a controversy over the nature of the mystical union, they concluded that man cannot participate in the essence or substance of God (Palamas. *Triads*. 60-66, 74-5, 80-1, 93-111). The reason for this assertion was that Palamas believed it would destroy the transcendence of God and that the essence of God would be communicated to man. His solution to the problem was that man participated in the energies of God. This is not to say that Palamas rejected a mystical union since in his system energies are the equivalent of uncreated grace or light beaming from the divine nature. In other words energies are posited as truly divine yet in some sense distinct from the essence of God (Williams. *Ground of Union*. 16). By affirming that energies were uncreated or divine,

Palamas affirmed a “real” union yet a union that was distinct from a union with the essence of God (Palamas. *Triads*. 20-22). Uncreated energies also had to be communicated to truly deify man, since according to Palamas created things cannot impart divinity (Palamas. *Triads*. 105). By affirming that saving grace is an uncreated energy, Greek theology has maintained that man is saved via a Byzantine notion of infused grace that is something like the substance of God but distinct from it. Furthermore God’s attribute of omnipresence is somewhat problematic for Gregory Palamas, because of his essence-energy distinction. Although Palamas’ essence-energy distinction may seem like an innovation, it does have its origins in St. Basil’s letters (Basil. *Letter 234*; NPNF. Series 2. 8:274). St. John of Damascus makes a similar distinction. However the essence-energy distinction that both these Greek fathers make is distinct from the Palamite use. The greatest obstacle to Palamas’ solution according to him was II Peter 1:4 which maintained that man participated in the divine essence (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως). Palamas studied this word “essence” (φύσεως) and concluded that this word was being used in one of its other senses (Meyendorff. *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. 178). At times it seems that Palamas may acknowledge a union of two substances where the divine communicated uncreated energies to the believer (Palamas. *Triads*. 39). According to this view the terms union and communication were being confused due to a difference in semantics. Nevertheless all of his remarks about the absolute transcendence of the divine essence seem to reject such a real union. For this reason it is usually taught that Gregory Palamas confessed a union with the divine energies of God which also communicated uncreated energy to the faithful.

Although Palamas’ mystical union appears to have at least small patristic warrant, it contradicts Scripture. To claim that God’s transcendence would be compromised by a real union implies that a real union could exist only if either the substance of God or man were destroyed. It is also an improper use of the analogy of faith to contradict a clear passage of Scripture. Even Dr. Martin Luther did not

contradict the clear meaning of James when he made his final conclusion concerning James' view of the function of works. It is truth that II Peter 1:4 is an *antilegomenon* passage and not the *sedes doctrinae* of the mystical union, yet there are many *homologoumena* passages which confirm a real union such as John 17:21-26, John 14:23-26, Romans 8:1, etc. Moreover if man can participate only in the energies of God, the hypostatic union of Christ may also come into question. Gregory Palamas' solution to this problem is that the personal union is distinct from the mystical union although he virtually seems to equate the structure of both of these unions (Palamas. *Triads*. 60, 89).

Lutheran theology on the basis of Scripture has affirmed a real union with God where the deity communicates grace and gifts to the believer. Lutherans have also taught a distinction between God's essence and his energies, attributes, or gifts. However this distinction is quite different from Palamas' essence-energy distinction, for Lutherans maintain that the substance of God is present in man. Yet God does not dwell idly in man but is operative, communicating grace and gifts to man. In this way, the *unio mystica* is distinct from the general union where God merely dwells in all things (Chemnitz. TNC. 247-248). Lutherans and the Greeks confess the two energies of Christ and the one energy of the Trinity (Chemnitz. TNC. 233-240). However this use of the term energy is distinct from the idea that Gregory Palamas is advocating. Lutherans also speak of other energies. Nevertheless the only uncreated energies spoken of in Lutheranism are Triune God and His essential attributes.

### **3. Latin Medieval Theology: Simplicity of God and Created Grace**

The ancient Latin fathers, like their Greek counterparts, maintained a real union (Augustine. *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*. 110; NPNF. Series 1. 7:408). Although the medieval western church is not as clear on the nature of the mystical union, they also taught that a mystical union existed. But it was not until Scholasticism that the east and west really started to diverge in their thinking regarding the *unio mystica*. At this pivotal juncture particular eastern and western dogmas clashed

causing real division. The origin of these western teachings was the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and the other Scholastics who predate Gregory Palamas the prominent origin of the eastern teachings. The two chief dogmas of the western church that really militated against the essence-energy distinction of Palamas were: the simplicity of God (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.3; Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. I.3) and the doctrine of created grace (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I-II.110.2; Bonaventure. *Sententiarum*. II.26.1.3). Furthermore the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and their different interpretations were often the center of these controversies, causing further divisions.

St. John of Damascus also affirmed the simplicity of God, but the Greeks always felt the western notion of the simplicity of God (as opposed to the eastern notion) endangered the distinction of the persons in the Trinity (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 1.10-11; NPNF. Series 2. 9:12-13). When western theologians heard about the Byzantine essence-energy distinction, they believed the simplicity of God was in question and even charged the Greeks with confessing greater and inferior gods (Williams. *Ground of Union*. 14). Naturally the Greeks countered this charge by claiming the *filioque* also compromised the simplicity of God and that the western notion of simplicity endangered the distinction between the persons (Williams. *Ground of Union*. 14-16). The western dogma of created grace compelled the Byzantine Greeks to charge the medieval west with denying a real mystical union. The basis of this charge was that the Greeks felt uncreated grace or energies was the only way the west could affirm a real union, since a union with the essence of God was out of the question according to the Byzantine theology. Once again according to medieval Greek theology uncreated grace or energies are posited as truly divine, yet in some sense distinct from the essence of God.

Latin medieval theology and Scholasticism did not teach such a Byzantine energy-essence distinction, although many wrote that God is in all things as the cause of their being with respect to God's omnipresence (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.8.1; Bonaventure. *Breviloquium* I.5). This previous

statement concerning the presence of God may be understood correctly, namely, that God resides in all things according to His essence or it may be understood as something similar to the Byzantine distinction albeit via created grace which would be the basis of the union and what is communicated. The former is the customary understanding. St. John of Damascus, who was one of the most often cited fathers among the Scholastics, makes a similar statement. When Damascus asserts this, he means that although the essence of God dwells within man, essence is not communicated but the gifts of God. This is confirmed by his statement in book II chapter 13 of the *Orthodox Faith*.

The following are a few voices from the medieval church that seem to maintain a union of substances in the general union and therefore also in the mystical union. A few of the following citations speak exclusively to the mystical union. Speaking to God's omnipresence, Hugh of St. Victor confirms the real presence of God's essence in all things, the faithful included:

Now we are of the opinion and thus fully approve that it should be truly asserted much more soberly and fittingly that God substantially or essentially and properly and really is, and thus He is in everything whether by nature or by essence without definition of Himself, and in every place without circumscription, and in every time without mutability (Hugh of St. Victor. *On the Sacraments*. 1.3.17).

Anselm of Canterbury writes, "Therefore, since this nature does not exist only in a limited place or for a limited time, it is necessary that it exists everywhere and always, i.e., in every place and at every time" (Anselm. *Monologion*. 20; *Anselm of Canterbury*. I, 32). Bonaventure maintains the omnipresence of the "being" of God in his *Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum* (Bonaventure. *Sententiarum*. I.27.1.1-2). The Seraphic Doctor also affirms the fact that not only the gifts of God or grace are present in man but also the Holy Spirit Himself (Bonaventure. *Sententiarum*. I.14.2.1). Lombard affirms the presence of the essence of God in all things in his *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor* (Chemnitz. TNC. 424). Thomas Aquinas writes that God is in all things both by His presence and power which explains how "God is in all things as the cause of their being with respect to God's omnipresence" should be interpreted (Aquinas. *Summa*

*Theologica* I.8.3). John Duns Scotus writes, "I respond saying one being is infinite through essence, that is God" (Scotus. *Summa Theologica*. I,163).

It should be remembered that although the essence of God dwells within man in both the general and mystical union, the west taught grace was created in contradistinction to the east. Moreover created grace would not compromise the simplicity of God since it is created by nature. Thus it is clearly distinct from the essence of God. Why address God's omnipresence? The reason God's omnipresence is being addressed is that the nature of the union is the same in both the general union and the mystical union although they differ according to what is communicated. Thus if one affirms the omnipresence of the essence of God, one will rarely deny the presence of God's essence in the mystical union. This is not only biblical but also systematically logical. Since the Scholastics rarely allude to any order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) and usually treat only parts of the *ordo* sporadically under Christology and grace, it is difficult to get a systematic idea of their entire view of the mystical union. But it is certainly possible to find references to this dogma. As a result of neglecting most of the order of salvation, their systematic view of the *ordo* naturally became quite flawed, which is evident in the Roman doctrine of justification.

What about Dionysius' celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchy? Do not these two hierarchies between God and man nullify the presence of the essence of God in man? In other words, does not confessing Dionysius' assertion that man can have indirect access and contact only with the deity via the two hierarchies conflict with the presence of the essence of God in man or the *unio mystica*? It is true that those most influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius in the west, like the School of St. Victor and the Franciscans, confessed Dionysius' hierarchies which seem to conflict with a real union with the substance of God. Such an assertion for the necessity of the hierarchies found in Dionysius is evident in Bonaventure (Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. II.9). Ironically most of these theologians also confess the presence of God's essence in both the general union and mystical union apparently without

acknowledging that Dionysius' hierarchies and the mystical union seem to be mutually exclusive doctrines. An example of this also would be Bonaventure. Such an inconsistency salvaged the mystical union during this era, yet it may have also led a few to reject a real mystical union when the conflict was realized. Fortunately few seemed to address this discrepancy.

But did not most Scholastics reject the communication of omnipresence to Christ's human nature? If so, how can Latin medieval theology's versions of the mystical union be considered better than Reformed view? Latin medieval theology taught a modified view of the *genus maiestaticum* or the communication of certain divine attributes to the human nature. For example Thomas Aquinas wrote, "He hath given all things into His hands, in respect of His humanity, inasmuch as He is made Lord of all things that are in heaven and that are in earth" (Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*. (John 3:35) IV, 132; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). From this citation one can see that some of the schoolmen taught that the divine attribute of omnipotence is communicated to the human nature *in abstracto*. Even though the Scholastics questioned the communication of omnipresence to Christ's humanity, they categorically affirmed a real presence in the Eucharist, albeit transubstantiation.

Nevertheless if the Scholastics affirmed transubstantiation, they must have some notion of a communication of omnipresence, albeit flawed. Furthermore many were willing to say that the person of Christ could be omnipresent, although they often refrained from saying the humanity of Christ was omnipresent by virtue of the communication of omnipresence. Sometimes it seems that they were only rejecting that omnipresence was an essential attribute of the humanity of Christ. At other times it seems that it was much more than that.

What about the counter-reformation theologians? The two most notable representatives of this period would be Robert Bellarmine and Francisco Suarez, but only Bellarmine will be examined in this thesis. Bellarmine's denial of the communication of omnipresence seems worse than the worst of the



Scholastics and really seems to endanger a true mystical union. But this may be the result of reading his polemical literature. Nevertheless Bellarmine may have questioned the entire *genus maiestaticum* on the basis of the axiom: *finitum non est capax infiniti*, although he also maintained transubstantiation (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. 2:119, 125-126, 132, 183). Therefore Bellarmine's mystical union seems to be better than the Reformed but worse than the schoolmen's union.

Although a few medieval Latin theologians rejected any union of essences for a union of wills or grace (e.g., St. Bernard, although he seems to teach a union of substances elsewhere), most had a real idea of the participation in the nature of God, albeit flawed, since they rejected the absolute presence of Christ's human nature in the mystical union (Bernard. *The Works of Bernard*. IV, 437). In addition certain theologians contradicted themselves via their affirmation of Dionysius' hierarchies. For this reason the medieval Latin view of the mystical union is superior to the Reformed and medieval Byzantine view, although inferior to the ancient fathers and Lutheranism. One may never really know what some of the Scholastics really thought. Nevertheless there was a small minority that seemed to maintain a real mystical union without any of the aforementioned problems of the Scholastics. One such individual is St. Anselm of Canterbury. "For this purpose our God is made our brother, that He Himself be considered worthy to commune with our humanity, so we are taught to be communers of His divinity" (Anselm. *De. Exc. Virg. Mar.* XII; Calov. *Systema*. X, 517). By means of Anselm's use of the term "divinity" which is equal with the essence of God, Abraham Calov shows that at least some of the Scholastics taught a union of substances (Calov. *Systema*. X, 517). This citation is quite important, since Anselm does not appear to hold to Pseudo-Dionysius hierarchies nor the Christological error of the other Scholastics.

Now this may seem fairly esoteric and typical of medieval theology, yet this discussion has merit. Lutheran theology has maintained the simplicity of God on the basis of Scripture which affirms

God's transcendence (CA I, 3; Chemnitz. TNC. 34, 42; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 304). This does not mean "simple" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century American sense, but that ultimate divine perfection can exist only in true simplicity. Lutheran theology never allowed the simplicity or the transcendency of God to cloud clear passages of Scripture which indicate the presence of the essence of God in all things. The nature of the presence of Christ's humanity in the mystical union will be taken up later in this thesis. The question over the nature of grace has never really been fully dealt with in Lutheran theology. However there are some implications found in Lutheran writings. It is important to remember that Lutheran theology distinguishes between *gratia imputata* (imputed grace) and *gratia infusa* (infused grace). It rejected essential or uncreated righteousness as salvific in the Osiandrian Controversy, affirming imputed grace was forensic (FC SD III). But it affirmed the presence of God's essence in the mystical union and sanctification. Thus it would seem the *gratia imputata* is created, otherwise forensic justification would be destroyed. *Gratia infusa* is created if it is distinct from actual presence of God or is uncreated if it is the presence of God. This discussion will be taken up in detail under the nature of grace.

#### 4. **Contra Μεταουσία or Συνουσία**

What kind of union is the mystical union? Some have spoken of an *unio substantialis* (union of substance). The term *unio substantialis* is used in two ways. The first is a union of two substances which either changes the one into the other (μεταουσία or a *transsubstantiatio*) or produces a new substance (συνουσία or a *consubstantiatio*). No matter which way one takes it, one will still end up with only one substance. A μεταουσία would imply man's substance changes into the substance of God, a change resulting in the destruction of the human nature. A συνουσία would suggest that the substance of man and the substance of God join, forming a new substance that is neither divine nor human. The result of either view would inevitably be a denial of the resurrection of the body and pantheism. Both of these concepts cannot exist and are clearly refuted by Scripture (cf. Calov. *Biblia Illustrata*. II, 1536). For

instance Scripture equates the mystical union with a *κοινωνία* or a communion. The following are three such passages. *I Corinthians 1:9* God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship (*κοινωνίαν*) of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *I John 1:3* that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship (*κοινωνία*) with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. *II Peter 1:4* by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature (*ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως*), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. In order to be partakers or to be in communion, two things must exist and stay in existence, since a *κοινωνία* has two parts by definition. If the two objects cease to be two, then no communion or fellowship can exist. Nicolaus Hunnius makes a similar argument for the Real Presence in his *Epitome Credendorum*.

St. Paul writes concerning the blessed bread: “It is a communion (*Gemeinschaft*) of the body of Christ” (I Cor. 10:16). Now it is well known where a communion is, there must be at least two things: one of the two is that which has communion with the other and the other of the two is that which is in communion. For this reason one of the two must be bread that has communion with the body of Christ and other of the two is the body of Christ concerning which is called a communion of bread (Hunnius. *Glaubenslehre*. 335).

In Job chapters 38-41, God rebukes Job for his laments against God. During this conversation, God points out to Job that he has no basis to challenge God since he is not God. David Hollaz states: “Paul teaches that Christ and believers being mystically united remain distinct persons, Gal. 2:20” (Hollaz. *Examen*. 939; Schmid. DTELC. 486). His argument is based upon Galatians 2:20 which speaks of an intimate communion but one where the “Christ” and “I” in this passage never cease to exist. In so doing Hollaz points out that Paul says Christ lives in him and not that he is Christ. *Galatians 2:20* “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. The sainted Martin Chemnitz provides further exegetical insight:

In Gal. 2:20 Paul says: “ I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”; and in I Cor.

15:10, "I labored more than all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." This can be explained and understood simply and plainly by the fact that in Paul there is a human nature and also a divine nature which dwells in him, but these two natures in Paul do not constitute one hypostasis (ὕφιστάμενον). Nor does the person of Paul thereby consist of two natures, the divine and human; nor does it subsist at the same time in the divine and human natures. For Paul is and remains a person distinct from the person of the Holy Spirit, even though he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. But in Christ the divine and the human natures are so united that they form one hypostasis (ὕφιστάμενον), that is, one person of the incarnate Christ, which consists of the divine and human nature and subsists at the same time in the divine and human nature which have been joined together and united hypostatically (ὕφιστατικῶς) or personally in an inseparable union and perpetual association (Chemnitz. TNC. 78).

St. John the Theologian makes the same point by teaching that God dwells within the believer, but that the believer and God never mix substances nor become one substance. *John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.* John 17:22-24 and Ephesians 3:17-19 also speak of a union where God and man become one but do not cease to be God and man. As with communion, inhabitation implies two distinct objects are joined in a union. If the two cease to be two or if the two form a μεταουσία or συνουσία, there is no inhabitation or communion by definition.

Dr. Luther rejected μεταουσία and συνουσία by condemning certain mystics who taught a union that resulted in one substance (Luther. W2. XVII, 385). Luther writes using theosis language, "We who are flesh are made Word not by being substantially changed into the Word, but by taking it on (*assuminus*) and uniting it to ourselves by faith, on account of which we are said not only to have but even to be the Word" (Luther. WA. 28:25-32, 39-41). The Golden Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy and High Orthodoxy were very careful to point out that the distinction between God and man remains even in the mystical union. Martin Chemnitz, Polykarp Leyser, and Johann Gerhard explain this distinction in their exegesis of the transfiguration.

For this is our highest hope, that already our flesh, the same essence with us, sits in Christ at the right hand of God partaking of divine majesty and glory. And just as we believe in the resurrection of the flesh where we will again walk around with our own skin and will see God in our own flesh, Job 19:26: so also we know

that we will then become like Christ, Rom. 8:29, Phil. 3:21, however our substance will not change but rather we will receive a similar countenance (like Christ)" (Chemnitz. et.al. *Harmonie*. 24).

The Silver Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy strongly refuted any notion of μεταουσία and συνουσία as is evident in Johann Quenstedt:

This union does not consist in *transubstantiation*, or conversion of our substance into the substance of God and Christ, or *visè versa*, as the rod of Moses was converted into a serpent. Nor in *consubstantiation*, so that of two united essences there is formed one substance (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 624; Schmid. DTELC. 485).

If the mystical union is not a μεταουσία or συνουσία, then why does Holy Scripture say, "You are gods (John 10:34)?" Addressing the hypostatic union, Nicolaus Hunnius provides an answer to this question in his comments on John 1:14 (Hunnius. *Glaubenslehre*. 335). If St. John can say, "the Word became flesh" without destroying the two natures, then he can also say, "you are gods" without destroying the nature of God and the nature of man. Both of these statements do not destroy the two substances, rather these statements are used to show just how intimate the unions are. As "the Word became flesh" does not mean Christ ceased to be God, likewise "you are gods" does not mean man ceases to be human. The *Formula of Concord* uses the same analogy with respect to the Eucharist (FC SD VII, 35-38). However, this analogy is not meant to imply the personal union (*unio personalis*) and the mystical union are the same thing. God's "deified flesh" and "*Gott selbst ist tot*" (God Himself is dead) are similar expressions, because in both of these expressions Christ's divinity and humanity never cease to exist. Antiquity confirms this exegesis in the following remark by St. Augustine of Hippo:

The rest that are made gods, are made by His own Grace, are not born of His Substance, that they should be the same as He, but that by favor they should come to Him, and be fellow-heirs with Christ. For so great is the love in Him the Heir, that He hath willed to have fellow-heirs (Augustine. *On the Psalms*. 40; NPNF; Series 1. 8:178).

## 5. Lutheran Theology: Scriptural *Unio Mystica*

*Unio substantialis* is used in two ways. The first understanding of the term *unio substantialis* (union of substance) has already been refuted under the previous heading. There is a second way of understanding *unio substantialis* that can be understood correctly. The second usage of the term *unio substantialis* refers to a union of two substances that always remain two substances similar to colloidal suspension. Since *unio substantialis* (union of substance) can be confusing to use, *unio substantiarum* (union of substances) is preferred to bring out the meaning of the second usage of *unio substantialis*.

What kind of union is the mystical union or what is its form? Johann Quenstedt writes, "The form of the union consists in a true, real, intrinsic, and most close conjunction of the substance of the believer with the substance of the Holy Trinity and the flesh of Christ. It does not consist alone in a harmony of wills nor does it consist in grace alone" (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. II, 623). Rather it is actually an intimate union of two natures or substances, an *unio substantiarum* (Dannhauer. *Hodosophia*. Phaen. IX, 437). It is called a mystical union on the basis of Ephesians 5:32: *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church*. It is referred to as a spiritual union on the basis of I Corinthians 6:16-17 since it is not brought about in a carnal or corporeal manner, but in a spiritual and supernatural way by the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate (Dannhauer. *Hodosophia*. Phaen. IX, 437; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 530). Moreover the terms, spiritual and supernatural, do not imply a rejection of a union of substances. In addition, the *terminus* or point of the union is to be one mystical object with God, by which we are certainly made one spirit with God.

The biblical notion of the *unio substantiarum* has already been shown from the false conceptions of the nature of the mystical union. Nevertheless it is the desire of this thesis to provide further Scriptural evidence for the *unio substantiarum* as the only legitimate view of the nature of the mystical union rather than just deductions made from other passages. The following are some of the *sedes doctrinae* for the *unio mystica*. St. John the Divine writes:

*John 17:21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

Again the Apostle writes: *I John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. St*

Paul states:

*Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Again St. Paul writes: *I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* For more passages that teach the mystical union confer John 14:23, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:9, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:13, etc. There are also some *antilegomena* passages which speak of the *unio mystica*. The following are two such passages. *II Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.*

The Lutheran Confessions have something to say about the mystical union. The *Formula of Concord* rejects the following statement in its *negativa*. "That not God Himself, but only the gifts of God dwell in believers" (FC Epit. III, 6). This statement affirms the doctrine of a communion between the substance of God and the substance of man. Again the *Formula of Concord* writes:

In the same way we must correctly explain the argument regarding the indwelling of the essential righteousness of God in us. To be sure, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells through faith in the elect, who have become righteous through Christ and are reconciled with God.

(For all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who move them to act properly.) However, this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith, which St. Paul treats (Rom. 1:17, 3:5, 22, 25, II Cor. 5:21) and calls *iustitia Dei* (that is, the righteousness of God), for the sake of which we are pronounced righteous before God. Rather, this indwelling is a result of the righteousness of faith which precedes it, and this righteousness is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of poor sinners by grace, only because of Christ's obedience and merit (FC SD III, 54).

The *Book of Concord* speaks about the mystical union in numerous places: CA. III: 4-5; Apo. IV: 169-170; Apo. VII-VIII: 5; FC. Epit. VI: 5-6; FC. SD. III: 59, 65; FC. SD. VII: 63; FC. SD. VIII: 70; FC. SD. VIII: 78-79; FC. SD. VIII: 87; FC. SD. XI: 73-74 etc.

The ancient church taught an *unio substantiarum*. Most likely the earliest reference comes from St. Ignatius of Antioch who refers to the faithful as *Deiferos* (bearers of God) or *Spiritiferos* (bearers of the Spirit) in his *Epistle to the Ephesians* (Ignatius. *Epistle to the Ephesians.*; ANF. 1). This remark shows that two separate substances remain in a concrete union (Calov. *Systema*. X, 517). St. Irenaeus of Lyon confirms this dogma via the term fellowship or communion. "It is not possible to live apart from life, and the means of life is found in fellowship with God; but fellowship with God is to know God, and to enjoy His goodness" (Irenaeus. *Against the Heresies*. 4.20.5; ANF. 1:489). St. Augustine of Hippo writes in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*.

And accordingly, though the Father and Son, or even the Holy Spirit, are in us, we must not suppose that they are of one nature with ourselves. And hence they are in us, or we are in them, in this sense, that they are one in their own nature, and we are one in ours. For they are in us, as God in His temple; but we are in them, as the creature in its Creator (Augustine. *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*. 110; NPNF. Series 1. 7:408).

Again the bishop of Hippo writes

Therefore if He Himself is the Selfsame and cannot in any way be changed, by participating in His divinity we too shall be made immortal in eternal life, and this pledge has been given to us by the Son of God...that before we should be made partakers of His immortality, He should Himself first be made a partaker of our mortality. For just as He was made mortal, not of His substance but of ours, so we shall be immortal, not of our substance but of His (Augustine. *Enar. in Ps. 146*).



St. Jerome also teaches an *unio substantiarum* where the two substances remain distinct in the bond of grace (Jerome. *Against Jovinianus*. 2.29; NPNF. Series 2. 6:401).

Some have said that Martin Luther rejected the fact that God dwells in man according to His essence. This is based upon a misunderstanding of Luther's critique of Osiander's sermon which was delivered in Schmalkalden (1537) and was recorded in the *Tischreden* by his followers.

Many sects will still arise and Osiander will start one of them, for that fellow can do nothing but criticize others... In Smalcald I preached on a text from the Epistles of John in which it stated that Christ dwells in us through faith and grace, works in us, and defends and saves us. Just as I fell ill he (Osiander) rebuked me openly, though not my name, in the presence of all the learned men. Christ, he said, dwells in us essentially, etc. Everybody was annoyed by this, especially Brenz (Luther. W2. 22, 679-680; Luther. LW. 54, 382-383).

By saying this Luther did not reject the fact that God dwells in man in His essence, rather both Luther and Brenz are rejecting that man is saved on the basis of Christ's essential righteousness. This has been misunderstood by some to mean that Luther denied the mystical union. To the contrary Martin Luther states, "Thus the true Spirit does not only dwell in believers through His gifts, but according to His essence (*substantiam*)" (Luther. W2. V, 574). Johannes Brenz writes, "God lives in Christ essentially, in this manner He also lives in Peter and Paul" (Brenz. *Christologische Schriften*. I, 123). It is important to remember that the *Tischreden* was assembled by individuals who sat at Luther's table. As a result it may not be Dr. Luther verbatim and even if it is Luther word for word, it is a well-known fact that he can tend to overstate the case. For this reason the second quoted citation of Dr. Luther is to be preferred since it originates in his commentary on the Psalms where he would speak more carefully. If there is still any doubt as to Martin Luther's conviction that the substance of God is in man via the mystical union, the following quote should end all debate.

As now one indivisible person is made in Christ, who is God and man, so becomes out of Christ and us one body and flesh that we are not able to separate, for His flesh is in us and our flesh is in Him that He is also essentially dwelling

within us etc. However this is another union than a personal union which is not as high and great as the (personal) union because Christ, true man is eternally God with the Father and with the Holy Spirit (Luther. W2. VII, 2358-9).

Philipp Melanchthon quotes St. Cyril of Alexandria on this same point. “Cyril says in his commentary on John, “Hence we must understand that Christ is in us not only through love, but also by participation in our nature,” that is, He is present not only with His efficacy but also with His substance” (Melanchthon. *Loci Communes* 1543. 147). Aegidius Hunnius and Balthazer Mentzer assert a union of substances in their works (cf. Calov. *Systema*. X, 519). Martin Chemnitz confirms the presence of God’s essence in man and distinguishes it from the grace operative in this union.

The Word of God teaches clearly that since God or the entire Trinity dwells graciously in the believers and saints, therefore He is not idle or present only in essence or without efficacy (ζῆνεν ἐνέργειας) toward them, leaving them wholly or merely in their natural condition, but rather that He is operative in the believers with His divine activity or efficacy (ἐνέργεια) and that He accomplishes in them many different supernatural works and things contrary to nature, as the Scholastics say (Chemnitz. TNC. 247).

Johann Gerhard writes, “Thus God is present in all creatures by means of His infinite essence, while with His own essence He unites Himself with the pious by means of even a drawing near of His essence. In these ones therefore it is said that He inhabits and enlivens” (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 330).

*Consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae* a document that almost become symbolic for all Lutherans and may have been written by Abraham Calov clearly affirms a union of substance against Calixistus who denied the presence of the substance of God in man (Henke. *Inest theologorum Saxoniorum consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae*. 29) The sainted Abraham Calov explains the *causa formalis* or the form of the union with the following words:

The form (of the mystical union) is a union (*conjunctio*) with God, not relative but true, not purely extrinsic but intrinsic, not through a bare positioning but through an intimate emanation, not only the operation of grace alone but likewise of a divine substance caused by an approximation to faith with a mystical περιχώρησις, nearer to a commixture or an essential transformation of man (Calov. *Theologia Postiva*. l. c. Chap. VIII. Thes. III. p. 503, Hoenecke. Dogmatik. III, 411).

This statement may seem very strong and bordering on a false notion of the *unio substantialis* but Abraham Calov is only trying to explain how real, true, and intimate this union actually is. A few lines before this citation is a statement where Calov categorically condemns any talk about μεταουσία or συνουσία as false doctrine. In reality, Abraham Calov is borrowing a Greek Christological term (περιχωρήσις or perichorsis meaning “interpenetration”) used by Luther to explain the sacramental union and even the mystical union via his “one cake” analogy (Saarinen. *The Presence of God in Luther’s Theology*. 7-8). The purpose of this term was to indicate that Holy Communion is a real union and that the substance of bread, body, wine, and blood still remain even in the sacramental union. Martin Luther also uses the concept of περιχωρήσις to describe the mystical union as one loaf (cf. Luther. W2. XI, 616). Martin Chemnitz points out that St. John of Damascus already employed this term to describe the biblical foundations for the *unio personalis* (personal union) indicating that Lutheranism was not innovating some new theology (Chemnitz. TNC. 100-101, 123; John of Damascus. PG. 94, 1001). On the basis of John 17:21-23, Adolf Hoenecke, one of the Synodical Conference fathers, implements the Christological term *durchdringen* or “interpenetrate” to describe the mystical union (Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. III, 410). These terms are not meant to say that the *unio mystica* is the same thing as the *unio personalis* (the personal union) or the *unio sacramentalis* (sacramental union). Their only purpose is to convey the reality of the union taught in the Holy Scriptures.

#### **6. Other Unions Distinct from the *Unio Mystica***

There are two other biblical unions that must be distinguished from the mystical union. First, there is the *unio personalis* (personal union). This union refers to the union between the divine nature and the human nature of Christ. The personal union is distinct from the mystical union in that it is a union of two natures that form one person. The mystical union is neither personal (in the theological sense) nor does it form one person (ὑφιστάμενον). Furthermore the human nature of Christ does not

“subsist in itself” (ἄνυπόστατον), but “subsists in something else” (ἐνυπόστατον) namely the personality of the preincarnate λόγος (Chemnitz. TNC. 31). In contradistinction to the mystical union, the humanity of Christ in the personal union also receives the divine characteristics or attributes of God as well as created gifts (FC SD VIII, 48-52). Man in the mystical union receives only created gifts (FC SD VIII, 48-52). The purpose of the personal union is the salvation of man, although it also functions as a cause and paradigm for the mystical union. The mystical union is the effect of Christ’s saving work which images or reflects the personal union although distinct by nature and purpose. Moreover the personal union has occurred only in the person of Christ.

In the following citation, Johannes Brenz explains some of the similarities and differences between the personal union and mystical union.

What is the difference between the humanity of Christ and all the saints as far as the indwelling of God is concerned? For God actually lives in the humanity of Christ, in this manner He lives also in Peter and Paul. God lives in Christ essentially, in this manner He also lives in Peter and Paul. God lives powerfully in Christ, in this manner He also lives in Peter and Paul, by virtue of the former passage. And further, God lives in Christ with manifold grace and gifts, in this way He also lives in Peter and Paul. In what way is the indwelling of God different? Thus it is also true, while God according to His essence is most simple, quite simple, undividable, thus He is everywhere where He is, whole and completely together. How than can He be different in Christ than in another man? Concerning this manner, the ancients have given this opinion. That God lives and is in the humanity of Christ not only actually, essentially, powerfully, and graciously as in the other saints, but also personally, namely that the Son of God, true, eternal God with humanity, which He assumed from Mary, thus has united (Himself with), however not that the divine nature is transformed into the human but out of God and man one undivided person has come into existence (Brenz. *Christologische Schriften*. I, 121)

In the next citation, Martin Chemnitz distinguishes the personal union from the general union and the mystical union by designating the personal union as personal and hypostatic.

For the presence of the Logos in the assumed flesh and in turn the presence of the assumed nature in the Logos (by and with the assuming divine nature) differs completely in kind from the presence in which either the Logos is present with other creatures or other creatures are present in the Logos. For the nature or form

of the hypostatic union does not consist only in the fact that the assumed nature is sustained, borne up, and nourished in the person of the Logos, but also in that the whole fullness, and not only a part of the deity of the Logos is united with the assumed nature, not in a way that it is entirely in the saints, but personally and forming one hypostasis (ὕφιστάμενον). And the assumed nature is attached to the complete fullness, not just to some portion of the deity of the Logos, somewhere, in a manner that a nail clings to a wheel, a planet to its orbit, a finger to the body, a city to a sea, or as a line touches a circle at only one point. But this union which took place was a personal one and formed one hypostasis (ὕφιστάμενον) (Chemnitz. TNC. 78).

The *Formula of Concord* distinguishes these two unions in FC SD VIII, 16, 34, 67-70. It should also be noted that the ancient church made a point of distinguishing the *unio mystica* and the *unio personalis* throughout their Christological writings as do the Lutheran fathers (e.g. Hesshusius. *Postilla*. 53-54). This is evident at the council of Chalcedon 451 A.D. (NPNF. Series 2. 14:243ff). Moreover St. Cyril of Alexandria points out that Nestorius' error was that he really confused the mystical union and the personal union.

For the fullness of the consubstantial Trinity dwells within us through the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul says: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells within you" (I Corinthians 3:16)? Indeed Christ Himself says: "If anyone loves me he will keep my Word and my father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). But neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit have ever been called a man because of the fact that they dwell within us. These people are making mockery of the mystery of the incarnation (Cyril of Alexandria. *On the Unity of Christ*. 96-97).

Second, there is a *unio sacramentalis* (sacramental union). This union takes place between the earthly elements and the heavenly elements of the Lord's Supper. This union is also different from the mystical union. The sacramental union is not meant to convey *gratia infusa* to bread and wine. Rather it is meant to transport *gratia imputata* (imputed grace) and *gratia infusa* to the recipient of the sacrament. Nevertheless the *unio sacramentalis* serves the mystical union in the following capacity. The sacramental union is the form of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a means or *causa instrumentalis* of the mystical union.

## D. Scriptural Pictures

The Scriptures make use of many pictures to describe and demonstrate the mystical union. In the Old Testament there are three prominent examples of the mystical union. The first is Song of Songs. This book of King Solomon depicts the mystical union as a relationship between a husband and wife. This picture symbolizes the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church or all believers. The second is recorded in Hosea 2:19-20. In this instance the inspired prophet uses the engagement picture. The third is the transfiguration of Moses upon Mt. Sinai. The New Testament also makes use of the marriage picture in Ephesians 5. St. John describes the mystical union with a vine and its branches. *John 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* St. Paul refers to the Christian as the temple of the Holy Spirit in which God dwells.

*I Corinthians 6:15-17 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

St. Paul also speaks of Christ as the head and the believers as His members. This analogy for the mystical union is found in *Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

The final picture is the transfiguration. Although the transfiguration is typically mentioned to illustrate the *genus maiestaticum*, Lutheran theology has pointed out the allusions to the mystical union and biblical theosis. In this instance, the mystical union in grace (*unio gratiosa*) is demonstrated by the awesome vision manifested to the disciples and the union in glory (*unio gloriosa*) by the transfigured appearance of Moses and Elijah. Here transfiguring light or energy shines forth from the deified flesh of

Christ (*genus maiestaticum*). This picture not only demonstrates the theosis of Christ's humanity (*genus maiestaticum*) but also the theosis of man (*unio gratiosa* and *unio gloriosa*).

*Luke 9:29-30, 33 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem...33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" - not knowing what he said.*

### **E. Union with Christ and the Trinity**

The *causa efficiens* or efficient cause of the *unio mystica* is the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The *extrema* or the two parts of this union are the total substance of the Holy Trinity with the human nature of Christ and the substance of man according to his body and soul. Thus believers are the *subjectum* (subject) of divine inhabitation and union with God.

Obviously man's whole human nature: body, soul, and will must be part of this union with the Triune God. Just as Christ did not come to save part of man, so Christ did not come to sanctify part of man. Moreover if Christ justifies and sanctifies only part of man, then the whole man is not justified and sanctified. Since Christ redeemed that which He assumed according to Scripture and Gregory of Nazianzus, our whole human nature must also participate in the divine nature (Gregory of Nazianzen. *Letter 101*; NPNF. Series 2. 8:220). For this reason, man's body, soul, and will are all being transformed awaiting their fullness on the last day.

The Lutheran dogmaticians recognized the mystical union is a union with the Holy Trinity and the person of Christ. However, Abraham Calov was the first to really make this a systematic distinction. In his *Systema Locorum Theologicorum*, he treats the union with the Trinity under one *locus* and the union with Christ under another *locus*. In the spirit of Abraham Calov, this paper will maintain this

distinction. The union with Christ will be treated first since mankind can have access to the divinity only through the human nature of Christ.

### 1. Union with Christ

The mystical union is a union with the person of Christ. Such a union with the Son is taught in the following passage by St. Paul.

*Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

This union with the Son is also taught in I Corinthians 6:15-17, Romans 8:1,9, John 14:23-26, I John 1:3, I Corinthians 1:9, John 17:21-25, Ephesians 2:13, Galatians 2:20, and Colossians 1:27. The personal union of Christ consists of two natures, one human and the other divine (I Timothy 3:16, I Timothy 2:5, John 1:14, and Colossians 2:9). It also consists of two wills, one divine and one human (Luke 22:42). The divine nature is of the same substance as the Father and the Spirit while the human nature is of the same substance as our human nature.

In the personal union two natures, human and divine, are inseparably united in Christ Jesus, for where Christ's divinity is, there is also His humanity (I Corinthians 15:27; Psalm 8:6; FC SD VIII, 77-84; Athanasius. *Concerning the Incarnation*. 17; NPNF. Series 2. 4:45; John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.27; NPNF. Series 2. 9:72). When the believer is in communion with Christ, he is in communion with both the human and the divine nature since the human and the divine nature are inseparable. Since this dogma has been contested by the Reformed, Roman Catholics, and many Scholastics the following citations are provided to show that this doctrine is both Scriptural and catholic. This teaching will be taken up again in the study of the theosis of Christ's humanity.

The Deity is clearly never outside of the humanity of Christ according to Colossians 2:9. The following passages attest to this teaching. *Ephesians 1: 22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and*



gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. Matthew 28:20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. John 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

St. John Chrysostom writes, "Are there many Christs just because He is offered in many places? By no means. Rather, there is one Christ everywhere, who is both completely here and completely there, as one body" (Chrysostom. *Homilies on Hebrews*. 17; NPNF. Series 1. 14:449; *Catalog of Testimonies*.

X). St. Leo the Great writes,

Each nature, indeed, expresses its true character by distinct modes of operation, but neither separates itself from its connection with the other; here neither is without the other in anything. But God has assumed the whole human being and thus united Himself to the latter and the latter to Himself, so that each nature is in the other and neither enters into the other without its own set of characteristics (Leo the Great. PL. 54:319; *Catalog of Testimonies*. IX).

Theophylact of Ochrid writes, "So that He might fill all things by ruling and performing His tasks, and so that He might do this in the flesh since already before this [the incarnation] He filled all things with His divinity" (Theophylact. PL. 124:1083; *Catalog of Testimonies*. IX). Furthermore one cannot confess with the council of Chalcedon and the fathers that Christ is undivided (ἀδιαιρέτως) while claiming that His body is not present with His divinity (*Symbolum Chalcedonense*; Schaff. *Creeds of Christendom*. II, 62). The following are Lutheran citations that acknowledge this dogma as well. "Because after the incarnation the Logos is not outside of the flesh nor is the flesh outside of the Logos, but insofar as it is

Logos it is united and in Himself subsists the hypostasis of the Logos" (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici* I, 544; cf. Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 216). "The form of the union consists in a true, real, intrinsic, and most close conjunction of the substance of the believer with the substance of the Holy Trinity and the flesh of Christ" (Hollaz. *Examen*. 938; Schmid. DTELC. 483). Abraham Calov concurs:

The mystical union of Christ with the believer is a true and real and most intimate conjunction of the divine and human nature of the theanthropic Christ and the regenerated man, which is effected by virtue of the merits of Christ through the Word and Sacraments, so that Christ constitutes a spiritual unit with the regenerated person, and operates in and through him, and those things which the believer does or suffers He appropriates to Himself, so that the man does not live, as to his spiritual and divine life, of himself, but by the faith of the Son of God, until he is taken to heaven (Calov. *Systema*. X, 526; Schmid. DTELC. 482-483).

Christ's presence in the mystical union is a specific mode of presence. It is true that different dogmaticians have varying modes for the person of Christ. But this is the result of grouping modes under one umbrella mode of presence. They would not deny any mode. One of the most useful listings of modes is the following. The modes of presence are circumscriptive (local), definitive (illocal), repletive (supernatural, *unio generalis*), sacramental, and *unio mystica* (cf. Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 177-184). Why mention these modes? It is important to keep in mind that in every mode the entire person of Christ, human and divine nature, is present. While Nicolaus Hunnius believes it is best not to talk about the divine nature of Christ being present in the Eucharist, he does not say the divine nature is categorically absent in the Eucharist or the sacramental mode (Hunnus. *Glaubenslehre*. 336). Hunnius should have been more careful and may even have erred, for one dare never separate the person of Christ. A better assessment of the Lord's Supper is offered by Joachim Luetkemann: "There Christ gives Himself to us completely for our own, His body, His spirit, His flesh, His blood and all, what he merited with it must be ours, yes His whole deity and humanity" (Luetkemann. *Vorschmack goettlicher Guete*. 429). Luetkemann's interpretation is also demanded by the *Formula of Concord* (FC SD VII,126). This dogma will be further discussed under the theosis of Christ's humanity.

Mankind has access to the divine only through the human nature of Christ. Through the person of Christ the believer has access to the Trinity (FC SD VIII, 87; Loeber. *Dogmatik*. 639). In other words, Christ's humanity allows mankind to have union with His divinity and the entire Trinity through the person of Christ. Mankind cannot approach God in His divinity. This cannot be stressed enough, for if Christ's body is absent in the mystical union, man cannot have access to the divinity, destroying the mystical union. For this reason it must be maintained that the incarnation is the basis of the mystical union or that the mystical union is predicated from the incarnation (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 707-8). In other words, apart from the *unio personalis* there can be no *unio mystica*.

This is not only logical but scriptural. *John 14:6* Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. Luther states, "Our ladder to God is He who descended to us. We have to begin our ascent in His humility and His humiliation" (Luther. WA. 2:493,12). Likewise the second Martin taught the following:

But [we teach that] because we have been so alienated through sin from the life of the Deity that our weakness cannot bear Him to be dealing in us except through a medium, therefore He assumed our nature in order that through that which is related to us and consubstantial with us the Deity might deal with us. And thus the humanity of Christ is the point of connection between us and God Himself, as Cyril says and as we shall demonstrate more fully later on in the book concerning the hypostatic union. Therefore, in order that we might be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain Him more firmly, not only did He Himself assume our nature but He also restored it again for us by distributing His body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with His humanity, which has been assumed for us and is again communicated back to us, He might draw us in communion and union with the deity itself (Chemnitz. *Lord's Supper*. 188).

Again Chemnitz writes:

Indeed since for us poor sinners there is no approach open to the bare divine majesty any more than for a blade of straw to a consuming fire, the divine nature of the Logos assumed a nature of the same substance with ours and akin to ours, in which He placed the whole fullness of the deity personally, so that in this object which is of the same substance with ours and akin to us we might know God, seek, and grasp Him. For in the flesh of Christ dwells the whole fullness of

the deity of the Son, and the Father is in the Son. We thus begin from the flesh of Christ and from their mount to communion with the entire Trinity. In John 1:4, 5:26, and 6:40 Christ teaches that He has life from the Father and that this life He has placed into the assumed flesh personally, so that we should seek that fullness from which we must receive all things in no other place than in the assumed nature of Christ (Chemnitz. TNC. 79-80).

## 2. Union with the Trinity

The mystical union is a union with the entire Trinity. The Holy Trinity refers to the three persons in one God (Matthew 28:19; Deuteronomy 6:4). The Triune God is one and yet has three persons. The Trinity has only one nature and is composed of only one substance. It is also composed of three persons but still has only one will. In the mystical union the believer communes with the one nature and substance of God. Each person of the Trinity is also in communion with the believer. In addition all the persons of the Trinity work together when God is in communion with the believer. One cannot have communion with only one person of the Trinity for this would destroy the Trinity *opera divina ad extra* or the economic Trinity (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. I, 416). It should also be noted that the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit were often proved in the Trinitarian and Christological debates by appealing to their part in the theosis of man (Athanasius. *Four Discourses against the Arians*. 2.70; NPNF. Series 2. 4:386; Gregory of Nazianzus. *Fifth Theological Oration: On the Holy Spirit*. 28; NPNF. Series 2. 7:327; Augustine. *On the Gospel of St. John*. 48:9-10; NPNF. Series 1. 7:269).

Holy Scripture teaches the Father and the Son are in communion with the believer in the following two passages. *I John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship (κοινωνίαν) with us; and truly our fellowship (κοινωνία) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship (κοινωνίαν) of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Likewise John 14:23-26 teaches a union where the Father and Son are present. A union with the Son has already been presented. Therefore only the following references will be cited: Ephesians 3: 17-19, I Corinthians 6:15-17, Romans 8:1,9, John

14:23-26, I John 1:3, I Corinthians 1:9, John 17:21-25, Ephesians 2:13, Galatians 2:20, and Colossians 1:27. The Holy Spirit is also included in this union. The following passages prove this to be true.

*Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.*

In addition, I Corinthians 6:15-19 shows that a communion with the Holy Spirit exists. Even the *Formula of Concord* stresses the fact that each person of the Godhead is present in the *unio mystica*. “To be sure, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells through faith in the elect, who have become righteous through Christ and are reconciled with God” (FC SD III, 54).

The voices of church history confirm this exegesis. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes:

For the Word also dwells in us. The most holy Paul confirms this point for us when he says: “For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, from whom all fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth. May he grant that you are strengthened in power through His Spirit, according to the riches of His glory, that Christ may dwell in you in your hearts” (Ephesians 2:14-17); and that He is within us by the Spirit, “in whom we cry out Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). And so, if we have been granted the same dignity by God the Father, our position is in no way inferior to His. For we too are sons and gods by grace, and we have surely been brought to this wonderful and supernatural dignity since we have the Only Begotten Word of God dwelling within us. It is completely wicked and foolish for them to say that Jesus has been granted the dignity of the Sonship and has won this glory as a matter of grace (Cyril of Alexandria. *On the Unity of Christ*. 80).

Bonaventure maintains a mystical union with the entire Trinity in his *Breviloquium* (I.5). The Golden Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy confirms this to be true. Martin Chemnitz writes:

And since it is the greatest and sweetest consolation for us that, although our wretched human nature because of sin has been torn away and alienated from God, who is life itself (Eph 4:8; Is. 49:8ff.), yet His physical body, which is of the same substance with us, is most intimately joined and united with the divine nature in the person of the son of God because of the hypostatic union, that in his way the restitution and reparation of it [our human nature] became surer and more certain, and thus we in turn are made participants (κοινωνοί) of the divine nature

in Christ (II Peter 1:4), and thus also receive fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (I John 1:3) (Chemnitz. TNC. 41).

The Gnesio-Lutherans and the devotional writers agree (Hesshusius. *Postilla*. 54; Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 770). The bulwark of orthodoxy, Abraham Calov, concludes this *catena*:

...but we assert that the substance of the believer is united with the substance of the entire Holy Trinity through a conjunction of substance to substance, without extension or contraction of the divine or human essence, by a change of manner only, which according to God's gracious will is different in this life from what it will be in eternal life (Calov. *Systema*. X, 511; Schmid. DTELC. 484).

### **F. Impelling Cause of the *Unio Mystica***

The *causa impulsiva* or the impelling cause is that God is joined with the regenerate in a mystical bond of union by a special internal love with which He completes them, and by the external merits (*causa meritoria*) of Christ with which He causes true faith from their apprehension (Hollaz. *Examen*. 936). This cause “moves or provides opportunity for the efficient cause, though not in an absolute sense or necessary sense, not as a prior efficient cause” (Muller. *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*. 62). This cause is twofold. The first part is the love of God. Not only does God have love but also He is Love according to St. John (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 617). *I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.* The second part is Christ and His merits which Lutheran Orthodoxy often calls *causa meritoria* or meritorious cause (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 617). For this reason one can biblically say that man's salvation and sanctification was not caused by him but by the love of God and the merits of Christ.

### **G. How the Union is Achieved**

The *causa instrumentalis (media)* or means of this union are twofold. The means on the part of God are the means of grace: the Word, Baptism, and the Eucharist. The means on the part of man so to

speak is faith yet this means or *οργανον λεπτικον* is also imparted by God (Calov. *Systema*. X, 527-28; Hollaz. *Examen*. 936). For this reason faith is not a work of man but a gift of God by which he is able to receive grace.

### 1. Faith

The mystical union occurs through faith and not apart from faith. This has been spoken of as the *causa instrumentalis* on the part of man. However this designation is not meant in a synergistic sense, since faith is caused exclusively by God. Instead this designation is meant merely to serve in the systematizing of this dogma. St. Paul points out the biblical connection between faith and the mystical union in his letter to the Ephesians.

*Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

He reiterates this point in Galatians. *Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* This teaching is also found in Galatians 3:16, 26-29. The connection between the *unio mystica* and faith can also be found in the writings of the fathers. St. John Chrysostom writes, "Mark with insatiable earnestness how he invokes these blessing upon them, that they may not be tossed about. But how shall this be effected? By the 'Holy Spirit in your inward man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith'" (Chrysostom. *Homilies on Ephesians*. 7; NPNF.

Series 1. 13:81). The *Formula of Concord* agrees:

It is true indeed that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith in the elect who have been justified through Christ and reconciled with God, since all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who impels them to do rightly (FC SD III, 54).

The mystical union can take place only in a believer, since faith must be present. Johannes Brenz writes, “But receive Them with hospitality through love or through faith in Christ” (Brenz cited in Elert. *The Structure of Lutheranism*. 156). Johann Arndt, Johann Gerhard, and Johann Dannhauer firmly confess that the mystical union can occur only by faith (Dannhauer. *Hodosophia*. Phaen. IX, 437; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 530; *Weimarische Bibelwerk*. 161; Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 216). In contradistinction to the mystical union, the *unio generalis* occurs in unbelievers and all creation apart from faith (Act 17:28). Thus the mystical union is a result of faith and salvation and not the cause of them (FC SD III, 54). The relationship between faith and the mystical union is not a temporal one, but rather a cause and effect relationship. This relationship will be further discussed under the *ordo salutis*.

## 2. Means of Grace

The *unio mystica* occurs through the means of grace and not apart from them. If one says with Paul that the mystical union occurs only by faith, then one ought to conclude the means of grace are the link between God and man and are part of the instrumental cause of the union. The Spirit communicates these means of grace or transfiguring gifts to the Christian. By these gifts the believer is permitted to communion with the whole Trinity via the human nature of Christ.

Faith is the *οργανον λεπτικον* or the receiving agent of God’s grace which flows to mankind alone via the means of grace. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul explains how the *unio mystica* takes place via the Word.

*Colossians 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Patristic theology also links the Word to the mystical union. Pseudo-Dionysius writes:



We are raised up to the enlightening beams of the Sacred Scriptures, and with these to illuminate us, with our beings shaped to songs of praise, we behold the divine light, in a manner befitting us, and our praise resounds from that generous Source of all holy enlightenment, a Source which has told us about itself in the Holy Words of Scripture. We learn, for instance, that it is the cause of every thing, that it is the origin, being, and life. To those who fall away it is the voice calling, "Come back!" and it is the power which raises them up again. It refurbishes and restores the image of God corrupted within them. It is the sacred stability which is there for them when the tide of unholiness is tossing them about. It is the safety for those who made a stand. It is the guide that brings upward those uplifted to it and it is the enlightenment of the illuminated. Source of perfection for those being made perfect, source of divinity for those being deified, principle of simplicity for those turning toward simplicity, point of unity for those made one, transcendently, beyond what is, it is the source of every source. Generously and as far as may be, it gives out a share of what is hidden (Pseudo-Dionysius. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. 51).

In addition to the Word, the Holy Scripture teaches that the mystical union occurs in Baptism.

*Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.*

St. Paul drives this point home even stronger in Galatians 3:16, 26-29.

*Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ...26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

This citation from Paul is very interesting. First he states that the *Seed* promised to Abraham is Christ. Second, Paul points out that we become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Third, he says if you are baptized into Christ, you put on Christ, referring to the *unio mystica*. Fourth, if you are in Christ through Baptism then you are *Abraham's seed*. By this argument one may conclude that we become little Christs since we become Abraham's seed via Baptism. One is reminded that just as the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," at the baptism of Jesus, at every Christian baptism

the words of the Father are restated over all His baptized sons. Again this terminology is meant to show the intimacy of the union. It is not meant to imply consubstantiation or transubstantiation. A similar idea is expressed by Johannes Brenz in his *Evangelium quod inscribitur secundum Joannem*. Here he makes a very interesting and sometimes overlooked point. "That as many as believe in Christ receive divine majesty and become sons of God, that is, gods themselves" (*ac fiant filii Dei, hoc est, dii ipse*) (Brenz cited in Elert. *The Structure of Lutheranism*. 157). Another interesting passage that ties Baptism to the mystical union is Hebrews 6:4. Although the term "baptize" is never employed, "illumination" or "enlightenment" is used. This term was often used with reference to Baptism in the early church. This passage may also refer to the Eucharist. Antiquity and Lutheranism were not oblivious to this teaching and confessed the relationship between Baptism and the *unio mystica* as well (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 722). St. John Chrysostom writes:

Why does he not say, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have been born of God?" for this was what directly went to prove that they were sons; - because he states it in a much more awful point of view; If Christ be the Son of God, and thou hast put on Him, thou who hast the Son within thee, and art fashioned after His pattern, hast been brought into one kindred and nature with Him (Chrysostom. *Commentary on Galatians*. 4; NPNF. Series 1. 13:30).

The mystical union occurs in Holy Communion as in the other means of grace. *John 6:56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."*

*I Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (κοινωνία) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (κοινωνία) of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake (μετέχομεν) of that one bread.*

In this passage, St. Paul renders the Eucharist a κοινωνία that we μετέχομεν. It is true that there is a κοινωνία between the heavenly elements and earthly elements. However, these verses indicate that this κοινωνία is also a union between Christ and the recipient. In addition, it is a union between all believers and Christ since *we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake (μετέχομεν) of that*

*one bread.* The bread is Christ with whom we all become one by partaking of this most holy sacrament.

Martin Luther explains this in his *Predigt von Empfangung des heiligen Sacraments*:

You have two fruits from this sacrament. One is that it makes us brothers and coheirs of the Lord Christ, so that out of Him and us become One Cake (*Ein Kuchen*). The second, that we also become a communion (*gemein*) and one with all other believers, where they are on earth and are also all One Cake (*Ein Kuchen*) (Luther. W2. XI, 616).

Furthermore since all believers are in communion, Christ can say, “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*” (Matthew 15:40; Loeber. *Dogmatik* 639). Through the Eucharist made efficacious by means of the Word, the Christian indeed tastes and sees that the Lord is Good (Psalm 34:8).

The venerable fathers recognized this connection between the Eucharist and the mystical union as is evident in the next citation.

...that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption. He gives these gifts by virtue of the benediction through which He transelements the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing (Gregory of Nyssa. *Great Catechism*. 37; NPNF. Series 2. 5:506).

The following are some additional remarks by Lutheran theologians connecting the mystical union to the Eucharist. In these statements they are trying to express the intimacy of the union and are not confusing substances. Johannes Brenz writes, “That is, we are made one flesh, one blood. And he who eats Me also acquires the same nature that My flesh and My blood have” (Brenz cited in Elert. *The Structure of Lutheranism*. 157). Martin Chemnitz writes,

Therefore, in order that we might be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain Him more firmly, not only did He Himself assume our nature but also restored it again for us by distributing His holy body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with His humanity, which has been assumed

from us and is again communicated back to us, He might draw us into communion and union with the deity itself (Chemnitz. *Lord's Supper*. 188)

Johann Gerhard makes a similar remark that also illustrates how Christ permeates the substance of the believer via the Eucharist.

Natural food is converted into the substance of the body through alteration or transmutation, but this spiritual food is not altered nor transmuted in us, but rather it transmutes or changes us, so that we are partakers of the divine nature, II Peter 1:4, and members of the mystical body whose head is Christ. Eph 5:30 (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. V, 210).

In his *Postille* the arch-theologian of Lutheranism writes concerning the Eucharist:

There is no natural thing speaks Tauler in his sermon on the Lord's Supper that comes so near and so inwardly to man than eating and drinking. For this reason He established this way that He unites Himself with us in the nearest and most inward manner. It is on account of us that (He) became man (so) that we through Him would become children of God (John 1:12) and partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). But His love was still not great enough. He also wanted to become our food. Nothing is more closely related to the Lord than His assumed human nature, His flesh and blood, which He personally united to Himself, likewise nothing can be nearer to us men than what we eat and drink because this same thing penetrates us in the most inward manner (Gerhard. *Postille*. I, 325).

Joachim Luetkemann states in his *Vorsmack goettlicher Guete* that the Lord's Supper strengthens the mystical union as does Johann Arndt (Luetkemann. *Vorsmack goettlicher Guete*. 429; Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 723)

## H. *Ordo Salutis*

Early Lutheran dogmatic works did not treat the entire *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) in a systematic way. However, they did deal with most of the *ordo* under one or more *loci*. Even when the *ordo compositivus* (synthetic method) was popularized by Johann Gerhard, the *ordo salutis* was still only in its early stages. Still it should be noted that Johann Gerhard would later advocate the *ordo resolutivus* in his *prooemium* (par. 28) because it treated theology as a *habitus practicus* (as opposed to a theoretical science) when he had finished his *Loci Theologici* and could no longer restructure it

(Vaahtoranta, Martti. *Restauratio Imaginis Divinae*. 22). Nicolaus Hunnius was one of the earliest to develop the *ordo salutis* in his *Epitome Credendorum* along with Balthazar Mentzer. But the *ordo salutis* would not take its final shape until after Calixtus, the arch-heretic from Helmstedt, introduced the *ordo resolutivus* (analytic method) to Protestant systematics. Calixtus' orthodox opponent Abraham Calov is said to be the true founder of the modern Lutheran *ordo salutis*. Since certain early Lutheran dogmaticans used the *ordo compositivus* where the *unio mystica* was not treated under a specific *locus*, some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars have improperly accused the later dogmaticians of innovating the mystical union in their works. As has been demonstrated in this paper, Luther and all of orthodox Lutheranism clearly taught a mystical union. Furthermore a through study of the *ordo salutis* is necessary to maintain a proper distinction between justification and sanctification. Many errors have arisen as a result of a misunderstanding of the *ordo salutis*.

### **1. Structure of the *Ordo Salutis***

Although there are minor differences among Lutheran theologians as to the exact structure of the *ordo salutis*, there is clearly agreement on its main components. Abraham Calov's *ordo* consists of vocation, illumination, regeneration, conversion, justification, penitence, mystical union, sanctification, and glorification (Calov. *Systema*. X). This is the most common schema for constructing the *ordo*. The purpose of the *ordo salutis* is merely to systematize what takes place in a believer in a cause and effect relationship. The *ordo* dare not be turned into a temporal relationship or into something caused by man since this would be unbiblical. Furthermore the entire *ordo salutis* occurs simultaneously. The negative of developing such an *ordo salutis* via the analytical method, as C.F.W. Walther once remarked, is that one could force Scripture into an airtight system whereby doctrine is not based upon *locus classicus*, but rather logical deductions (Suelflow. *Servant of the Word*. 106). Moreover the Reformed have often attacked the Lutheran *ordo salutis* claiming it was synergistic, since regeneration and faith precede

justification. Biblically speaking according to the *ordo salutis* faith does precede subjective justification since man is justified by faith (Galatians 3:28, Romans 8:30). However faith is also caused by the Holy Spirit and therefore is not a work of man (Romans 8:30). Clearly the Reformed's foolish charge is unwarranted and clouded by their misunderstanding of election.

## 2. Relationship between Justification and the *Unio Mystica* with respect to the *Nexus Indivulsus*

The mystical union is preceded by justification and followed by sanctification in the Lutheran *ordo salutis*. It also cannot be stressed enough that both the *unio mystica* and sanctification are always the effect or *consequens* of justification and never its cause (FC SD III 54; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. III, 478). Nevertheless it would be false to conclude that the mystical union does not take place at the same time as justification (Schmid. DTELC. 480). This is the whole point behind the *nexus indivulsus* (inseparable connection). Simply put it means where there is justification there must also be sanctification (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. III, 8). The *Formula of Concord* explains.

This is not to be understood as if justification and sanctification are separate from each other in such a way that a true faith can exist for a while along with an evil intention, but rather this only indicates the order in which the one thing precedes or follows the other. For what Dr. Luther correctly said remains true: faith and good works fit beautifully together. But it is faith alone that lays hold of the blessing, apart from works, and yet it is never, ever alone, as has been expressed above (FC SD III, 41).

Since the arrangement of the *ordo salutis* is not a temporal one, because it happens instantaneously, it is a relationship of cause and effect. Why does the *ordo salutis* happen instantaneously? The reason is because one is either a believer or unbeliever. There is no state in between according to St. Paul. While sanctification occurs at the very moment of justification, sanctification is not necessary for salvation but is a fruit that will always accompany faith. Johann Quenstedt explains:

Regeneration, justification, union, and renovation are simultaneous, and, being more closely united than the ingredients of an atom (*quomvis puncto mathematico*

*arctiores*), so cohere that they cannot be separated or rent asunder. Yet according to our mode of conceiving of them, justification and regeneration are prior in order to the mystical union (Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III, 621; Schmid. DTELC. 481).

What about the *pro nobis* (for us) and *in nobis* (in us) distinctions in justification, what is their function? Although they are fine dogmatic terms for expressing the cause and effect relationship between justification and sanctification, they are not meant to express a temporal nor local relationship with respect to the *ordo salutis*. An often-cited quotation of Dr. Luther by Tuomo Mannermaa may shed light on this issue. Luther writes, “*in ipse fide Christus adest* (in faith itself Christ is present)” (Luther. WA. 40/I, 229, 15; *Luther und Theosis*. 33). This citation is from Luther’s commentary on Galatians (1535) with reference to Galatians 2:16. In this citation Luther is stressing that Christ is present already in faith. Still it is important to recognize that it is the Christ *extra nos* (outside of us) that justifies even though Christ is already dwelling within us. In the same way Adolf Hoenecke states, “The mystical union is present with faith. It occurs together with rebirth, conversion, and justification” (Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. III, 416). Johann Baier and C.F.W. Walther also confirm this (Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. III, 293).

Kurt Marquart adds a further point to this discussion. He indicates that “in us” (*in nobis, in uns*) of the FC SD III, 32 and the “outside of us” (*extra nos, ausserhalb* or *pro nobis*) of the FC SD III, 55 are meant to safeguard the difference between the “inchoate righteousness” of renewal, love, and good works, and the “imputed (*imputatam, zugerechnete*) righteousness” by which alone we are justified and saved (Marquart. *Luther and Theosis*. 200-201). The terminology employed by the *Formula of Concord* appears to be only emphasizing the difference between imputed and infused grace and not so much a spatial or local relationship (Marquart. *Luther and Theosis*. 200-201). Thus Marquart could be understood to suggest that even the Christ within the believer may impute righteousness to the Christian, since *extra nos* is not meant to imply the position of Christ in relation to the believer but rather only the

concept of imputation. Following Marquart's logic *extra nos* and *in nobis* are theological jargon which are not to be understood as a position in relation to the believer, but are theological shorthand.

### 3. Nature of Grace: Created or Uncreated

The debate concerning created and uncreated grace or energies originates in a controversy between Medieval Byzantium and the Medieval West. On one side of the issue was the simplicity of God and apophatic theology or negative theology. On the other side, one had to deal with the implications of the simplicity of God and apophatic theology on the nature of grace. In other words is grace created or uncreated? Western theology under the influence of Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I-II.1.10.2; Bonaventure. *Sententiarum*. II.26.1.3; William of Ockham. *Quodlibetal Questions*. 491-497) asserted grace was created while the east under the influence of Gregory Palamas asserted grace was uncreated (Gregory Palamas. *Triads*. 93-111). Although Palamas points to certain remarks of Pseudo-Dionysius in favor of uncreated grace, his Byzantine opponents countered with Dionysian citations that seemed to argue for created grace. In summary the first recognized definition of the nature of grace arose during high Scholasticism although it may have been identified earlier.

The controversy arose when the Byzantine Greeks under the direction of Gregory Palamas explored the implications of negative theology due to a controversy over the nature of the mystical union. As a result Palamas concluded that man cannot participate in the essence or substance of God since it would destroy the transcendence of God according to his understanding of apophatic theology (Palamas. *Triads*. 93-111). His solution to the problem was that man participated in the energies of God. Energies are posited as truly divine yet in some sense distinct from the essence of God (Williams. *Ground of Union*. 16). By affirming that energies were uncreated, Palamas taught a “real” union yet a union that was distinct from a union with the essence of God (Palamas. *Triads*. 20-22). Furthermore



according to Palamas grace has to be uncreated to be deifying and therefore created grace is problematic (Palamas. *Triads*. 105). In the Latin west, grace had already been deemed created. When the east realized this, they charged the west with denying a real union. However in the western church, the transcendence of God and His simplicity was not always considered to be breached by the participation in the essence of God. Although the debate between created and uncreated grace never really spilled over into Lutheranism, there is evidence that Lutherans were not totally oblivious to this discussion. Nevertheless the Scriptures do not use the terms created and uncreated grace and therefore as in the use of all theological terms, caution must be taken to remain within the limits of Scripture.

Perhaps this discussion may seem frivolous. At the very least it would seem to have no relevance for Lutheranism. Nevertheless this is not the case, especially today. As will be shown, the biblical doctrines of Christology, justification, and sanctification are all riding on the answer to this question. It is also not really a new question in Lutheranism, since this is the question that was being addressed in the Osiandrian controversy. Furthermore Finnish Lutheranism has already asserted that Luther taught that saving grace was the uncreated essential attribute of God (Braaten. *Union with Christ*. 48). Their basis for this assertion is certain Luther passages which seem to teach that God and His attributes reside in man in the *unio mystica* and that God's essential attribute of righteousness is communicated to man. Since Luther equates God's essence and His attributes, the logical conclusion is that God's attributes are uncreated. This argument will be critiqued at the end of this discussion.

Biblical and Lutheran theology testifies to at least two kinds of grace. There are *gratia imputata* or imputed grace and *gratia infusa* or infused grace. *Gratia imputata* is saving grace and is forensic in nature. It is clearly taught in Romans 3:23-24. *Romans 3:23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Saving grace is often defined by this axiom: *Gratia dei salvifica est gratuitus dei favor propter*

*Christum*. Luther writes, "Grace, in the proper sense of the term, denotes God's favor and good will toward us which He cherishes in Himself" (Luther. W2. XIV, 98). Philip Melancthon offers an excellent exposition of the nature of imputed grace and distinguishes it from the gifts of God in his 1521 *Loci Communes*.

For grace is nothing (if it is to be most exactly defined) but the benevolence of God toward us or the will of God that has commiserated us. Therefore, the word "grace" does not signify some quality in us, but rather the will of God itself, or the benevolence of God toward us. In Romans 5:15, Paul distinguishes the gift from grace: "If by the sin of one many died, much more the grace of God and the gift in that grace which is of one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many." He calls grace the favor of God, the favor by which God comprehends in Christ, and for Christ's sake, all the saints. Then because he favors us, God cannot but pour out his gifts upon those whom he has commiserated (Melancthon. MWA. II/1:86-87; *The Loci Communes of Philip Melancthon*. 170-171).

Since saving grace or imputed grace is the favor of God, it is best described as an attitude or a promise and not a *res*. If saving grace is not correctly taught as an attitude, one will destroy justification. For example Andreas Osiander confused infused grace with saving grace resulting in a perfectionism that is contrary to the *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time saint and sinner) principle of St. Paul taught in Romans 7.

*Gratia infusa* is sanctifying grace and is not saving grace. It is this grace that is operative in the *unio mystica* (Calov. *Systema*. X, 529). However it should be noted that the earlier Lutheran theologians tended to refer to infused grace as gifts rather than grace. This distinction was only a semantic one. In Lutheran Orthodoxy, theologians tended to make the grace and gifts distinction with the terms *gratia operans et cooperans* (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. II, 254; Quenstedt. *Theologia*. III. 497, 633). Infused grace as a legitimate theological term is also found in Lutheran Orthodoxy. Infused grace is an incomplete grace not in the sense that it is imperfect since its origins are divine, but that it is not intended to save mankind. Infused grace is not an attitude but that through which God allows man to cooperate in his sanctification (FC SD II, 65-66; Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. II, 220f and 309; Pieper.

*Christian Dogmatic*. II, 9-10; III, 132, 405). Sanctification is never complete in this life but only in the life to come. This is based upon the *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time saint and sinner) principle of St. Paul taught in Romans 7. For this reason Lutheran theology maintains the biblical doctrine of progression in sanctification but rejects perfectionism. If sanctification were not progressive, then the very nature of sanctification is compromised and essentially nonexistent. Martin Chemnitz explains:

These gifts the Holy Spirit works through the means, or instrument, of the Word, if it is read, heard, and pondered, which a person both should and can do in some measure. He does not infuse these qualities in the way a liquid is poured into a jar but in such a way that the impulses and actions follow in mind and will. When therefore the Holy Spirit begins to heal man's nature through the Word and some spark of spiritual power and faculty has been kindled, although the renewal is not at once perfect and complete but only began in great infirmity, then, nevertheless, neither the mind nor the will is idle, but they have certain new impulses, which also they must exercise through meditation, praying, endeavoring, wrestling, etc. However, this spiritual efficacy, these spiritual impulses, no matter how slight, do not arise and are not born either wholly or in part from natural powers which the mind and will possess from the moment of birth; but as gifts, operations, and effects in us (Chemnitz. *Examination of the Council of Trent*. I, 435-6).

Franz Pieper explains biblical infused grace providing some of the *sedes doctrina* for this dogma.

However the term "grace" also designates something in man, namely, the good qualities (powers) and the good works, which God because of His gracious disposition, works in believers. "The term 'grace' is used, by way of metonymy [effect for the cause], for the gifts conferred on us through the benevolence of God." I Peter 4:10-11: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." Here the manifold grace of God is the gift received, not the *favor dei* forgiving grace, but the ability which God giveth, the ability inhering in the Christians to teach what is right and to serve one another. In Romans 15:15-16: The grace that is given to me of God that I should be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," and other passages, and I Peter 2:19: "For this is thankworthy [*χάρις*; R.V., margin: "grace"], if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully," the privilege of exercising the public ministry and patience in suffering is called a God-given *χάρις*. Grace in this sense is *donum gratiae, gratia inhaerens, gratia infusa* (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 9).

Uncreated grace according to medieval theology is described in two ways. In the western sense uncreated grace is the substance of God itself. This western definition of uncreated grace is acknowledged by the Formula of Concord (FC SD III, 54). In the Byzantine sense it is posited as truly divine yet in some sense distinct from the essence of God (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*. VI, 683; Williams. *Ground of Union*. 16). In addition to created and uncreated, the distinction between imputation and infusion needs to be addressed in this discussion of the nature of grace. Since *gratia imputata* or imputed grace is an attitude of God and distinct from His substance, one cannot maintain that saving grace is an infusion of God's uncreated attribute. If one were to say that saving grace was a communication of uncreated grace in the first sense, then one would be teaching the doctrine of Andreas Osiander which Luther, Brenz, and the *Formula of Concord* rejected (FC SD III, 9 and 17). If one holds to the Byzantine view of uncreated grace, one will end up denying St. Paul's doctrine of forensic justification for a modified Roman justification. The only conclusion that can be made from these paradigms is that man is either only a saint or in the process of being saved. In other words man achieves perfection already in this life or God is not just, since an incomplete satisfaction for sin is permitted. This final conclusion could endanger the very nature of God. Johann Gerhard concludes that uncreated or essential saving grace cannot be salvific, otherwise the distinction between God and man would be blurred. In addition uncreated saving grace would nullify the incarnation (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. III, 478). Now it may seem possible to designate *gratia imputata* as uncreated in the sense that it is an uncreated imputation of God's essential attribute as opposed to an infusion of the essential attribute. Yet this brings up further questions. Since an imputation is distinct from an infusion of an uncreated essential attribute, can this imputation really be called uncreated according to its nature? Furthermore uncreated by definition would imply part of the substance or attribute of God resides within

this grace. Although Lutherans have not appeared to describe *gratia imputata* as created, it appears that this is the best designation for it.

If imputed grace or energy is created, would *gratia infusa* also need to be created. Since God indeed dwells in man according to His substance, it would appear that infused grace may be uncreated. But before this question is dealt with it is important to remember that Scripture has taught a distinction between God's essence and His gifts. However, this distinction is quite different from Palamas' essence-energy distinction, for Scripture maintains that the substance of God is present in man. God does not dwell in man in an idle manner but is operative communicating grace and gifts to man. Gerhard also concurs with this in his *Meditationes Sacrae* where he writes, "God became man, that man might become partakers of the divine grace and of the divine nature (Gerhard. *Sacred Meditations*. 76). In this way, the *unio mystica* is distinct from the general union where God merely dwells in all things (Chemnitz. TNC. 247-248). By affirming this, Chemnitz states that all the gifts that are communicated in the mystical union are created. Therefore according to Chemnitz, infused grace is also created. This is the opinion of the *Formula of Concord* which refutes the Reformed for teaching that only created gifts are communicated to the human nature of Christ "as are found in the saints" (FC SD VIII, 52). However it would be false to conclude from this that created gifts, are not present with the essential gifts communicated to the human nature of Christ. In the following citation Chemnitz explains his logic.

The Word of God teaches clearly that since God or the entire Trinity dwells graciously in the believers and saints, therefore He is not idle or present only in essence or without efficacy (ὄνευ ἐνέργειας) toward them, leaving them wholly or merely in their natural condition, but rather that He is operative in the believers with His divine activity or efficacy (ἐνέργεια) and that He accomplishes in them many different supernatural works and things contrary to nature, as the Scholastics say. And He gives them many gracious, spiritual, heavenly, and divine gifts which are usually called either qualities, characteristics, or virtues. Or, as we commonly say, the Holy Spirit produces in believers such actions as He Himself is. Thus Scripture calls this gracious indwelling of the saints the fellowship (κοινωνία) of the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 13:14). Thus also the believers are called partakers of the divine nature (θείας φύσεως κοινωνοί), as

those who have communion with the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). But these gifts which have been conferred on the saints through the gracious indwelling are not themselves the essential, uncreated, and infinite attributes of the Deity, but they are gracious finite gifts, in a sense, effects of the Deity, which are given to the saints in such a way that they inhere in them formally, habitually, and subjectively, and in this way they differ in their nature and are distinct from the essential attributes of the divine nature. These gifts are so distributed among the saints in accord with the good will of God that not all are given to all, but in addition to the gifts which are common to all believers (as when Paul in Titus 1:4 speaks of the common faith), He has distributed to certain individuals special gifts insofar as it is expedient (I Corinthians 12:11). For they have gifts which differ according to the grace given them, as God has distributed to each the measure of faith (Romans 12:6). For some have many such gifts and others fewer, some lesser, some greater (Chemnitz. TNC. 247).

Nevertheless Martin Chemnitz' opinion needs to be evaluated since his argument for created grace seems to presuppose that all grace is created and distinct from the divine attributes of God. His argument for created grace is simply that created grace is the only means for God to be operative in man since the presence of God by itself does not always communicate something, as the general union demonstrates. Although Chemnitz could be clearer, it would appear that for Chemnitz and the *Formula of Concord* uncreated grace or gifts that are operative could be equated only with the essential attributes of God. In fact the Formula of Concord refers to the Trinity in typical scholastic fashion as "essential righteousness" which could be understood as uncreated grace (FC SD III, 54). Why are the divine attributes unable to be communicated to man in the mystical union? Simply, Scripture speaks of only such a communication in the person of Christ. Nowhere does it suggest the divine attributes of God are communicated to man in the mystical union. If this were not true the distinction between God and man may be blurred. The following are some Scriptural proofs for the dogma that the divine attributes are only communicated to Christ. Colossians 2:9 confirms the fact that the essential attributes are communicated only to Christ's humanity, for the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells alone in Christ bodily. Likewise John 17:5 speaks about an uncreated glory communicated alone to Christ's human

nature. Since Chemnitz appears to be unaware of the Byzantine concept of uncreated grace and because essential attributes are communicated only to Christ, infused grace has to be created.

Would the eastern view of uncreated grace work in the Lutheran paradigm? If the eastern view of uncreated grace were applied to Chemnitz' paradigm, it might appear to work. The positive of the Byzantine concept of uncreated grace is that it would seem to make a stronger mystical union since according to Palamas grace has to be uncreated to be deifying and therefore created grace could be problematic (Palamas. *Triads*. 105). It would also be truly operative in man and not idle. However the Byzantine concept of uncreated grace as sanctifying grace also causes many problems. Uncreated grace in the Byzantine sense appears to contradict itself, since it is not the essence of God but it is also uncreated. How can something be truly uncreated but distinct from the essential attributes or essence of God? The aforementioned question is truly problematic since western thought equates the essential attributes of God with the essence of God (Bernard. *Sermon on the Canticles*. 80; *The Works of St. Bernard*. IV, 487ff; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 295). If they are not the same thing, then God is composite and no longer simple (Leo the Great. *Epist.* 91; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 295; Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. II, 12). Palamas' view is further complicated since he seems to equate the divine attributes of God with uncreated grace. He also seems to distinguish the divine attributes from the essence of God.

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 superessential essence of God. The essential characteristic is not the essence which processes 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 impartible God." These, then, are the essential powers; as to the Superessential... that is the Reality which possess these powers and gathers them into unity in itself. Similarly, the deifying light is also essential, but is not itself the essence of God (Palamas. *Triads*. 81).

In contradistinction to Palamas, Lutheran theology and most of western theology is working with a different paradigm. Lutheranism equates the essence of God with His attributes and distinguishes it from created grace. Palamas seems to equate uncreated grace with divine attributes but distinguishes it from God's essence. For this reason it is hard to define exactly how Palamas' view is different. Still, apart from a possible weaker mystical union in the west, Palamas' view of essence and energy appears to be far more problematic than the western view. In reality Palamas' uncreated grace is hard to distinguish from the divine or essential attributes of God which are communicated only to the human nature of Christ. If one had a clear scriptural *sedes* for this distinction, then it would be warranted, however there is no proof for making such an assertion. Furthermore one would be hard pressed to prove a biblical distinction between the divine essence and "uncreated" energies in the Byzantine sense. Scripture does speak of the "gifts" or "things" of God communicated in the mystical union which are distinct from the essence of God (I Peter 4:10-11; I Corinthians 12:11; Romans 12:6). But in reality Scripture also does not categorically and clearly identify these gifts as created or uncreated. For this reason the view of created sanctifying grace is not without its problems although uncreated grace is much harder to prove. Nevertheless Scripture does distinguish the Holy Spirit from His gifts. If these gifts were uncreated according to western thought, then they cannot really be distinct from the essence of God and there would be no need of mentioning such gifts. Since Scripture mentions both the Spirit and His gifts, one can assume the gifts are created, otherwise they would not be distinguished. Remember the essence and attributes of God are really the same thing. In other words, why talk about gifts if they are essentially the same thing as the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the employment of the terms "gifts" or "things" with reference to the persons of the Trinity implies a distinction from the essence of God by their very use. This distinction is also clear in I Peter 4:10-11, Romans 12:6, and I Corinthians 12:11. Therefore uncreated energies, even though defined as distinct from the essence of God, seem to



be scripturally the same thing as the divine attributes of God which in the west are equal with the essence of God. On this basis the west calls grace created. This argument is not completely fair since it presupposes certain western concepts. However Palamas' presuppositions seem to contradict themselves before his final systematized conclusion is even compared to the western view because of his apaphatic theology. The real problem lies in this question: How can something be uncreated yet distinct from God? Only God is uncreated and God is essence or being.

Byzantine uncreated grace is semantically very convenient but scripturally and systematically dubious. In the end this author maintains with the Lutheran Confessions and Martin Chemnitz that infused grace is created. While it is true that Lutheranism seems to speak of an uncreated grace in the western sense defined as "essential righteousness," this uncreated grace is really the substance of the Trinity itself which dwells in man but is never communicated to man, for only created grace may be communicated. In contradistinction to western thought, Byzantine uncreated grace is communicated to man but is somehow distinct from the essence of God. The Lutheran position is affirmed because Byzantine uncreated grace is scripturally difficult to distinguish from the essential attributes of God. However the nature of sanctifying grace is still somewhat of a paradox. How can infused grace be truly glorifying on one side and at the same time neither alter the substance of man nor be equated with the essential attributes of God. Created grace appears to be the best solution. If uncreated grace was Scripturally distinct from the divine attributes, then Lutheran theology would not seem to have a problem affirming it.

Now that nature of grace has been discussed, a critique of Finnish Lutheranism's uncreated grace is warranted. The Finish interpretation of Luther by Tuomo Mannermaa is nothing more than an attempt to repackage Palamas' essence-energy distinction as an essence-attribute distinction with a few variations (Braaten. *Union with Christ*. 49-55). However the Finns are far more contradictory than

Palamas since they have haphazardly amalgamated both of these distinctions and have not resolved many of the conflicts. Obviously God's essence and attributes are uncreated in Lutheranism, since Lutheranism has equated them (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 295). But this assertion completely contradicts Palamas who states that essence and energies are uncreated although distinct from one another. Moreover since Luther equates God's essence and attributes it must be maintained that where God's attributes are so is His essence. The Finns seem to be uncomfortable with this at times and at other times not. Most often, but not always, they imply that only God's attributes are in man and strongly state that His attributes are even communicated to man. Orthodox Lutheran theology states the attributes of God and His essence are indeed in man but they are not communicated to man. In opposition to this, the Finns agree with Andreas Osiander that God's essential attribute of righteousness is communicated to man and is salvific but that Osiander strayed only on his Christological views (Braaten. *Union with Christ*. 46). The *Formula of Concord* teaches that God's essence and attributes reside in man but that only created grace is communicated to man. Furthermore the believer is declared righteous and is made righteous in sanctification, yet this righteousness is not the communicated essential attribute of God. The result of the Finnish interpretation is that there is little difference between the believer and Christ. Following this logic all believers are omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, or at the very least essentially righteous. Only the Father, the Son, and the Spirit can and ever will be essentially righteous by means of Their own divine attributes. In the end the Finns are far worse than Palamas since they even claim a divine attribute which is communicated only to the humanity of Christ is also communicated to man. Such a theology could not be accepted by the east or the west.

### **I. Benefits and Goal of the *Unio Mystica***

In order to facilitate this discussion it is important to remember that the mystical union is divided into two parts: the *unio gratiosa* or the gracious union on earth and the *unio gloriosa* or the glorious

union that occurs in heaven. The *finis* or goal of the mystical union is that God complete our gracious fullness (*unio gratiosa*) and maintain us at every point until our glorious fullness (*unio gloriosa*). St. Paul explains the purpose of the *unio gratiosa* is to live transfigured lives until we are fully transfigured in heaven (*unio gloriosa*) by using the term μεταμορφώω (to transfigure).

*Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be transfigured (μεταμορφουσθε) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. II Corinthians. 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transfigured (μεταμορφουμεθα) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Adolf Hoenecke defines the purpose of the *unio mystica* as follows:

The final purpose of the mystical union is the same as all other works of God for us. The *unio mystica* is however thus an end in itself because the purpose of the works of God is the reception of salvation for us believers. In the *unio mystica* the blessedness even reaches its highest point here on earth. In this union God pours out the fullness of his gracious gifts on the believers, so that for them neither comfort, nor peace, nor joy is lacking. (Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. III, 416).

Although the nature of the gracious union has already arrived at its fullness on earth, the glories and gifts imparted do not reach their climax until heaven where man achieves perfection via the Triune God.

### 1. Unio Gratiiosa

The *unio gratiosa* (gracious union) is but a foretaste of the glories that will be showered upon man in the *unio gloriosa* (glorious union). This union clearly demonstrates that sanctification is progressive (Ephesians 1:17-18; Colossians 1:9,11; II Peter 3:18; *Weimarische Bibelwerk*. 314). Not that the believer will ever achieve perfection in this life, since the Pauline doctrine of *simil iustus et peccator* speaks against this (Romans 7). Rather it teaches us that the Christian should strive for a perfect life and that it is possible to make progress in our sanctification (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. 59). We are not to become complacent with our lives of sanctification nor are we to revel in our sin because we are justified. St. Paul also rejects this in Romans 6. Therefore until judgment day the Christian is *simul*

*iustus et peccator*. At the same time, the Christian will be striving towards a transfigured life that will climax in eternity. Why does he do this? The love of Christ constrains the Christian to long for this transfigured life.

The purpose of the *unio gratiosa* on earth is to comfort, strengthen, and preserve us in Christ so that we can image Christ to all around us until we partake of the glorious union in heaven. Therefore when the believer bears his cross in great *Anfechtung* (affliction) feeling utterly alone throughout this valley of sorrows, he can take comfort that God is with him in ways far behind his comprehension. No matter where one is or in what situation one is, one can be sure that the Lord is near him providing the strength to overcome any obstacle and the ability to do all things through Him found in the means of grace. As Christ said in Matthew 28:20, “*Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age*”.

The medium of this comfort is the means of grace which the Comforter communicates to us. It is also true that the comfort for the Christian in this life comes primarily from the cross. But there is also comfort that comes from external testimony of the Spirit (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 718; Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 541ff). This comfort arises when the believer knows from his transfigured existence that he has been justified as Christ once said by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:16). Johann Gerhard explains the internal testimony of the Spirit and the external testimony that results from it.

Therefore the testimony of the Holy Spirit is twofold because he works in us internally and externally. Internally is when His internal testimony confirms us that we are in the grace of God, from which peace and tranquility of conscience jubilation and exultation arise. Externally is when fruits of His internal testimony follow which are ardent prayer, love of the Word, study of piety, patience in the cross, etc. This external testimony does not remove (the internal) but presupposes the internal (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. III, 374).

This external testimony of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the mystical union is not the basis of our justification but is merely a telltale sign that we are justified. Thus there is a comfort in knowing that I

am one of the justified, since my life motivated by the Spirit testifies that I have been justified by grace alone. However the external testimony of the Spirit is a secondary comfort to the primary and full comfort that can come only from our crucified Lord via His objective means of grace. If the comfort of the mystical union is confused with the objective comfort of the cross, a confusion of justification and sanctification will result. For this reason let no one condemn the manifold grace and comfort of God.

## 2. Restoration of the Image of God

Linked to the mystical union is the restoration of the image of God. The restoration of the image of God has been placed between the gracious union and glorious union since it starts already in this life (*Weimarische Bibelwerk*. 393). This point is often stressed in the Lutheran devotional writers (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 704, 716). Nevertheless although it begins in this life it does not reach its fullness until heaven. This dogma is based upon Romans 8:29, I Corinthians 15:49, and II Corinthians 3:17-18.

C.F.W. Walther writes:

If these things should happen, so sins must be blotted out and we become partakers of the divine nature, not only divine grace, but also the divine nature. God sent His only begotten Son into this world, let Him become human, blotted out our sins through Him, made all who believe in His Son now again partakers of His divine nature, gives them again to His Holy Spirit, and renews them again to His image (Walther. *Hausandacht*. 41).

## 3. Unio gloriosa

The *finis* or end of this union is perfection in God. Herein true peace and comfort only can exist. As St. Augustine once said, “Our hearts are restless until they find rest in You” (Augustine. *Confessions*. 1.1; NPNF. Series 1. 1:45). In this perfection via the beatific vision, the faithful will be brought to the greatest joy and praise based upon Psalm 16:11. *You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*. Beyond this one cannot describe the union in heaven. It is beyond all comprehension. St. Augustine of Hippo makes the remark that such

things exceed all description and that eloquence should not be employed to relate them since such eloquence would only cheapen its magnificence.

#### 4. Beatific Vision

Some might think that it is odd for a Lutheran thesis to be talking about the beatific vision. However it is very scriptural and Lutheran to talk about this vision. For example Job confesses in Job 19:25-27. *For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; 26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, 27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!* The Psalmist writes: *Psalm 27:13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Psalm 17:15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.* St. Paul speaks of this vision in I Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.* Christ refers to this vision in the Beatitudes. *Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.* It is also important to take note of the words of St. John and St. Paul. *I John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 1 Timothy 6:16 who [God] alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*

Now that some of the *sedes doctrina* have been presented, the nature of this vision will be discussed. There has been a major difference of opinion concerning this dogma between the eastern and western medieval church. The following is Thomas' presentation of this dogma. God is knowable in His essence based upon I Corinthians 13:12 (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.1). God cannot be seen by the senses or eyes, only by one's intellect (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.3). One can see only God by grace, apart from grace one cannot see His essence, for grace provides knowledge superior to that

which natural knowledge does (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.4 &13). The goal of life is the vision of God. Therefore all will see God's essence but some not as perfectly (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.6). We will not see God comprehensively (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.7-8). We will see all we will see at the same moment (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I.12.10). In other words there will not be a progression of continual revelation. In contradistinction to Thomas, Gregory Palamas would argue that God cannot be seen or known in His essence based upon I John 4:12 (Palamas. *Triads*. 32, 59, 61, 64, 67, 68, 84). For Palamas the goal of life is deification. In heaven one basks in a beatific vision in an eternal assent without end and without ever approaching the essence of God (Palamas. *Triads*. 18). In other words, deification in heaven is perfect yet ever increasing without end and without becoming God. Although these two have been chosen to represent their medieval traditions, it should be noted that the ancient fathers do not necessarily fall under their traditions. For example Boethius and Ambrose did not believe the essence of God could be seen (Boethius. *Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*. 79). In addition William of Ockham seems to claim that Paul saw the essence of God in his vision before death (William of Ockham. *Quodlibetal Questions*. 492).

Biblical and Lutheran theology asserts that the faithful will see and know God in His essence based upon I Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known* (Hutter. *Compend of Lutheran Theology*. 240; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. IX, 339; Hollaz. *Examen*. 457). Concerning this knowledge St. Paul writes:

*Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

In the aforementioned passage St. Paul teaches that the glorious union provides its recipient with the greatest knowledge imaginable, the love of Christ via the beatific vision. This knowledge will be clear and intuitive (Walther/Baier. *Compendium*. II, 181). The beatific vision will take place only in heaven,

based upon the following words of St. John and St. Paul, and not on earth. *I John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. I Timothy 6:16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.* There has been some debate as to whether the faithful will see God with their glorified eyes or only with some other gift of God, for example, illuminated will or intellect (Hoenecke. *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*. IV, 336-337). Based upon Job's word in Job 19:25-27, it would seem that the faithful will see God with their own glorified eyes. For this reason it may be best not to be overly dogmatic about it. Nevertheless the vision will also be accessible to man's illuminated intellect and will (Hollaz. *Examen*. 457). It will take place via grace. The goal of life is the beatific vision which all will see. However none of the faithful will see or know God's essence comprehensively since this would confuse the distinction between God and man (Dannhauer. *Hodosophia*. 173; Hollaz. *Examen*. 457). This vision will compel the faithful to joy and praise based upon Psalm 16:11 (Hoenecke. *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*. 337). *Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

In the following citations are summaries of this dogma from antiquity. St. Bernard writes:

But such a Beatific Vision is not for the present life, but is reserved for the final state of existence; to those, at least, who are able to say: *We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is* (I John 3:2). Even in the present life He appears to whom He wills, but in the manner that He wills, not as He is. There is no man, however wise or holy, there is no prophet, who is able, or ever was able to see Him, in this mortal body as He is; yet those who shall be found worthy shall do so when their body shall be immortal. (Bernard. *The Works of St Bernard*. 4:201).

In the previous citation Bernard could be understood as denying the possibility of seeing God's essence. However the final remark seems to negate this view and implies that we will see God's essence. Johann Gerhard writes on *The Beatific Vision of God in Heaven*:



And if God shall be all in all, then surely He will grant us fullness of knowledge, the perfection of peace, and the continuing power of memory through all eternity. God the Son will satisfy our intellect with the fullest knowledge; God the Holy Ghost will satisfy our wills with the holiest love; and God the Father will charge our memories with the unfailing remembrance of both. Thou, O God, art the Light; "in Thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:10), see Thee, that is, in Thyself, in glory of Thy countenance, when we see Thee face to face. Nor shall we see Thee only, but shall live with Thee; and not only that, but we shall praise Thee; and not only so, but we shall be partakers of Thy joy; and more than that, we shall be as the angels of God (Matthew 22:30, aye, like God Himself, who is blessed forevermore (I John 3:2) (Gerhard. *Sacred Meditations*. 276).

## **J. Relation to Theosis**

The term theosis (θέωσις) is used in two ways. Although it is used to explain two distinct dogmas, there is nevertheless a similarity between its use in both of these doctrines. In the first sense it describes what takes place in the mystical union. In the second sense, it refers to the *genus maiestaticum*. In both cases the mystical union and the personal union serve as a bond in which theosis takes place. However it is important to distinguish the medieval Byzantine view of theosis from the biblical concept of theosis, since the later Byzantine view resulted in a confusion of sanctification and justification.

### **1. Theosis of Man**

Theosis (θέωσις) and mystical union (*unio mystica*) are eastern and western Christendom's customary terms for essentially the same thing. However it would be false to presume that the west did not use theosis language and that the east did not speak of a mystical union. This is evident in the citations that will follow. Since these two terms really describe the same dogma, all the Scriptural points made to explain the mystical union will apply to the biblical concept of theosis. So what exactly is the relationship between theosis and the mystical union? Theosis is the verbal idea or action that takes place in the mystical union. Therefore the mystical union is the bond in which theosis occurs.

The concept of theosis is clearly present in the New Testament and the early church. Psalm 82:6, John 10:34, and II Peter 1:4 are often cited by the fathers to prove this doctrine, but there are many

better examples of this teaching in Scripture. The following are but a few. *I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Philippians 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

*Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ...26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (If one becomes Abraham's seed then one becomes Christ)*

In addition Romans 6:4-5, John 17:21-23, II Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:14, I Corinthians 15:49-54 etc. teach the biblical doctrine of theosis.

Another passage that is often cited to prove the biblical doctrine of theosis but is somewhat contested is John 10:34-36.

*John 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods" '? 35 "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36 "do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"*

This New Testament passage cited by St. John the Apostle is recorded in Psalm 82:6. Many Lutheran scholars and modern scholars have interpreted "gods" as those having authority given them by God whether civil or ecclesiastical (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. VI, 281; Stoeckhardt. *Biblische Geschichte*. 223). Furthermore the "Word of God" is interpreted as a divine vocation according to this view. This

interpretation is valid if one is talking about Psalm 82:6, however it seems a little weaker when employed to explain John 10:34. Nevertheless, the majority of commentators believe that in John 10:34 Christ is simply saying, why am I blaspheming when I call myself the Son of God if magistrates are called gods in the Old Testament.

Another interpretation of this passage is the following. Christ is saying that if believers are called gods because of the *unio mystica*, why am I blaspheming when I say that I am the Son of God. If one takes the magistrate view, the analogy is much weaker and does little to prove the deity of Christ. However, if “gods” is referring to the *unio mystica*, the analogy is much stronger. According to this view Christ is saying if you are gods by participation in the divine nature then why am I blaspheming when I say that I am the Son of God in the fullest sense, the Only-Begotten from all eternity. In either viewpoint the crowd is not being referred to as “gods.” Christ is making an analogy from the Old Testament only to use against them. Furthermore to argue that the crowd was being referred to as “gods” since they were all magistrates, political or ecclesiastical, is really weak. The text says only that the crowd was composed of Jews. It says nothing about the crowd’s vocation.

There is good reason for connecting this passage to the *unio mystica* or the biblical doctrine of theosis. First according to St. Peter all Christians are a “royal priesthood and a holy nation” (I Peter 2:9). Since “gods” does have a connotation of “magistrate” in the Old Testament, it could apply to all Christians in the New Testament by virtue of the royal priesthood of all believers. Psalm 82:6 may be speaking about earthly magistrates, but it appears Christ is using the term more broadly in John 10:34. Second, St. John says in John 10:34 that He called them “gods” to whom the Word of God came. Psalm 82:6 seems to include pagan magistrates as gods, but never mentions the Word of God coming to them. In contradistinction to the Psalms, St. John’s gospel states that the individuals who receive the Word of

God are gods. Third the analogy between the believers and Christ seems to make more sense in John 10:34 and emphasizes the divinity of Christ.

Even if this passage does not teach the biblical doctrine of theosis, as most scholars believe, it need not concern one. This passage is not the only basis for the biblical doctrine of theosis as was demonstrated above. Men like Johann Gerhard and Abraham Calov who interpreted “gods” in John 10:34 as authorities, still taught the biblical concept of theosis based on passages like II Peter 1:4, I John 3:2, Philippians 3:21, etc. (cf. Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 515). Nevertheless it should be pointed out that Luther cites Psalms 82:6 as a proof of theosis in his sermons and other works, although in his commentary on the Psalms he interprets “gods” as “magistrates”(Luther. W2. V, 727-729; Luther. W2. XI, 481).

Since all the teachings about the mystical union also apply to theosis, the following brief schema will be provided for clarification. Theosis is best described as that which takes place in the mystical union. When the Sacred Scriptures use theosis language, it does not mean that the substance of man is changed into the substance of God or that a third substance is produced. Rather the biblical notion of theosis is founded upon the nature of the mystical union, that is, an *unio substantiarum* (union of substances) (John 17:21-26, I John 1:3, I Corinthians 1:9, II Peter 1:4). In this union the substance of God and the substance of man interpenetrate (περιχωρήσις) but never become one substance or a new substance. As “the Word became flesh” does not destroy Christ’s deity likewise “you are gods” does not destroy the believer’s humanity. This is not to say that the personal union is the same as the mystical union. Rather it is meant to say that God so permeates us with his divinity that we are called sons of God and even gods by adoption. Furthermore the theosis of Christ’s human nature is also distinct from the theosis of man. The theosis of Christ’s human nature results in one person or hypostasis (ὑφιστάμενον) and also receives divine attributes of God. Furthermore the human nature of Christ does not “subsist in

itself” (ἀνυπόστατον), but “subsists in something else” (ἐνυπόστατον) namely the personality of the preincarnate λόγος (Chemnitz. TNC. 31). In contradistinction to the theosis of Christ’s humanity, God communicates created grace to man in the theosis of man. The effecting cause of this union is the Trinity with whom man has communion via the human nature of Christ (I John 1:3, Romans 8:9, II Corinthians 13:11). The instrumental cause of theosis is the means of grace received by faith (Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 3:17-19, I Corinthians 10:16-17, Colossians 1:25-27).

There are three different uses of theosis. The first use is theosis in the narrow sense. It is part of sanctification. This is the most proper use of theosis. The second use is theosis in the broad sense. It is understood as sanctification in the broad sense. This usage occurs less often than the narrow sense. The third use is theosis in the forensic sense. This occurs the least often. While making this distinction, it must be understood that none of these biblical senses of theosis contradict the doctrine of forensic justification. In order to demonstrate that no contradiction exists, all three senses will now be further explained.

The theosis of man is used in a narrow sense. This usage is the same thing as sanctification in the narrow sense. In this manner it is used in its most proper and accurate sense. In no way can theosis in the narrow sense function as the means of salvation. Such a teaching would destroy the forensic nature of St. Paul’s doctrine of justification resulting in a denial of *simil iustus et peccator* or the destruction of God’s attribute of justice. Unfortunately in church history some have confused theosis in the narrow sense with justification. An example of theosis used properly in the narrow sense can be found in *Theologia Germanica*. “Moreover, to a deified man, there belongs true, deep, and real humility, and where this is not, the man is not deified. This Christ taught in words and works; and from this it comes that in the True Light is known what is so true” (*Theologia Germanica*. 175).

Theosis is used in a broad sense. This usage is the same thing as sanctification in the broad sense. In this manner it is used more loosely. In this case theosis is employed to describe the entire *ordo salutis* or order of salvation from the call to glorification. In other word it includes justification and sanctification. St. Paul uses this sense when he talks about the whole *ordo salutis* as sanctification (II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2). An example of this use is found in Athanasius' famous axiom, "God became man, so that man might become gods" (Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. 54; NPNF. Series 2. 4:65). This passage may also be understood in the narrow sense.

Theosis is used in a declarative or forensic sense. In this manner theosis is used in its most imprecise sense and is really something distinct in nature. This usage is not common. In this use theosis language is implemented, but the nature of theosis is altered to imply a forensic or declarative sense. For example, it would be biblically possible according to this sense to say, "You are declared the sons of God by faith," "You are declared gods," or even "You are gods," if one understands that it is the same as saying, "You are declared holy." Both statements are expressions of forensic justification. Likewise the expression "already but not yet" applies. The believer is already holy or god via an imputation of grace, but is not yet fully holy or god in this life, because our sanctification is perfected in the life to come. Nevertheless we are not saved on the basis of our sanctified existence, but on the basis of imputed grace. One of the clearest examples of Dr. Luther implementing theosis language for the purpose of expressing justification or a forensic sense of theosis is cited by Johann Baier in his *Compendium*.

Luther indeed said in his commentary on Galatians 2, that the faithful are so stuck together with Christ through faith that they are 'as' (quasi) one person with Himself that he is able to say: 'I am Christ'; but immediately he explains, adding: e.g. the righteousness of Christ, the life of Christ, and the victory of Christ is mine and in turn Christ says: 'I am this sinner', e.g. his sin, his death, etc. are Mine (Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. III, 294).

Theosis has many different themes or aspects. The term "theme" is employed not to negate their reality but to distinguish different aspects of theosis. Furthermore this list is not meant to be exhaustive.

The first theme may be referred to as *Conformitas Christi* or Christification for lack of a better term. This theme is found in Galatians 3:16, 26-29 where Paul states the seed of Abraham is Christ yet through Baptism the Christian becomes a son of God and seed of Abraham that is Christ. Although the east almost exclusively talks about deification in terms of becoming gods, the Latin west and Lutheranism spoke of becoming Christs in addition to gods. This theme is also evident in the imitation of Christ (Ephesian 5:1, I Peter 2:21). The second theme or motif is Luther's favorite *froehliche Wechsel* or joyous exchange. This use can be found in II Corinthians 8:9 and Roman 5:12-21. The third theme is the restoration of the image of God. This theme is evident in I Corinthians 15:49, II Corinthians 3:18, and Romans 8:29. It was also a favorite among the Greek fathers. The fourth theme is the transfigured/transformed existence found in Romans 12:2, II Corinthians 3:18, II Corinthians 5:17, and Philippians 3:21. The fifth theme is the sons of God by adoption theme. It may be found in John 1:12, I John 3:2, Romans 8:14-17, John 1:12-13, Galatians 3:16, Galatians 3:26-29, Romans 8:14, Galatians 4:4-7, and Ephesians 1:3ff. This theme is a favorite of Latin theology. The sixth theme is the united in Christ's resurrected likeness motif. It is taught in Romans 6:5. The seventh theme is the recapitulation theme. It is found in II Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 1:10, and I Corinthians 12:12. This motif was the cornerstone of St. Irenaeus of Lyon's theology. The eighth theme is the exsultation of knowledge theme which climaxes in the beatific vision. It is found in Ephesians 3:17-19. In addition church history has alluded to a few biblical individuals as the paradigm for the theosis of man. Naturally Christ is the primary model but Moses, Elijah, Paul, and John have also been thought of as examples of the deified life (Gregory of Nyssa. *Life of Moses*). In church history Antony of Egypt and Francis of Assisi have been paradigms for the east and west.

The concept of theosis as well as its various themes are well documented in church history. The following are some statements from the Greek fathers. St. Irenaeus of Lyon writes, "The Word of God,

our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself” (Irenaeus. *Against the Heresies*. 5.Preface; ANF. 1:526). St.

Athanasius of Alexandria wrote, “God became man, so that man might become gods” (Athanasius.

*Concerning the Incarnation*. 54; NPNF. Series 2. 4:65). St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

Since, then, that God-containing flesh partook for its substance and support of this particular nourishment also, and since the God who was manifested infused Himself into perishable humanity for this purpose, viz. that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption. He gives these gifts by virtue of the benediction through which He transelements the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing (Gregory of Nyssa. *Great Catechism*. 37; NPNF. Series 2. 5:506).

St. Gregory Nazianzen writes, “For if He (Holy Spirit) is not to be worshiped, how can He deify me by Baptism” (Gregory of Nazianzen. *Fifth Theological Oration: On the Holy Spirit*. 28; NPNF. Series 2.

7:327). St. Basil of Caesarea writes:

Hence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, the being made God. Such, then, to instance a few out of many, are the conceptions concerning the Holy Spirit, which we have been taught to hold concerning His greatness, His dignity, and His operations, by the oracles of the Spirit themselves (Basil. *On the Spirit*. 9; NPNF. Series 2. 8:16).

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes:

For the Word also dwells in us. The most holy Paul confirms this point for us when he says: “For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, from whom all fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth. May he grant that you are strengthened in power through His Spirit, according to the riches of His glory, that Christ may dwell in you in your hearts” (Ephesians 2:14-17); and that He is within us by the Spirit, “in whom we cry out Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). And so, if we have been granted the same dignity by God the Father, our position is in no way inferior to His. For we too are sons and gods by grace, and we have surely been brought to this wonderful and supernatural dignity since we have the Only Begotten Word of God dwelling within us. It is completely wicked and foolish for



them to say that Jesus has been granted the dignity of the Sonship and has won this glory as a matter of grace (Cyril of Alexandria. *On the Unity of Christ*. 80).

Pseudo-Dionysius writes:

We are raised up to the enlightening beams of the Sacred Scriptures, and with these to illuminate us, with our beings shaped to songs of praise, we behold the divine light, in a manner befitting us, and our praise resounds from that generous Source of all holy enlightenment, a Source which has told us about itself in the Holy Words of Scripture. We learn, for instance, that it is the cause of every thing, that it is the origin, being, and life. To those who fall away it is the voice calling, "Come back!" and it is the power which raises them up again. It refurbishes and restores the image of God corrupted within them. It is the sacred stability which is there for them when the tide of unholiness is tossing them about. It is the safety for those who made a stand. It is the guide bringing upward those uplifted to it and it is the enlightenment of the illuminated. Source of perfection for those being made perfect, source of divinity for those being deified, principle of simplicity for those turning toward simplicity, point of unity for those made one, transcendently, beyond what is, it is the source of every source. Generously and as far as may be, it gives out a share of what is hidden (Pseudo-Dionysius. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. 51).

St. Maximus the Confessor writes:

In the same way in which the soul and the body are united, God should become accessible for participation by the soul and, through the Son's intermediary, by the body, in order that the soul might receive an unchanging character, and the body, immortality; and finally that the whole man should become like God, deified by the grace of God-become-man, becoming whole man, soul and body, by nature, and becoming whole God, soul and body by grace (Maximus. *Ambig.* PG. 91:1237).

St. John of Damascus writes:

For it was fitting that not only the first-fruits of our nature should partake in the higher good but every man who wished it, and that a second birth should take place and that the nourishment should be new and suitable to the birth and thus the measure of perfection be attained. Through His birth, that is, His incarnation, and baptism and passion and resurrection, He delivered our nature from the sin of our first parent and death and corruption, and became the first-fruits of the resurrection, and made Himself the way and image and pattern, in order that we, too, following in His footsteps, may become by adoption what He is Himself by nature, sons and heirs of God and joint heirs with Him. He gave us therefore, as I said, a second birth in order that, just as we who are born of Adam are in his image and are the heirs of the curse and corruption, so also being born of Him we

may be in His likeness and heirs of His incorruption and blessing and glory (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 4.13; NPNF. Series 2. 9:82).

Again Damascus writes,

That is, in the age to come, he is changed and — to complete the mystery — becomes deified by merely inclining himself towards God; becoming deified, in the way of participating in the divine glory and not in that of a change into the divine being (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 2.12; NPNF. Series 2. 9:31).

The Latin patristic doctrine of theosis is evident in the following *catena*. St. Hilary of Poitiers writes, “The object to be gained was that man might become god” (Hilary. *On the Trinity*. 11.38; NPNF. Series 2. 9:167). St. Ambrose of Milan writes:

Who, then, can dare to say that the Holy Spirit is separated from the Father and the Son, since through Him we attain to the image and likeness of God, and through Him, as the Apostle Peter says, are partakers of the divine nature? In which there is certainly not the inheritance of carnal succession, but the spiritual connection of the grace of adoption. And in order that we may know that this seal is rather on our hearts than on our bodies, the prophet says: “The light of Thy countenance has been impressed upon us, O Lord, Thou hast put gladness in my heart” (Ambrose. *Of the Holy Spirit*. 1.6; NPNF. Series 2. 10:103).

St. Augustine the great teacher of God’s undeserved grace among the early fathers writes.

If the Word of God came to men, that they might be called gods, how can the very Word of God, who is with God, be otherwise than God? If by the Word of God men become gods, if by fellowship they become gods, can He by whom they have fellowship not be God? If lights which are lit are gods, is the light which enlighteneth not God? If through being warmed in a way by saving fire they are constituted gods, is He who gives them the warmth other than God? Thou approachest the light and art enlightened, and numbered among the sons of God; if thou withdrawest from the light, thou fallest into obscurity, and art accounted in darkness; but that light approacheth not, because it never recedeth from itself. If, then, the Word of God maketh you gods, how can the Word of God be otherwise than God? Therefore did the Father sanctify His Son, and send Him into the world. Perhaps some one may be saying: If the Father sanctified Him, was there then a time when He was not sanctified? He sanctified in the same way as He begat Him. For in the act of begetting He gave Him the power to be holy, because He begat Him in holiness. For if that which is sanctified was unholy before, how can we say to God the Father, “Hallowed be Thy name”? “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye will not believe me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.” The Son says not, “the Father is in me, and I in Him,” as men can say it. For if we

think well, we are in God; and if we live well, God is in us: believers, by participating in His grace, and being illuminated by Himself, are in Him, and He in us. But not so is it with the only-begotten Son: He is in the Father, and the Father in Him; as one who is equal is in him whose equal he is. In short, we can sometimes say, We are in God, and God is in us; but can we say, I and God are one? Thou art in God, because God contains thee; God is in thee, because thou art become the temple of God: but because thou art in God, and God is in thee, canst thou say, He that seeth me seeth God; as the Only-begotten said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also;" and "I and the Father are one"? Recognize the prerogative of the Lord, and the privilege of the servant. The prerogative of the Lord is equality with the Father: the privilege of the servant is fellowship with the Savior (Augustine. *On the Gospel of St. John*. 48:9-10; NPNF. Series 1. 7:269).

Medieval Greek theology taught a doctrine of theosis that serves as the basis of the modern Eastern Orthodox view of theosis. Symeon the New Theologian writes, "True God truly became perfect man. For this reason He became man which before He was not, in order to make man a god which he had never been before. Since He is not divisible, He deified and made us gods by His divinity, and not by His flesh alone" (Symeon the New Theologian. *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*. II, 45-6). Gregory Palamas referring to Maximus writes, "They become living icons of Christ, being the same as He is, by grace rather than by assimilation" (*Philokalia*. 4:381). Again Palamas writes:

The grace of deification is, therefore, above nature, virtue and knowledge and, according to St. Maximos, all such things entirely fall short of it. For all the virtue we can attain and such imitation of God as lies in our power does nothing more than fit us for union with the deity, but it is through grace that his ineffable union is actually accomplished. Through grace God in His entirety penetrates the saints in their entirety, and the saints in their entirety penetrate God entirely, exchanging the whole of Him for themselves, and acquiring Him alone as the reward of their assent towards Him; for He embraces them as the soul embraces the body, enabling them to be in Him as His own members (*Philokalia*. 4:421).

Nicholas Cabasilus writes:

What then could be a greater proof of kindness and benevolence than that He who washes with water should set the soul free from uncleanness? Or that He by anointing it with chrism should grant it to reign in the heavenly kingdom? Or that He as the Host of the banquet should provide His own Body and Blood? And moreover, that men should become gods (cf. John 10:35) and sons of God (Romans 8:14). And that our nature should be honored with God's honor, and that

dust should be raised to such a height of glory as to become equal in honor and dignity to the divine nature (Cabasilas. *The Life in Christ*. 51-52)?

Certain medieval Latin theologians taught theosis. Hugh of St. Victor writes, “The Son of God was made Son of man that He might make the sons of men sons of God (Hugh. *On the Sacraments*. 2.1.2). Alger of Liege writes that we share in the divine nature by adoption, because Christ has made us His brothers by sharing our nature. By God’s grace, all who received Christ by faith are made sons of God (Alger of Liege. *De Sacramentis*. 1.2; PL. 180.745). Rupert of Deutz speaks about deified man in the context of the feast of Ascension (Rupert of Deutz. *De Divinis Officiis*. 9.6.698-705; CCCM. 7.317). Achard of St. Victor writes in his sermon on *Quadragesima*, “To a great extent there they lay aside the form of a slave and, being free, assume the form of God. In the Spirit they strip themselves of humanity and put on God Himself” (Achard of St. Victor. *Works*. 346). St. Bernard of Clairvaux asks, “Why should we not become gods for Him who for love of us became man” (*The Kolbe Reader*, ed. Ansel W. Romb. 81n). Again the great monastic preacher writes:

It is deifying to go through such an experience. As a drop of water seems to disappear completely in a big quantity of wine, even assuming the wine’s taste and color; just as red, molten iron becomes so much like fire it seems to lose its primary state; just as the air on a sunny day seems transformed into sunshine instead of being lit up; so it is necessary for the saints that all human feelings melt in a mysterious way and flow into the will of God. Otherwise, how will God be all in all if something human survives in man? No doubt, the substance remains though under another form, another glory, another power (Bernard. *De Diligendo Deo*. 10.28; Tamburello. *Union with Christ*. 67)

Anselm of Canterbury writes concerning the Eucharist, “In his immolation He revealed Himself ‘as He is’; and ‘with unveiled faces’ we shall behold His glory, so as to be conformed to Him in all respects, ‘having been made like the body of His glory,’ so that He may be all things to us in eternal bliss” (*Anselm of Canterbury*. III, 243). Bonaventure writes:

Wherefore it is also commanded that His sacrament be surrounded with great solemnity, of a place as well as time, of words and prayers as well as of vestments, in the celebration of Masses; so that both the celebrating priest and the

communicants may realize the gift of grace through which they are cleansed, enlightened, perfected, restored, vivified, and most ardently transformed into Christ by rapturous love (Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. VI.9).

Concerning St. Francis, Bonaventure writes, "The true love of Christ had transformed His lover into His image" (Bonaventure. *Life of St. Francis*. 125). Again the famous Franciscan writes, "Because this inpouring (of grace), rendering the soul deiform, comes from God, conforms to God, and leads to God as an end, it restores our spirit as the image of the most blessed Trinity, affecting it not only as part of the order of creation, but also in terms of the righteousness of the will and the repose of beatitude (Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. V.1). The angelic doctor, Thomas Aquinas, quotes St. Augustine on theosis saying, "God became man, so that man might become god" (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. III.1.2). Again he writes, "For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the divine nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle" (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. I-II.1.12.1). In his *Compendium Theologiae* Thomas Aquinas distinguishes mystical union from the personal union and speaks of theosis as the operation of God in the mystical union. With respect to the Photian error, Thomas writes, "In this event no union of God with man would have been effected; only a man would be deified by grace. Elevation of this sort is not peculiar to Christ, but is common to all the saints, although some may be considered more highly endowed with such grace than others" (Aquinas. *Compendium Theologiae*. 202; Aquinas. *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology*. 231). *Theologia Germanica* which had a profound influence upon Dr. Luther overflows with theosis. In the following citation one may see this work's emphasis on the relationship between theosis and the imitation of Christ, "Moreover, to a deified man, there belongs true, deep, and real humility, and where this is not, the man is not deified. This Christ taught in words and works; and from this it comes that in the True Light is known what is so true" (*Theologia Germanica*. 175).

Martin Luther and the Lutheran Fathers clearly taught theosis. However Lutheran theology preserved the biblical concept of this dogma that was lost by many in the middle ages. Martin Luther writes in his 1515 Christmas Sermon:

As the Word became flesh, so it is certainly necessary that the flesh should also become Word. For just for this reason does the Word become flesh, in order that the flesh might become Word. In other words: God became man, in order that man should become a god. Thus strength becomes weak in order that weakness might become strong. The Logos puts on our form and figure and image and likeness, in order that He might cloth us with His image, form, likeness. Thus wisdom becomes foolish, in order that foolishness might become wisdom, and so in all other things which are in God and us, in all of which He assumes ours in order to confer upon us His (things). We who are flesh are made Word not by being substantially changed into the Word, but by taking it on (*assuminus*) and uniting it to ourselves by faith, on account of which we are said not only to have but even to be the Word (Luther. WA. 28/1:25-32, 39-41).

Luther writes in his 1521 *Kirchen Postille*, “Yes through faith we become gods (*Goetter*) and partakers of the divine nature and name as Psalm 82:6 says: I have indeed said, you are gods (*Goetter*), and altogether children of the most high” (Luther. WA, 17/II, 74; Luther. W2. XI, 481; Luther. *Sermons of Martin Luther*. II, 73-74). In a sermon preached October 1, 1525 he states,

And that we are so filled with “all the fullness of God,” that is said in the Hebrew manner, meaning that we are filled in every way in which He fills, and become full of God, showered with all gifts and grace and filled with His Spirit, Who is to make us bold, and enlighten us with His light, and live His life in us, that His bliss make us blest, His love awaken love in us. In short, that everything that He is and can do, be fully in us and mightily work, that we be completely deified (*vergottet*), not that we have a particle or only some pieces of God, but all the fullness. Much has been written about how man should be deified; there they made ladders, on which one should climb into heaven, and much of that sort of thing. Yet it is sheer piecemeal effort; but here (in faith) the right and closest way to get there is indicated, that you become full of God, that you lack in no thing, but have everything in one heap, that everything that you speak, think, walk, in sum, your whole life be completely divine (*Gottisch*) (Luther. WA. 17:438; Luther. *The Sermons of Martin Luther*. 8:279-280).

In his treatise *Against Latomus*, he makes use of the *Conformitas Christi* or Christification theme.

... so that no fool, having once accepted the gift, will think himself already contented and secure. But he does not want us to halt in what has been received,

but rather to draw near from day to day so that we may be fully transformed into Christ. His righteousness is perpetual and sure; there is no change, there is there no lack, for He Himself is the Lord of all. Therefore, whenever Paul preached faith in Christ, he did so with utmost care to proclaim that righteousness is not only through Him or from Him but even that it is in Him. He therefore draws us into Himself, and transforms us, and places us as if in hiding ‘until the wrath passes away (Luther. LW. 32:235).’”

Dr. Luther writes in 1526, “God pours out Christ His dear Son over us and pours Himself into us and draws us into Himself, so that He becomes completely humanified (*vermenschet*) and we become completely deified (*gantz und gar vergottet*, “Godded-through”) and everything is altogether one thing, God, Christ, and you” (Luther. WA. 20:229-230). With respect to the Eucharist, Luther writes in 1527, “The perishable food changes into the Body, he who eats it, this food again changes him. He who eats it into himself, makes himself like even it (Body of Christ), spiritual, living and eternal, as it is, as He says, ‘This is the bread from heaven that gives life to this world’” (Luther. W2. XX, 844). Again Martin Luther says in a sermon preached on April 15, 1531 the year after the presentation of the *Confessio Augustana*:

It is body and blood which is full of God or that deifies (*durchgoettert*) as water which is thoroughly sugared wherein one cannot taste a drop of water, but a sweet sugar taste and power. So also he who grasps hold of His body, he has not only the simple flesh and blood of Christ but deified flesh and blood...for here alone is the true food (Luther. W2. VII, 2353-5254).

In Luther’s famous Christmas Hymn *Vom Himmel Hoch* or *From Heaven Above*, he states in verse 6 that we become *Gottes Geschlecht* or *God’s race*. In addition Luther’s *Froehliche Wechsel* (joyful exchange) is saturated with theosis imagery.

In the previous statements, Dr. Luther never denied forensic justification nor taught a destruction of substances, rather, he tried to express the mystical union with God in as concrete and real terms as possible. Often he made use of Alexandrian Christological terminology to do this. Many critical individuals have tried to say that Luther only taught theosis in his early years and that he changed his

tune when he discovered the Pauline dogma of forensic justification. Notice that all of these citations except for the initial quote came after Luther's *Turmerlebnis*, so to speak, which occurred around 1519. Clearly Martin Luther taught a real doctrine of theosis that did not contradict forensic justification. Rather Luther views theosis as the action which takes place in the mystical union. Moreover Luther uses theosis in the broad and forensic sense which also does not conflict with forensic justification as has been demonstrated earlier in this thesis.

Luther was not alone, for his followers taught the Scriptural view of theosis as well. Johannes Brenz writes, "That as many as believe in Christ receive divine majesty and become sons of God, that is, gods themselves" (*ac fiant filii Dei, hoc est, dii ipse*) (Brenz. *Evangelium quod inscribitur secundum Joannem*. 379; Elert. *The Structure of Lutheranism*. 157). Tilemann Hesshusius writes, "Here above God has stirred up heaven and earth and must cause the angels and man in all eternity to marvel that God has allowed Himself to go so deep below and man is so highly honored" (Hesshusius. *Postilla*. 54). In the next citation Hesshusius distinguishes between Christ and the other sons of God.

For this reason he (John) also named Him the first born of God so that he make a clear distinction between this Son and the other children of God, who through the Holy Spirit have received sonship. All believers have been named children of God because they are ruled by the Holy Spirit and have become likewise partakers of the divine nature (Hesshusius. *Postilla*. 53).

Martin Chemnitz, the second Martin wrote:

And this is what Justin is saying: "Our blood and flesh are nourished by the bread of the Eucharist by a process of change (kata. metabolh,n)," Leo in *Sermo 14, De passione*, says: "Participation in the body and blood of the Lord does nothing else than transform us into that which we have received." Therefore the opinion of antiquity is that "the essential quality (*proprietas*) of the Only-begotten, that is, His life, itself enters into us and remain in us" through that nature by which He is made our Brother and of the same substance with us, namely, through the most holy body and blood of the Lord (Chemnitz. *Lord's Supper*. 170).

Again Martin Chemnitz writes,



Therefore, in order that we might be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain Him more firmly, not only did He Himself assume our nature but also restored it again for us by distributing His holy body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with His humanity, which has been assumed from us and is again communicated back to us, He might draw us into communion and union with the deity itself (Chemnitz. *Lord's Supper*. 188)

In Nikolaus Herman's great Christmas hymn *Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men*, one can clearly see a theosis motif in verse six. Unfortunately most English translations fail to bring this out. The following is a literal translation.

He exchanges with us in a wonderful manner:  
 He takes on flesh and blood  
 And gives to us in His Father's kingdom  
 The clear deity thereon.

Valerius Herberger writes, "Yes that is your greatest joy that the Lord Jesus Christ your brother is a friend of blood and courage, we are His dear brothers: we are now becoming a race of God, we have become partakers of the divine nature in Christ, we are God's race" (Herberger. *Herz-Postille oder deutliche Erklarung aller Sonn- und Festtags Evangelien*. 65).

Johann Arndt, the great defender of the mystical union, taught the biblical notion of theosis. His following remark echoes that of St. Irenaeus of Lyon. Arndt writes, "He has made Himself as you so that He makes you as Himself" (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 718). His theology of theosis is evident in the next citation as well. "For this reason He has wanted to transform and disguise Himself in everyone so that He through the bond of love reforms and renews everyone in Him and conforms and makes (everyone) similar to Himself" (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 718). Arndt like many Lutherans often makes the remark that the faithful are *Gottes Geschlecht* or a race of God (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 772; *Paradies-Gaertlein*. 87). Again Johann Arndt writes:

For just as a true natural son has not only the flesh and blood of his parents on himself, but also proceeds with the same behavior and disposition: so also those who are born of God must be proceeding with the Spirit of God and bear something of the divine in themselves as Gal 4:6 writes: Because you are children

of God, God has sent the spirit of His Son in your hearts (Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 709).

Johann Gerhard clearly affirmed theosis and tied the *O felix peccatum* (O blessed fall) theme of the fathers to it. He writes, “Christ hath brought to our poor human nature a greater glory than it lost by Adam’s sin. In Christ we receive, more than we lost in Adam. Where sin had abounded, divine grace hath much more abounded” (Gerhard. *Sacred Meditations*. 85). Quoting Irenaeus of Lyon under the *usus practicus* of his *locus* on the person and office of Christ, the arch-theologian of Lutheranism writes: “The Son of God has become the Son of man for the purpose (*ad huc ut*) that man might become the son of God; book 4. c. 37. p. 267” (*ut et homo fieret Dei Filius*) (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 515). Again Gerhard writes: “The pious are called partakers of the divine nature, not that they are gods through participation as Bellarmine says in *De Beat. Sanct.* Cap. 9, but through regeneration, adoption, renewal of the image of God, inhabitation of the favor of God etc.” (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. VIII, 369-370). The consensus of Lutheran High Orthodoxy regarding theosis can be acquired by the *Weimar Bible* which is a Lutheran study bible compiled by the orthodox theologians of the University of Jena and other Lutherans. This famous work edited by Johann Gerhard connects the *Conformitas Christi* theme to II Corinthians 3:18 with the words *zu Christo bekehrten Heiligen* “the transformed into Christ saints” (*Weimarische Bibelwerk*. 314). In the following citation Abraham Calov points out the relationship between theosis and the mystical union.

Therefore Christ offers to us His flesh and His blood in order that we may enjoy spiritually through faith in the Word and sacramentally in the bread and wine the blessings of the Lord’s Supper and have life eternal in Him John 6:53-54. Concerning this the pious fathers delightfully present the mystery of enjoyment as θεολογῶσι (deification) and a most joyous use of the mystical union that Holy Scripture repeats clearly everywhere (Calov. *Systema*. X, 533).

Again the sainted Abraham Calov makes this connection in his great exegetical work.

For it is possible to be explained from the mystery of the personal union, that its foundation is our spiritual union and communion with Christ. For as the Son of

God and the human nature are made participants through the personal union, the human nature of Christ is made a participant of the divine, in as much as its complete fullness is a participant in itself, Col 2:9. So the faithful come to be participants in the divine nature through a spiritual union. 'God has become man,' Athanasius states, Oration V: *Against the Arius*, 'that we are deified in Himself' (Calov. *Biblia Illustrata*. II, 1537).

## 2. Theosis of Christ's Human Nature

Theosis has been used in church history to define what Lutherans call the *genus maiestaticum* (FC SD VIII, 48-52; *Inest theologorum Saxoniorum consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae* 29).

Martin Chemnitz provides the following brief explanation of the *genus maiestaticum* in the table of contents of his *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (1578).

Concerning the third classification or genus or the third general heading of those things which result from and follow the hypostatic union in Christ, namely that although nothing is either added or taken away from the divine nature in itself, yet, because of the hypostatic union with the deity, countless supernatural qualities (ὑπερφυσικά) and qualities which are even contrary (παραφυσικά) to the common condition of human nature are given and communicated to Christ's human nature (Chemnitz. TNC. 6).

The following are some of the sedes doctrina of the genus maiestaticum. *Matthew 28:18,20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. John 5:22-23 "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, 23 "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Luke 4:30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way. John 8:59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by (cf. Schaller. Biblical Christology. 69). etc.*

Now that biblical evidence has been established for this dogma a fuller explanation is warranted. Since Scripture affirms the immutability of God (Malachi 3:6, James 1:17), Christ's divine nature in the

personal union is in no way altered. In addition the human nature also remains intact. If the human nature did not remain intact, Christ could not take man's place as his substitute. Just as the *genus maiestaticum* does not imply the nature of man was altered, so the theosis of Christ's humanity, that is, the eastern expression for the *genus maiestaticum*, also does not alter the human nature of Christ. St. John of Damascus explains, "For just as the flesh was deified without undergoing change in its nature, in the same way also will and energy are deified without transgressing their own proper limits" (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.15; NPNF. Series 2. 9:61). Yet the humanity of Christ is enriched with countless gifts of God and even with the divine attributes of God. In this way the theosis of Christ's humanity is distinct from the theosis of man which only receives created grace. Martin Chemnitz explains:

But these infused, created, finite, yet spiritual, heavenly, and divine gifts of which we were speaking in the last chapter in no way equal or fully describe the excellence, preeminence, and majesty of all of those things which the Scripture teaches and which the ancient church on the basis of Scripture asserted were given to or bestowed upon Christ according to the human nature, in time, because of the hypostatic union with the deity, or which the human nature in Christ has received as a result of this union. For, as we have shown, these gifts are not only created, finite, or habitual gifts, but the very characteristics or attributes of the divine nature of the Logos Himself. Therefore those things which have been given to the human nature in Christ as a result of the hypostatic union with the deity, in addition to the created gifts and finite qualities, we must also posit another exalted classification of giving or communion (κοινωνία) whereby the assumed human nature in Christ by reason of the hypostatic union possesses along with the attributes and characteristics of the divine nature of the Logos the same kind of communion that iron has with fire, whereby the power of the giving light and heat, which is and remains an essential property of the fire, is communicated to the heated iron without any commingling because of union (Chemnitz. TNC. 258-9).

However not all the divine attributes are communicated to Christ's human nature in the same way. For example His humanity is not retroactively eternal. Why is this the case? The answer is that one can say only what Scripture states. The divine attributes that are communicated directly to the human nature are called the operative attributes. Examples of these attributes are omnipotence, omniscience,

and omnipresence. The quiescent attributes like eternity, simplicity, and infinity are not communicated directly but they dwell in the human nature because of the personal union (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. I, 435; II, 236; Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. II, IV). This point is especially stressed by the *Apology of the Book of Concord* against the Reformed *Admonitio Neostadiensis* which rejected the Scriptural view of the communication of the divine attributes to the human nature of Christ by means of a logical deduction (*Apologia oder Verantwortung des christlichen Concordien Buchs*. 81).

In order to show the catholicity of the *genus maiestaticum* the following citations have been cited. Justin Martyr writes, “The things which are outside, above, and beyond nature take place in His nature according to divine power, and it is impossible to make them creditable or, as it were, to place before our eyes according to reason and standards of nature” (Justin Martyr cited in Chemnitz. TNC. 344). Eusebius writes, “The Logos communicated His characteristics from Himself to the assumed nature, but He did not receive in turn the characteristics of the mortal nature” (Eusebius. *Demonstratio Evangelica*. 4.13; Chemnitz. TNC. 345). St. Athanasius of Alexandria writes, “Although the body of Christ possesses a mortal nature, yet it rose again above its nature because of the Logos dwelling in it” (Athanasius. PG. 26:1068; Chemnitz. TNC. 346). St. Hilary of Poitiers writes, “The Word having been made flesh, prayed that that which was temporal might receive the glory of His eternal brilliance, so that the corruption of the flesh might be absorbed and transformed into the power of God and the incorruption of the Spirit” (Hilary. PL. 10:85; Chemnitz. TNC. 352). St. Gregory the Theologian writes, “The donning of incorruptibility... is complete, not only because of the deity, which is most perfect, but also because of the assumed human nature, which is anointed with deity” (Gregory of Nazianzus. *Oratio* 45; PG. 36:640-1; Chemnitz. TNC. 355). St. Ambrose of Milan writes

But they worship not only His Godhead but also His Footstool, as it is written: “And worship His footstool, for it is holy,” Or if they deny that in Christ the mysteries also of His Incarnation are to be worshipped, in which we observe as it were certain express traces of His Godhead, and certain ways of the Heavenly

Word; let them read that even the apostles worshipped Him when He rose again in the glory of His Flesh (Ambrose. *Concerning the Holy Spirit*. 3.11; NPNF. Series 2. 10:145).

St. Augustine of Hippo writes, "I claim that the deity was not affected by the injury to His body, just as we know the flesh was glorified by the majesty of the deity" (Augustine. PL. 42:1165; Chemnitz. TNC. 361). St. Chrysostom on Heb 1:6 writes, "The Father commanded that Christ according to the flesh be adored by all the angels" (Chrysostom. PG. 63:27; Chemnitz. TNC. 366). Leontius of Byzantium writes, "Because of the organic union with God, effected in an immediate way by an intimate union on the level of the hypostasis, the wealth of deification entered the man who was the Lord, in his particular (human) nature" (Leontius of Byzantium. *Adv. Nestorius*. I.18; Meyendorff. *Christ in Christian Thought*. 78-79). St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, "Furthermore He makes the activity of His divine majesty also the property of His flesh, so that the flesh too can make the dead alive and heal the sick" (Cyril of Alexandria. Basel. IV, 239; Chemnitz. TNC. 370). Again the Alexandrian writes:

Even after the resurrection the same body which had suffered continued to exist, although it no longer contained any human weakness. We maintain that it was no longer susceptible to hunger or weariness or anything like this, but was thereafter incorruptible, and not only that but life-giving as well since it is the body of Life, that is the body of the Only Begotten. Now it is radiant with divine glory and is seen to be the body of God. So, even if someone should call it 'divine' just as one might call a man's body 'human,' such a fitting thought would not be mistaken. In my opinion this is what the most-wise Paul said: 'Even if we know Christ according to the flesh, nonetheless we know him no longer' (II Corinthians 5:16). As I have said, because it was God's own body it transcended all human things, yet the earthly body itself did not undergo a transformation into the nature of Godhead, for this is impossible, otherwise we would be accusing the Godhead of being created and of receiving into itself something which was not part of its nature. It would be just as foolish an idea to talk of the body being transformed into the nature of the Godhead as it would to say the Word is transformed into the nature of the flesh. For just as the latter is impossible (for he is unchangeable and unalterable) so too is the former. It is not possible that any creature could be converted into the essence or nature of Godhead, and the flesh is a created thing. We maintain, therefore, that Christ's body is divine insofar as it is the body of God, adorned with unspeakable glory, incorruption, holy, and life-giving; but none of the holy fathers has ever thought or said that it was transformed into the nature of the Godhead, and we have no intention of doing so either (Cyril of

Alexandria. *First Letter of Cyril to Succensus* cited in McGuckin. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy*. 357).

St. John of Damascus writes:

But observe that although we hold that the natures of the Lord permeate one another, yet we know that the permeation springs from the divine nature. For it is that that penetrates and permeates all things, as it wills, while nothing penetrates it: and it is it, too, that imparts to the flesh its own peculiar glories, while abiding itself impossible and without participation in the affections of the flesh. For if the sun imparts to us his energies and yet does not participate in ours, how much the rather must this be true of the Creator and Lord of the Sun (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.7; NPNF. Series 2. 9:52).

Again Damascus writes in his *locus* titled *Concerning the Deification of the Nature of our Lord's Flesh and of His Will*.

It is worthy of note that the flesh of the Lord is not said to have been deified and made equal to God and God in respect of any change or alteration, or transformation, or confusion of nature: as Gregory the Theologian says, "Whereof the one deified, and the other was deified, and, to speak boldly, made equal to God: and that which anointed became man, and that which was anointed became God." For these words do not mean any change in nature, but rather the economical union (I mean the union in subsistence by virtue of which it was united inseparably with God the Word), and the permeation of the natures through one another, just as we saw that burning permeated the steel. For, just as we confess that God became man without change or alteration, so we consider that the flesh became God without change. For because the Word became flesh, He did not overstep the limits of His own divinity nor abandon the divine glories that belong to Him: nor, on the other hand, was the flesh, when deified, changed in its own nature or in its natural properties. For even after the union, both the natures abode unconfused and their properties unimpaired. But the flesh of the Lord received the riches of the divine energies through the purest union with the Word, that is to say, the union in subsistence, without entailing the loss of any of its natural attributes. For it is not in virtue of any energy of its own but through the Word united to it, that it manifests divine energy: for the flaming steel burns, not because it has been endowed in a physical way with burning energy, but because it has obtained this energy by its union with fire (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.17; NPNF. Series 2. 9:65).

Anselm of Canterbury writes, "In all occurrences the divine nature [in the God-man] was not abased but the human nature was exulted. The divine nature was not weakened but the human nature was

mercifully assisted” (Anselm. *A Meditation on the Human Redemption; Anselm of Canterbury*. I, 140-1).

St. Bernard writes:

The apostle does not say, ‘existing or remaining higher than the heaven,’ but rather, ‘He was made higher than the heavens’ (Hebrews 7:26). Do not think that this is said in regards to the nature in which He is who is, but only in regard to that nature in which He was made in time and gained all preeminence for Himself above every principality, and finally above every creature (Bernard. *Sermon 73; Works of St. Bernard IV*, 448f).

At this point it is necessary to address and distinguish Reformed Christology from Scholastic Christology. The purpose of bringing up these two Christological traditions is to explain exactly what the *genus maiestaticum* or theosis of Christ’s humanity is and to refute all false views of it. By doing so, this thesis will show that the theosis of Christ’s humanity refers to a real communication of the divine attributes to the human nature of Christ and not just created gifts. If this real communication of divine attributes to the human nature did not happen, then both the incarnation and the mystical union are in question, because there is no mystical union apart from a real incarnation. In order to do this, it is important to remember the distinction between speaking in the concrete, that is, with reference to person, and abstract, that is, with reference to nature. The Reformed categorically reject *the genus maiestaticum* or the communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ in the abstract sense based upon the principle: *finitum non est capax infiniti* (Zanchius. *Disp. De. Praedicatis post unionem*. Thes. 46; Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. III, 97; Turretin. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. 2:323-332). By doing this they confess that only created gifts are communicated to Christ’s humanity and even reject Christ’s presence in the sacramental mode of the Eucharist (Zanchius. *Disp. De. Praedicatis post unionem*. Thes. 46). Although they will talk about a communication with reference to the person of Christ, all they do is talk. In reality their communication is a mere *praedicatio verbalis* or a verbal communication.



In contradistinction to the Reformed, the Medieval Scholastics have a flawed view of the *genus maiestaticum*. They will allow the divine attributes to be communicated to the humanity of Christ in the abstract sense, with the exception of omnipresence. For example Thomas Aquinas writes, "He hath given all things into His hands, in respect of His humanity, inasmuch as He is made Lord of all of things that are in heaven and that are in earth" (Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*. IV, 132; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). Although they will not speak about a communication in the abstract sense with reference to omnipresence they will talk about a communication of omnipresence to the person of Christ in the concrete sense. For this reason, the Scholastics must be distinguished from the Reformed but their flawed *genus maiestaticum* should be acknowledged. This will be fully discussed under the communication of omnipresence.

Both the Roman Catholics and the Reformed charge the Lutherans with being both unscriptural and contrary to the tradition of the church with respect to the *genus maiestaticum*. This will be proven untrue in this thesis. Furthermore it is quite interesting that many Greek Orthodox scholars have acknowledged the legitimacy of Lutheran Christology. They affirm that Lutheran Christology is both Scriptural and in harmony with the Greek fathers (Watson, Francis. "Martin Chemnitz and the Eastern Church. A Christology of the Consensus of the Fathers." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*. (1994) p. 78, 82-84). The following are three divine attributes communicated to the human nature: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence that will be proved with Scripture and confirmed by patristic witness. They have been chosen since each one has been rejected by the Reformed and the Roman Catholics as being unbiblical and contrary to the tradition of the church.

The attribute of omnipotence is communicated to the human nature of Christ in the following passages. *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Philippians 3:21 Who will transform our lowly body that it may be*

*conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. John 3:35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. Ephesians 1:20 Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Daniel 7:13 " I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. Hebrews 2:8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. Matthew 14:25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.*

The fathers will confirm a real communication of omnipotence to the human nature of Christ in the following citations. St. Athanasius states that Matthew 28:18 and John 17:5 refer to the humanity of Christ (Athanasius cited in Chemnitz. TNC. 347-8). St. Basil writes, "With the nature that God is Lord of all, the human (nature) receives from the Father dominion still in time" (Basil cited in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). Eustathius writes, "The man Christ, or the temple of the Logos, received authority, power, rulership, lordship, and judgment over all things. He received the scepter of the eternal power" (Eustathius. PG. 18:696; Chemnitz. TNC. 397). Emissenus states, "Christ receives power and dominion over all things in heaven and on earth, according to His human nature" (Emissenus cited in Chemnitz. TNC. 398). St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "The soul of Christ was in the heart of the earth, and yet divine power and authority were joined to it" (Gregory of Nyssa. PG. 46:616; Chemnitz. TNC. 353). Epiphanius writes: "When the angel says, 'that holy thing which is born in you shall be called the Son of

God' (Luke 1:35), he is not referring to the fact that the flesh, insofar as its power is concerned, is not greater than other flesh, but the flesh is united with the deity in one union rules with the Father and the Holy Spirit" (Epiphanius. PG. 42:328; Chemnitz. TNC. 357). St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, "With flesh the Only-begotten rules over all things" (Cyril of Alexandria. *Dialogue 6*; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). The Venerable Bede writes concerning Matthew 28:18, "This He speaks not from the deity coeternal with the father, but from the humanity which He took upon Him according to which He was made a little lower than the angels" (Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*. I, 987). Theophylact states, "All things are given into the hands of the Son according to His humanity" (Theophylact cited in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). Nicolaus of Lyra writes, "Christ not alone in so far as He is God, but even in so far as He is man rules in eternity, not only men, but even over angels" (Lyra cited in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). Even Thomas Aquinas is not afraid of stating this dogma which demonstrates the Scholastics had some notion of a communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ. "He hath given all things into His hands, in respect of His humanity, inasmuch as He is made Lord of all things that are in heaven and that are in earth" (Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*. IV, 132; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). Ironically Bellarmine also affirmed this: "Christ's humanity is conceded power over all things" (Bellarmine. *De Christo*. 3.16; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553).

The divine attribute of omniscience is communicated to the human nature of Christ. *Colossians 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. Colossians 2:3 In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; John 2:25 And had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."*

The dogma is also confirmed by antiquity. St. Athanasius writes:

The flesh did not become divine wisdom itself, insofar as it is wisdom, did not increase, but the humanity increased in wisdom and little by little surpassed human nature, since it had truly deified and made the organ of wisdom, so that the wisdom revealed its power through the humanity, and thus wisdom shown from it (Athanasius. PG. 26:436; Chemnitz. TNC. 348).

Epiphanius writes, “For the whole fullness of the deity dwells in Him bodily. Therefore, Christ is the receptacle of the wisdom and deity” (Epiphanius. PG. 43:133; Chemnitz. TNC. 358). Dionysius the Carthusian writes (1402-71): “Universal knowledge of all things and secrets are revealed to the soul of Christ at the first instance of the incarnation” (Dionysius. *Apoc. 1 fol. 194*; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 554). Thomas Aquinas writes in Johann Dorsch’s *Thoma Aquinas dictae Doctor Angelicus Confessor Veritatis Evangelicae Augustana Confessione repetitae*,

When it is inquired whether Christ knows all things in the Word, “all things” may be taken in two ways: First, properly, to stand for all that in any way whatsoever is, will be, or was done, said, or thought, by whomsoever and at any time. And in this way it must be said that the soul of Christ knows all things in the Word. For every created intellect knows in the Word, not all simply, but so many more things the more perfectly it sees the Word. Yet no beatified intellect fails to know in the Word whatever pertains to itself. Now to Christ and to His dignity all things to some extent belong, inasmuch as all things are subject to Him. Moreover, He has been appointed Judge of all by God, “because He is the Son of Man,” as is said John 5:27; and therefore the soul of Christ knows in the Word all things existing in whatever time, and the thoughts of men, of which He is the Judge, so that what is said of Him (John 2:25), “For He knew what was in man,” can be understood not merely of the Divine knowledge, but also of His soul’s knowledge, which it had in the Word. Secondly, “all things” may be taken widely, as extending not merely to such things as are in act at some time, but even to such things as are in potentiality, and never have been nor ever will be reduced to act. Now some of these are in the Divine power alone, and not all of these does the soul of Christ know in the Word. For this would be to comprehend all that God could do, which would be to comprehend the Divine power, and, consequently, the Divine Essence. For every power is known from the knowledge of all it can do. Some, however, are not only in the power of God, but also in the power of the creature; and all of these the soul of Christ knows in the Word; for it comprehends in the Word the essence of every creature, and, consequently, its power and virtue, and all things that are in the power of the creature (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. III.10.2; Dorsch, *Thoma Aquinas dictae Doctor Angelicus Confessor Veritatis Evangelicae Augustana Confessione repetitae*. 40-41).

Nicolaus of Lyra writes, “Christ has in the divine nature the same knowledge with the Father, in the human nature He knows all things which God knows by means of knowing the idea”(Nicolaus of Lyra. *Postilla Super Totam Bibliam*. John 3:31; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 554).

Due to the controversies over the omnipresence of Christ, the following discussion will be needed for clarification. There have been at least three major views concerning the communication of the omnipresence to the human nature of Christ. The first view is that of the Reformed. They believe that there is no communication of the omnipresence of Christ to the human nature. The second view is held by the Scholastic and modern Catholics to varying degrees. This group is not always consistent on how they define the presence of Christ’s human nature although they all agree that it is in many places via transubstantiation. However transubstantiation is rendered a miracle by which no proof for the omnipresence of Christ’s human nature via the personal union can be drawn. Now there is an interesting distinction among the schoolmen that needs to be addressed. Many have used a *totus-totum* distinction to explain the omnipresence of Christ. This distinction is summarized by Thomas Aquinas in the following citation.

...‘totus’ does not apply to the person as a thing is called whole because it has parts, but ‘totus’ applies to the person in the same way a thing is called whole because it is perfect and nothing is missing from it. Thus he (Christ) is said to be everywhere in his entirety because there is nothing missing from his existence as person which enable him to be everywhere. For since the ‘totus’ is of the masculine gender, it applies to the person. Insofar as he is everywhere, he is missing something of what pertains to the human nature, because according to the human nature he is not everywhere. And therefore it is said that he is not everywhere ‘totum,’ because since ‘totum’ is of the neuter gender it applies to the nature (Aquinas. *Scriptum Super Sententiis*. III.22.1.2).

This distinction may seem to echo the Reformed *finitum non est capax infiniti*. It is similar in that both the Reformed and the Scholastics only want to speak about any communication in the concrete sense or in reference to the person. Both also object to speaking of any communication of omnipresence in the

abstract or to the human nature of Christ (Turretin. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. 2:323ff). Remember the schoolmen used “concrete” and “*totus*” to refer to the person and “abstract” and “*totum*” to refer to the nature. Such terms are also employed by the Lutherans although the Lutherans spoke of a communication in the abstract sense. Still it would not be correct to equate the schoolmen with the Reformed since the Scholastics held to a real presence in the Eucharist albeit transubstantiation. Furthermore many were willing to speak of the omnipresence of the person of Christ although they typically refrained from talking about a communication in the abstract sense as the Thomas’ citation indicates. If this were rejected the reason oriented Scholastics would have also had to deny their real presence in the Eucharist. Furthermore some like John Duns Scotus even made the remark that the divine power one with the same body could be in several places, locally or by dimension, even independently of the miracle of transubstantiation (Scotus. *Omnia Opera*. IV.10.2). In addition he states that although God alone is everywhere because of His immensity, this does not mean that God, by His power, cannot make something not Himself to be everywhere (Scotus. *Omnia Opera*. IV.10.2.15). Obviously the Lutherans and the Scholastics do not agree on the nature of the communication of omnipresence. But it should be noted that the Scholastics are different from the Reformed and could be used to show that the Reformed view is totally philosophical while the Scholastics are unbiblical and a bit philosophical. Nevertheless the Scholastic’s view not only endangers the person of Christ but also the mystical union. If Christ’s humanity is the only way to access the divinity and the humanity of Christ may not be present, then the mystical union is compromised!

The third view of the communication of omnipresence is the biblical Lutheran view. This view is based on Scripture and has avoided all rational arguments as *sedes doctrina* for this dogma. In summary it states that omnipresence is communicated to Christ’s human nature by virtue of the personal union. Furthermore omnipresence does not become an essential attribute of the human nature for this would

destroy it. Rather it is communicated to the human nature so that Christ can fill all things. This communication is not posited to prove the real presence in the Eucharist for Scripture affirms the real presence with Christ's words *hoc est corpus meum*. However if one rejects the communication of omnipresence to the human nature on the basis of a philosophical premise, then one has to reject the real presence in the Eucharist via the same philosophical presupposition. Since reason cannot deduce the nature of both of these presences, one must look to Scripture alone. For this reason permit this thesis to present some of the passages which affirm this dogma.

*Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. Matthew 28:20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. John 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

Now so that no one may question the catholicity of this teaching let us hear the words of antiquity. Origen writes,

When a certain lump of iron is placed in a fire, so that it receives the fire into all its pores and veins, and if the fire and all of its effects are never removed from it, and it in turn is never separated from the fire, we can say that it has taken on all the qualities of fire, since nothing is seen in it except fire. Now, if someone should touch it, he will feel the power of the fire, not that of the iron. Thus also the soul, which is like iron in the fire, is always present in the Logos, so that all it does, all it feels, all it understands is God (Origen. PG. 11:213-14; Chemnitz. TNC. 344).

St. Athanasius writes, “For since He was a body, and since the Logos was not outside the body, He is correctly said to have been exsulted as a man because of His body...for the Logos received things from the Father because of His humanity and was exsulted by the Father” (Athanasius. PG. 26:104-5; Chemnitz. TNC. 346). St. Augustine of Hippo writes, “But the shutting of doors presented no obstacle to the matter of his body, wherein Godhead resided. He indeed could enter without being opened, by whose birth the virginity of His mother remained inviolated” (Augustine. *On the Gospel of St. John*. 121; NPNF. Series 1. 7:438). Oecumenius writes, “Once the bare divinity filled all things, but the incarnate one descended and ascended so that He would fill all things with His flesh (μετὰ σαρκός) (Oecumenius cited in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 560). St. John Chrysostom writes, “Are there many Christs, just because He is offered in many places? By no means. Rather, there is one Christ everywhere, who is both completely here and completely there, as one body” (Chrysostom. *Homilies on Hebrews*. 17; NPNF. Series 1. 14:449; *Catalog of Testimonies*. X). St. Leo the Great writes,

Each nature, indeed, expresses its true character by distinct modes of operation, but neither separates itself from its connection with the other; here neither is without the other in anything. But God has assumed the whole human being and thus united himself to the latter and the latter to himself, so that each nature is in the other and neither enters into the other without its own set of characteristics (Leo the Great. PL. 54:319; *Catalog of Testimonies*. IX).

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes,

As I have said, because it was God’s own body it transcended all human things, yet the earthly body itself did not undergo a transformation into the nature of Godhead, for this is impossible, otherwise we would be accusing the Godhead of being created and of receiving into itself something which was not part of its nature. It would be just as foolish an idea to talk of the body being transformed into the nature of the Godhead as it would to say the Word is transformed into the nature of the flesh. For just as the latter is impossible (for he is unchangeable and unalterable) so too is the former. It is not possible that any creature could be converted into the essence or nature of Godhead, and the flesh is created thing. We maintain, therefore, that Christ’s body is divine insofar as it is the body of God, adorned with unspeakable glory, incorruption, holy, and life-giving; but none of the holy fathers has ever thought or said that it was transformed into the nature of the Godhead, and we have no intention of doing so either (Cyril. *First*



*Letter of Cyril to Succensus* cited in McGuckin. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy*. 357).

Theophylact of Ochrid writes, “So that he might fill all things by ruling and performing his tasks, and so that he might do this in the flesh since already before this [the incarnation] he filled all things with his divinity” (Theophylact. PL. 124:1083; *Catalog of Testimonies*. IX).

The mystical union proves a communication of omnipresence to the humanity of Christ, for if Christ’s humanity is absent one cannot have access to the divinity (cf. Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 707-8). Therefore the mystical union demands a communication of omnipresence. Another contested proof of this dogma although widely affirmed by the fathers was *clausum utero*. In addition since the right hand of God is not a location as most of the fathers teach, Christ’s body must be present with the deity. Furthermore one cannot confess with the council of Chalcedon and the fathers that Christ is undivided (ἀδιαίρετως) while claiming that His body is not present with His divinity denying a communication of the divine attributes (*Symbolum Chalcedonense*; Schaff. *Creeeds of Christendom* II, 62). How can one affirm Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and deny the omnipresence of His humanity? How can one adore the flesh of Christ with the fathers apart from the *genus maiestaticum*?

It should be noted as the Calvinists quite often do that the fathers also spoke of the finiteness of the human nature. However the Reformed are mistaken when they claim that such quotes refute the communication of omnipresence to the human nature. In reality these passages are speaking about the essential attributes of the human nature. Omnipresence never becomes an attribute of the human nature. Here the Lutherans agree with the Reformed. However in the personal union omnipresence is communicated to the human nature, although it never becomes a property of the human nature.

Following are some Lutheran citations which reflect the communication of omnipresence to the humanity of Christ proving Lutherans have always maintained this teaching. These citations are present to show that orthodox Lutheranism continued to maintain a biblical understanding of the communication

of omnipresence to the humanity of Christ. Dr. Martin Luther writes, “Wherever you place God, there you must also place with Him His human nature; they do not permit themselves to be separated or divided from each other” (Luther. W2. XX, 951). Johann Gerhard writes, “Because after the incarnation the Logos is not outside of the flesh nor is the flesh outside of the Logos, but insofar as it is logos it is united and in Himself subsists the hypostasis of the Logos” (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici* I, 544, cf Arndt. *Wahres Christentum*. 216). August Pfeiffer the Superintendent of Luebeck writes:

That Christ, according to His humanity, is omnipresent we learn, furthermore, from the fact that He sitteth on the right hand of God, by which we of course understand not a locality or position, but the omnipresent power of God, the full and constant use of which Christ assumed at His ascension. For He “ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.” Eph. 4:10. The omnipresence of God is spoken of in the same manner in Jer. 23:25: “Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” Finally, we have the explicit promise of Christ that, according to His humanity also, He will be present with His church on earth even unto the end of the world, Matt 28:20; not only in the Sacrament, wherein by means of the consecrated bread and wine, He gives us His body and blood, I Cor. 10:16, but also outside of the Sacrament; not only with the apostles throughout their lives, but also with all believers (Pfeiffer. *Anti-Calvinism*. 64-5).

*Consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae* states, “we reject those who teach the man Christ has omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence personally, but do not allow the human nature of Christ to be or to be said to have omnipotence, omniscience, and even omnipresence” (Henke. *Inest theologorum Saxoniorum consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae*. 30). After stating the aforementioned, the *Consensus* also argues that omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence are not essential attributes of the humanity of Christ although communicated to it (Henke. *Inest theologorum Saxoniorum consensus repetitus fidei vere lutheranae*. 29).

Why spend so much time affirming a real communication of the divine attributes to the human nature? First and foremost Scripture teaches it and it is necessary for salvation. Second it has been rejected in a greater or lesser degree as unbiblical or contrary to the fathers. Third to distinguish the mystical union from the personal union which only receives created grace. Fourth to demonstrate that

the theosis of Christ's human nature is caused by divine attributes and created gifts although the divine attributes never become the essential attributes of the human nature. Finally the mystical union cannot exist apart from the incarnation.

Theosis has also been used by the patristic fathers and Lutheran fathers to teach the *genus maiestaticum*. Now that the *genus maiestaticum* has been established by Scripture and confirmed by the exegesis of the fathers, this thesis will demonstrate that the *genus maiestaticum* and the theosis of Christ's humanity are the synonymous. In other words when the fathers spoke of the theosis of Christ's humanity, they mean a communication of the divine attributes to His human nature. Only those passages which use deification language and speak of the communication of the essential attributes to the humanity of Christ will be cited here. St. Athanasius of Alexandria writes:

The flesh did not become divine wisdom itself, insofar as it is wisdom, did not increase, but the humanity increased in wisdom and little by little surpassed human nature, since it had truly deified and made the organ of wisdom, so that the wisdom revealed its power through the humanity, and thus wisdom shone from it (Athanasius. PG. 26:436; Chemnitz. TNC. 348).

Leontius of Byzantium writes, "Because of the organic union with God, effected in an immediate way by an intimate union on the level of the hypostasis, the wealth of deification entered the man who was the Lord, in his particular (human) nature" (Leontius of Byzantium. *Adv. Nestorius*. I.18; Meyendorff. *Christ in Christian Thought*. 78-79). St. John of Damascus writes in his *locus* titled *Concerning the Deification of the Nature of our Lord's Flesh and of His Will*.

It is worthy of note that the flesh of the Lord is not said to have been deified and made equal to God and God in respect of any change or alteration, or transformation, or confusion of nature: as Gregory the Theologian says, "Whereof the one deified, and the other was deified, and, to speak boldly, made equal to God: and that which anointed became man, and that which was anointed became God." For these words do not mean any change in nature, but rather the economical union (I mean the union in subsistence by virtue of which it was united inseparably with God the Word), and the permeation of the natures through one another, just as we saw that burning permeated the steel. For, just as we confess that God became man without change or alteration, so we consider that

the flesh became God without change. For because the Word became flesh, He did not overstep the limits of His own divinity nor abandon the divine glories that belong to Him: nor, on the other hand, was the flesh, when deified, changed in its own nature or in its natural properties. For even after the union, both natures abode unconfused and their properties unimpaired. But the flesh of the Lord received the riches of the divine energies through the purest union with the Word, that is to say, the union in subsistence, without entailing the loss of any of its natural attributes. For it is not in virtue of any energy of its own but through the Word united to it, that it manifests divine energy: for the flaming steel burns, not because it has been endowed in a physical way with burning energy, but because it has obtained this energy by its union with fire (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.17; NPNF. Series 2. 9:65).

Certain Scholastics like Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas refer to Christ's deified flesh but since they are weak on the genus *maiestaticum* as a whole no more attention will be given to them.

Martin Luther used theosis to define the *genus maiestaticum* as did Johannes Brenz.

It is body and blood which is full of God or that deifies (*durchgoettert*) as water which is thoroughly sugared wherein one cannot taste a drop of water, but a sweet sugar taste and power. So also who grasps hold of His body, he has not only the simple flesh and blood of Christ but deified flesh and blood...for here alone is the true food (Luther. W2. VII, 2353-5254).

Johannes Brenz writes, "that the attributes of the divine nature have been communicated to the humanity of Christ, which thus is deified" (Brenz cited in Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 154).

Lutheran Orthodoxy equated the theosis of Christ's humanity with the *genus maiestaticum*.

Martin Chemnitz writes:

Throughout the ancient church, particularly the Greek church, the most common words to designate deification are Justin's term ἀποθέωσις, Eusebius' συναποθέωσις, Nazianzus' θέωσις, Athanasius' θεοποίησις, θεολόγωσις, Epiphanius' ἕνθεον, and Damascenus' λόγωσις. Damascenus in Bk. 3, ch, 12, explains that the ancients in using this term "deification" did not at all have in mind a transmutation, commingling, conversion, abolition, or equating of the natures, but they wished by this term to describe first of all the plan of the personal union. For just as with respect to the assumed humanity this union is called a putting on of flesh (σάρκωσις) or a putting on of the man's nature (ἐνανθρώπησις), so with respect to the deity which is united to the humanity the ancients called it a putting on of God (θέωσις) or a putting on of the Logos (λόγωσις). In the second place, because of this personal union we can say that the man Christ is God. In the third place, Damascenus says that by the term

“deification” the ancients were trying to indicate the reciprocal relationship or interpenetration (περιχώρησις) of the natures, just as we use the term “firing” (πύρωσις) with reference to the iron because of its union with the fire, which is communicated to the iron, giving the iron the power of glowing and giving heat. Thus the flesh of the deity is enriched through the union by these actions, as we explained above, and it is thus described by the ancients as being deification (θεοθεΐσα). Damascenus, Bk. 2, ch. 22, says: “ We say that man is deified not by transmutation into the divine essence but by a participation in the divine brilliance” (τῆ μετοχῇ τῆς θείας ἐλλάμψεως) (Chemnitz. TNC. 396).

However it should be pointed that at Martin Chemnitz’ time, theosis was no longer a common theological term. For this reason and due to the Schwenkfelder’s Eutychian tendencies, he believed it was best not to use it (Chemnitz. TNC. 396). Johann Gerhard also demonstrates that theosis was the term the fathers employed for the *genus maiestaticum*, although he does not appear to have any reservations about its continued use.

Scripture calls this genus ὑπερύψωσις, μεγαλοσύνη ἐν ὑψηλοῖς etc.; the Greek fathers:θέωσις, ἀποθέωσις, μετάληψις θείας ἀξίας Justin; μετάδοσις καὶ μετοχὴ θείας ἐξουσίας Basil; μεγάλη προσθήκη, βελτίωσις, θεοποίησις, θεολόγωσις, πλήρωσις Athanasius; δυνάμωσις, συνδυνάμωσις Eriphanus; μεταποίησις [Gregory of] Nyssa; εἰς τὸ ἴδιον τῆς θεότητος ὕψος διὰ τῆς ἐνώσεως ἀναγωγῆ. The same one[again]; δύναμις καὶ δόξα ἐπίκτητος Eastachius; ἔνθεος δύναμις Eusebius; μετοχὴ τῆς θείας ἐλλάμψεως, πλοῦτος τῶν θείων ἐνεργειῶν ἐκ τῆς πρὸς τὸν ὕψιστον λόγον ἐνώσεως καὶ συμφύιας τῇ σαρκὶ προσγιγόμενος, μετάδοσις τῶν θείων ἀρχημάτων Damascus. By the Latin fathers *communicatio maiestatis, transformatio assumptae naturae in divinam gloriam et operationem, proectio naturae humanae etc.* (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 544).

Franz Pieper writes:

This truth is expressed by the Greek terms δόξασις (glorification), βελτίωσις (improvement), μετάδοσις (impartation), μεταποίησις (change), μετοκὴ θείας δυνάμειος (communion of the divine power), and other terms. Moreover, since in those days there was less danger of defamation than there is now, they used even such terms as θέωσις, ἀποθέωσις, and θεοποίησις, all of which mean “deification,” though not in the sense that human nature was changed into the deity, but to designate the personal union of God and man, and the resulting permeation of the human nature by the divine. The Lutheran doctrine of the communication of the divine attributes to the human nature is therefore not an innovation, but was already taught by the ancient church fathers, both Greek and Latin. This is convincingly demonstrated in the *Catalogus Testimoniorum*, which was published

by Andreae and Chemnitz as their personal testimony and was later appended to the Formula of Concord (Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 220).

### **K. *Unio Iustitia Imputata* and Forensic Theosis**

One of the more recent and intriguing contributions of Tuomo Mannermaa's Finnish school is a book titled *Restauratio Imaginis Divinae. Die Vereinigung von Gott und Mensch, ihre Voraussetzung und Implikationen bei Johann Gerhard* by Martti Vaahtoranta. While Vaahtoranta may hold to many of the Finn's views, he points out an important theme in Lutheranism. Lutheranism often speaks of justification as Christ "covering up" (*beziehen*) the sins of the sinner with His merits or Himself so that the Father no longer sees the sin but Christ and declares the sinner innocent. By means of this Scriptural picture, Vaahtoranta suggests that Johann Gerhard thinks of some kind of *unio* or union in justification as well. Such an idea seems to be present in the following remark of Dr. Luther where he uses forensic theosis language and in the Gerhard citation where he speaks of the *induitio* or *Anziehen* (*put on* or *clothing*) of Christ.

Luther indeed said in his commentary on Gal 2, the faithful are so stuck together with Christ through faith that they are 'as' (*quasi*) one person with Himself that He is able to say: 'I am Christ', but immediately he explains, adding: e.g. the righteousness of Christ, and the victory of Christ is mine and in turn Christ says: 'I am the sinner', e.g. his sin, his death, etc. are Mine (Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. III, 294).

Therefore we say that Christ is put on (*indui*) by faith in the act of justification because His righteousness is imputed to us (if we put on Christ through faith and even His righteousness, which thus is imputed to us, we are able to put Him before our name at the judgment of God) (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. Cotta Edition. Locus. XVI. Par. 209; Vaahtoranta. *Restauratio Imaginis Divinae*. 251).

Traditionally Lutherans have not defined this "covering up" as an *unio* or much less an *unio mystica*. Furthermore the *Formula of Concord* and Lutheranism has used the term *unio mystica* exclusively in sanctification since this term is associated with *gratia infusa*. However there appears to be some presence of God in justification distinct from an *unio mystica* or *unio generalis* or general union.

In fact such a presence or *unio* with God in justification would seem to be possible without communicating the substance of God or *gratia infusa* since the *unio generalis* or general union is even present in the unbeliever and all things without communicating anything. For this reason it is important to recognize that the presence of God or an *unio* does not necessarily communicate anything but is the bond in which something is or is not communicated. The fact that Lutheranism has used the term *unio* in the *unio generalis* confirms this idea. Thus according to Lutheran usage an *unio* is the presence of God in which some action does or does not occur. Yet the problem still remains. Lutherans have not used the term *unio* with respect to the presence of God in justification. However this problem appears to be more semantic than dogmatic. Moreover Lutheranism has made use of forensic theosis language which would seem to be harmonious with a forensic union with God. For this reason a new *unio* term would seem to be theologically legitimate if this *unio* is conceived of as merely a bond in which *gratia imputata* is communicated in a completely forensic action. In fact this concept would help explain what Martin Luther really meant in his 1535 Commentary on Galatians where he writes, “*in ipse fide Christus adest*” (in faith itself Christ is present) (Luther. WA. 40/I, 229, 15; *Luther und Theosis*. 33). Furthermore such a term would help distinguish Orthodox Lutheranism from the New Finnish Theology proposed by Tuomo Mannermaa. In order to do this a term would have to be developed that would convey the biblical concept of “covering up” in a forensic action and that would only communicate *gratia imputata*. Moreover such a term would also need to distinguish the *unio mystica* and *unio generalis* from this forensic union. Such a term could be an *unio iustitia imputata*.

If such a view is orthodox, why did not the fathers develop such a term? First the answer is that terminology usually arises in controversy. This issue was not a controversy. Second there is no way that any church father is going to come up with a term for everything. Thus just because the fathers did not coin the term does not mean they rejected the concept. For example Lutheran Orthodoxy did not coin the

term “objective justification.” However by coining this term the Synodical Conference fathers did not innovate a dogma but developed a term to describe what Scripture and the Dogmaticians had taught. Since the Scriptures and the fathers seem to have recognized a forensic presence of God in justification, the term *unio iustitia imputata* is purely a semantic designation for the biblical and Lutheran view. It is in no way intended to be an innovation. In other words the term is a new term meant to encapsulate an idea found in Scripture and Lutheranism. However the Finnish concept of Johann Gerhard’s view of justification proposed by Vaahtoranata does not appear to be so innocent. This individual may be carrying a large amount of Finnish baggage. In point of fact Martti Vaahtoranta wrote an article on this subject in *Lutherische Beitrage* titled *Johann Gerhard und die aktuelle Rechtfertigungslehre* or *Johann Gerhard and his Actual Doctrine of Justification* revealing his Finnish tendencies.

#### **L. Relation to the Theology of the Cross**

Does not all this talk about mystical union with God and the transformation of man oppose the theology of the cross? Kurt Marquart responds, “The point of the theology of the cross does not mean that Christ or God is not glorious or powerful, or should not be treated or worshiped as such, but that we can know this glory and power only by faith which grasps God under the very opposite appearances.” (Marquart. *Luther and Theosis*. 194-195)! Any talk about theosis must pass a certain litmus test to be genuine theology of the cross. It must first direct the Christian only to the crucified and risen Savior and His means of grace alone. Any theology of communication in uncreated light directly and experientially apart from the means of grace but through spiritual exercises clearly contradicts the theology of the cross. Second it has to be a movement of God downward rather than a movement of man upward (Marquart. *Luther and Theosis*. 195-196). Man does not climb a ladder to God, rather heaven and God descend to him (Luther. WA. 17/1:438). Therefore it should be no surprise that the biblical *unio mystica*



and theosis are also intimately linked with the incarnation and the *tentatio* (affliction) of the believer or, better, imitation of Christ.

The mystical union and the theosis of man are firmly grounded in the incarnation and have their origins in it. Apart from the incarnation, there cannot be a mystical union or theosis, for man cannot behold God in His awesome divinity since it would consume him. For this reason, man can have access to God only through the human nature of Christ. In addition the personal union also serves as the paradigm for the mystical union as does Christian marriage.

The mystical union and theosis are intimately linked to the *tentatio* of the believer and the imitation of Christ. *I Peter 2:21* For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. Thus living a transformed life does not mean that the Christian's life is suddenly separated from trials and *tentatio* or *Anfechtung* (affliction). Rather a sanctified existence will experience many and numerous afflictions. In fact often the greater the saint is the more severe the trials will be. But how does this spiritual angst translate into theosis? This is the paradox of the cross. Man's theosis is very real yet veiled in the afflicted life of the imitation of Christ. For this reason *tentatio* cannot be separated from the imitation of Christ as Christ's instructions, "to bear ones cross and follow after Him," indicates (Matthew 10:38).

The relationship between theosis and the affliction of the imitation of Christ is quite apparent in the fathers. St. Augustine concurs, "For inquiry," says he, "purifies and imitation deifies us by moving us nearer to Him" (Augustine. *City of God*. 19.23; NPNF. Series 1. 2:417). St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, "Therefore we mount up unto dignity above our nature for Christ's sake, and we too shall be sons of God, not like Him in exactitude, but by grace in imitation of Him" (Cyril. *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*. 104). Dr. Luther writes that when the sinner denies himself and clings to the Word, keeping nothing whatsoever of his own, he becomes what he grasps and therefore is deified

(Luther. WA. 1:29.6-10). Johann Gerhard sees this connection as so central that he writes an entire devotion in his *Sacra Meditationes* linking theosis with the affliction under *The Imitation of Christ*. He writes, "If thou wouldst be an adopted son of God, behold how thy Savior, the only-begotten Son of God, lived in this world. If you wouldst be a joined heir with Christ, then you shouldst also be an imitator of Christ...If thou bearest the cross after Him here, thou shalt share in His eternal glory over there" (Gerhard. *Sacred Meditations*. 170&172). Thus man's transfigured existence is not manifested in majesty but is veiled in the imitation of Christ's passion. Clearly this does not mean that one should become a martyr. Nor should one despise the blessings of God whether spiritual or material. Yet one should also not manipulate God for He shall not be mocked.

How does man participate in the passion of Christ? Christ answers: *Matthew 10:38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me*. In Christ's words one sees the bearing of *tentatio* or affliction for the sake of Jesus as part of the imitation of Christ. St. Paul writes:

*Romans 6:2-7 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

Here the apostle explains that via Baptism we each participate in Christ's passion imitating our Lord. This point is often reflected in Lutheran liturgics which emphasizes Baptism as the Christian's holy week event. Again St. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:1-2 *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*. In other words imitate and reflect Christ as an icon of love to all around you in love. Offer spiritual sacrifices to God by giving of yourself for the Spiritual edification of all around

you. Johann Arndt said it well when he wrote, "Christ has many servants but few followers." Arndt does not mean that one should not be a servant. Rather he is referring to false servants who are looking to add to their own glory rather than the glory of Christ and those around. Christ became poor and lowly so that we might be rich. By virtue of Christ's work, the faithful are brought from the poverty of this life to the glory of the life to come.

### **M. Incarnation without Sin**

Would Christ have become incarnate if man had not sinned? This may seem like a very strange question to ask, nevertheless it has been asked quite frequently in Christianity. The origin of the question is twofold. The first question is: Did mankind gain anything that Adam did not have through the incarnation? The second question is: what is the eternal purpose or *finis* of mankind? If one answers "yes" to the first question, then one often will ask why would God have not become man even if mankind resisted the fall. In order to counter the charge that God desired the fall, one following this logic may respond that God would have become incarnate either way. The answer to the second question is linked to the first, because if mankind gained something in the fall then this must also have been the purpose of Adam before the fall otherwise God appears to desire sin.

Both of these questions are dangerous because they try to unravel the hidden will of God. Mankind can approach God only through His revealed will or the means of grace. Any other approach runs contrary to Scripture and results in blasphemy. However the question is addressed because it is often asked in the context of the mystical union or theosis. The reason that this question arises is that if the theosis of man is the *finis* of man, then it would seem logical that the incarnation had to occur regardless of whether man sinned or not, since the mystical union is predicated from the incarnation. Although this deduction is very logical, it attempts to pry into the hidden will of God.

Although no true Lutheran would claim God desired the fall, some have made the statement, "O *felix peccatum*" that is "O blessed sin" or also "O blessed fall." In fact Johann Gerhard makes this remark concerning Christ's incarnation: "My nature is greater in You than it was disgraced in Adam through sin" (Gerhard. *The Daily Exercise of Piety*. 60; cf also Gerhard. *Sacred Meditations*. 85). Likewise C.F.W. Walther uses the following theme for one of his Christmas day sermons: "That we find more again in Bethlehem than we first have lost in paradise" (Walther. *Festklaenge*. 68). Furthermore in this sermon, Walther makes use of the expression "O blessed guilt" (Walther. *Festklaenge*. 75). Although both of these men concluded on the basis of Scripture (Matthew 18:11, I John 4:9-10) that Christ would not have become incarnate had mankind remained in perfection, they did not hesitate to use the expression *O felix peccatum* (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 514; Baier/Walther. *Compendium*. III, 101-102).

When Andreas Osiander asked this question in his treatise, *An filius Dei fuerit incarnandus, si peccatum non introivisset in mundum, item: De imagine Dei, quid sit* (1550), he answered with the affirmative (Osiander. GA. IX, 450-491). No one else in Lutheranism has ever answered this question with a "yes." Johann Gerhard cites numerous individuals on both sides of this subject, although he replies with "no" to this subject. Some of those saying "yes" are Rupertus Turciensis, Gabriel Biel, Albert the Great, and Duns Scotus (Scotus. *Summa Theologica*. V, 28-31; Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 513). He even names a few Calvinists who answered affirmatively like Zanchi. Such individuals often cite God's immutability and the fulfillment of the image of God as the basis for their assertion. This notion of the fulfillment of the image of God was also at the center of Osiander's anthropology. However, the majority of the church has answered this question with a "no." Some of those answering "no" are Athanasius, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure. However, Thomas Aquinas said that if God wanted, He could have done it

but argued from Scripture that He probably would not have (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. III.1.2-3). The *Formula of Concord* does not directly deal with the subject. Nevertheless the *Book of Concord* and all of Lutheranism have stated on the basis of Scripture that the purpose of the incarnation was for salvation (CA III).

### **III. Antitheses**

As in any confession of sound doctrine, all false doctrine must be refuted. For this reason the following groups have been cited with their errors. The purpose of this portion of the thesis is twofold. First it rejects all false notions of the mystical union and theosis establishing their biblical boundaries. Second by means of clarifying what the mystical union and theosis are not, it is the hope of this thesis that a better understanding of the correct dogma will result.

#### **A. Contra Neoplatonism**

Often the mystical union and theosis have been written off as more hellenistic than biblical. As far as the biblical dogma of theosis and the mystical union are concerned, those who consider this dogma to be some platonic fantasy are clearly confused. However there have been certain abuses of this dogma that have Neoplatonic origins. To be sure, Plotinus taught a certain union with the deity. But his union was a transubstantiation into the divine that was essentially pantheism. In typical platonic fashion it tended to despise anything earthly. Nevertheless this paper is not really concerned with Plotinus.

What is important is the influence Neoplatonism had on the church. No student of church history can deny that certain individuals were very influenced by Neoplatonism. Yet most of the ancient church never allowed Neoplatonism to subvert the main tenets of their theology. The result of such an invasion of this philosophy are the following. The nature of the mystical union is defined as transubstantiation into God. This union with God results in pantheism. The incarnation is denigrated as earthly. The means of grace are despised since purity cannot be conveyed via earthly elements. Instead an emphasis on a

return to a primeval state of contemplation became the center of this spirituality. A hierarchy forms between God and man.

### **B. Contra Eastern Orthodoxy**

The dialogue between the Finnish Lutherans and the Russian Orthodox Church has once again alluded to the patristic continuum in Lutheran theology. This is evident in numerous citations of the Greek fathers in Lutheran works and the 16<sup>th</sup> century attempts at union. However modern Eastern Orthodox dogma is not identical to Lutheran dogma. As far as the theosis of Christ's human nature is concerned there is no argument as Father Pomazansky demonstrates (cf. also Watson, Francis. "Martin Chemnitz and the Eastern Church. A Christology of the Consensus of the Fathers." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*. (1994) p. 73-86).

"Indivisibly, inseparably." Both natures are forever united, not forming two persons which are only morally united, as Nestorius taught. They are inseparable from the moment of the conception (that is, the man was not formed first, and then God was united with him, but God the Word, descended into the womb of Mary the Virgin, formed a living human flesh for Himself). These natures were also inseparable at the time of the Savior's suffering on the Cross, at the moment of death, at the Resurrection and after the Ascension, and unto the ages, In His deified flesh the Lord Jesus Christ will also come at His Second Coming (Pomazansky. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. 183).

But there is contention over the theosis of man. The Eastern Orthodox teach theosis as their doctrine of salvation. As a result of this forensic justification is rejected. The Byzantine notion of salvation is deification of man by a gradual infusing of divine uncreated energies. In contradistinction to this, Lutheranism maintains forensic justification and teaches that the mystical union and theosis in the narrow sense encompass sanctification. Sadly the Eastern Orthodox have confused justification and sanctification.

### **C. Contra Osiandrianism**

Andreas Osiander was the Lutheran reformer of Nuremberg who later strayed from Luther's teaching. He taught that man was saved via the indwelling of the divine nature of Christ. Although his doctrine of the two natures appears to be orthodox, he confused the function of the two natures in salvation. He also rejected any notion of forensic justification, teaching salvation via the infused essential righteousness of Christ in the mystical union. This essential righteousness which Osiander referred to was God's attribute of righteousness which can potentially result in pantheism. Virtually the same argument with the exception of Osiander's Christological blunder is employed by the Finns.

Osiander's view of the mystical union is clearly contrary to the biblical paradigm, for Scripture asserts forensic justification via imputed grace is salvific. In addition it clearly teaches the mystical union is part sanctification and that it communicates infused grace. Therefore there is indeed a proper understanding of *gratia infusa* with respect to sanctification. Nevertheless *gratia infusa* is an incomplete grace that cannot save. For this reason Osiander's teaching resulted in a perfectionism that is contrary to the *simul iustus et peccator* principle of St. Paul taught in Romans 7. Thus if one denies forensic justification as the basis of salvation, man must be perfect or God cannot be just.

The following individuals have been cited to demonstrate that Osiander's theology is still around in different forms. For example Karl Holl, one of the leaders of the Luther Renaissance in Germany, taught that Osiander's doctrine of justification was closer to Luther's view than the "Melancthonian notion of imputation" (Neve. *History of Christian Thought*. I, 231). This absurd idea comes from a misunderstanding of the mystical union and from an attitude that rejects anything associated with Philipp Melancthon. This attitude has produced such theologians as Gustaf Aulen.

#### **D. Contra the New Finnish Interpretation of Lutheranism**

The "new" Finnish interpretation of Luther's thought proposed by Tuomo Mannermaa and his disciples has clouded Luther's teachings in the name of ecumenical unity with the Eastern Orthodox

(Braaten. *Union with Christ*. 1). The Finnish school under the leadership of Tuomo Mannermaa has brought to light many of Luther's theosis citations and has emphasized the continuum of Lutheran theology with the fathers. Unfortunately the Finns did not stop here. Instead, due to their desire for ecumenical unity with Eastern Orthodoxy, the Finns have put an Osiandrian or Palamite spin on Luther's theosis citations arguing for a new Lutheran theory of atonement. In so doing they have revived the theology of Karl Holl, one of the fathers of the Luther Renaissance, and some of Gustaf Aulen's theology taking it to new extremes (Braaten. *Union in Christ*. 8). Their interpretation is essentially a more refined Osiandrian theology. Although they do not negate the importance of either nature, they tend to see the union with Christ's deified flesh as the basis of salvation rather than its effect. Basically they confuse justification and sanctification, turning deification or sanctification into salvation. The result is that they argue for an operative justification and claim that Andreas Osiander's only error was his Christological blunder. However it is important to remember that an operative justification does not require synergism even though it has accompanied this view at times in church history. In other words it is possible to reject synergism and still maintain operative justification. Thus it would not be proper to charge the Finns with synergism. Still like most errors in the church, the Finns overemphasized one truth at the expense of another resulting in a convoluted notion of the original truth. In other words, the Finns overemphasized theosis at the expense of justification resulting in a confused notion of theosis. Not that one should refrain from preaching sanctification, but one must not supplant justification with theosis as the Finns do in their theology.

It should be noted that the Finns base most of their deification theory of atonement research on the early works Dr. Luther (1514-1519) when Luther's *turmerlebnis* or discovery of forensic justification had not yet occurred. Nevertheless the Finnish school seems perplexed when Luther still makes use of theosis while maintaining forensic justification at the same time. Obviously Luther was not



contradicting himself because Luther maintained the theosis that takes place in the mystical union is a part of sanctification. It is true that Luther at times used theosis in the broad or even the forensic sense but this should not be cited to propose a new Lutheran theory of atonement. To make such a claim would be just as foolish as to suggest that St. Paul denied forensic justification because he uses sanctification in the broad sense.

The greatest error of the Finns is their essence-attribute distinction and their teaching of uncreated grace (Braaten. *Union with Christ*. 48-53). It is so dangerous because this error can easily destroy the Trinity, Christology, justification, and sanctification. Palamas's essence-energy distinction and uncreated grace is still more tolerable since essence and energy were verbally distinct from one another. The Finnish interpretation equates God's essence and attributes and also equates the attributes of God with communicated uncreated grace. The result of this interpretation would make a distinction between Christ and man very difficult.

#### **E. Contra the Advocates of Μεταουσία or Συνοουσία**

The basis for refuting a μεταουσία or συνοουσία theory of the nature of the union has already been demonstrated. The purpose of this section is merely to indicate those who advocate such a view. It should also be noted again that Lutheranism does not teach such a union although it is often accused of it by the papists and Reformed. The primary groups that advocate μεταουσία or συνοουσία are the pantheistic mystics. Of these mystics Schwenkfeld and Weigel are the two primary individuals although there are others. They teach an actual union whereby the human nature of man ceases to exist either becoming God or becoming a third substance with God. Schleiermacher is said to have a similar viewpoint. The result of this view will inevitably be pantheism and a denial of the resurrection of the body which Weigel even asserts (Calov. *Systema*. X, 522). The Mormon doctrine of deification also

seems to fit into this category, but goes farther than anyone else would even dare and is not Christian.

Mormon dogma will be discussed later.

#### **F. Contra Those Who Deny a Union of Substances**

In contradistinction to the aforementioned group, many fit into this category. These individuals argue that a union of substances is impossible because it will either compromise God's transcendence/simplicity or result in *μεταουσία* or *συνουσία*. It should come as no surprise that these individuals also have problems with their Christology. According to them, the mystical union is only a sharing of gifts and works. At best it is nothing more than a moral union. Advocates of this view are certain Scholastics, Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists. However it should be noted that the error of the Scholastics is not so much that they rejected union of substances but the presence of Christ's humanity in the mystical union. Likewise the Calvinists (Calvin, Beza, Danneaeus, Piscator, Turretin, etc.) reject a real union of substance.

#### **G. Contra Albrecht Ritschl and His Influence on Modern Lutheranism**

Albrecht Ritschl, the father of Classical Liberalism, ironically became one of the forerunners of the Luther Renaissance. His demythologizing led to the conclusion that anything supernatural in Scripture was false. This conclusion continued into his historical studies where he taught Luther did not know of any mystical union and that it was an innovation of Johann Arndt. In other words pietism begins with the study and development of the mystical union. This view has been adopted by some proponents of the Luther Renaissance (unaware of its origins) who rejected Holl's conclusions but still maintained a bias against anything having to do with Melancthon, such as Lutheran Orthodoxy. This group also tends to question real progressive sanctification. As a result of this view some of late 16<sup>th</sup> century Lutheranism and most 17<sup>th</sup> century Lutheranism (with the exception of a few Gnesio-Lutherans

and a few of the Concordist) are suspect because they are viewed as inherently Melanchthonian and ironically also pietistic.

While the Luther Renaissance has done many good things it has also created many problems and has misunderstood much about Philipp Melanchthon and Lutheran Orthodoxy. As has been clearly demonstrated throughout this paper, Ritschl's conclusions, which are still common today, are absolutely absurd. The mystical union has already been shown to be present in Martin Luther himself. As far as the systematic study of the mystical union it is often discussed in the earliest Lutheran Christological writings in order to distinguish it from the personal union. In these discussions all the major distinctions that can be found in Abraham Calov's superb treatment of this subject are already evident if not alluded to. Not only do all the major dogmaticians from Martin Chemnitz onward treat this doctrine under various *loci* but even Nicolaus Hunnius already gives it its own *locus* in his *Epitome Credendorum* of 1625. This work predates Calov significantly.

#### **H. Contra the Mormons**

Typically the first protestant reaction to theosis is, "Isn't that Mormon?" Mormon teaching only looks similar to the scriptural view of theosis on the surface, when in reality it is something entirely different and foreign to Christendom. According to Mormon dogma one is transformed into a god and exists apart from the one true God for there is no one true God. How can this be? Mormons teach that every one can become god in the fullest sense populating their own worlds through celestial intercourse. This idolatry is a complete mockery of the Christian doctrine of theosis.

The Scriptural doctrine of theosis is the same thing as sanctification. No one becomes a God nor is a hint of pantheism implied. In contradistinction man participates in God experiencing transfiguring grace that does not destroy our substance but enhances it. Mormon doctrine is worse than transubstantiation or consubstantiation because one does not become absorbed into God. Rather man

becomes one of many gods. Such a view is blatantly unbiblical. Mormon dogma is the farthest thing from Christianity and is in reality closer to paganism.

### **I. Contra New Age Movement**

Often theosis is conceived of as New Age. In fact much of the New Age religions are modern versions of eastern religions, the mystery religions, and Gnosticism. Since these religions emphasized a notion of being absorbed into the divine, theosis and the mystical union are conceived of as old eastern religion repackaged in the New Age movement. Moreover this New Age religion has allied itself with Post-Modernism gaining tremendous ground which is evident in some of the mainline denominations. However the Scriptural doctrine of the mystical union and theosis do not result in some pantheistic notion of God. Unfortunately some of the renewed interest in the church's teaching of theosis has come about from individuals longing for a Post-Modern New Age form of Christianity. The size of any secular bookstore's spirituality section in proportion to religion clearly testifies to this in our own culture. In fact many in the church are still fighting rationalism while Post-modernism has adopted this New Age Christianity as a synthesis for the new generation.

### **IV. The *Unio Mystica* and Theosis in Church History**

This portion of this thesis will provide an overview of the history of the mystical union and theosis. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a complete historical analysis. However a general outline of key individuals and events will prove useful. It is also not the intent of this section to chart the development of this dogma. This dogma is fully developed in Holy Scripture. The purpose of this section is merely to show how pious men interpreted what Scripture clearly taught. As will be seen not everyone was as faithful to the Scriptures either for philosophical or hermeneutical reasons.

## A. Patristic Era

As has been demonstrated already in this paper theosis in the narrow sense is what takes place in the mystical union. This is confessed by the majority of Christendom. Yet it is true that the west tended to speak more of the mystical union whereas the east tended to speak more about theosis. Nevertheless this does not mean that the east and the west spoke exclusively in this manner. In fact the east often spoke of the mystical union and the west of theosis. In addition the western view of theosis tends to stress becoming Christ though becoming gods is also evident. This Christosis or Christification, for lack of a better term, is somewhat rare in the east although present. The initial distinction is made only to indicate the general practice of each tradition. It should by no means be understood as an absolute principle. It should also be noted that the doctrine of the theosis of man in the narrow sense tended to be confused with justification earlier in the eastern church than it did in the western church.

### 1. St. Irenaeus of Lyon

St. Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130-c. 200) was a Greek-speaking student of Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69-c. 155), a disciple of St. John. He was born in Asia Minor and studied in Rome, later becoming bishop in Lyon. There in Lyon he also ministered to certain Celtic tribes, although the church in Lyon was Greek speaking. He was probably martyred. St. Irenaeus' theology centers in what he calls recapitulation theology (ἀνακεφαλαιώσις) although he also utilized ransom, payment of debt, and sacrifice motifs to explain redemption. This recapitulation emphasis is found in Ephesians 1:10 and Romans 5:12-21. According to this view, Christ became the second Adam conquering the forces of evil and recreates the world in Himself. In other words all that the first Adam lost in the fall the second Adam regained in Himself and even more. By taking on human flesh, He allows man to partake of the divine nature through adoption that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself (Irenaeus. *Against the Heresies*. 5.Pref.; ANF. 1:526). In so doing he emphasized the fact that man can have access to God only via the

human nature of Christ. It is interesting that St. Irenaeus of Lyon defines this union as a *κοινωνία* and not a transformation that would destroy the human nature of man or produce a third substance with God. St. Irenaeus of Lyon also used the theosis image of the medicine of immortality with reference to the Eucharist (Irenaeus. *Against the Heresies*. 4.18.5; ANF. 1:486).

## 2. St. Athanasius of Alexandria

St. Athanasius (296-373) was the bishop of Alexandria and is best known for his Christology which opposed Arius. He was the greatest confessor of Nicea clearly teaching *homoousios*. He is also known for his famous encapsulation of theosis in the following passage. “God became man so that we may be made god” (Athanasius. *De Incarnatione*. 54; NPNF. Series 2. 4:65). In his works Athanasius combined sacrifice, “exchange” (a development of the recapitulation theme), and theosis demonstrating how theosis may be linked to many atonement themes (Lehninger. *Luther and Theosis*. 12-13). In Athanasius’ *Life of St. Antony* one can see that theosis is not some esoteric occurrence in man according to Athanasius but is evident in one of his favorite paradigms, St. Antony of Egypt.

Not only does Athanasius clearly teach the theosis of man but he also teaches the theosis of Christ’s humanity or the *genus maiestaticum*. This means that Athanasius confessed a true communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ which is evident throughout his Christology (Athanasius. *Four Discourses Against the Arians*. I & III; NPNF. Series 2. 4:330, 415). It should also be noted that Athanasius proves the divinity of Christ via theosis.

For man had not been deified if joined to a creature, or unless the Son were very God; nor had man been brought into the Father’s presence, unless He had been His natural and true Word who had put on the body. And as we had not been delivered from sin and the curse, unless it had been by nature human flesh, which the Word put on (for we should have had nothing common with what was foreign), so also the man had not been deified, unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to Him. For therefore the union was of this kind, that He might unite what is man by nature to Him who is in the nature of the Godhead, and his salvation and deification might be sure (Athanasius. *Four Discourses Against the Arians*. 2.70; NPNF. Series 1. 4:386).

### 3. Cappadocians

The Cappadocian fathers are Basil the Great (c. 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-c. 395), and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) or the theologian. These men provided the final definitions for the distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις. In so doing, they solidified the theology of Nicea and emphasized the consubstantiality of all three person of the Trinity. It is also quite interesting to notice how theosis shaped the theological discussion at the ecumenical councils. This is evident in Gregory of Nazianzus' argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory the theologian writes, "How can He (Holy Spirit) deify me by baptism?" if He is not truly God"(Gregory of Nazianzus. *Fifth Theological Oration: On the Holy Spirit*. 28; NPNF. Series 2. 7:327)? Likewise St. Basil of Caesarea makes this same argument (Basil. *On the Holy Spirit*. 9.23; NPNF. Series 2. 8:16).

The greatest Christological phrase from the Cappadocians comes from St. Gregory of Nazianzus. He writes, "For that which He (Christ) has not assumed, He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved" (Gregory of Nazianzus. *Epistle 101*; NPNF. Series 2. 7: 440). This passage is loaded with theology. First it states that a whole human nature had to be assumed in order to save mankind. Second the theosis of Christ's human nature is implied. Third the theosis of man is implied. Finally the nature of both the unions does not result in a destruction of humanity nor a third substance with God. Lest anyone doubt that the Cappadocians taught a real theosis of Christ's humanity the following citation from Basil is cited. Basil writes, "With the nature that God is Lord of all, the human (nature) receives from the Father dominion still in time" (Basil cited in Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 553). In addition Moses as the model of the deified man is stressed in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*.

The Cappadocian fathers realized the vehicle of theosis was the means of grace. This is evident in Gregory of Nyssa's *Great Catechism*.

...that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption. He gives these gifts by virtue of the benediction through which He transelements the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing (Gregory of Nyssa. *Great Catechism*. 37; NPNF. Series 2. 5:506).

#### 4. St. Augustine of Hippo

St. Augustine (354-430) was bishop in Hippo near Carthage in North Africa. During his early life he fell away from the church, embracing philosophy and even Manicheism. Later he became disillusioned by the teaching of Mani and opened up a school of rhetoric in Rome. Soon he was disgruntled with his students and took a professorship in Milan where he began studying Neoplatonism and heard St. Ambrose's sermons. Eventually he turned back to Christianity. Following this he started a monastic community in North Africa but was soon made bishop of Hippo while maintaining a monastic lifestyle. In Hippo he wrote most of his major works and later died. While St. Augustine is known as one of the greatest thinkers in the church, most of his theology originates in the practical problems of shepherding the flock of Hippo. Thus Augustine the practical pastor is the basis of Augustine the theologian. Although some theologians resented him and disagree with his views, his theology soon eclipsed all others in western Christendom until its convolution in the Middle Ages. He was a prolific writer and an extremely gifted individual. He is considered to be the greatest of the western fathers and even the greatest father of the church in western Christendom.

Since theosis is usually considered to be an exclusively eastern teaching in the ancient church more attention will be given to St. Augustine's view of theosis. In typical western fashion he tends to emphasize the mystical union a little over theosis, yet as will be demonstrated he clearly taught theosis. Augustine's conception of the nature of the union is clearly a union of substances that does not destroy



man's nature or produce a third substance with God. St. Augustine confirms this union of substances in his *Commentary on the Gospel St. John* and his *Commentary on the Psalms*.

And accordingly, though the Father and Son, or even the Holy Spirit, are in us, we must not suppose that they are of one nature with ourselves. And hence they are in us, or we are in them, in this sense, that they are one in their own nature, and we are one in ours. For they are in us, as God in His temple; but we are in them, as the creature in its Creator (Augustine. *Commentary on the Gospel St. John*. 110; NPNF. Series 1. 7:408).

Therefore if He Himself is the Selfsame and cannot in any way be changed, by participating in His divinity we too shall be made immortal in eternal life, and this pledge has been given to us by the Son of God...that before we should be made partakers of His immortality, He should Himself first be made a partaker our mortality. For just as He was made mortal, not of His substance but of ours, so we shall be immortal, not of our substance but of His (Augustine. *Enar. in Ps. 146*).

In the next citation Augustine explains the union of substances via the term *participatio*, the Latin equivalent of *κοινωνία*.

The teacher of humility and sharer (*particeps*) of our infirmity, giving us participation (*participationem*) of His divinity, coming down that He might both teach and be the Way, has deigned most highly to commend His humility to us (Augustine. *Enar. in Ps. 58*)

Augustine's use of theosis is very interesting especially when one remembers that he is the great teacher of salvation apart from works in antiquity. This is pointed out to demonstrate that justification does not contradict theosis as long as both are kept in their respective spheres, namely, justification and sanctification. Augustine's use of theosis included both the broad and narrow sense. In the following citation he echoes St. Athanasius, "*Deos facturum qui homines erant, homo factus est qui Deus erat*" that is "To make human beings gods, He was made man who was God" (Augustine. *Sermon 192.1.1*). In the next citation against a Platonist who rejected Christ as the means of deification, Augustine states that theosis can take place only by participation in the divine nature which is manifested in the imitation of Christ, "For inquiry," says he, "purifies and imitation deifies us by moving us nearer to Him" (Augustine. *City of God*. 19.23; NPNF. Series 1. 2:417). In his sermons he equates the mystical union

and theosis by equating their unions, "God wishes to make you a god, not by nature, like Him whom he begot, but by His gifts and adoption. For just as He through His humanity was made a partaker of your morality, so He makes you a partaker of His immortality by exultation" (Augustine. *Sermon 166*; PL. 38:909). Like his Greek counterparts Augustine proves the divinity of Christ by virtue of His ability to cause theosis (Augustine. *On the Gospel of St. John*. 48:9-10; NPNF. Series 1. 7:269). In the following quote Augustine emphasizes grace as the means of theosis while distinguishing the theosis of Christ's humanity from the theosis of man.

We too are made by His grace what we were not, that is, sons of God. Yet we were something else, and this much inferior, that is sons of man. Therefore He descended that we might ascend, and remaining in His nature was made a partaker of our nature, that we remaining in our nature might be made partakers of His nature. But not simply thus; for His participation in our nature did not make Him worse, while participation in His nature makes us better (Augustine. *Epistle 140*; CSEL. xlv. 162).

With respect to his life in the monastic community that he started, Augustine wrote that he enjoyed the "leisure in which to deify oneself (*deificari in otio*)" (Augustine. *Letter 10.2*; NPNF. Series 2. 1:228 cf. variant). However some claim this previous remark is referring more to a Neoplatonic theosis rather than a Christian theosis. In the final citation one will see Augustine's emphasis on theosis via the grace of adoption which set the tone for deification in the western church.

The Word of God, if He is God, is truly the God of gods; but whether He be God the Gospel answereth, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And if all things were made by Himself, as He saith in the sequel, then if any were made gods, by Himself were they made. For the one God was not made, and He is Himself alone truly God. But Himself the only God, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, is one God. But then who are those gods, or where are they, of whom God is the true God? Another Psalm saith, "God hath stood in the synagogue of gods, but in the midst He judgeth gods." As yet we know not whether perchance any gods be congregated in heaven, and in their congregation, for this is "in the synagogue," God hath stood to judge. See in the same Psalm those to whom he saith, "I have said, Ye are gods, and children of the Highest all; but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." It is evident then, that He hath called men gods, that are deified of His Grace, not born of His Substance. For He doth justify, who is just through His own self, and not of

another; and He doth deify who is God through Himself, not by the partaking of another. But He that justifieth doth Himself deify, in that by justifying He doth make sons of God. "For He hath given them power to become the sons of God." If we have been made sons of God, we have also been made gods: but this is the effect of Grace adopting, not of nature generating. For the only Son of God, God, and one God with the Father, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was in the beginning the Word, and the Word with God, the Word God. The rest that are made gods, are made by His own Grace, are not born of His Substance, that they should be the same as He, but that by favor they should come to Him, and be fellow-heirs with Christ. For so great is the love in Him the Heir, that He hath willed to have fellow-heirs (Augustine. *On the Psalms*. 40; NPNF. Series 1. 8:178).

### 5. St. Cyril of Alexandria

St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) was the famous bishop whose theology served as the cornerstone of Calcedonian Christology. Although he was not the friendliest of the ancient fathers, his intellect and ability to systematize the dogma of Scripture preserved the orthodox understanding of the person of Christ in the church. He also firmly confessed St. Mary as the θεοτόκος against Nestorius. In addition to being a great systematician, he was regarded as one the best exegetes in antiquity.

St. Cyril's contributions to theosis are that he confessed both the theosis of man and the theosis of Christ's humanity. With regard to the theosis of man he writes,

For the Word also dwells in us. The most holy Paul confirms this point for us when he says: "For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, from whom all fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth. May he grant that you are strengthened in power through His Spirit, according to the riches of his glory, that Christ may dwell in you in your hearts" (Ephesians 2:14-17); and that He is within us by the Spirit, "in whom we cry out Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). And so, if we have been granted the same dignity by God the Father, our position is in no way inferior to His. For we too are sons and gods by grace, and we have surely been brought to this wonderful and supernatural dignity since we have the Only Begotten Word of God dwelling with in us. It is completely wicked and foolish for them to say that Jesus has been granted the dignity of the Sonship and has won this glory as a matter of Grace (Cyril. *On the Unity of Christ*. 80).

He stands with the Cappadocians when he writes, if “the Spirit that makes us god” were a different nature from that of God, we would be lost, for only God can save us (Cyril. *Dialogues on the Trinity*. 7.639; Translated in Pelikan. *The Christian Tradition*. I, 216).

With regard to the theosis of Christ’s humanity or the *genus maiestaticum* St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, “Furthermore He makes the activity of His divine majesty also the property of His flesh, so that the flesh too can make the dead alive and heal the sick” (Cyril. Basel. IV, 239; Chemnitz. TNC. 370).

Again the Alexandrian writes:

Even after the resurrection the same body which had suffered continued to exist, although it no longer contained any human weakness. We maintain that it was no longer susceptible to hunger or weariness or anything like this, but was thereafter incorruptible, and not only that but life-giving as well since it is the body of Life, that is the body of the Only Begotten. Now it is radiant with divine glory and is seen to be the body of God. So, even if someone should call it ‘divine’ just as one might call a man’s body ‘human’, such a fitting thought would not be mistaken. In my opinion this is what the most-wise Paul said: ‘Even if we know Christ according to the flesh, nonetheless we know him no longer’ (II Corinthians 5:16). As I have said, because it was God’s own body it transcended all human things, yet the earthly body itself did not undergo a transformation into the nature of Godhead, for this is impossible, otherwise we would be accusing the Godhead of being created and of receiving into itself something which was not part of its nature. It would be just as foolish an idea to talk of the body being transformed into the nature of the Godhead as it would to say the Word is transformed into the nature of the flesh. For just as the latter is impossible (for he is unchangeable and unalterable) so too is the former. It is not possible that any creature could be converted into the essence or nature of Godhead, and the flesh is created thing. We maintain, therefore, that Christ’s body is divine insofar as it is the body of God, adorned with unspeakable glory, incorruption, holy, and life-giving; but none of the holy fathers has ever thought or said that it was transformed into the nature of the Godhead, and we have no intention of doing so either (Cyril. *First Letter of Cyril to Succensus*. cited in McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy*. 357).

The following citation is truly full of theology. Therein he confesses the theosis of man via sanctification by means of the Eucharist and the divine indwelling. Furthermore he confesses the *genus maiestaticum* or theosis of Christ’s humanity with the words “life-giving” flesh.

We must necessarily add this: proclaiming the death in the flesh of the unique Son of God, that is, Jesus Christ, and confessing His return to life from the dead, and His reception into heaven, we celebrate the unbloody service in the churches. So we approach to the mystical gifts and are sanctified, becoming partakers of the holy flesh and honorable blood of Christ the Savior of us all, not receiving it as ordinary flesh-God forbid-nor as that of a man sanctified and cojoined with the Words by a unity of honor, or one who had received a divine indwelling, but as truly life-giving and the Word's own flesh. For being nature, as God, life, when He had become one with His own flesh, He made it life-giving (Cyril. *Epistle to Nestorius*. 17; PG 77:114).

## 6. Pseudo-Dionysius

Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500) was believed to be the famed disciple of St. Paul in Athens. Some traditions say that he was the first bishop in Athens other say that he labored in Gaul. However it is certain that the disciple of St. Paul is not the same person as the author of the *Corpus-Dionysicum*. Some believe the author of the *corpus* was a monophysite. Even though there is some evidence for this idea there is other evidence which does not fits this theory. Nevertheless due to this author's pseudonym his works were held in high esteem by both the eastern and western church second only to canon in some places. In fact numerous commentaries were written on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius.

Dionysian theology is very theocentric with strong Neoplatonic overtones which at times seems to consume his Christianity. At the same time there is a mystical quality to them that is complicated by his view of transcendence. For example Dionysius often will say that God is being, and then say no, super-being, since being would limit Him (Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works*. 54, 96). This emphasis on the transcendence of God is so strong that at times is seems to nullify what Scripture says about God and Christ. However just when one thinks there is nothing Christian about his works, he refers to Christ and the sacraments. Throughout the *corpus* one can see that deification and union with God is the *finis* of men. Dionysius' view of theosis seems more Neoplatonic than Christian at times and at other times not. This is further complicated by his hierarchies between God and man. The two hierarchies between God and man are the celestial which is made up of the different order of angels and

the ecclesiastical hierarchy which is made up of different levels of clergy. These hierarchies take real biblical and ecclesiastical figures and insert them into a Neoplatonic framework that would seem to contradict the mystical union and the priesthood of all believers. Later on the Dionysian notion of hierarchies between God and man, his view of the transcendence of God, Dionysian concept of theosis, the Palamite doctrine of uncreated grace, and the western view of created grace proved to be quite difficult to harmonize in the medieval east and west.

### **7. St. Maximus the Confessor**

St. Maximus of Chrysopolis (c. 580-662) or otherwise known as the Confessor is usually associated with the question of how many energies or wills are present in Christ. Against the monothelites he confessed that Christ had two wills that correspond with His natures. By maintaining this confession Maximus endured many exiles and abuse but was vindicated later for his orthodoxy. His primary work on the topic of the two wills is his *Disputation with Pyrrhus* who was the temporally deposed Patriarch of Constantinople. It is also interesting that one Roman Pontiff confessed *ex cathedra* that neither the monothelite doctrine nor the orthodox dythelite teaching should be taught. He never recanted this error. His name is Pope Honorius.

At the center of Maximus the Confessor's soteriology was theosis. Therefore it is no surprise that he fought for the two wills of Christ. If the two wills had not been confessed, then the two natures of Christ would be in danger. If such a confusion of the natures resulted, theosis and the nature of the mystical union would be compromised. Maximus writes, "Let us become the image of the one whole God, bearing nothing earthly in ourselves, so that we may consort with God and become gods, receiving from God our existence as gods" (*Philokalia*. 2:171).

## 8. St. John of Damascus

St. John of Damascus (c. 675-c. 749) is the great systematizer of the Greek fathers whose chief theological work titled *An Exposition of Orthodox Faith* had a major impact on the Latin Middle Ages and Lutheranism. John is perhaps better known for his defense of icons against the iconoclasts. He succeeded in his efforts against the iconoclasts where other failed because he was protected by the Moslem Caliph. He is considered to be the last of the church fathers. Although St. John's opinion is often sought on numerous subjects, Christology is where he truly shines. Furthermore according to Martin Chemnitz both Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus deserve the chief honor as the primary teachers and confessors of the three Christological *genera*. The following is Damascus' view of the theosis of Christ's humanity or the *genus maiestaticum*.

It is worthy of note that the flesh of the Lord is not said to have been deified and made equal to God and God in respect of any change or alteration, or transformation, or confusion of nature: as Gregory the Theologian says, "Whereof the one deified, and the other was deified, and, to speak boldly, made equal to God: and that which anointed became man, and that which was anointed became God." For these words do not mean any change in nature, but rather the economical union (I mean the union in subsistence by virtue of which it was united inseparably with God the Word), and the permeation of the natures through one another, just as we saw that burning permeated the steel. For, just as we confess that God became man without change or alteration, so we consider that the flesh became God without change. For because the Word became flesh, He did not overstep the limits of His own divinity nor abandon the divine glories that belong to Him: nor, on the other hand, was the flesh, when deified, changed in its own nature or in its natural properties. For even after the union, both the natures abode unconfused and their properties unimpaired. But the flesh of the Lord received the riches of the divine energies through the purest union with the Word, that is to say, the union in subsistence, without entailing the loss of any of its natural attributes. For it is not in virtue of any energy of its own but through the Word united to it, that it manifests divine energy: for the flaming steel burns, not because it has been endowed in a physical way with burning energy, but because it has obtained this energy by its union with fire (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 3.17; NPNF. Series 2. 9:65).

Concerning the theosis of man he connects the coal in the vision of Isaiah with the Eucharist.

Wherefore with all fear and a pure conscience and certain faith let us draw near and it will assuredly be to us as we believe, doubting nothing. Let us pay homage to it in all purity both of soul and body: for it is twofold. Let us draw near to it with an ardent desire, and with our hands held in the form of the cross let us receive the body of the Crucified One: and let us apply our eyes and lips and brows and partake of the divine coal, in order that the fire of the longing, that is in us, with the additional heat derived from the coal may utterly consume our sins and illumine our hearts, and that we may be inflamed and deified by the participation in the divine fire. Isaiah saw the coal. But coal is not plain wood but wood united with fire: in like manner also the bread of the communion is not plain bread but bread united with divinity. But a body which is united with divinity is not one nature, but has one nature belonging to the body and another belonging to the divinity that is united to it, so that the compound is not one nature but two (John of Damascus. *Orthodox Faith*. 4.13; NPNF. Series 2. 9:83).

## **B. Medieval Era**

Although the patristic era was not without its faults, many of the errors concerning the mystical union developed in the Middle Ages. The initial problem arose when the Scholastics started to apply philosophy and logic to their Christologies. As a result a true mystical union was compromised for if Christ's humanity is not present in the mystical union, one cannot have access to the divinity. The second major problem that arose was the relationship between God's transcendence and immanence. The last significant problem that arose was the question of the nature of grace.

### **1. Western Christendom**

Although there are many noteworthy medieval Scholastics that could be examined, this paper has decided to emphasize Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. Other significant theologians in this discussion would be John Duns Scotus, Nicholas of Lyra, Bernard, Peter Lombard, Hugo of St. Victor, Anselm of Canterbury, and John Scotus Erigena. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas have been chosen since they are two of the most significant figures if not the most significant. Although Dr. Luther and Martin Chemnitz did not have much use for them, the later dogmaticans particularly Johann Gerhard often used them against the Catholics in his *Loci Theologici* and *Confessio Catholica*. Furthermore Johann Dorsch



wrote a book where he demonstrates that Thomas Aquinas can be used to support the Lutheran dogma more so than Roman dogma. This book is titled *Thomas Aquinas Confessor Veritatis Evangelicae*.

#### **a. St. Bonaventure**

St. Bonaventure (c. 1217-1274) or Giovanni di Fidanza was a Franciscan theologian and contemporary with Aquinas. The church of his day called him *Doctor Devotus* until John Gerson called him *Doctor Seraphicus*. Bonaventure was born in Bagnorea. When he was still a youth he became so ill that his mother vowed him to St. Francis of Assisi on condition of his recovery. As a result of his recovery Bonaventure always maintained a sentiment of special love for St. Francis. His teacher was Alexander of Hales a great theologian in his own right but who is more often known for his decision to replace the Bible with Lombard's *Sentences* as the chief systematics text at the University of Paris. Alexander of Hales said of Bonaventure, "I do not see in him that Adam sinned" (Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*. 4). At the University of Paris he became both a fellow student and later a colleague of Thomas Aquinas. Although theologically Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas often strongly disagreed, they appear to have remained fairly cordial. In 1257 he was named Minister General of his order during which time he restored order to the Franciscans. As result of this St. Francis is regarded as the founder of the Franciscan order and Bonaventure, who reorganized the order, its second founder. Toward the end of his life he was reluctantly made a cardinal. On his way to Rome to receive his red hat, he stopped at a small Franciscan monastery. At this monastery the papal delegation met him as he was doing the dishes. With utter simplicity he told them to leave the hat on the bush until he was finished performing his task. He died at the Council of Lyon. As far as works, Bonaventure produced no *Summa* but he did produce a *Commentary on the Sentences*, a few biblical commentaries, and a compendium of theology known as the *Breviloquium*. Although he was a major systematician, he is highly praised as the pinnacle of Franciscan spirituality centering on a theology of the cross and the

imitation of Christ. It has been said that Bonaventure did for mysticism and mystical theology what Thomas Aquinas did to systematic theology. Martin Luther said that Bonaventure was the best of the Scholastics (Luther. W2. XXII, 1390).

Although Bonaventure had an excellent knowledge of St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Anselm of Canterbury, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Hugh of St. Victor, he usually prefers to use theosis language instead of terms like “deification,” although he certainly uses a few derivatives of theosis. Thus it is noteworthy that when he addresses the theosis of Christ the following is implemented: “deified through union with the Godhead” (Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. IV.3). It seems odd that theosis terms would not be more common in Bonaventure as opposed to theosis language which is common in his works since it permeates Dionysius and is very evident in St. Augustine of Hippo. Furthermore Bonaventure and the Franciscans were considered to be the heirs of Augustinian theology as opposed to Thomas Aquinas and the later Dominicans. Nevertheless it should be noted that in one instance in his *Breviloquium*, he speaks of man’s soul as “deiform” via the grace of God (Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*. V.1). He also speaks about being conformed into God in a few places in his *Breviloquium*.

In many ways Bonaventure and most of the west prefer to talk more of a *Conformitas Christi* or a Christification rather than theosis. In other words the west often emphasizes becoming Christs rather than becoming gods. In his *Life of St. Francis* and *Journey of the Mind to God*, Bonaventure depicts Francis as a type of Christ and a model for all men as a true imitator of Christ (Bonaventure. *The Life of St. Francis*. 6). This emphasis of Francis as the paradigm for Christification or the theosis of man permeates his works. Likewise according to Bonaventure’s theology of the cross, the true transformation of man comes only through imitation of the crucified one which climaxes in the stigmata (Galatians 6:17). In other words one has access to God only through the person of Christ (Bonaventure. *Mystical Opuscula*. 6-7). The end result of this theosis of the cross and assimilation into Christ is that man’s

status is so enhanced that he experiences the beatific vision. A classic example of Bonaventure's Christification is found in his *Life of St. Francis*. Referring to St. Francis he writes:

Being thus raised to God by the ardor of seraphical love, and wholly transformed by the sweetness of compassion unto Him, Who, of His exceeding charity, was pleased to be crucified for us; early in the morning of the Feast of Exultation of the Holy Cross, as he was praying in a secret and solitary place on the mountain, he beheld a seraph, having six wings, all on fire, descending to him from the highest of heaven (Bonaventure. *Life of Francis*. 123).

### **b. St. Thomas Aquinas**

St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1274) is known as *Doctor Communis* and *Doctor Angelicus*.

Thomas was the youngest son of the count of Landulf of Aquino. Initially his parents were extremely displeased with his desire to become a monk and even kept him under house arrest for sometime. After they realized that they would not change his mind they allowed him to become a monk. He started as part of the Benedictine order but later became a Dominican. His teacher was the famous Albert the Great whose prestige would soon be eclipsed by the young Thomas. It was under Albert that Thomas truly began his study of Aristotle. However his Aristotelianism also included certain Platonic ideas. Due to his size and appearance his fellow students called him the "Dumb Ox." Yet it was Albert who realized his genius and said, "You call him a Dumb Ox, I tell you that the Dumb Ox will bellow so loud that his bellowing will fill the world" (Chesterton. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*. 71). Needless to say Albert the Great was right. Due to his vast knowledge and many writings, his bellowing filled the known world and still is evident today. His chief theological works were the *Summa Theologica*, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, *Commentary of the Sentences*, his compendium of theology, and his numerous commentaries. Although Thomas was still very much a man of his day, he was often used against Roman Catholicism by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran Dogmaticians who felt he was more Lutheran than Roman Catholic. Recent research comparing the young Thomas to the modern Thomas seems to support Lutheran Orthodoxy's claim (Obermann. *The Dawn of the Reformation*. 5; Scharlemann. *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard*).

Thomas' mystical union is indeed a union of two substances which does not interfere with his view of the simplicity of God. However Thomas is not willing to say in his *Commentary on the Sentences* c. 1253-55 (III.22.1.2) that Christ's divinity has communicated the divine attribute of omnipresence to His humanity in *abstracto*, although the mature Thomas seems to second guess his error in the *Catena Aurea* c. 1261-67 (IV.132; I.987) and the *Summa Theologica* c. 1269-73 (III.10.2). As a result it is questionable if he taught a real mystical union or not. He does teach that the grace of gifts imparted in the mystical union are created but he does not make a distinction between imputed and infused grace. As a result he confuses justification and sanctification. It is often said that of all the Scholastics Thomas was the only one to really read Cyril of Alexandria. This is evident in his Christology in which he is closer to Cyril than any other Scholastic. All the other Scholastics were more influenced by Lombard's more questionable, if not at times Nestorian Christology. Still Thomas' Christology is not Cyrillian. Scholasticism would have to pass on before the true heirs of St. Cyril of Alexandria's Christology in the west, the Lutherans, would again revive his theology. As far as the theosis of man one can see it in a few places in his writing along with theosis language (Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. III.1.2; I-II.1.12.1; *Compendium Theologiae*. 202; Aquinas. *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology*. 231).

## **2. Eastern Christendom**

After the death of John of Damascus the east never regained its prestige as the great center of Christian thought. Soon the west would begin its golden age that would never really be eclipsed. Yet it would be unfair to say that the east produced no great theologians after John of Damascus. A few would rise out of the east during the middle ages as in the west during the patristic era. The greatest mystic of this period was Symeon the New Theologian who seems to be very enthusiastic. The other theologian of note is Nicholas Cabasilus a very intelligent mystical writer and authority on eastern liturgics.

Nevertheless this thesis has chosen to concentrate on Theophylact of Ochrid the great Byzantine exegete and Gregory Palamas the greatest theologian of this era.

#### **a. St. Theophylact of Ochrid**

St. Theophylact (11<sup>th</sup> century) was archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria. He was a famous Byzantine exegete whom the Lutherans used extensively. In fact he is even cited in the *Book of Concord*. Theophylact was a native of Euboea and a pupil of Michael Psellus. After serving as a tutor to the son of the emperor, he was called as archbishop of Ochrid in the country of Bulgaria. His principle work is a series of commentaries on several books of the Old Testament and all the books of the New Testament with the exception of Revelation. This work owes much to Chrysostom but is by no means unoriginal. Theophylact also seems to have a concillary view on the schism of 1054.

Theophylact's greatest legacy is his clear exegesis of the theosis of Christ's humanity or the *genus maiestaticum*. With regard to this doctrine he clearly confesses with Sacred Scripture that the divine attributes of God are communicated to the human nature. He even teaches a communication of omnipresence to the humanity of Christ.

#### **b. St. Gregory Palamas**

St. Gregory Palamas (c. 1296-1359) was the great defender of Hesychasm. He was probably born in Constantinople. He had a very good education and was well versed in theology and philosophy. Soon he became attracted to monasticism and joined one of the communities on Mt. Athos. There he practiced the Hesychast tradition in contemplation with the "Jesus Prayer." The Jesus Prayer is a short prayer that is continually repeated in order to achieve communion with uncreated light. The prayer often reads, "Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy upon me." In its most ancient form, used in the Egyptian and Palestine desert, it appears to be simply part of the Kyrie. This tradition was also enamored with the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor from which uncreated light shone from the flesh of Christ. Around this

time certain Greek Latinophiles began studying Thomism and Nominalism. Soon the Hesychast tradition of communion with God via uncreated energies would be contested by certain individuals, Barlaam of Calabria being its chief adversary. It was at this point that Palamas comes to the fore and defends the Hesychasts. Sometime later he becomes bishop of Thessalonica. After many years of debate Palamas won out at the Council of Sophia 1351 and his doctrine becomes the norm for Eastern Orthodoxy as Thomas' doctrine becomes the cornerstone of Roman Catholicism. His major work is called the *Triads* which is an apology for Hesychasm.

Palamas' view of the mystical union is contrary to the biblical paradigm. As a result of Dionysian apophatic or negative theology, he concludes that man cannot participate in the essence of God but merely his energies. These energies are posited as truly uncreated and thus truly divine, although distinct from the essence of God. When Barlaam objected to this communion citing the hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius would not permit the union that Palamas was demanding, Palamas replied that the hierarchies applied only to the Old Testament on the basis of Hebrew 2:2 (Introduction. *Triads*. 21). Following Palamas' logic, justification and sanctification are blended into deification which occurs through the means of grace and contemplative prayer. With respect to knowledge, Palamas rejected Barlaam's Thomistic view of knowledge, claiming that man can never see or know God. In so doing he implemented apophatic theology although he never desired this theology to become an end in itself. Rather unknowing was the beginning to something far greater than knowledge or unknowing.

### **C. Luther and Lutheranism**

The doctrine of the *unio mystica* and theosis are clearly present in Luther and Lutheranism as this paper has already demonstrated. Therefore Albrecht Ritschl's theory that Johann Arndt introduced this doctrine to Lutheranism in his devotional work titled *Wahres Christentum* is clearly incorrect. In reality Luther's interest in the mystical union and theosis are found in both early and late Luther. This is

evident in his respect for the famous mystical work titled *Theologia Germanica*, which he also had reprinted in 1518, and his own writings. If Luther had a confused notion of the mystical union and theosis in his early works, his later works attest to the fact that Luther understood the relationship between forensic justification and theosis. By means of his later writings two myths are put to rest. The first is that Luther's sacramental mysticism was merely a practice of the early Luther who rejected the mystical union and theosis after he discovered forensic justification. The second is that Luther's final theory of justification was not really forensic but operative.

Another early reformer that deserves credit for the Lutheran theology of theosis is Johannes Brenz. Unfortunately history had not been kind to Brenz who was wrongly accused of many falsities. Nevertheless orthodox Lutheranism has always claimed him as a father of Lutheranism. Johann Brenz is most often criticized for his Christology and is even accused of teaching a separate Christology from Martin Chemnitz. Although these two great theologians may have employed slightly different terminology, let it be known that these theologians are of one spirit and doctrine as Chemnitz demonstrates in his *De duabus naturis in Christo*. Brenz's importance to this doctrine is that he along with Luther maintained the presence of Christ's humanity in the mystical union along with his teaching of theosis.

Even Philipp Melancthon who helped Luther discover forensic justification was not oblivious to the mystical union. It is true that he initially alluded only to an indwelling of the gifts of God, but later spoke of the indwelling of the substance of God in the 1543 *Loci Communes*. Perhaps he came to this revelation when encouraging dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox. Likewise Stephan Gerlach, who delivered the *Augustana Graeca* and served as the Lutheran liaison to the ecumenical Patriarch, taught a close relationship between the mystical union and the personal union.

The *Augustana Graeca* (1559), which is not the Augsburg Confession of 1530 yet is also distinct from the *variata*, was authored by Master Philipp Melancthon. This text makes use of the mystical union and theosis language. It should also be noted that this version of the *Augsburg Confession* and not a new Greek translation was sent again to the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1574 by the Tuebingen theologians: Jakob Andreae, Johannes Brenz, Martin Crusius, Lucas Osiander, Stephen Gerlach, Jakob Heerbrand, Eberhard Bidembach, Johann Mageirus, Theodor Schneff, William Holderer, Johann Schoppsius (Mastrantonis. *Augsburg and Constantinople*. 314). This fact is quite odd since these Orthodox men did not make a fresh Greek translation from the 1530 Augsburg Confession even when Martin Crucius, a very capable Greek scholar, could have easily performed this task. In addition a Greek translation of Jakob Heerbrand's *Compendium Theologiae* was sent along with their correspondence. This version of the *Augustana Graeca* was later printed in the *Acta et Scripta Theologorum Wirtembergensium et Patriarchae Constantinopolitani D Hieremiae...*(1584) for all Lutherans in Germany to read following the conclusion of this dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox.

Andreas Osiander was another reformer that later strayed from Luther's doctrine. He confused justification and the mystical union resulting in an operative justification that destroyed the faith. Unfortunately his erroneous view spawned overreactions among the Hamburg ministerium who denied a real union. After the *Formula of Concord* refuted both Osiander and the Hamburg ministerium the true doctrine of the mystical union was reclaimed by the Lutheran Confessions.

Among the writers of the *Formula of Concord* none compare to the genius of Martin Chemnitz. Although his Christology has been accused of being in opposition to Brenz' view, Chemnitz' work on Christology has clearly put this myth to rest. The value of Chemnitz work as far as theosis is concerned is that he systematically distinguishes between the theosis of Christ's humanity and the theosis of man (Chemnitz. TNC. 96). He furthermore distinguishes the general union from the mystical union and the



union of grace from the union of glory. Martin Luther and Johannes Brenz also taught these distinctions yet none as neatly and systematically as Martin Chemnitz did. Nevertheless although Chemnitz clearly uses theosis language and refers to its use among the fathers, he believed that it may not be wise to continue its use when Schwenkfeld was on the rise. Yet he does not reject its legitimacy or its use in the church. Rather Chemnitz prefers using such theosis phrases as “you partake of that which you are to become” implying theosis without using the term “deify.” Martin Chemnitz appears to be the first Lutheran to systematically define the nature of grace. The primary sources for Chemnitz’ view of theosis are found in his *De duabus naturis in Christo* and *De coena domini*.

In the realm of devotional literature the two pioneers of Lutheran mystical literature were Philipp Nicolai and Johann Arndt. Philipp Nicolai, the hymnist and author of a major work on Christology, wrote the *Freudenspiegel* which was published four years earlier than Johann Arndt’s famous *Wahres Christentum*. This work is saturated with references to the mystical union. For this reason it is very ironic that Arndt was charged with inserting the mystical union into Lutheranism via the medieval mystics. This charge is clearly unsubstantiated. However these two men were the first to really incorporate the mystical union into Lutheran *Erbauungsliteratur*. Other orthodox devotional writers that make extensive use of the mystical union are Joachim Luetkemann, Martin Moeller, Valerius Herberger, and Christian Sriver. However the mystical union was already present in the dogmatic literature and sermons of Luther and Brenz.

It has been suggested that the mystical union first came into Lutheran dogmatics via the *ordo resolutivus* or analytical method of organizing dogmatics which was popularized in orthodox Lutheranism by Abraham Calov. Prior to Johann Gerhard most Lutherans followed the *ordo locorum* (*loci* method) of Melancthon. Johann Gerhard synthesized this method with his own Aristotelian-dogmatic construction resulting in a loose adaptation of the *ordo compositivus* or the synthetic method.

This was the paradigm until the analytical method became popular. Although it is true that prior to the use of the analytical method, the mystical union was not designated its own *locus*, it is false to deduce from this that the early dogmaticians did not teach this dogma. In reality the earlier dogmaticians like Leonhard Hutter, Aegidius Hunnius, Johann Gerhard dispersed their discussion under different *loci*. Their discussion of the mystical union can be found in the *loci* treating Christology, operative and cooperative grace, the means of grace, beatific vision etc. Some of the best discussions of the mystical union are found in these theologian's commentaries, sermons, and devotional works. It should also be noted that Nicolaus Hunnius who predates the popular use of the analytical method gives the mystical union its own *locus* in his *Epitome Credendorum* (1625) and appears to have been the first to do so. Furthermore Matthias Flacius, the most famous Gnesio-Lutheran, was the first Lutheran to advocate the analytical method, and even Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* seems to make use of an *ordo salutis*. If the analytical method was inherently pietistic surely Flacius would have recognized it.

Some have claimed that the *Wunderkind* and arch-theologian of Lutheranism, Johann Gerhard, did not teach this dogma, only because he did not provide a specific *locus* for this subject. Such a claim argues that if any talk of a mystical union or theosis were legitimate in Lutheranism surely Johann Gerhard would have alluded to it. This claim that Gerhard did not teach a mystical union and theosis is false on many levels. First Johann Gerhard defended Johann Arndt and the theology of *Wahres Christentum*. Second he speaks about the mystical union, the theosis of man, and the theosis of Christ's humanity in many places in his *Loci Theologici* (Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. I, 515; VIII, 369-70; I, 544). Third, his commentaries allude to it and even his *Weimar Bibel* demonstrating the opinion of all of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Finally his devotional works and sermons often use the mystical union and even theosis language. In addition Gerhard provides one of the best, although by no means the first, studies of the beatific vision.

Abraham Calov has been given the false reputation of being the first to introduce the mystical union into Lutheran dogmatics. Anyone that has read the fathers know this is not the case. Calov is also not the first to designate a *locus* to the mystical union, nor is he the first to incorporate it into the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). In reality this honor belongs to Nicolaus Hunnius or Balthazar Mentzer, one of Johann Gerhard's teachers. However he was the first to make a systematic distinction between the union with the Trinity and the union with Christ. Furthermore Abraham Calov's treatment of the mystical union is the most complete in all of Lutheranism. In fact his study of the *ordo salutis* or order of salvation was the standard that Johann Quenstedt, Johann Koenig, and David Hollaz would follow. However not all who used the analytical method gave the mystical union its own *loci*. For example Johann Dannhauer, Johann Baier, and Christian Loeber treat the *unio mystica* under many different *loci*. The rule in Lutheran theology has typically been, if one follows the analytical method then one usually gives the mystical union its own *locus*. If not, it is often incorporated in a variety of *loci*. This distinction is still evident in Adolf Hoenecke's *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik* which gives the mystical union its own *locus* and Franz Pieper who distributes it throughout his *Christliche Dogmatik*. As far as theosis language, Abraham Calov cites the famous theosis axiom of St. Athanasius (Calov. *Biblia Illustrata*. II, 1537).

The pietists taught a sort of mystical union. However, their view was a transubstantiation or a consubstantiation at best. It got so bad that Valentin Ernst Loescher attacked them on this very point in his *Timotheus Verinus*, although at times Loescher is also a little critical of Luther and Chemnitz for using theosis language. Yet it should not be concluded that Loescher rejected its legitimacy but only its abuse by the pietists. The rationalists simply rejected the biblical concept of the mystical union for being supernatural. In the Lutheran Awakening the true doctrine of the mystical union was revived. Neo-Lutherans like August Vilmar and the Erlangen men (like Luthardt and Philippi) addressed it in their dogmatics. However, Heinrich Schmid in his *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*

and Adolf Hoenecke in his *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik* were the first to do justice to this dogma in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Franz Pieper and Conrad Emil Lindberg also treat this subject yet not as thoroughly. C.F.W. Walther treats it through Baier's *Compendium*. The best 20<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran treatment of the mystical union is done by Werner Elert.

#### V. *Usus Practicus*

*Theologia est habitus practicus*. This famous axiom describes all of biblical and Lutheran theology. It is translated "Theology is a practical aptitude." Some might ask in what sense is theology practical? Theology is biblically and theologically practical when it teaches what is necessary for salvation or what is beneficial for the preservation and edification of the believer. Abraham Calov writes, "The genus of theology is to take away an aptitude (*habitus*) (Hebrews 5:14.) It is drawing near to a practical aptitude (*habitus*) (John 5:34; Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:15), because the purpose of theologians and of theology is not bare knowledge, but a *praxis*, by leading man clearly to salvation (II Timothy 3:16; I Timothy 4:16) (Calov. *Theologia Positiva. De Natura Theologiae*. 5; Hoenecke. *Dogmatik*. I, 249). It is true that there are many things that are unnecessary for salvation but this does not mean that they are theologically unpractical.

Nevertheless a false concept of the practical nature of theology has arisen today that is present in the distinction between "academic" Christianity and "practical" Christianity. Such a distinction is completely unbiblical, a mockery of the true *habitus practicus* of Scripture, and has had serious ramifications on clergy and especially the priesthood of all believers. Such an attitude has produced such a line of demarcation between clergy and laity that one group complicates Scripture by adding to it while the other group takes away from Holy Writ by dumbing it down. Both are guilty of trying to inhibit the perspicuity of Sacred Scripture while Romanizing it. No part of the Bible is only meant for the theologians or just for the laity. If this were true then, *theologia est non habitus practicus* (theology

is not a practical aptitude), and Lutherans are better off returning to the theology of the Scholastics and abandoning biblical Lutheranism. Such a false notion of the practical nature of theology has defined a new canon of what is important in Scripture and has already endangered the doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ in many denominations. Obviously theology is not a science, and therefore we dare not hide the truth from our people as the papist hid forensic justification from our forefathers. Granted, not everything will be understood, yet this should not inhibit our longing for faith seeking understanding because the Scriptures are perspicuous although our eyes are sometimes clouded by sin. In the same way the Christian will never be only a saint on earth. Yet this does not mean one should not strive to be a saint on earth.

The practical nature of theology is really a comforting thing. One does not have to worry about opening the Scripture and debating whether or not any doctrine has any practical use. All doctrine is applicable to the Christian's life. No teaching is purely taught for contemplative value although all doctrines are worthy of contemplation. In other words Scripture is pastoral in nature. What can be more comforting?

#### **A. *Habitus Practicus of the Unio Mystical and Theosis***

The mystical union and theosis are practical because these things are edifying and useful for living a sanctified life. For this reason a Christian will long continually to learn more about His Lord from Scripture. Any Christian that would dare to think or say, "Jesus loves me this I know and that is really all I want to know," is in danger of losing his soul. Such an attitude is arrogant and blasphemous towards God. Furthermore where there is justification there is always sanctification. If a Christian is content with only knowing how to be saved and never strives to learn more about God then one is really rejecting sanctification. If sanctification is absent in the life of anyone, then there is no justification or

salvation. For Christ said that you will know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16). Still one must be careful not to judge too swiftly or harshly for one may not see all their fruits. Legalism is also a sin.

Perhaps at first this dogma may seem a little heavy as anything new often does, yet this initial feeling wears off once one realizes the biblical comfort, building up, and much more that comes from this teaching. As with all dogma, the Christian clergyman must try to teach the full counsel of God. He should not neglect any dogma. Yet as C.F.W. Walther writes, the gospel must predominate (Walther. *Law and Gospel*. 403ff). Since the mystical union and theosis are sanctification they dare never predominate yet they ought to be present where appropriate.

The practical aptitude of this dogma is that it empowers the Christian to live the Christ like life in the fullest sense through the faith via the means of grace so that he may have a blessed end, partake of the union of glory, and experience the beatific vision. Although this dogma is not necessary for the salvation of man, it is quite practical. St. Paul speaks to this subject in the following passages.

*Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be transfired by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. II Corinthians. 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transfired into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

*Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

David Hollaz provides this wonderful list of benefits of this union under the *finis* of the mystical union.

The *finis* of the mystical union is ultimately eternal life. The intermediate *finis* and effect are various: communion with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, the certainty of faith, of divine aid, of effective comfort, of provoked requests and favorable listening of them (these requests), preservation in a state of grace from which is born persistence of faithfulness, sanctification, seal of the future glory of the resurrection and of the heavenly inheritance, union of the reborn between themselves and communion of the church (Hollaz. *Examen*. 944).

The spirituality of theosis in our life is truly transfiguring. In this most intimate union, the Holy Deity descends to lowly humanity interpenetrating our being and communicating to us treasures beyond our comprehension. Herein we commune in deifying light via the most holy means of grace conforming us into the divine image. Yet to all around this union is veiled in humility and manifested to us via the imitation of our Lord's passion. This imitation takes place through the faithful's continued use of the means of grace in all times of life and in our imaging of Christ to all around as icons of Christ. Through our Lord's Sacred Word we are strengthened and made able to bear our cross even in the most severe *Anfechtung*. In Holy Baptism we are crucified and buried with Christ only to rise to a new deified existence. By participation in the mystery of the Eucharist we experience the transfiguration of our resurrected bodies by partaking of that which we are to become consuming the very price our redemption. Throughout this continued use of Word and Sacrament the Christian is given the gift of interpreting the very Words of God and the opportunity to reflect Christ in our evangelism to all around as icons of Christ. Thus the theology of the cross and the Christian's life of theosis go hand in hand.

#### **B. Mystical Union and Theosis Help Safeguard the *Genus Maiestaticum* and the Eucharist**

The intimate relationship between this teaching and *genus maiestaticum* and the Eucharist has already been attested. Yet the dogma concerning the nature of the union and theosis also helps to safeguard this teaching against the papists and the Reformed. In like manner it can be employed as a polemical tool against them. Examples of this are numerous in the history of the church and Lutheranism. Although the unions are different, in each case the nature of all of these unions are similar and have often been implemented to show the absurdity of Rome and Geneva. This is evident in the Eucharistic controversies of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Lutheran dogmaticians often used their opposition's logic or philosophy against them. Such an apologetical use of philosophy can be useful as Paul was apt to do, if it is not employed as the basis

of biblical teaching. But after this is done, the Lutheran must always point his brother back to Scripture which is the only fountain and source of all true dogma. In other words, logic may be used to show the folly of your adversary's logic. However apologetical reasoning is always law orientated. Thus one must return them to the Scriptures which alone is capable of changing the heart. This secondary use of reason is based on the holy writers own use of the ministerial use of reason.

### **C. Comfort and the Strength to Endure the Cross**

The purpose of the *unio gratiosa* on earth is to comfort, strengthen or build up the Christian in Christ until he partakes of the glorious union in heaven. German Lutheran theology has a wonderful word for this in *Erbauung* which means "build up." This word is often used to describe sermon and devotional literature. Unlike its English counterpart "devotion," *Erbauung* denotes the primary direction of the liturgy and devotional life.

How does this mystical union provide comfort and *Erbauung*? When the believer bears his cross in great *Anfechtung* feeling utterly alone throughout this valley of sorrows, he can take comfort that God is with him in ways far behind his comprehension. No matter where one is or what situation one is in, the Christian can be sure that the Lord is near him providing the strength to overcome any obstacle and the ability to do all things through Him found in the means of grace. As Isaiah writes:

*Isaiah 43:1-2 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.*

Likewise Christ said in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age".

The primary medium of comfort according to Scripture is the means of grace which the Comforter communicates to us. It is also true that the comfort for the Christian in this life comes primarily from the cross. However there is also comfort that comes from external testimony of the Spirit



(Gerhard. *Loci Theologici*. III, 374; Arndt, *Wahres Christentum*. 718; Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*. II, 541ff). In other words, the believer knows from his transfigured existence that he has been justified for, as Christ once said, by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:16). This is the comfort offered by the *unio mystica*. The mystical union does not offer the primary comfort of the gospel since this would be a confusion of justification and sanctification. For this reason the external testimony of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the mystical union is not the basis of our justification but is merely a tell tale sign that we are justified. Thus there is a comfort in knowing that I am one of the justified since my life motivated by the Spirit testifies that I have been justified by grace alone. However the external testimony of the Spirit is a secondary comfort to the primary and full comfort that can only come from our crucified Lord via his objective means of grace.

#### **D. Homilectial Theology**

Theosis and the mystical union can play a beneficial role in Christian homiletics. To be sure the presentation of law and gospel by means of mystical union and theosis terms often results in a truly personal approach. With respect to the law the clergyman can explain to his hearers that the Lord is enthroned in their hearts and can see every evil thought, word, and deed. Thus God is not afar off but within and is exposed to every evil that we partake in. After the hearers have come to acknowledge the gravity of their sin, the preacher may then refer them to the blessed incarnate Christ who became man so that we might become the sons of God by adoption. In other words, Christ, true God and true man in one person, experiences the theosis of his humanity so that He can live a holy life for us, suffer and die for our sin, and then rise again. By virtue of this resurrection He proclaims victory over sin and absolution to all declaring us to be holy and sons of God. The Christian then receives this forgiveness in the means of grace but also the power to live a new transfigured life in Christ via the imitation of our Lord in the

mystical union. In this pre-climactic state we ever grow in holiness by created grace and image Christ to all around until we experience the beatific vision in the union of glory.

### **E. Evangelism Theology**

Some might honestly say what does evangelism have to do with the mystical union? How can this supposed esoteric subject have any practical use for evangelism? This may be the reaction of many and probably the initial reaction of this author. Yet the mystical union is at the heart of evangelism theology. St. Paul writes in Romans 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* Paul is not only speaking about a demonstration to God but also to all around us. Likewise Paul tells us to imitate Christ and even to become little Christs (Ephesians 5:1-2, I Peter 2:21). Clearly this is not only for our own good but for the good of all around. The Christian is always a part of holy mother church and the communion of saints (Galatians 4:26). The Christian is not a rugged individualist, rather he is in communion with the Triune God and all the saints longing for the edification of all the sons of God and the conversion of the heathen.

In the mystical union Christ dwells within us, and we become living icons of Christ imaging His life, passion, death, and resurrection to all imitating our Lord. This does not only apply to our imitation of His passion via the means of grace and *Anfechtung* or evangelism in the loose sense. We are also to witness to all around in word and deed that is evangelism in the strict sense. Martin Luther makes this same point in the following citation,

Sadly, this (life) is now unknown in the whole world, and is neither preached nor pursued; indeed we are even quite ignorant of our own name, why are we Christians and are also so-called. Surely we are so-called not from Christ absent, but from Christ dwelling (*inhabitante*) in us, that is, inasmuch as we believe in Him and are mutually one another's Christ, doing for neighbors just as Christ does for us. We conclude therefore the Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor, or he is no Christian; in Christ through faith, in the neighbor through love. Through faith he is raptured above himself into God, and by love he

in turn flows beneath himself into the neighbor, remaining always in God and in His love (Luther. WA. 7:66, 69).

In evangelism in the strict sense we present the law and the gospel to the unrepentant. In evangelism in the loose sense, or much better, pre-evangelism, considering our modern theological environment, conversion does not happen. Our deeds will not convert anyone. Yet it will make one curious about Christianity and perhaps in this way provide someone with an opportunity to tell others about Jesus. Clearly the mystical union is at the center of evangelism.

#### **F. Eschatological Foretaste of Heaven**

A very useful phrase to describe the eschatology of the mystical union is “already but not yet.” In other words, the Christian is already experiencing the treasures of heaven, although not in its fullness. This is part of the infinite goodness of God who does not leave His children in the dark but already permits them to experience a foretaste of the glories that they could not possibly fathom. By means of this foretaste the Father allows one to begin to be *able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Just as the liturgy is heaven on earth where St. John’s Apocalypse is manifest before our eyes, already but not yet. Likewise in the Eucharist and in all the means of grace the Christian already experiences a taste of the union of glory via the union of grace but not yet in its fullness. Such a theology is completely in harmony with the theology of the cross. The faithful do not rise to heaven, heaven comes to the faithful. Furthermore in the holy and blessed Eucharist the faithful partake of that which they are about to become. This eschatological foretaste given to us in the divine liturgy is truly heaven on earth. For this reason the liturgy must be taught just as the Holy Scripture and catechism teach for here all the blessings of heaven are manifested in the means of grace in this blessed theophany.

## VI. Conclusion

The mystical union and theosis have always been taught in Confessional Lutheranism. For this reason nothing new has really been said concerning this teaching. Our dogmatic, homiletic, liturgical, and devotional literature clearly attests to this dogma. Neither is the purpose of this thesis to suggest anyone has taught false doctrine nor that there has been a cover up of this dogma in Confessional Lutheranism. In fact this author was taught this doctrine from little on, although not systematically and at times unaware of how to verbalize it. The purpose of this paper is to explain this dogma since it has been misrepresented by many in history especially Finnish Lutheranism today. This thesis also wishes to serve and edify the sanctified lives of all fellow Lutherans. Could the mystical union and theosis be explained better? Yes, it could be explained better just as all dogma could be. In fact if it were, our theology of Christ, the Eucharist, evangelism, and sanctification may be better grasped by our people. Not that anyone is ignorant of it. Yet in our life of sanctification we should long to study all aspects of theology. The final request of this paper or *pium desiderium* is that we encourage sanctified lives via the gospel for the glory of God alone apart from any desire to appease our maker who has already been appeased through Christ alone. Such *pia desideria* were common in Lutheran Orthodoxy well before pietism and shall also be the pious desires of Confessional Orthodox Lutherans today.

The mystical union is one of the most beautiful and comforting doctrines of Christendom. Through it, the believer knows that God is always beside him (Matthew 28:20), watching over him, guiding him, and providing him with the strength to do all things through Him. The *unio mystica* also provides us with a foretaste of our transfigured existence via theosis which will climax in heaven (Roman 12:2). Nevertheless when systematizing any dogma, there is a fear of losing its intrinsic beauty. The reason for systematizing this doctrine is to show what is biblical and what is not. Therefore, it is the

hope of this paper that the *unio mystica* has been adequately defined without destroying the intrinsic beauty and comfort of this precious dogma. Therefore let us pray with Johann Gerhard:

To me You were given-shall not all things be given to me? My nature is glorified greater in You than it was disgraced in Adam through sin. Because You assumed into the unity of Your person (Christ has two natures, human and divine, in one person) that which was only accidentally weakened by Satan, You truly are flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone (Eph 5:30). You are my brother. What can You deny to me, to whom You are most intimately joined by the same essence of the flesh and by feelings of fraternal love (Gerhard. *The Daily Exercise of Piety*. 60)?

**Soli Deo Gloria**

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