

the

# ORTHODOX EVANGELIST



“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5

Fall 2018

Vol. 52 Vol 3



## Can Grace Replace the Holy Spirit?

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

**The contrast between divine immanence, a characteristic of Eastern Church theology, and divine transcendence that marks Western Christian thought has captured my imagination over a period of several years. Coming into a**

deeper awareness of it served as a providential preparation for my positive response to the charismatic movement which I have regarded as an apocalyptic phenomenon.

Divine immanence denotes the idea of God's indwelling in the world and especially in man, despite the fall of Adam. It speaks of His closeness with man and man's closeness with God. This is known as mutual indwelling of God and man. Divine transcendence, on the other hand, signifies the notion of God's remoteness from the world and especially from man due to his sinful nature.

In Orthodox theology the teachings on creation, original sin, and justification have been expounded primarily in terms of the indwelling and personal presence of the Holy Spirit. Awareness of Divine immanence remained intact by and large, despite the encroachments of Latin theology in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The barbarian invasions from the north in the 6th and 7th centuries pushed out much of Greek philosophy and thought in Italy. The eventual Latinization of theology that followed and the rise of authoritarianism banished the belief that man can be

directly related to God in the Logos and the Holy Spirit. The pope and the hierarchy took the place of the absent Christ. People now had access only to “grace” which a transcendent God communicated through sacramental channels.

We can find many abortive attempts to recover the immediacy of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the mystics in the west. They remained as nostalgic longings for a tradition once part of western Christian experience, but now lost and forgotten. The Protestant Reformers accentuated divine transcendence with their emphasis on man's total depravity and drew western man still further away from the intimacy of the indwelling Logos and indwelling Spirit.

An increased separation between faith and reason has been corollary to a wider gulf between man and God. The fideism of Neo-orthodoxy and existentialism in recent western Christian thought is the result of a long process of alienation between the human and divine. The God-is-dead theology was the final outcome of this centuries-long development.

### A Rediscovery of the Holy Spirit

In this background we can see that

the charismatic movement of our day represents a rediscovery of the Holy Spirit among Protestants and Roman Catholics. Among Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, it can be interpreted as an expression of re-awareness of what was always there, but had either been forgotten (do to western theological influences) or what remained dormant and unexpressed. The Holy Spirit was replaced with “grace” in Roman and Protestant theology and worship. It was largely due to the teachings of St. Augustine. In Orthodoxy, however, the Holy Spirit was preserved as the dynamic of the Church's sacramental and devotional life.

A Spirit-consciousness has always been characteristic of Orthodox theology and worship. In the words of a Protestant scholar, “*The doctrine of grace, as a specific influence passing from God to the individual through external channels or in some arbitrary way, which has played so large a part in the sacramental and Calvinistic theologies, it must be admitted the early Greek theology knew nothing of it*” (Alexander Allen, *The Continuity of Christian Thought*, P.16).

The Orthodox Church teaches that the fall of Adam deprived man of the full measure of the communion of the Holy Spirit that was required for his attainment of the “*image and likeness of God.*” It is by virtue of the Holy Spirit that man is related to God, because by the initial infusion man was in the beginning in a manner that related him constitutionally to God. But he lost access to further participation in the Spirit of God. As a result, he remained psychicos, that is, a “living soul”, lacking the supplementary Spirit. In the epistle of Jude we read: “*These be they who separate themselves, psychicoi (soulish), having not the Spirit*” (1:19).

## Spiritual vs. Soulsh

The person who exists on the level of mere animation is the soulsh or carnal man. He is the one who remains unregenerate and who has not received the gift of the new birth in the Holy Spirit. Being a child of Adam and a “child of wrath”, he exists in a state in which he remains separated from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Adam’s disobedience did not deprive man of supernatural gifts of divine grace which had been super-added to his natural endowment. It kept man from receiving the complete measure of the Holy Spirit originally infused at the moment of his creation when he became a “living soul”. But that initial infusion of the Holy Spirit was not a single event. It was rather a continuous process which was interrupted by the fall of Adam.

In Orthodox theology the emphasis is more on the forfeiture of the Holy Spirit and less on the depravity of man’s nature. That original sin was more privative than positive in its effect means that man due to the fall remained psychicos or in a state of being merely “a living soul”, because he failed to become pneumatikos or “spiritual”. Only Jesus Christ as the first perfect man created in the “image and likeness of God”, advanced beyond the stage of the psychicos to that of the pneumatikos of spiritual man. This is what St. Paul affirms when he teaches: *“The first Adam was made a living soul: the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).*

Apart from God’s Holy Spirit it is impossible for any man to become a quickening Spirit. *“We, apart from the*

*Spirit,” says St. Athanasius, “are alien and remote from God, and are united with the Godhead by participation in the Spirit; so that our being in the Father does not belong to us, but to the Spirit which is in us and dwells in us” (Against Arians III, 24).*

Only an adequate anthropology can support the doctrine of the transmission of the guilt of original sin to posterity without violating the truth that God is good and righteous. This means that only the tripartite or trisynthetic view of man – not the dichotomist view – can be regarded as satisfactory and adequate enough to account for the communication of original sin to Adam’s descendants. It serves as the only way of avoiding both creationism and traducianism. It is the only truly Biblical view of man, while dichotomy is both Platonic and Thomistic.

In other words inherent in Orthodox anthropology is the doctrine that man consists of three parts; body, soul and Spirit. Prior to rebirth he possesses the animating and noetic Spirit. At the time of rebirth he receives the sanctifying Spirit that sets him free from the dominion of corruption and death. In receiving the “supplementary Spirit”. He partakes of the fullness of the Spirit.

## The Holy Spirit in Orthodox Anthropology

The hypostasis of each soul which descends from the parent’s body is the carrier of the stain of original sin, because it is the organic nexus between parent and offspring. The nature (physis) or essence of the soul (that is, the aggregate of personality characteristics) naturally remains untainted, since it is communicated by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that indwells in the soul provides the hypostasis with its proper nature, namely, life, self-consciousness, freedom of the will, intelligence, and reason all of which go to make up the human personality or divine image.

The hypostasis is the creaturely

part of the soul, while its nature is divine and communicated directly by the Holy Spirit. The former is the substratum or individuating principle of each soul. It is that which makes one soul distinct from the other. When the most difficult dogmas of all, original sin and the new birth, are set in this light, their contradiction disappears, that is, when the distinction is maintained between soul and Spirit in man and between hypostasis and nature in the soul.

A defective anthropology cannot sustain a sound theology. Orthodox theology must necessarily be related to an Orthodox anthropology. A spiritual theology requires a spiritual anthropology, as certainly as the eye is adapted to light or the lungs to inhale air.

In Orthodox theology redemption is interpreted in terms of the renewed indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul. In regeneration man does not receive what is extraneous to his true nature or what he was totally deprived of previously. Redemption is the restoration of God’s gift given in the descent of the Holy Spirit into the soul of man.

But the fall of Adam did not alienate the Spirit completely from man. Logic itself compels the belief that the Spirit remains in man, as the source of life and intelligence, however, deficient for man’s perfection. Man has the spermatik logos within him before receiving Christ, that is, in a seminal form. We can hold that he also possesses what we can call the spermatik spirit, that is, in a minimal measure.

When the New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit being given to the believer, it should not be viewed as an adventitious entity superadded to man’s proper makeup. The most heinous of sins cannot banish the Spirit in all His totality. A spermatik vestige of the Spirit must always abide to remind man of his origin and render him capable of repentance.

Were the Spirit to leave the sinner

### THE ORTHODOX EVANGELIST

Fall 2018 No.3

A Newsletter for the promotion of Orthodox Renewal,  
Published quarterly by the Orthodox Brotherhood of  
St Symeon the New Theologian,

Inc. St. Symeon Office: 329 N. Holiday Road, Miramar  
Beach, Florida 32250 Phone: (850) 654-2771. Past issues  
available upon request.

Email: [st-symeon-nt@cox.net](mailto:st-symeon-nt@cox.net)

Web site: [www.stsymeon.org](http://www.stsymeon.org).

totally, then God could not expect an account from him and the penalty of damnation could have no real significance. Hence, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is man's persistence in sin or unbelief, despite the ever-abiding presence of God's Spirit within him.

### **Renewal of the Initial Infusion**

In spiritual rebirth the believer receives the renewal of that infusion of the Holy Spirit that we received originally at creation. Man had forfeited the fullness of the infusion by his transgression. Thanks to the Blood of the New Covenant shed by Jesus Christ upon Calvary the Father pours out again His Holy Spirit to man. The act of the risen Christ's inbreathing upon the apostles when He said: *"Receive the Holy Spirit,"* is generally taken by the early church Fathers as a repeating of the first infusion. *"This is a second inbreathing,"* writes St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *"because the first was darkened by voluntary sins"* (*Catechesis XVII, 12*).

St. Basil of the 4th Century teaches that it is the restoration of the first infusion and that the Logos who initially imparted the Spirit to man as the Creator now inbreathes Him again as the Baptizer (*Against Eunomius V*).

Similarly St. Cyril of Alexandria states that: *"the Holy Spirit which left us is restored to us by Christ who breathed upon his holy apostles, saying, Receive the Holy Ghost. It is renewal (ananeosis) of that ancient gift and of the inbreathing which was given to us"* (*Against Anthropomorphites II*).

St. Gregory of Nyssa, also of the early church, believes that Christ renewed the infusion when He breathed upon His apostles *"that by becoming remade again in the original image we would appear conformed to Him who has created us by participation in the Spirit (dia tes tou Pneumatos metoches)"* (*Book of Treasures XXXIV*).

### **The Holy Spirit Displaced by Grace**

The Orthodox Church has no theology of grace. It has, however, a theology of the Holy Spirit. Our church does not conceive of grace as an impersonal power moving from God to man. Grace is pardoning favor and acquitting love. It is a quality and attribute of God's nature and not a concrete entity. It is a disposition of love, forgiveness and justification.

As such, grace is manifested by God, but not transmitted to man, as if it were an actual existing entity. When St. Paul says, *"By grace you are saved"* (*Eph. 2:5*), he is declaring the forgiving love of God by virtue of which the repenting sinner has access to the Holy Spirit.

"Grace" does not refer to itself, but to the Spirit which is given to man because of divine favor. It speaks of the pardon that God pronounces upon sinful man when he repents in faith. When it is stated in scripture that grace is given or received, it is meant that man becomes the recipient of divine pardon and absolving goodness, not as an entity superadded to man's basic nature, but as expressed in the growth of his communion with the Spirit.

"Grace" is not a new concept in the New Testament associated only with the atoning death of Jesus. Creation itself is an expression of divine favor and love. *"What belongs to the law was itself the work of grace,"* St. John Chrysostom teaches, *"as well as our very creation out of non-existent things, since not for our preceding good deeds did we receive such a recompense"* (*Homily on John XIV, 2*). Man exists by grace (charity), not by nature (physei). As St. Macarius the Egyptian states *"But the very fact that he is man he enjoys by grace (kata Charin)."*

Grace, consequently, is not the power itself, as such, which effects justification in the sinner, but the Holy Spirit that indwells in his heart in greater abundance by virtue of God's

grace. According to St. Diodorus of Tarsus, *"The operation of the Spirit can be called 'Spirit'.* We can also call the Spirit 'operation' (energeia). This is not unacceptable" (*On Genesis*). St. John Damascene likewise holds that *"the Spirit is understood in many ways. The Holy Spirit and the powers of the Holy Spirit are known as 'spirit'"* (*On the Orthodox Faith 1, 13*).

In certain instances, the redeeming power which man receives from God is called in scripture "grace" and sometimes simply the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit, as God, that is operating for man's redemption, and not some impersonal power originating from God. Whether we call it "grace" or "energy" the fact remains that we are referring to the living, personal presence and indwelling reality of God's Holy Spirit in man.

When we say that man exists by grace and not by nature, we mean he exists by virtue of the Spirit in which he lives, moves and has his being, be he godly or ungodly. The Spirit is the oxygen, so to speak, in which the soul subsists and breathes. Likewise, when we say man is saved by grace, we mean he is redeemed by Christ who releases His Holy Spirit in super abundance into man's soul.

### **Our Spiritual Inheritance Legally But Not Experientially**

What I wish to stress in conclusion is the fact that the Pentecostal or Charismatic movement, with its focus on a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit, is a compensation for the neglect and oblivion into which the doctrine of the indwelling Spirit had fallen throughout the centuries, particularly since the de-Hellenization of Christian thought and the Latinization of theology that coincided with the beginning of the Dark Ages in the west. It is, also a compensation for the lack of an adequate Orthodox witness to the western churches.

This means that Orthodox Christians have no reason for

distrusting the charismatic renewal, because in effect it comes to reaffirm the Orthodox tradition on the indwelling Holy Spirit. We can trace the hand of the Lord moving in a mysterious way and leading the heirs of the Papacy and the Reformation back to the freedom and authority of the Holy Spirit, as we found in the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Orthodox Christians can help the non-Orthodox charismatics by witnessing to the Eucharistic life of the Church, since the centrality of the

Eucharist is conspicuously absent from the charismatic revival. God is calling us to assist them. The Church which has been free from both Pope and Reformer is the only Church that truly has recognized Jesus Christ as her sovereign Head. Our responsibility is enormous. Unfortunately, we Orthodox have our charismatic and Pentecostal inheritance legally, but not experientially.

The charismatic movement with its emphasis on a personal experience of Pentecost, comes to remind us of the Spirit-orientated life of the Orthodox

Church. It especially reminds us of the prophecy of Joel that in the last days God would pour out of His Holy Spirit “upon all flesh”. The former rain “took place on Pentecost”. Now we are living in the hour of the “latter rain”. It is God’s way of preparing His remnant people to receive their soon coming King.

There is no better way to respond than to repent of our personal sins, to yield our lives to Jesus and to rekindle the “seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” that is within us through Chrismation.

## The Tripartite Nature of Man, an Historical Perspective

by Joseph Abbate / President

The belief in the tripartite nature of mankind has had a long tradition throughout Christian history. Though there have been some debates about the issue, the Orthodox Church, surprisingly, has not yet fully settled the matter. I can in no way exhaust the topic at hand, not only due to the lack of space but because of the great depth of mystery and good arguments on both sides of the isle, both those who hold to the belief of mankind consisting of body, soul and Holy Spirit (tripartite), and those who accept only body and Spirit (bipartite).

St. Paul the Apostle had written about man being comprised of body, soul and Spirit in (1 Thess. 5:23), “*And the Very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Many of the prominent early Church Fathers, such as St. Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and St. Gregory of Nyssa held to the belief of the tripartite nature. The fact that even the Fathers who are designated Theologians, such as St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Symeon the New Theologian accepted the tripartite view, only adds further weight to the doctrine. St. Symeon writes: “*Man is united to God spiritually and physically, since the soul is not separated from the mind,*

*neither the body from the soul. By being united in essence man also has three hypostasis by grace. He is a single god by adoption with body, soul and the divine Spirit, of whom he has become a partaker. Then is fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet David, “I have said, ye are gods, and ye are all the sons of the most high” (Psalm 82:6). St. Symeon. The Discourses P. 195).*

If this is the case, then why do different trains of thought still remain? It shouldn’t be controversial at all, but, once again, we can trace the differences back due to the separation of the Orthodox Church in the East and the Roman Catholic Church in the West. The beliefs from St. Augustine had a great influence on the Western church to favor the bipartite nature of mankind. St. Augustine failed to comprehend the differences between soul (psyche) and Spirit (Pneuma). The late Bible scholar and church historian J.B. Heard wrote: “*From attending to this distinction between Psyche and Pneuma, the Greek fathers seem to me to have reached that golden mean, which was lost in Latin theology generally, and which even the Reformers, Lutheran and Calvinists, alike failed to reach.*” (J.B. Heard, *Tripartite Nature of Man P.8*).

It is historically understandable

that opposing views would arise due to the complexity of the subject. Theology was, at times, also mixed with error by some early heretical figures such as Apollinaris. Due to his belief that the Logos replaced the human nature of Christ, Apollinaris was rightly condemned for this heresy, but at the same time, he apparently also accepted the tripartite view of man, which was subsequently tossed out as well. As Bible scholar Philip Schaff had stated: “*The tripartite view of man was gradually discredited by association.... If the early Church had taught that man consisted of only body and soul, this heresy never could have gained traction. (History of the Christian Church P. 711).*

To quote J. B. Heard: “*The consequence of this was, that in the reaction against these errors, the Latin Church generally, as guided by Augustine and Jerome, rejected altogether the distinction between Psyche and Pneuma, for which the Latin tongue was not flexible enough to find equivalents, and so the usual dichotomy of man into body and soul only became the prevailing view throughout the West. (Tripartite Nature of Man P. IX).*