La lumière et la grâce : deux métaphores chrétiennes

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Résumé : Nous nous proposons d’analyser dans une perspective méthodologique herméneutique la lumière et la grâce, deux médiations métaphoriques représentatives dans le schéma de communication entre le divin et l’humain. L’objectif de notre article consiste à montrer comment ces médiations fonctionnent en tant que méthode de communication dans le sens grec du terme. Notre hypothèse est la suivante : la lumière et la grâce expriment à la fois la cause et les moyens ; Dieu qui est lumière et grâce se communique d’une façon salvifique à travers la lumière et la grâce, et l’être humain en tant que destinataire de la lumière et de la grâce, peut se communiquer lui-même comme lumière et grâce.

Mots-clés : lumière, grâce, métaphore, nature humaine, nature divine, communication

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The Light and the Grace: Christian Metaphors

Abstract: Our present study continues to provide guidance and meaning for those who are open and have the courage to ask the kind of questions superior to reason. The acceptance of unreasonable realities expresses sometimes the portrait of a non-

modern and superstitious man, a portrait dismantled by the contemporary science in order to get the assurance of control over the material and spiritual reality around us. However, the acceptance of unreasonable realities, born by the reason’s questions, expresses in other circumstances the access to super-reason and super-faith. The Light and the Grace from super-existence toward the human nature, and the implications these have, as a divine communication method and metaphors, and as a call to dialogic sharing with the Divine, are the objects of our present study. Super-reason and super-faith can and must characterize also the modern man. The Light and the Grace express both the cause and the means; God who is Light and Grace does communicate Himself in a salvific manner through Light and Grace, and we, as destinations of Light and of Grace can communicate ourselves as Light and Grace to our neighbours.

**Keywords:** Light, grace, metaphors, human nature, divine nature, communication

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Let’s talk about the important things also.

The Light and the Grace are not so much the object of scientific research laboratories, as are the subject of our kneeling which, under the veil of bold prayers, bring the divine transcendence and bring God in the human limited beings. In other words, the light and the grace become God’s methods of communication, mediated towards the human soul and human intelligence, by prayer. These dialogues or these imaginations are faster than the rumors of the speed of light and, peripheral to the law of gravity, they succeed in making known the first encounters between terrestrial and supra-terrestrial, between physic and super physic, between searching and finding. That would be in summary, yet complete, the declaration of intent in respect to knowing the God that saves and the God that communicates Himself to the beings interested in Him.

If there is a road from death to life, then this road would be watched by the Light, and if there is a favor from death to life, then this is the Grace. The Light and the Grace do exist as two fundamental metaphors of communication (Bratosin, Tudor, 2009) in the theological approach of the mediation. If there is science from death to life, then it is science-fiction, and if there is happening from death to life, then this happening never happened. Science-fiction and happening do not exist. The situation of every man, in general, and of every specialist, in particular, is the following: one has to choose between what it is and what one wishes it would be; unfortunately we almost always talk about what we wish it would be.

Man can be seen by the means of what he is and what he was. The other options are usually just versions of *scientific madness.* As a being that bears the imprint of
the Initiator, man could have never been anything just man. "... It is forgotten that the man is not a purely natural being, locked in the world’s autonomy, but is created in God’s image and meant to grow higher in the likeness of God, by the life breath of divine grace in order to be able to share the immortality of the Creator" (Popescu, 2001, 29). As one can never be just himself, but always shares something from his parents, grandparents, grand-grandparents etc., back to Adam, the same one as a being shares something from beyond Adam. If in the first instance we carry along in us something from the dead ones, so we can never say our existence is a completely distinct one, in the second instance we carry along in us something form the Living One, and accordingly we can never say our life is a completely distinct one. "As by the physical line of procreation the body and the blood are shared, the same it is with the body and spiritual blood of Christ which will give birth, by a superior birth, to the new human race" (Schütze, 2010). In our present research we intend to point out two key elements that can link back our ephemeral existence to the eternal one, and then we will try to observe how these two can determine the temporary, making it back a content of eternity.

The light and the grace are coming from Christ, the one who is Light and Grace; the effects of light and grace are determined by Christ, the Mediator Himself, and those in which there is light and grace working to perfect holiness are only those that belong to Christ. This reality requires our enlightenment not as an instant understanding of a previous unsolved problem, but as a grace driven work, an intended and directed action from God’s love in Jesus Christ and from God through Christ in us. We could say this is a repetition of the phenomena on mount Tabor, when the divine light that was shining on Christ’s face and clothes was the same light found in Moses and Elijah, the ones already redeemed. "The light seen by the Apostles on mount Tabor was not a climate-made phenomenon, as Varlaam said, an inferior light, by its nature, to the human thinking. It was God’s own light by nature: eternal, infinite, uncircumscribed in time and space, existing beyond the created being" (Lossky, 1995, 145). This light and even this grace were put in Jesus Christ, the One that had not yet been glorified, as an earnest or an anticipation of the glory which the human being has yet to receive it, the one which was taken from it at the time of the expulsion from Paradise.

1. Light and the human nature

The mystery of the human nature is as big as the mystery of the human nature of Jesus Christ and, projected on eternity, it is as much developed as the one belonging to Jesus Christ. We cannot hide what was seen, we cannot see what remained hidden. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever...” (Deuteronomy 29, 29).
Light is a background of the divine nature that keep its incompatibility with darkness, and it is on a given moment and on a certain way an example similitude of life. „In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” (John 1, 4) In this case it ends the death on the human nature of Jesus Christ and delays the death on our human nature. The light which we are born with is a perishable life and the Light which we receive anticipates the capability to be eternal, it anticipates the eternal life. „Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8, 12) The one who follows that Light which sustains the cosmos will have the Light which sustains the life without death. In other words, due to sin God allows for the light of life to be near the Light of life, and we understand this as failure that requires a second examination. The cross as a Sacrifice means opening up an arena where the victorious in Christ can reproduce in their life the exercise of obeying of Eden, can have Light instead of light and Life instead of life. Reviewing the above mentioned we could say that the perishable light that moves next to the eternal Light is reassimilated in Christ, the Light, and the temporary life that moves next to the eternal Life is reassimilated in Christ, the Life. Here is how St. Gregory of Nazians describes that situation: „Let’s come closer to the light, and then let’s become perfect light, offspring of the perfect light” (Grigore de Nazianz, 2002, 40). By coming closer to Jesus Christ, the life that ends in death, our temporary existence, this appendix of eternity which we live, becomes again a part of God’s ultimate intention, we become branches, buds of what God calls life, in the rigid sense of the word.

The human nature, as bearing the image and likeness of God is, in general, also a light bearer. Yet, in order to take place the completing of the human nature, in a biblical sense, we have to talk about bearing the light in a special sense also. In Hebrews 10, where we take notice of a speech regarding thesis and antithesis of Christ’s blood and animals’ blood, of Christ’s sacrifice and animals’ sacrifice, of the eternal character of the sacrifice of the Son of God and the temporary character of the sacrifice of animals, though seeming as by surprise, God introduces the idea of light, the fact that in order to understand and assimilate the Redeeming Sacrifice there is a need for Light, or being illuminated: „But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions….” (Hebrews 10, 32) There is a beginning. The human nature may benefit of being filled with light in a special way and from that moment on the light bearer becomes also the destination of the Light of the World. Lord Jesus Christ exercised this event, due to the human nature He had and through it the whole human nature, at His baptism. „But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and
lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3, 14-17) The opening of heavens, the descending of the Holy Spirit and the principal declaration of the Father create this meeting or, better said, this only place where this meeting can take place. In the human nature of Jesus Christ God meets our whole human nature. „Christ is the connection point between God and humanity, because He exists simultaneously in one and in the other, reuniting them within Himself” (Coman, 1993, 301). Here and now are the days of the beginning. When Jesus Christ decides to be baptized, to baptize the human nature he adopted, nature that belongs to us by love and to Him by creation, He decides the place from where and the time when the man can be filled up with Light.

Jesus Christ remains the model for light and nature. „The Son is mainly assigned as the quintessence of life which is, in the same time, light, and also made everything” (Shutze, 2010, 113). His declaration in John 8, 12: „I am the light of the world” must be found in all the redeemed: „Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5, 14) because in every human being consecrated to God must exist this divine synthesis that made Jesus Christ a sense of history and a sense of rehabilitating the universe. The light and nature which characterized the incarnated Christ must characterize the man which, in turn, must make a proof, in the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit, of light and nature in the most complete Christological sense. In this form of existence and in this form of intention must be approached the religious Christian life. Doing theology must consume the space and the distance created by the philosophical-theological discourse and put again the human nature in the possession of Light which declares the reasons of existence and confirms the relation that ensures the existence. Light and nature from Christ, the Son of God, implies light and nature in the sons of obedience. The human life must find in its nature the sense of Light and thus is to become a bearer of it. To be a Christ bearer absolutely implies to be a light bearer. „For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4, 6-7) This mentioning made by the apostle Paul takes it to the upper most the complexity of such a relationship between the light in us and our human nature, between light in Christ and His human nature, between the light in us and the light in Christ, and between Christ’s human nature and our human nature. Under these circumstances, light does not only imply directing or guidance, but light implies a state of the works of grace, a state in which God meets the work of His hands with a recovering grace through redeeming. The making of light was in order for our hearts to be enlightened, and our hearts were enlightened in order that on Christ’s face may shine the light of knowledge of God’s glory. Light and nature is then a declaration of free access to divine life, a declaration of existence in divine life. „The life of the Holy Trinity is, according to St. Gregory of Nazians, that blessed sharing of light in
which the Christian searches to enter looking for the powers and the gifts of grace” (Spidlik, 2001, 115). The expression Christian is searching does not mean the idea of works or the idea of intentions, but the idea of response; the perverted nature responds to the movement of Light, it responds when being made sensitive by the Light, it places itself in that situation and space where the meeting between man and God is one of soteriological nature.

2. Grace and human nature

The human nature and the human nature of Jesus Christ must be analyzed also as a grace problem. When Jesus Christ got the body through Virgin Mary He did not create a body out of her. For this reason the becoming a man of the Son of God must be seen as a grace problem not only as a creation problem. To us humans, to us who compromised the image of God was given the grace that Christ might assume our nature. „And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace...” (John 1, 14.16) The incarnation is a grace problem, and the receiving of grace from Christ derives from His incarnation. The miracle of getting a body from the Virgin Mary makes it possible the miracle of grace. „Without this self motion, without kenosis, the gap between God and man could have not been bridged even in Jesus Christ. Only through kenosis the Godhead could descend right in the bosom of humanity, to ennoble it not from outside, as an object, but from inside” (Staniloae, 1993, 134). If the Light puts our nature in the meeting place with God, then grace works out human nature from its midst, sanctifying it. The human nature assumed by the Son of God is the nature which Christ, as in an act of grace and as a determination of it, was taking toward perfection. For this reason we cannot talk about Christ’s human nature outside of grace and we cannot talk about the existence of our human nature without grace. In this context, when a man refuses to repent, refuses the grace to exist, and when he accepts to repent he accepts the added measure of grace that Christ brings when coming into the world. We are born and we live by grace and we are born again and we live again only by grace upon grace. In other words, the human sinful nature owes his life to this graceful sustaining, a divine given: grace and nature. Also, our sinful human nature is saved and redeemed by the graceful support extended toward the world in Christ crucified body: Grace and Nature that is divine presence and sacrificing suffering on behalf of others.

When we say grace and nature we say the work of inside. It is something that takes place in Christ and does not take place anymore in us and is something that takes place in Christ in order that it might take place also in us. For the first instance we look at the agony in Gethsemane. „And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the
ground.” (Luca 22,44) In Christ was taking place that graceful work that was supposed to sacrifice Him. Grace and nature were declaring a state of agony of that Being which belongs to the Son of God. The conflict between the eternal and perishable, between life and death, between God and Satan was taken toward the Cross upon which, by sacrifice and resurrection, was the Light to come on. This taking along was in fact taking place in the interiority of Christ in order that it might not take place in our interiority. But also in Him there was something taking place which must take place also in us. In Him was grace meeting nature as reason, virtue, ideal, and finality of what implies God’s love for those He created. Grace and nature on human being level must be a volcanic eruption of despair toward sin and the internal assumption of theandrisms offered by Golgotha. „The call does not come from outside, as to force the man, but from his very inside being (a theandric being, according to image); this call is identified with his most profound desire and thus he freely assumes his initial and final destiny” (Evdokimov, 1996, 291). The sin crisis is a state of pseudo light and pseudo grace. For such a reason this crisis cannot be solved only by Light and Grace in the divine sense of association. This situation implies putting the human being in a different state of being. „Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5, 1-2) We entered a new state of being. In a state of „wonder, beauty, charity united with gratitude” (Spidlik, 2001, 33). Grace and nature implies, with this perspective, the reassimilation of the human being in God’s environment as a virtue and living this state up to the eschaton in a synergetic situation, a „life hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3,3).

To the grace we have to look through the Grace from Christ and to the human nature we have to look through the human nature assumed by Christ. In Him, the One and the Eternal is the existence state of being to which is the sinner called and is offered to the sinner in the virtue of the Cross. The Cross and Resurrection, which is the method by which God brings toward the world the redemption, represents the indestructible synergy between grace and nature that Christ bear as in an ark in order to appropriate the man who is looking for salvation with the same grace which He appropriated Mary. The Delight given to this virgin is to be found in the following words: „And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.” (Luke 1,28) This being highly favoured, this deliverer of great grace is realized by Jesus Christ in all that expose themselves to the Cross and to the Resurrection that is the supreme scope of Grace and Nature. „And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4,33) In these circumstances the words highly favoured/great grace express the idea of Christ in you, and ye are the light of the world imply, in this case, you are the grace of the world, you multiply Christ among humans and the sense of your existence is a soteriological one.
Grace makes out of the incarnated Christ and the human nature some sort of communicating vessels: Him being poor makes us rich, Him being powerless gives us power, Him being dead gives us life. „For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8, 9) The grace is the kenosis of Jesus Christ, it is the emptying of oneself into eternal love and toward the complete salvation of man. „The Son of God, by incarnation, brought down the uncreated Sophia, His divine life, from its state of fullness wholly manifested from eternities, into a stage of becoming, of developing. He reduced it, consequently, by the birth as a human, to its initial moment of development, to a purely potential state of being, to the state of a Baby and according to His Divine Life, not only according to the human one” (Staniloae, 1993, 131). Christ descends through grace so that we, by the same grace, might ascend; Christ makes Himself human by grace so that, by the same grace, we might become partakers of His Divine nature; Christ renounces to a life of grace so that we, by the same grace, might have life.

3. Light and Grace as divine metaphorical mediations of communication: conclusions

The Divine Light and grace are expressed in Christ at the level of the uncreated divine nature and at the level of the assimilated human nature. From the divine nature, in Christ, God comes through light and grace in the human nature adopted by the Son of God. This coming that coincides with the kenosis, and not only to that, is a salvific one. God comes through light and grace and communicates His intention in order to recover the fallen human being. Light and grace express the place and the work to which man has to expose himself by faith. By faith man can expose himself to light, to live in light, and also by faith the man can expose himself to grace, which means to accept that grace might work in him the sanctification.

Light and grace do not express what a man can do or what a man can communicate to God, but express what God can do in our human nature. Through light and grace, in the human nature taken upon Himself, Jesus Christ does exactly what He wants to do through light and grace metaphorical mediation as in our human nature; through light and grace in the human nature He got from virgin Mary, Jesus Christ communicates exactly what He Wants to communicate through light and grace in our human nature. In this context, when we speak of light and grace, we speak about the way in which God, due to His love, moves from Himself towards us through the humanness of Christ. When we talk about light and grace, we talk about the way God communicates Himself through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, seen as an act of generosity and love toward human race. Accordingly, through this communication and through this movement God anticipates our restoration and,
implicitly, our salvation. In light and in grace salvation does descend toward the world and, in light and in grace the world is saved through Christ.

References