THEOSIS:
The Telos of Humanity in both Calvin and Palamas?

by

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Master of Theology
A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Knox College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Theology awarded by Knox College and the University of Toronto.

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Abstract

Up until this point, any rereading of John Calvin through the lens of theosis has not been considered specifically in conversation with the work of St. Gregory Palamas. Therefore this thesis explores the parallels and distinctions in three key areas of Calvin and Palamas in order to examine to what extent it can be argued that there are significant parallels between the theology of John Calvin and St. Gregory Palamas' understanding of theosis. The three areas of focus are: the doctrine of God; theological anthropology; and soteriology. These three categories are useful ones to examine because of their importance in Palamas’ characterization of theosis as the telos of human beings. Their application here derives from the current research on Calvin and theosis as well as on Palamas’ own writings concerning theosis. The final result deduces that the broad parallels between Palamas and Calvin are enough to consider a type of theosis in the work of Calvin, but this type is radically distinct from the more specific aspects of Palamite theology, including his understanding of the self-communication of God and the incarnation.
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Introduction

Theosis, also known as deification, or divinization, is the centre of Byzantine Theology. Hence, in his Theophanes, St. Gregory Palamas, a prominent fourteenth century Byzantine Father, concludes that theosis is “the purpose of our creation: ‘That is why God made us, that we should become partakers of the divine nature’.” Yet despite its central role in Byzantine Theology, theosis was, for the most part, either ignored, or deemed problematic for Western Theology. As Collins, in his introduction to his study on theosis in Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion, discerned “for many faithful Christians as well as for those who discourse in the academy it may seem an abhorrent or presumptuous, esoteric or irrelevant idea.” Those opposed to theosis, have often followed the tradition of Harnack in asserting that the developed idea of deification is the result of the corrupting influence of Greek philosophy upon Eastern Christianity, and that Augustine brought the doctrine “to an edifying end” in the west. Theosis is also often understood as an attack on the Western emphasis on justification, and the result of the over-glorification of human beings. Yet despite theological opposition to theosis in the West, the central role of theosis in Byzantine Theology and the movement towards ecumenical dialogue has spurred on further investigation into theosis, and its place within Christian thought.

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1 Theosis, deification and divinization are terms that are normally used interchangeably. For the purposes of this paper, I will utilize the term theosis.
4 Adolf von Harnack, History of Dogma. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961.) Collins outlines “the problematic status of the concept of ‘theosis’ or deification” in his introduction. Concerning the hellenization of Christian thought he notes the writings of Adolf von Harnack in History of Dogma: “The core thesis of Harnack’s attack [on theosis] was that the early Church has allowed the original pristine Christian kerygma to be overlaid by pagan and ‘Hellenistic’ thought forms and concepts, which he rejects in the strongest of terms.” In Collins, 3.
5 Cf. Collins, 3.
beyond the Byzantine tradition.\footnote{Collins notes: “over the past 20 years or so there has been something of a renaissance in theological discourse concerning the doctrine which is variously referred to as ‘deification’, ‘divinization’ or ‘theosis’: in 1987 Panayiotis Nellas’ work, *Deification in Christ*, was published in English; more recently, George A. Maloney’s work, *The Undreamed Has Happened: God Lives in Us* (2003); and Norman Russell’s works, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (2004) and *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (2009). Two collections of essays have also appeared. In 2006 Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov published *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* and in 2007 Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung published *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*. Each of these collections includes an investigation of understanding of deification beyond the Eastern Orthodox Tradition.” In Collins, 1.} As a result, writes Karkkainen, in *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*:

one of the most exciting things happening in ecumenical theology currently is the fact that many Protestants are now rereading their heritages through the church catholic. That includes reading them through Eastern Orthodoxy. In this rereading the idea of union, even deification, is being reclaimed and reappropriated as one of the oldest, if not the oldest Christian symbol of salvation.\footnote{Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), 8.}

A few examples of theologians being reread through the lens of *theosis* have included:

rereading through the lens of *theosis*. The results of rereading Calvin through the lens of *theosis* have been varied: some interpreters have discerned an underlying doctrine of *theosis* in the theology of John Calvin; others have met the idea of *theosis* in Calvin with staunch disapproval and rejection.

Conventionally, the rereading of various western theologians through the lens of *theosis* is met with mixed reviews and conclusions, including the rereading of Calvin through the lens of *theosis*. Russell considered the mixed reactions of the rereading of western theologians to partly be the result of the difficult language associated with *theosis*. *Theosis* is a complex doctrine to define, and is met with various interpretations and conclusions, some of which are contrary to each other, especially since “all the earlier patristic writers who refer to deification, although sometimes conscious of the boldness of their language, took it for granted that their readers understood what they meant.” In addition, the language of *theosis* is often metaphorical due to its often mystical and eschatological context. Many theologians and interpreters find it difficult to provide a concrete characterization or definition of a state or reality that is not yet complete. Consequently, when rereading various theologians through the lens of *theosis*, it is helpful to utilize the standard presented by Byzantine Theology, in which *theosis* has played a prominent role throughout the centuries. The norm and standard for *theosis* within Byzantine Theology is found in the theology of St. Gregory Palamas. Norman Russell, in a paper on *theosis*, explains that despite the central role of *theosis* in Byzantine Theology, “*theosis* did not mean
much to most Byzantines in the early fourteenth century.” Russell goes on to note that some “writers referred to it in passing” and it was mentioned by Maximus the Confessor and in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus, but by and large “it was not widely used by later Byzantine writers.” Even references in the patristic literature, according to Russell, were limited to “baptismal adoption by grace, or for the final consummation of the resurrected life” until St. Gregory Palamas characterized the central importance of *theosis* as the *telos* of human beings for the Byzantine faith.

As of yet, any rereading of John Calvin through the lens of *theosis* has not been considered specifically in conversation with the work of St. Gregory Palamas. Therefore this thesis will explore the significant parallels and distinctions in three key areas of Calvin and Palamas in order to examine to what extent it can be argued that there are significant parallels between the theology of John Calvin and St. Gregory Palamas' understanding of *theosis*. The three areas of focus are: the doctrine of God; theological anthropology; and soteriology. These three categories are useful ones to examine because of their importance in Palamas’ characterization of *theosis* as the *telos* of human beings. Their application here derives from the current research on Calvin and *theosis* as well as on Palamas’ own writings concerning *theosis*.

**The Current Research on Calvin and Theosis**

The current research on *theosis* as a key idea in the work of John Calvin, can be summarized by three categories: the affirmation of Calvin’s agreement with the Eastern Orthodox definitions of *theosis*; the espousal of *theosis* as a key element in the work of Calvin, yet distinct from Eastern Orthodox definitions of *theosis*; and abject rejections of the presence of the idea of *theosis* in

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14 Ibid., 357-8.
Calvin’s thought. These three areas utilize Calvin’s doctrines of God, theological anthropology and soteriology in different ways in order to make their argument.

McClelland, Meyendorff, Murphy and Mosser have affirmed Calvin’s agreement with the Eastern Orthodox definitions of *theosis*, based primarily on Calvin’s soteriology, and his theological anthropology. As the result of an Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue in the 1960’s, McLelland came to the conclusion that by virtue of Calvin’s emphasis on a believer’s mystical union with Christ in salvation, “I submit that on this decisive point Calvin is one with our Orthodox brethren in their idea of theosis.” McClelland further concluded that it is simply by virtue of Calvin’s followers’ emphasis on subscription to creeds and behaviour that they have lost the importance of the mystical, living union in Calvin’s thought. Meyendorff reaffirmed McLelland’s statement in his summary of the dialogue’s Third Consultation at Princeton Theological Seminary in May, 1970. He wrote,

> the exchange occasioned by the presentation of the Orthodox teaching of divinisation (*theosis*) and the Reformed teaching on sanctification produced extensive preliminary agreement, particularly on the primacy of God’s initiative in man’s salvation, the role of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and the need for a proper appreciation of divinisation-sanctification.

The findings of McLelland and Meyendorff concerning *theosis* and sanctification were reaffirmed at the 1994 Orthodox-Reformed dialogue, where participants came to the following conclusion in the “Agreed Statement on Christology”:

> ...through the perichoresis or interpenetration of the two natures in the unity of Christ’s person the human nature is restored, sustained and glorified as the new and perfect humanity of the last Adam, recapitulating the history of the first Adam. In the Orthodox tradition this is called theosis (commonly rendered as “deification”), but this does not imply that Christ's humanity ceases to be

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16 Ibid., 17.

creaturely or becomes divine in essence. Reformed theology shares this understanding but avoids the language of theosis. It treats the theme more in terms of the sanctification of human nature in Christ.¹⁸

Gannon Murphy further emphasized Calvin’s soteriology in regards to theosis. Murphy specifically highlighted the similarities in Eastern Orthodox theology and Calvin’s critical use of Christus in nobis and unio mystica concerning the “believer’s union and oneness with Christ” for salvation.¹⁹ “Union with Christ” for Murphy, is comparable with the Orthodox understanding of theosis. Murphy thereby re-titled the reformed terms used to describe the effects of a believer’s “Union with Christ”: “regeneration” as “inaugural theosis”; “sanctification” as “progressive theosis”; and “glorification” as “consummative theosis.”²⁰ For Murphy, God’s grace imparts these three facets of theosis through three primary means: “the word, the sacraments, and prayer.”²¹

Mosser, in his article affirming the presence of theosis in Calvin went beyond the emphasis of soteriology to show that “deificatory language and imagery can be found at many points in Calvin’s theology” including Calvin’s theological anthropology.²² As a result of this inquiry, Mosser came to the conclusion that “deification is not merely an eschatological concept for Calvin. It is rooted in the divine intentions for the creation and recreation of humanity…” thereby highlighting Calvin’s soteriology as well as his theological anthropology.²³

In contrast to the above authors, Billings and Canlis affirmed theosis as a key element in the work of Calvin, yet considered Calvin’s type of theosis as distinct from that of Eastern Orthodox characterizations. They made this distinction based primarily on Calvin’s doctrine of

²⁰ Murphy, 207.
²¹ Ibid., 207.
²³ Mosser, 42.
God (specifically the Trinity), and theological anthropology, with some reference to his soteriology. Billings, in his article “United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification” argued, “Calvin teaches deification of a particular sort” based on Calvin’s Trinitarian use of “participation, ingrafting and adoption.”

Billings also took into consideration Calvin’s emphasis on “humanity at its fullest is humanity united to God.”

Billings wrote, “while Calvin does not go into detailed speculation on this final, eschatological end, his language concerning a Trinitarian incorporation of humanity into union with God is clear and emphatic.”

Yet Billings, despite his recognition of the great deal of common ground between Orthodox theologies of participation and theosis, was quick to emphasize that based on Calvin’s soteriology, Calvin’s doctrine of deification was unique, and that one must not equate Calvin with the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis as proposed by McLelland. Billings is concerned that such an association would collapse the broader theology of Calvin, including his emphasis on scripture and the reality of human sin, into a Byzantine mould. Therefore, in the conclusion to his book, Calvin, Participation, and the Gift, Billings cautioned against theologies of participation and theosis, including Palamite theology, which he believed may “become theologies of glory – underplaying the less fashionable themes of human sin and Christ’s cross.”

Canlis, in her book, Calvin’s Ladder, followed in the tradition of Billings by emphasizing that Calvin’s distinctive Trinitarian approach to the divine-human relationship revealed “a more

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25 Ibid., 319.
26 Ibid., 325.
27 Ibid., 334.
28 Ibid., 334.
comprehensive story, that of a God who intends us for communion.” This communion is “Union with Christ”: “the groundwork of creation, the purpose of anthropology, the telos towards which all creation strains.” Canlis added that, in this, Calvin was in line with the patristic doctrines of deification; but she nonetheless shares Billing’s concern of collapsing Calvin into a Byzantine mould.

Others were not as quick to attribute theosis to the work of Calvin. Their resistance was most often a consequence of emphasizing one or more of the following: a definition of theosis which includes the mixing of the divine and human natures; an emphasis on Calvin’s doctrine God, especially concerning the transcendence of God and thereby a reading of Calvin’s theological anthropology in which the divine-human relationship is radically oppositional; and a dialectical soteriology in which the act of redemption is forced on the divine as a means of synthesizing the oppositional divine-human relationship.

The objection to theosis, which utilized the definition of theosis which includes the mixing of the divine and human natures, drew primarily on Calvin’s theological anthropology, which rejected any mixing of the two natures. It is aptly summarized by Charles Partee in his subsection entitled “Deification” in The Theology of John Calvin, in which he traced much of the current literature both for and against theosis in Calvin. He concluded that Mosser’s final judgement is unnecessary and that Billings stumbled in using the term doctrine in reference to theosis in Calvin because Calvin never used the term theosis. Partee’s case for the opposition continues with Wendel, who wrote,

30 Canlis, 54.
31 Ibid., 237.
there is no question, when Calvin is speaking about union or communion with Christ, of any absorption in Christ, or any mystical identification that would diminish human personality in the slightest degree, or draw Christ down to us. The author of the Institutes had already shown himself too hostile to any glorification or deification of man, and of earthly sinful man above all, to be suspected of trying to revert to this by a roundabout way.33

Wendel went on to say that “it remains true that, close as that union may be, man and the Christ are not confused together, but on the contrary keep their own characteristics.”34 Partee continued his emphasis against any mixing of the divine and human nature in relation to Calvin’s soteriology, and more specifically, sanctification. He noted, in concordance with Niesel, that sanctification is a doctrine of soteriology, not ontology.35 Niesel wrote that in theosis an ontological change happens, because the believer is absorbed into the divine, but in sanctification the “union of the faithful with Christ which Calvin teaches has nothing whatever to do with the absorption of the pious mystic into the sphere of the divine being.”36 The argument against the mixing of natures was continued by John McClean in his article, “Perichoresis, Theosis and Union with Christ in the Thought of John Calvin” where he deferred to Partee’s arguments and re-iterated the point that in Calvin, “Union with Christ” is not viewed as “perichoretic but as spirit-mediated”.37 Therefore, according to McClean, theosis cannot be present in Calvin because there is no mingling of natures, even though there is a type of exchange. McCormack and Slater also took up this argument in their respective discussions of Calvin and theosis.38

These authors who object to theosis based on the mixing of divine and human natures, however,

34 Wendel, 237.
35 Partee, 178.
operate with interpretations of *theosis* which are contrary to the Palamite characterization of *theosis* which does not include the mingling of natures.\textsuperscript{39}

The interpretations of *theosis* which include the mixing of natures, often also emphasized Calvin’s doctrine of God, primarily the category of the transcendence of God. The result of the emphasis on Calvin’s doctrine of God was a reading of Calvin’s theological anthropology in which the divine-human relationship is so radically oppositional that any sort of *theosis* is impossible.\textsuperscript{40} In addition, such a reading of Calvin means that the extent of human depravity is such that Calvin is forced to synthesize the divine and the human, through his doctrine of redemption. The result, noted Torrance, is that Calvin’s soteriology is reduced to nothing more than God’s answer to human depravity.\textsuperscript{41} By this Torrance meant that God is forced to synthesize two polar opposites, the holy divine and the depraved human, by the creation of grace, in the atonement, in order to produce a type of divine-human relationship. Examples of interpretations of Calvin in which the divine-human relationship is essentially oppositional and in which God is forced to synthesize these oppositional entities through the creation of grace are found in the works of Butin, Baiton, Bouwsma, Ganoczy, and Wendel.

Butin noted that in Baur’s overstated analysis of Calvin, “Baur went on to depict this relationship of God with human beings in terms of bipolar counterparts who are dialectically synthesized in the mediation of Christ.”\textsuperscript{42} As observed by B.B. Warfield, however, the roots of

\textsuperscript{39} They are also in contrast to the definitions utilized by Billings and Canlis, which, while they do not want Calvin collapsed into Byzantine thought, do not hold to *theosis* as the mingling of natures.

\textsuperscript{40} Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin’s Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995), 15. Butin wrote: “In the last 200 years of Calvin scholarship, there has been a persistent tendency to interpret Calvin’s view of the divine-human relationship in terms of a radical, oppositional contrast between the divine and the human.”

\textsuperscript{41} Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 20.

\textsuperscript{42} Butin, 16. Butin further notes that “Ever since F.C. Baur’s monumental three-volume study of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity (1843), a highly influential strand of Reformation interpretation has regarded the doctrine of the Trinity in the thought of the magisterial reformers as being largely a traditional and formal convention, intended only to initially indicate the historical orthodoxy of protestant theology. Calvin’s theology has typically been
this interpretation are more Hegelian, than deriving from Calvin himself. Still, emphasized
Butin, Baur’s analysis had significant impact on future interpretations of Calvin’s understanding
of the divine-human relationship. \(^{43}\)

Bainton, in his examination on *The Life and Death of Michael Servetus*, compared the
differences between Servetus’s and Calvin’s theological anthropology. According to Bainton,
Servetus “understood the nature of humanity [as being] of such a character that God can
communicate to it divinity, … not indeed by a degradation of divinity but by an exhalation of
humanity.”\(^{44}\) Bainton then argued, “Servetus scarcely understood how deep were his differences
with Calvin. For Calvin, God was so high and lifted up…”\(^{45}\) that, as a result, “man’s only hope
of redemption is through Christ Jesus was who was from all eternity the Son of God; and the
only hope of society is through the company of the elect…”\(^{46}\)

William Bouwsma, in *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*, argued that Calvin
presented two personas, which coexisted together, though quite uncomfortably, within the same
historic person.\(^{47}\) Bouwsma described these two personas, as first, one who “craved desperately
for intelligibility, order, certainty” and as second, one who “celebrates the paradoxes and
mystery at the heart of existence.”\(^{48}\) This second persona, according to Bouwsma, considered
the life of faith as one which was “dynamic and could be appropriated only gradually and
imperfectly; a Christian in this context was a person making progress toward the full stature of

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\(^{43}\) Butin, 16.

\(^{44}\) Roland Herbert Bainton. *Hunted Heretic; the Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 47.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 46.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 46.


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 230.
Christ.” However, Bouwsma further emphasized, the second personality was minimized in Calvin in favour of the first personality. It was Calvin’s first and dominant personality that sought to reconcile and unite the oppositional categories of deity and humanity.

Ganoczy began his chapter on the dialectical structure of Calvin’s thought by identifying two kinds of dialectic in Calvin. The first he attributes to Calvin’s law school training by which Calvin learned “the art of reasoning according to the demands of formal logic.” The use of dialectic in the art of reasoning gave Calvin a powerful weapon, which armed him for battle. Ganoczy further noted that Calvin found enjoyment in this art: “discussing, accusing, defending, refuting, demonstrating – he obviously does all this with the pleasure that a gifted artist feels at his work.”

Ganoczy then noted that the second use of the dialectic in Calvin is in the foundation of his theological system. Ganoczy called this the “habit of systematically placing the divine and the human elements in opposition to each other and then resolving the tension with the help of a principle that synthesizes the opposites.” Evidence for the dialectic at the foundation of Calvin’s thought, according to Ganoczy, was found in Martin Luther’s influence on Calvin, Calvin’s use of scripture, and in Calvin’s dynamism.

The results of this foundational dialectic in Calvin were viewed by Ganoczy as both positive and negative. The positive result was a clear theological system that brought reform amongst the confusion of the reformation. The negative, however, was that Calvin’s dialectic resulted in an inherent flaw in his system that brought about its failure: it “was destined by its

49 Bouwsma, 231
50 Ibid., 231: “His more philosophical side was dominant, seeking to reconcile and unite them dialectically.”
52 Ibid., 185.
53 Ibid., 185.
54 Ibid., 186
55 Ibid., 187.
very structure to fail to attain a divine-human synthesis.”\textsuperscript{56} Ganoczy further emphasized that Calvin failed in attaining this divine-human synthesis in his discussions on the incarnation, and the church.

Wendel noted that Calvin began his \textit{Institutes} by emphasizing the opposition of God and creature, by placing “all his theology under the sign of what was one of the essential principles of the Reform: the absolute transcendence of God and his total ‘otherness’ in relation to man.”\textsuperscript{57} Wendel went on to state that Calvin considered no theology as Christian and in line with the scriptures, except that which “respects the infinite distance separating God from his creature and gives up all confusion, all mixing, that might tend to efface the radical distinction between the Divine and the human.”\textsuperscript{58}

In summary, the critics of \textit{theosis} as a functioning theological category for Calvin emphasized Calvin’s doctrine of the utter transcendence of God in opposition to human beings. The result is a vast chasm between humanity and God whose consequence is a negative view of humanity and a forced synthesis of the relationship through a markedly transactional doctrine of redemption. The transaction of redemption resulted in God’s toleration of the human creature, and a minimal goal of sanctification. The end result, however, was still a static contrast between the divine and the human. Or, as Billings summarizes, it is to argue that “Calvin systematically opposes humanity and divinity such that a transformative union between the two is made unthinkable.”\textsuperscript{59} Those in favour of the presence of \textit{theosis} in Calvin’s thought read Calvin in a different light. They have emphasized Calvin’s doctrine of the Trinity, rather than the Transcendence of God, as well as a theological anthropology and soteriology which accentuated

\textsuperscript{56} Gancozy, 187.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 151.
humanity’s and creation’s telos as communion with God. In these readings, the goal of Calvin’s theology was not separation, but union, which can also be described using the Palamite characterization of theosis.

**Palamas on Theosis**
The Palamite characterization of theosis begins and ends with theosis as the telos of human beings. The reason for this central role writes Mantzaridis, is that “Palamas himself, following the tradition of the Greek Fathers and the mystical theologians of Byzantium, saw deification as the ultimate goal of human existence.”60 As referenced above, Palamas made this point himself in his Theophanes, where he stated that theosis is the “purpose of our creation: ‘that is why God made us, that we should become partakers of the divine nature’. ”61 Therefore, all believers are engaged by God, on a life-long journey towards the telos of theosis.

The journey towards theosis began at baptism, and is further initiated and enabled by God, through his Spirit, in the sacraments and the contemplation of God. Palamas’ thought and practice concerning the contemplation of God was influenced by his hesychasm. Hesychasm, defined Papademetriou, is a “mysticism in which, through spiritual exercise and in quietness, the mystic attains the vision of the divine light and the glory of God.”62 The vision of the divine light and the glory of God is the grace of God. The grace of God is not to be understood as “a thing, but as a relationship.”63 The relationship is one in which “‘the entire Divinity comes to dwell in fullness in those deemed worthy’ and all the saints in their entire being dwell in God,

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62 “It is the vision, not of the ‘essence’ of God, but of His presence and activity, His ‘energies.’ This is in contrast to the Oriental mysticism of complete absorption of the self in the union with the divine essence. Also, it is in contrast to the Occidental sensual mysticism where the mystic is united carnally to Christ.” In George C. Papademetriou, *Introduction to Saint Gregory Palamas* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), 31.
receiving God in his wholeness.”⁶⁴ As such, the recipients of grace “become partakers of the divine nature”; they are brought into full communion with God by divine action. The completion of the communion is theosis and only possible in the life to come.

Consequently, since the completion of theosis is found only in a state that has yet to happen, Palamas did not focus on a definition, or concrete characterization of the final state of theosis. In the words of Palamas himself:

Deification is in fact beyond every name. This is why we, who have written much about hesychia⁶⁵ (sometimes at the urging of the fathers, sometimes in response to the questions of the brothers) have never dared hitherto to write about deification. But now, since there is a necessity to speak, we will speak words of piety (by the grace of the Lord), but words inadequate to describe it. For even when spoken about, deification remains ineffable, and (as the Fathers teach us) can be given only by those who have received it.⁶⁶

Or, as summarized by Mantzardis, Palamite theosis is “a mystical event which takes place within [a person] through God’s supranatural power, and as such is essentially unutterable.”⁶⁷

Therefore, Palamas focused on the theological and anthropological elements which provided the foundation for, and pointed toward the human telos of theosis.

Scholars who have studied the Palamite characterization of theosis have followed suit, pulling out the theological and anthropological elements that reflect theosis, including Palamas’ doctrine of God, theological anthropology and soteriology. Mantzaridis in his study of theosis in Palamas, devoted his first chapter to a consideration of Palamas’ theological anthropology, which included a discussion on Palamite soteriology. Concerning Palamas’ theological

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⁶⁴ Gregory Palamas: The Triads (Classics of Western Spirituality), ed. John Meyendorff, trans. Nicholas Gendle (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983), III.i.27. It is important to note here, and as will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, that Palamas makes a distinction between God’s union with human beings in his essence and his energies. Therefore, when Palamas writes that the fullness of God comes to dwell in human beings, Palamas is referring only to the energies and not the essence of God. Therefore Russell notes that the grace of God also “goes beyond relationship. For although God unites himself with man, he remains wholly other.” In Russell, “Theosis and Gregory Palamas,” 305.

⁶⁵ Hesychia is “the Greek word for silence or quietness” in Papademetriou, 31.

⁶⁶ Triads, 3.1.32

⁶⁷ Mantzaridis, 127.
anthropology, Mantzaridis highlights Palamas’ emphasis on God’s creation of human beings in the divine image which means that “man’s true life springs from his participation in the life of God and his communion with Him.”

The creation of human beings in the divine image made human beings receptors for the Holy Spirit which “endows man with godlike existence through His grace and glory.” Therefore, according to Mantzaridis, Palamite theological anthropology emphasized that human beings are created for theosis by virtue of being image bearers of God.

Mantzaridis goes on to address Palamas’ soteriology in conjunction with Palamas’ theological anthropology to further highlight theosis as the telos of human beings. For although human beings were created for communion, “man has estranged himself from God…” This estrangement was caused by the sin of human beings and resulted in death. Sin, however, did not derail God’s original intention for human beings and redemption was enacted in order to restore the possibility of communion between God and human beings. Mantzaridis quoted Palamas’ Homily 16 to emphasize this point:

God’s Son became man to show to what heights He would raise us; to keep us from self-exaltation through thinking that we ourselves have secured the revocation of our fall; to join together, as a true mediator, and as Himself being both divine and human, the sundered aspects of our nature; to break the chain of sin; to purify the defilement that sin introduced into our flesh; to demonstrate God’s love for us; to make clear to us to what depths of evil we had fallen, since only God’s incarnation could retrieve us; to be an example to us of humility and a remedy for the pride of flesh and passion; to show how our nature as created by God is good; to be the inaugurator and assurance of resurrection and eternal life, destroying despair; to make men sons of God and participators in divine immortality, since He became Son of man and took on mortality; to show how human nature was created in the image of God above all other created things, for it is so kindred to God that it can form a single hypostasis with Him...

68 Mantzaridis, 22.
69 Ibid., 22.
70 Ibid., 25.
71 Ibid., 27; cf. Homily 16.
Therefore, summarizes Mantzaridis, by means of redemption, through Christ’s death and resurrection, God brought about the consummation of theosis in fallen human beings. Thus, through Mantzaridis’ work, we can observe the importance of both Palamas’ theological anthropology and soteriology for his understanding of theosis.

Williams also observed the importance of Palamas’ theological anthropology, and in addition, highlighted Palamas’ doctrine of God in her study of the Palamite doctrine of theosis in comparison to the theology of Aquinas. Her method was to begin with various keywords from the “the closest Palamas comes to a definition proper of theosis,” that is, a quotation from Maximus the Confessor. The definition is quoted by Palamas in the Triads:

But when you hear of the vision of God face-to-face, recall the testimony of Maximus: ‘Deification is an enhypostatic and direct illumination which has no beginning, but appears in those worthy as something exceeding their comprehension. It is indeed a mystical union with God, beyond intellect and reason, in the age when creatures will no longer know corruption. Thanks to this union, the saints, observing the light of the hidden and more-than-ineffable glory, become themselves able to receive the blessed purity, in company with the celestial powers. Deification is also the invocation of the great God and Father, the symbol of the authentic and real adoption, according to the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to the bestowal of which grace the saints become and will remain the sons of God.’

The keywords distinguished by Williams, from the above passage, were: light, union, virtue, knowledge, glory, adoption and grace. She then delineated Palamas’ use of the keywords throughout his works in order to draw out a fuller understanding of theosis in Palamite thought. She deduced that none of these terms singularly encompassed theosis for Palamas. Rather, she found “he simultaneously yokes them together and denies their ultimate validity. He does so, not

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72 Cf. Mantzaridis, 31-32
74 Meyendorff notes that it is enhypostatic “in the sense that the divine life finds its personal locus in each of those being sanctified.”
75 Triads, 3.1.28.
because he is inconsistent or his thinking muddled but because he wants to point to the way in which God both enters into human experience and exceeds it.”

Therefore, after her consideration of the keywords, Williams concluded that first and foremost, theosis for Palamas is associated with his theological anthropology; it is the human person who is created for theosis and receives theosis.

Next, in her study on theosis in Palamas, Williams took into account the Palamite doctrine of God in relation to the previously considered keywords. Her consideration resulted in the distinguishing of two themes concerning the doctrine of God, in which she found the “summation of the Palamite understanding of theosis.” These two themes were “transcendence or gratuity and provenance or authenticity.”

The theme of transcendence, or gratuity names the strand in Gregory’s thought that emphasizes the inviolability of divine being and theosis as gift. Thus, this pole makes a statement about both the divine and human dimensions of theosis: deification is the consequence of a divine, never a human act. The same principle that proclaims humanity solely the recipient of grace also proclaims God utterly transcendent, the One never constrained by the act of self-giving.

The theme of provenance, or authenticity, expresses the notion that deification is genuine encounter with no less than the living God and not some derivative of God. What God freely gives, therefore, is none other than himself and what the deified human person receives is none other than God.

These two themes, for Williams, point to “the common denominators of the Palamite doctrine of theosis: God’s self-communication to humanity is an authentic gift of self, and not of some lesser intermediary, yet humanity can neither force this divine gift, nor is God bound in the giving of

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76 Williams, 106.
77 Ibid., 161.
78 Ibid., 161.
79 Ibid., 128.
80 Ibid., 129.
it.”\(^{81}\) Therefore, summarizes Williams, when we speak of \textit{theosis} in Palamas, it is ultimately about how God relates to the human person and how that relatedness transforms the human nature by divine action: “the one who enfolds believers while never engulfing them, the one who shares himself among all, yet remains one, the Giver of all who is never given away.”\(^{82}\)

\textbf{Method}

The discussion concerning the parallels and distinctions between Palamas and Calvin concerning \textit{theosis} will begin with their respective doctrines of God, then continue one to examine their theological anthropology and finally their soteriology. The doctrine of God will examine primarily the areas of God’s transcendence and immanence. In the study of their anthropology we will focus mainly on their congruence concerning the creation of human beings in the image of God, and how such a mode of creation highlights God’s intention for a divine-human relationship. Finally, in considering their soteriology, we will consider the incarnation and the divine action in redemption, to restore the fractured divine-human relationship in order to bring about the \textit{telos} of human beings. The final result will show that Palamas and Calvin agreed on the overarching themes of \textit{theosis}, but differ on the mode and result, leading the the discernment that Calvin did not hold to a Palamite definition of \textit{theosis} but may have held to his own unique kind of \textit{theosis}.

\(^{81}\) Williams, 161.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 156.
Chapter One
The Doctrine of God

In order to initiate the discussion concerning the theological and anthropological similarities and distinctions between Calvin and Palamas on the topic of *theosis* as the *telos* of human beings, we will begin with their respective doctrines of God. Furthermore, as their doctrines of God are extensive elements of their theologies here we will be limited to primarily their discussions on the transcendence and immanence of God. As shown through the work of Williams in the introduction to this thesis, Palamas’ doctrine of God, especially concerning God’s transcendence, and I will add immanence, is an important part of Palamas’ theological and anthropological foundations for *theosis*. For ultimately God’s transcendence and immanence is about how God relates to, and thereby can be joined, or united to, human beings. The problem of God’s transcendence and immanence is as follows: If God is only transcendent, then God is ultimately beyond human reach and connection and no such union is possible; Yet, if God is only immanent, God may be accessible to human beings, but to the extent that there is such a mixing between the divine and the human that either one, or both, is no longer recognizable. This problem is quickly highlighted by those who argue against the attribution of *theosis* to the thought of Calvin. Calvin’s doctrine of God does possess a strong argument for the transcendence of God, which may at first glance seem to exclude any notion of *theosis*. Calvin, however, is not alone in his argument for the transcendence of God. Palamas also carefully guards God’s transcendence, while at the same time emphasizing that God is also immanent through God’s own self-communication to human beings which ultimately transforms the human nature by divine action to the ultimate *telos* of *theosis*.\(^{83}\) Palamas utilized two key terms to distinguish between the transcendence and immanence of God: *essence*, which protects

\(^{83}\) I am indebted to Williams for the phrase “self-communication” cf. pg. 161.
transcendence; and *energies*, which is God’s self-communication. The essence and energies are at the heart of *theosis* for Palamas. They are the opportunity for *theosis*; for without God’s transcendence there would be mixing and confusion, and without God’s self-communication there would be no opportunity for union.

Calvin did not use the terms *essence* or *energies* in his work. Calvin however, did not only speak of God’s transcendence, but also described a manner in which God communicates godself to human beings, which I have labelled: God’s accommodated self-communication. Therefore, for both Palamas and Calvin, God is transcendent and yet immanent through self-communication. In addition, for both Palamas and Calvin, the encounter with God’s self-communication is initiated by, and with the divine: through the Son in the Holy Spirit. **God comes to human beings and share’s godself with them.** Here, however, is where the parallels end. For Palamas, God’s self-communication is manifested in the divine light of the transfiguration which is revealed in prayer and contemplation. In distinction, Calvin demarcated God’s self-communication in the concrete actions of creation, scripture, and redemption.84

**The Transcendence of God**

**Palamas**

For Palamas, the transcendence of God implied God’s inaccessibility to his creatures because his divinity is beyond human knowledge and experience. This inaccessibility was foundational to the Palamite doctrine of God. God’s transcendence was intrinsic to God’s divinity: “rooted in God himself.”85 As such, wrote Anastos, “underlying Palamas’ theology is that God, as

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84 Also known as the Knowledge of God the Creator and the Knowledge of God the Redeemer.
uncreated, is beyond all being and therefore incomprehensible and inexpressible.”\textsuperscript{86} The knowledge of God is beyond the human ability to discern or grasp. As such, argue Antonopoulos and Terezis in their article, “Aspects on the Relation Between Faith and Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas,” Palamas was adamant that human knowledge, gleaned through “philosophy and science can legitimately apply only to the earthly, created objects accessed by sensual experience.”\textsuperscript{87} Therefore, human beings are able to obtain knowledge about the created world through philosophy and science, however, the uncreated, “is out of discussion and theoretical analysis…”\textsuperscript{88} Therefore, following the tradition of the church fathers, Palamas’ utilized the practice of apophatic theology. Meyendorff explains,

\begin{quote}

The writings of the Fathers – and particularly Dionysius – emphasized, as the starting point of any Christian discourse about God, the affirmation that God is not any of the creatures and that, therefore, the created mind, which “knows” only creatures, can conceive of God only by the method of exclusion.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

The method of exclusion distinguished God from that which was created, and was most frequently echoed in the liturgical prayers which were familiar to all, and emphasized the same apophatic theology: “‘Thou art God ineffable, invisible, incomprehensible’, proclaimed the Eucharistic canon of the liturgy celebrated in all the churches.”\textsuperscript{90} The result of apophatic theology according to Palamas was not union with God but a realization of distinction from him: “the ascent by negation is in fact only an apprehension of how all things are distinct from God.”\textsuperscript{91} The recognition of distinction from God, included, according to Anastos, a “recognition

\begin{footnotes}
\item[88] Antonopoulos and Terezis, 20.
\item[90] Meyendorf, \textit{Triads}, 14.
\item[91] Triads, Liii.19.
\end{footnotes}
of the deficiencies of created beings’ knowledge of and language about God.” 92 However, at the same time, the “divine ‘unknowability does not mean agnosticism, or refusal to know God’. ” 93 Rather its purpose was to insist on the “basic incapacity of man to reach God by his own effort.” 94 Therefore, the method of apophatic theology was a preliminary step for the believer in assuming the correct posturing in contemplation towards God who is beyond the human ability to know, and who desires to communicate godself to the believer, without the hindrance of human ideals. In addition, Palamas emphasized the transcendence of God in his theology in order to avoid any accusations of pantheism in theosis: “human beings cannot become equal to, or identical with, God.”

Calvin

Calvin also guards the transcendence of God, with the intention of emphasizing the inability of human beings to come to knowledge of God on their own. In the Institutes, Calvin emphasized that God is above and beyond the creation and therefore must not be confused with creation or creatures. 95 The name of God also invoked God’s place above the creation. In Calvin’s preface of the Ten Commandments, he noted, “the name “Jehovah” signifies God’s authority and lawful domination. …with this word alone, therefore, we are sufficiently brought under the yoke of God’s majesty.” 96 Then in his consideration of the Second Commandment on idolatry, Calvin warned against the attempt to reduce the transcendent God to the imagination of human mind, and the products of creation. He wrote that the commandment, “restrains our license from daring to subject God, who is incomprehensible, to our sense perceptions, or to represent him by any

92 Anastos, 336.
93 Meyendorff, Triads, 14.
95 Cf. Institutes, 1.5.5.
96 Ibid., 2.8.13.
form.” For, as Calvin regarded, in the First Commandment, “the Lord wills alone to be pre-eminent among his people, and to exercise complete authority over them. To effect this, he enjoins us to put far from us all impiety and superstition, which either diminish or obscure the glory of his divinity.” Then, in his discussion on the Lord’s Prayer, Calvin noted, “we should wish God to have the honor he deserves; men should never speak or think of him without the highest reverence.” In addition,

But if holiness is associated with God’s name where separated from all other names it breathes pure glory, here we are bidden to request not only that God vindicate his sacred name of all contempt and dishonor but also that he subdue the whole race of mankind to reverence for it.

Nothing, from human beings, or the rest of creation, is to be confused with the true God. God is completely other, and above human beings and the creation.

As God is completely other, and above human beings and creation, God cannot be fully discerned by investigation into creation, or the human mind. The great gulf between human beings and God was further emphasized by Calvin’s examples of human experiences with the majesty of God. Calvin wrote,

Hence that dread and wonder with which scripture commonly represent the saints as stricken and overcome whenever they felt the presence of God… when he manifests his glory, [they] are so shaken and struck dumb as to be laid low by the dread of death – are in fact overwhelmed by it and almost annihilated.

For Calvin, it is clear: God’s majesty is beyond the human ability to withstand. God is greater, mightier and beyond the human ability to fully know or comprehend by human means.

Torrance, in his book, Calvin’s Doctrine of Man, Torrance, considered Calvin’s strong statements on the transcendence of God as being a result of style. He described Calvin’s style as

97 Ibid., 2.8.17.
98 Institutes, 2.8.16.
99 Ibid., 3.20.41.
100 Hence Calvin is wary of philosophy apart from faith, cf. 1.13.21
101 Institutes, 1.1.3
didactic. In the preface to his book, Torrance began by attacking scholars who over emphasize Calvin’s use of the transcendence of God, and noted the negative effects of such interpretations. He wrote,

One of the calamities of traditional exposition and interpretation of Calvin's theology has been, by means of arid logical forms, to make Calvin's own distinctions too clean and too rigid. This has resulted in over-simplification which has obscured the flexibility as well as the range and profundity of his thought.\(^{102}\)

Rather, as Torrance explained in his first chapter, any emphasis on separation or opposition between the divine and the human, by Calvin, is didactic in purpose. Torrance argued that when Calvin emphasized the stark distinction between God and humanity, he did so in order to fully deflate humanity’s self-confidence and to abolish any pride in human integrity and achievements.\(^ {103}\) In so doing, Calvin strove, like Palamas, to ensure that no one could come to the conclusion that any human being could come to God on his/her own. Unfortunately, noted Torrance, “later Calvinist theology too often turned Calvin's didactic devices into dogmatic procedure, producing a doctrine of the fall of man and of human depravity apart from the context of grace.”\(^ {104}\) The outcome, observed Torrance, has been the obscuring of Calvin’s fundamental position, which has “…him out to be the author of a thoroughly pessimistic view of man.”\(^ {105}\)

Yet, it can be seen that Calvin’s primary concern in guarding the transcendence of God is not to emphasize a pessimistic view of humanity. More precisely, Calvin emphasized the transcendence of God in order to guard against the human desire to subject God to human control, or even manipulation, including the ability to reach on by oneself. It is to ensure, as

\(^{102}\) Torrance, 7
\(^{103}\) “Calvin holds so firmly that grace completely undercuts all our claims to righteousness and wisdom, and that we do not allow grace to strike home to us until we have renounced all our righteousness and wisdom, that he employs every didactic method he can think of to deflate man's self-esteem and pride in his own integrity and achievements. " in Torrance, 19-20.
\(^{104}\) Ibid., 20.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., 20.
Torrance observed, that human beings understand that they are made in God’s image, and not the other way around. Canlis, in accordance with Torrance’s argument, maintained that “we must view Calvin's insistence on transcendence against the background of medieval piety and its domestication of God, oriented as it was away from a dynamic relationship and toward manipulation.” In Calvin’s medieval context, continued Canlis, God was no longer free to relate to his people. Canlis quoted from Calvin’s Sermon on Acts 1: “they wish to hide Him in a box, and they wish to carry Him here and there, and to play with Him as with a doll.” Hence, in Bondage and Liberation of the Will, Calvin relayed the evils of the papacy that is filled with idolatry, and urged his readers to “shrink from open violations of doctrine and practices of worship which bring the most grievous insults on the most holy name of God.” This, for Calvin, was the sin of idolatry: "man's mind, full as it is of pride and boldness, dares to imagine a god according to its own capacity; as it sluggishly plods, indeed is overwhelmed with the crassest ignorance, it conceives an unreality and an empty appearance as God." Or in other words, God is reduced to humanity, instead of humanity uplifted to God. Consequently, for both Palamas and Calvin, the transcendence of God positioned humanity to look to God for God’s own self-revelation, and help. It properly postured humanity in relation to God.

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106 Canlis, 67.
107 Concerning Calvin on idolatry, Eire notes, “Calvin’s primary concern in his struggle against Catholic piety was to defend the glory of the God who is ‘entirely other,’ who transcends all materiality, who is ‘as different from flesh as fire is from water,’ and whose reality is inaccessible. Calvin’s attack on idolatry was an effort to restore God’s transcendence through the principle finitum non est capax infiniti and His omnipotence through soli Deo Gloria. To make others aware of this dual realization, Calvin systematically juxtaposed the divine and the human, contrasted the spiritual and the material, and placed the transcendent and omnipotent solus of God above the contingent multiple of man and the created world. Calvin’s attack on Roman Catholic ‘idolatry’ is a condemnation of the improper mixing of spiritual and material in worship – an affirmation of the principle finitum non est capax infiniti. It is also an indictment of man’s attempt to domesticate God and to rob him of his glory – an affirmation of the principle soli Deo Gloria.” In Carlos Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 197-198
108 Canlis, 67, quoting from Calvin’s sermon on Acts 1.9-11
Qualifying the Transcendence of God: Essence and Energies

The proper posturing of human in relation to God was the first step in understanding the relationship between the divine and the human. It defined the distinction between the two parties and the limits of the relationship. The next step was to characterize the connecting point in the relationship. The connecting point for Palamas was the ultimate telos of theosis. Palamas’ emphasis on theosis, therefore, required that created human beings be united with the transcendent, unknowable God. Hence, wrote Anastos, Palamas needed to cross the “ontological gulf between God and man in deification.”

To cross the ontological gulf between God’s transcendence and created humanity, Palamas, qualified the transcendence of God to God’s essence alone in distinction of the energies of God. This allowed Palamas to preserve the transcendance of God while uniting God and human beings in theosis.

Essence

At the most basic level, the distinction between essence and energy in Palamas was a method of ensuring that the transcendent God remained transcendent and yet also communicated godself to humanity. Essence refers to the ontic nature of a being. Thus the essence of God is the fullness of the deity: “all-powerful,” “possesses the faculties of knowing, of prescience, of creating of embracing all things in itself,” and “providence.” Furthermore, the divine essence for Palamas, is the “only one single essence without beginning, the essence of God, and the

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111 Palamas’ distinctions between the energies and essence of God, as outlined by Hussey, have subsequently been accorded a place in the Orthodox Church alongside the dogmatic formulations of the Seven Ecumenical Councils; and St. Gregory Palamas is commemorated liturgically on the Second Sunday of Lent as a kind of continuation of the previous Sunday’s celebration of the Feast of Orthodoxy. M. Edmund Hussey, “The Persons: Energy Structure in the Theology of St. Gregory Palamas,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 18, no. 1 (1974): 22. Archbishop Basil Krivocheine accentuates Palamas’ importance in stating that the “teaching of the Orthodox East not only finds in his work its final and systematic expression, but also its theological and philosophical expression. In Joost van Rossum, “Deification in Palamas and Aquinas,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 47, no. 3 (2003): 368
112 Anastos, 342.
114 Triads, 20.
115 Triads, III.ii.5.
essences other than it are seen to be of a created nature, and come to be through this sole unoriginate essence, the unique maker of essences.\textsuperscript{116} The essence of God is inaccessible to human beings and is therefore understood as His transcendence.

**Energies**

In his definition of the energies of God, Palamas depended on the definitions and formulas of St. Maximus the Confessor and of the Sixth Ecumenical Council\textsuperscript{117}. Hussey summarized Maximus and the sixth council’s definition “concerning energy as the realization and activity of any nature, as ‘the unfailing movement from nature to action,’ in Maximus’ own words.”\textsuperscript{118} Thus, for Palamas, God’s ability to go beyond himself and reveal himself to his creatures and creation is the energy that eternally flows from his essence.\textsuperscript{119} It is God’s self-communication to human beings.

Palamas symbolized the divine energies as rays from the sun: “the divine and uncreated grace and energy of God is divided indivisibly according to the image of the sun’s ray which gives warmth, light, life and increase, and sends its own radiance to those who are illuminated and manifests itself to the eyes of those who see.”\textsuperscript{120} The rays of divine energy are not independent of the essence, just as the rays of the sun are not independent of the sun, but radiate the fullness of the deity. To be more precise, the energy is “enhypostatic.”\textsuperscript{121} Palamas documented that he used the term enhypostatic, not anhypostatic because anhypostatic means “not only non-being or hallucination, but also everything which quickly disintegrates and runs

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\textsuperscript{116} Triads III.ii.5.
\textsuperscript{117} Hussey, 23.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{119} van Rossum, 369.
\textsuperscript{120} Gregory Palamas, One Hundred and Fifty Chapters (Studies and Texts), trans. Robert E. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 68.
\textsuperscript{121} Triads, III.i.9, 17, 18.
away, which disappears and straightaway ceases to be….”

The term *enhypostatic* showed the permanence and stability of the energy, “because it remains in being, and does not elude the gaze, as does lightning, or words, or thoughts…..”

Palamas’ goal in his clear definition of terms, was to emphasize, as noted by Meyendorff, “that the divine light or energy is neither an independent reality apart from the three divine Persons, nor something temporary and fleeting, but exists permanently as an outgoing power in God.”

Palamas referenced many Scripture passages in which God communicated godself to human beings as light. Palamas’ examples include the theophanies of the Old Testament, the illumination of Moses’ face, the vision of the martyr Stephen, Saul’s vision on the road to Damascus, and most importantly the transfiguration on Mount Tabor.

In these instances for Palamas, wrote Mantzaridis, “God, invisible and nonparticipable in His essence, becomes visible and participable in the Spirit to the faithful, by virtue of His energy.”

Light, in Palamas, is often associated with the knowledge of God: “Knowledge… is called light to the extent that it is communicated by divine Light.”

The knowledge of God Palamas refers to is not philosophical or rational information that is gleaned from the outside. Rather wrote, Williams, knowledge is used in more platonic terms, in which to know something is to be at one with it. This knowledge, for Palamas is not possessed or externally deducted, but revealed. Williams observed: “It is because of [Palamas’] keen awareness of our limitations that he seems most content to ally knowledge and deification where knowledge is clearly not the

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122 *Triads*, III.i.18.
123 Ibid., III.i.18.
125 Cf. Mantzaridis, 96-97.
126 Mantzaridis, 97.
127 I.3.3, Williams comments: “he manifests a marked ambivalence about identifying deification as a form of knowing, yet the sheer volume of instances in which he reaches for such images indicates that in the end he does regard deification as at least in some respects related to knowledge” (109).
128 Williams, 109.
fruit of humanity’s effort to better itself.”\textsuperscript{129} The knowledge of God, therefore, is revealed by means of the energies. The energies illumine the human mind with knowledge of the divine nature. To quote Meyendorff, “…it was the very reality of divine life, made manifest and real in the persons of the saints, members of the Body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{130} Therefore, for Palamas, not only is the transcendent God above knowing, but the revealed energies also ensure that God is also above not-knowing.\textsuperscript{131} By receiving the knowledge of God, the believer is filled and therefore united with God and thereby deified: “the mind becomes supercelestial, and as it were the companion of him who passed beyond the heavens for our sake.”\textsuperscript{132} Therefore for Palamas, the energies, which are God’s self-communication bring about \textit{theosis} in human beings. As will be discussed below, this is a key point of distinction from Calvin. In Calvin, God’s self-communication brings believers into closer relationship, but in and of itself does not bring about the transformation of \textit{theosis}.

The energies flow, ‘from the Father through Son in the Spirit’.”\textsuperscript{133} The Son is the Word, in whom we may receive knowledge and who exhibits the depth of union possible between God and humanity in the incarnation: “the divine purpose of the human race, however, is seen in the union of our human nature to the divine person of Christ, the second person of the Trinity and in its being raised to the right hand of the Father.”\textsuperscript{134} The Holy Spirit effects the communion with God. In the Triads Palamas argued against his critic Barlaam who purports that human beings can come to know God through human reason and intellectual growth. Palamas summarized Barlaam’s position as claiming “the grace of deification is a natural state, that is, the activity and

\textsuperscript{129} Williams, 111.
\textsuperscript{131} cf. Williams 110, \textit{Triads}, I.3.4
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Triads}, I.3.5
\textsuperscript{133} Fahey and Meyendorff, \textit{Trinitarian theology East and West}, 38.
\textsuperscript{134} Homily Notes, p. 272.
manifestation of a natural power” since it is accessible by human intellect.\textsuperscript{135} Therefore, according to Palamas, to follow Barlaam’s argument was to say “the deified man would necessarily be God by nature, if deification depended on our natural power, and was included among the laws of nature!”\textsuperscript{136} Consequently, Palamas labelled Barlaam a Messalian. Messalians, noted Meyendorff, “view that sanctification is a work of human effort, unaided by grace. It represents a Pelagian account of the spiritual life: Man deifies himself by his own powers.”\textsuperscript{137} Believers can, however, open themselves up to more fully experience the divine self-communication through contemplation and prayer. Yet, the primary actor, and instigator of the communication remains God, through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

\textit{Qualifying Transcendence in Calvin: God’s Accomodated Self-communication}

Calvin also spoke of the essence of God. He described it as “simple and undivided,” and spiritual.”\textsuperscript{138} He wrote, "when we profess to believe in one God, under the name of God is understood a single, simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons, or hypostases.”\textsuperscript{139} It is the essence of God that is unknowable, and outside the human ability to attain. In his refutation of the anti-trinitarian heresies, Calvin comments that Satan has been instigating great theological battles concerning the essence of God in order to undermine the faith of believers. In response he wrote,

\begin{quote}
For how can the human mind measure off the measureless essence of God according to its own little measure, a mind as yet unable to establish for certain the nature of the sun’s body, though men’s eyes daily gaze upon it? Indeed, how can the mind by its own leading come to search out God’s essence when it cannot
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} Triads, III.i.26.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid., III.i.26.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Meyendorff, \textit{Triads}, E.85.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Cf. \textit{Institutes}, 1.13.2, 1.13.6 and 1.13.20.
\item \textsuperscript{139} \textit{Institutes}, 1.13.20.
\end{itemize}
even get to its own? Let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself.\textsuperscript{140}

Calvin then quoted the church father Hilary of Poitiers, “[God] is the one fit witness to himself, and is not known except through himself.”\textsuperscript{141} The essence of God also includes God’s secret will. Therefore, in Bondage and Liberation of the Will, Calvin regarded God’s secret will as too much for human beings to grasp: “God does indeed have a definite, real reason for what he does, but it is too secret, sublime, and concealed for it to be grasped by the measure of our mind, which is so narrow and mean.”\textsuperscript{142} This statement is echoed in Calvin’s sermons on Job.\textsuperscript{143} Conversely, despite the incomprehensibility of God in God’s essence, in concurrence with Palamas, Calvin understood a God who was not just “God ineffable, invisible, incomprehensible” but also one who communicated godself to human beings through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Yet unlike Palamas’ energies, for Calvin, God’s self-communication was through concrete actions, revealed in creation, scripture and redemption.

**God’s Self-communication**

For Calvin, God’s self-communication is imparted in two ways: through the knowledge of God the creator and through the knowledge of God the redeemer.\textsuperscript{144} The knowledge of God the Creator includes: God’s self-communication by not only the design of creation, but also the providential care of creation and human beings; and God’s self-communication in scripture. Calvin gives many examples of God’s self-communication in the Institutes: concerning the creation, Calvin perceived: “the skilful ordering of the universe is for us a sort of mirror in which

\textsuperscript{140} Institutes, 1.13.21.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 1.13.21.
\textsuperscript{142} Bondage and Liberation of the Will, 191.
\textsuperscript{143} For an extensive investigation on this subject consult, Derek Thomas, Proclaiming the Incomprehensible God: Calvin’s Teaching on Job (Fearn: Mentor, 2004).
\textsuperscript{144} In 1.2.1 Calvin writes: “First, as much in the fashioning of the universe as in the general teaching of Scripture the Lord shows himself to be simply the Creator. Then in the face of Christ he shows himself the Redeemer.”
we can contemplate God, who is otherwise invisible”;¹⁴⁵ pertaining to anatomy, he observed:

“the human body shows itself to be a composition so ingenious that its Artificer is rightly judged a wonder-worker”;¹⁴⁶ and regarding God’s providence he witnessed: “he shows himself the protector and vindicator of innocence….”¹⁴⁷ For, as Calvin summarized,

Indeed, his essence is incomprehensible; hence his divineness far escapes all human perception. But upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance.¹⁴⁸

Concerning the self-communication of God in creation and providence, Calvin recapped, “we see that no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty; since form the few we have sampled at random, whithersoever you turn, it is clear that they are so very manifest and obvious…”¹⁴⁹

Calvin also emphasized God’s self-communication in scripture. He labels scripture an “another and better help” to “direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe.”¹⁵⁰ Scripture more “clearly shows us the true God,” and aids in distinguishing the true God from “all the throng of feigned gods.”¹⁵¹ Scripture is also a necessary aid after the fall of human beings into disobedience, when the perspicuity of God in creation was blinded by human sin. Calvin asserted,

It is therefore clear that God has provided the assistance of the Word for the sake of all those to whom he has been pleased to give useful instruction because he foresaw that his likeness imprinted upon the most beautiful form of the universe would be insufficiently effective. Hence, we must strive onward by this straight path if we seriously aspire to the pure contemplation of God. We must come, I say, to the Word, where God is truly and vividly described to us from his works,

¹⁴⁵ Institutes, 1.5.1
¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.5.2.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.5.7.
¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1.5.1.
¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1.5.9.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.6.1. Scripture is also the means by which God is revealed as the redeemer, and the way of redemption.
¹⁵¹ Ibid., 1.6.1.
while these very works are appraised not by our depraved judgment but by the rule of eternal truth.\textsuperscript{152}

Calvin also used God’s self-communication in scripture as a way of distinguishing between the unknowable essence of God, and God’s self-communication to human beings. An example of this distinction is found in Calvin’s commentary on Isaiah, where he often refers to God’s nature (\textit{natura Dei}), which, for Calvin, is exemplified in Exodus 34:6 “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” Huijgen, in his study on Calvin, quoted Calvin as stating, “There is no passage in the law which expresses God’s nature more to the life.”\textsuperscript{153} Huijgen went on to state that Calvin used “\textit{natura Dei} in contrast to \textit{essentia Dei}, or besides the idea of God’s essence. God’s essence still is the term to describe God’s inaccessibility, incomprehensibility and inscrutability, in short: God’s being God as completely distinct from all creation. By contrast, God’s concrete acts in history reveal God’s merciful and patient nature. God’s nature seems to mitigate the seriousness of God’s essence…”\textsuperscript{154} Therefore, for Calvin, God is unknowable in the \textit{essentia Dei}, but not in the \textit{natura Dei}, as revealed in scripture and by the works of God’s own hand.

Subsequently, for Calvin, human beings do not need to know the essence of God to be in relationship with God. More accurately, they engage in relationship through the ways in which God has revealed godself. Or as Calvin concludes,

Consequently, we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to \textit{contemplate him in his works} whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{152} 	extit{Institutes}, 1.6.3
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Institutes}, 1.5.9; italics mine.
God’s Accommodated Self-communication
Since the full essence and knowledge of God is beyond the human ability to grasp, Calvin further guarded the distinction between God’s self–revelation and the essence of God by observing God’s accommodation in God’s self-communication. Huijgen, in his extensive analysis of accommodation in Calvin, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin’s Theology*, defined accommodation as “God adapt[ing] himself to human capacity in his revelation.”156 According to Huijgen, the initial analysis of accommodation in Calvin comes from Klaas Schilder in 1933. Schilder, wrote Huijgen,

> describes how Calvin qualifies God’s transcendence with the idea of accommodation, which means that the relation between the speaking God and hearing humans cannot be determined exclusively as an infinite, qualitative difference, as dialectical theologians do. When God reveals Himself, He does not speak His own language, which would be in accordance with His majesty, by He accommodates to our capacity. By doing so, God draws near to humans, condescending to their rudeness and infirmity.”157

Therefore, when Calvin understood God coming near to humans through God’s self-communication, he found “God in that text as ‘a smiling father’ and as a ‘nurse stooping down’.”158

Dowey expanded further on Calvin’s use of accommodation in his book, *The Knowledge of God*. Accommodation in Calvin, defined Dowey, “refers to the process by which God reduces or adjusts to human capacities what he wills to reveal of the infinite mysteries of his being, which by their very nature are beyond the powers of the mind of man to grasp.”159 Dowey emphasized that in Calvin, all divine revelation is accommodated to the human ability to perceive and understand. Furthermore, accommodation also means that what is revealed is the

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156 Huijgen, 11.
157 Ibid., 13-14.
158 Ibid., 14.
“work, power, activity, or will of God rather than his direct being or essence.”\textsuperscript{160} As such, emphasized Dowey, Calvin’s principle of accommodation guards the borders of God’s self-communication: the “essence unknown, power exerted for the sake of revelation, with chief emphasis placed upon the revelation itself.”\textsuperscript{161}

As a result of accommodation, Calvin underscored the human limit to their quest for knowledge. The human quest of knowledge must not go beyond that which God has revealed to human beings:

the pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. And it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him to be as he manifests himself; furthermore, the mind always exercises the utmost diligence and care not to wander astray, or rashly and boldly to go beyond his will.\textsuperscript{162}

Calvin echoed the limits placed on human knowledge, and the need for knowledge in his commentary on Genesis 3. There he noted that the snake tempted Adam and Eve with knowledge that was for divinity alone:

Moreover, it is not without some show of reason that he makes the Divine glory, or equality with God, to consist in the perfect knowledge of good and evil; but it is a mere pretense, for the purpose of ensnaring the miserable woman. Because the desire of knowledge is naturally inherent in and happiness is supposed to be placed in it; but Eve erred in not regulating the measure of her knowledge by the will of God. And we all daily suffer under the same disease, because we desire to know more than is right, and more than God allows; whereas the principal point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God.\textsuperscript{163}

Therefore, not all the divine knowledge is accessible, or available to human beings. The separation between the transcendent God and mortal humans is bridged, in Calvin, not by humans seeking God, but rather by God revealing godself to human beings by accommodated self-communication.

\textsuperscript{160} Dowey, 6.  
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{162} Institutes, 1.2.2.  
\textsuperscript{163} Calvin, Commentary on Genesis 3.
The more a believer receives God’s self-communication, the closer a believer ascends to God. Calvin used two metaphors to describe the growth in relationship: the ladder and the pilgrim. In the ladder metaphor, Calvin underscored that divine accommodation serves a dynamic function. In Calvin’s commentary on Psalm 132, which is a Psalm of Ascent, he said:

> While God dwells in heaven, and is above all heavens, we must avail ourselves of helps in rising to the knowledge of him; and in giving us symbols of his presence, he sets, as it were, his feet upon the earth, and suffers us to touch them. It is thus that the Holy Spirit condescends for our profit, and in accommodation to our infirmity, raising our thoughts to heavenly and divine things by these worldly elements.\(^{164}\)

Calvin continued, “So, we should be careful to rise to him by the intermediate steps.”\(^{165}\) Huigjen, wrote that “Calvin describes the various means God has instituted, by descending and in order to make humans ascend, as ladders.”\(^{166}\) These means include earthly elements, such as the temple, the ark of the covenant, and later the sacraments. All of these earthly elements enable human beings to look upward, to God, and thus our senses are raised above the world, and brought closer to the divine light, and thereby into relationship with God. In so doing, “God accommodates to us… in order to draw us to Him by degrees and little by little.”\(^{167}\) Canlis has devoted an entire book to the study of ascent in Calvin’s theology: *Calvin’s Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension*. In it she emphasized that this ascent in Calvin is made only through the second person of the Trinity:

> Calvin brilliantly synthesized the two movements of ascent and descent into one primary activity: the ongoing story of God himself with us. God has come as man to stand for us (descent), and yet as man he also leads us back to the Father (ascent). The entire Christian life is an outworking of this ascent.\(^{168}\)

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164 Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 132:7*.  
165 Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 132:7*.  
166 Huigjen, 298.  
167 Ibid., 299; quoting Calvin’s Sermon on Deut. 32:36-39.  
168 Canlis, 3.
The emphasis of the ladder metaphor is to lead believers upward to God, through the ascended Christ.

The Pilgrim metaphor is engaged by Calvin to describe God’s accommodated self-communication as: ordered, bound to God’s Word, and eschatologically oriented. Huijgen wrote, “the road metaphor functions to describe God’s accommodated revelation to His people through time.” This revelation is bound to a certain order, which is the order of God’s Word. As the pilgrim becomes more illumined by the Word of God, the pilgrim is led further into right relationship with God. In his Commentary on Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path,” Calvin remarked:

namely, that unless the word of God enlighten men’s path, the whole of their life is enveloped in darkness and obscurity, so that they cannot do anything else than miserably wander from the right way; and again, that when we submit ourselves with docility to the teaching of God’s law, we are in no danger of going astray. […] Let us, then, be assured that an unerring light is to be found there, provided we open our eyes to behold it.

The emphasis of the pilgrim metaphor is the use of God’s accommodated self-communication to lead believers from this life, into the next. Both of these metaphors rely on the descent of God, through God’s self-communication in Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding the ladder and pilgrim metaphors, Huigjen preferred to illustrate accommodation in Calvin using a model of movement in concentric circles. The outer circle encompasses the universal aspects of revelation, including Calvin’s category of the knowledge of God the creator, revealed through creation. This level of accommodation is visible to all, though

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169 Huijgen, 300.
170 Ibid., 300.
171 Calvin, Commentary on Psalm 119:105
172 Huijgen, 305.
kept in obscurity through disobedience. Then, within the universal circle is Scripture, which as noted above, provides a “clearer and nearer revelation.” The purpose of Scripture is to teach human beings “who God is, and who we are, in mutual relation; no more, no less.” The inner circle includes the knowledge of Christ the redeemer. It is in the intimacy of this union with Christ the redeemer that we are brought to full expression of God’s accommodated self-communication. Calvin described it as: “God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ’s splendour had not beamed upon us,” and “so that Christ, by communicating his Father’s benefits, might express the true image of his glory.” Huijgen summarized Calvin’s position, it “is the most intimate revelation, and the limit of accommodation.”

The reception of God’s self-communication, in creation, scripture and through Christ is due to the personal involvement of the Holy Spirit. Regarding the Holy Spirit, writes Butin, "Calvin understands the scriptures to attribute to the Spirit the virtus (strength, power) and efficacia of the divine operation." The Holy Spirit makes possible the accommodated self-communication of God. In the words of Calvin: “but the Holy Spirit by his illumination makes us capable of understanding those things which would otherwise far exceed our capacity….” In addition, the reception of the Holy Spirit is not earned or rewarded by human effort, rather, it is a result of God’s grace.

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173 Huijgen also noted that “Calvin’s pictures this universal revelation in visual terms, specifically with the terminology of light. This visibility is the result of God’s accommodating activity” (308).
174 Huijgen, 309.
175 Ibid., 311.
176 Ibid., Huijgen emphasized that Christ is only known by faith, but I would add that Calvin argues for an understanding of scripture only through the eyes of faith, also by the power of the Holy Spirit.
177 Institutes, 3.2.1.
178 Huijgen, 312.
179 Butin, 52.
180 Calvin, Tracts, 53.4.
Conclusion
An analysis of both Palamas and Calvin’s thought concerning the transcendence and immanence of God has shown a primary agreement concerning God’s transcendence as well as God’s self-communication with human beings. As noted by Williams in the introduction, God’s self-communication with human beings can be identified as an essential foundational element of Palamas’ doctrine of theosis. It opens the pathway for human beings union with God.

Therefore, at this basic level, Calvin’s affirmation of God’s self-communication opens up the possibility of theosis in the theology of Calvin. In addition, there is agreement between Palamas and Calvin in their desire to guard the essence of God from any mixing or confusion of the divine and human natures, as well as the utilization of the transcendence of God to properly posture human beings towards God in relationship. They also both emphasize that the divine self-communication is given through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. At no point is the divine self-communication the result of human effort or ability.

The distinctions between Palamas and Calvin in the mode and result of the divine self-communication, however, are great. For Palamas, the divine self-communication is the result of God’s energies, which are described as light, and enact the process of theosis. As such, in Palamas, believers are encouraged to contemplate the divine light, in order to journey towards theosis. Calvin took a much more concrete approach to divine self-communication. He tied it to God’s concrete acts in creation, scripture, and redemption in Jesus Christ. Therefore, believers are encouraged to contemplate on these concrete works of God in order to be brought closer to God, the result of which we will discover in chapter three is sanctification. For now we turn to the receptors of God’s self-revelation: human beings and the way in which their mode of creation as image bearers of God, exhibits the possibility of their telos for theosis.
Chapter 2
Theological Anthropology
As observed in the previous chapter, in Palamas’ foundation for *theosis* it is essential that God can be present to human beings through God’s self-communication. Another foundational point in for *theosis* in Palamas resides in his theological anthropology. The primary consideration of Palamas’ theological anthropology for *theosis* involves God’s creation of human beings as divine image bearers. For Palamas, as image bearers human beings are the perfect receptors for the divine energies. As a result God is able to dwell completely in human beings, with the ultimate *telos* of *theosis*. For Calvin, the creation of human beings in the image of God also makes them the perfect receptors of God’s accommodated self-revelation. Calvin goes so far as to emphasize that the only way human beings can come to a full understanding of themselves, is through the knowledge of God. Human beings are characterized and enlivened only by their relationship to their creator. Above all, the creation of human beings in the image of God highlights for both Palamas and Calvin that human beings were not created to be autonomous, but to be in relationship with God; a relationship which Palamas finds its end in *theosis* and Calvin in the full illustration of the glory of God and the transformation of the fallen humans into the true likeness of God. In addition, for both Palamas and Calvin, the creation of human beings with physical bodies, highlights their design as the microcosms of creation.

*Palamas*

In Chapter 24 of *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, Palamas, after considering the creation of the material world, came to the creation of human beings. He began his consideration by noting that the “sensible world came into being for [humanity’s] sake,” as well as the immaterial world which “was prepared for [humanity’s] sake.”\(^{181}\) Palamas’ emphasis on the

\(^{181}\) *150 chapters*, 24.
creation of the material world as well as the immaterial world highlights his understanding that humanity is not bound only for the created world, but also destined for the kingdom of heaven. Human beings were not created for a unilateral existence, like the animals, or the heavenly beings, but rather, they were created for an existence that encompasses both the visible and invisible worlds. Hence they were created with both a body and a soul, distinct from each other, yet only divisible by death. \(^{182}\) Palamas wrote, “[humanity] did not derive everything from this matter and the sensible world like the other animals but the body only; the soul [humanity] derived from the realities beyond the world, or rather from God himself…” \(^{183}\) Palamas further wrote in *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*:

> God did not form the whole of man from the matter and from the elements of this sensible world, as He did the other animals. He formed only man’s body from these materials; but man’s soul He took from things supracelestial, or rather, it came from God Himself when mysteriously He breathed life into man. The human soul is something great and wondrous, superior to the entire world… \(^{184}\)

This mode of creation, as a body with a soul, was God’s creation of humanity in the divine image. \(^{185}\) The divine image permitted *theosis* in human beings because it made possible the reception of the divine energies. Hence, in his discussions on the energies and essence of God, Palamas underscored the term enhypostatic because “the energy of God does not possess a hypostasis of its own, but rather the Spirit ‘sends it out into the hypostasis of another’, in which it is indeed contemplated.” \(^{186}\) Meyendorff further clarified that the energies require a receptor, or

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\(^{182}\) Papademetriou wrote: “For this reason the anthropological presuppositions are radically different from the dualistic presuppositions of Platonic and Barlaamite anthropology. According to St. Gregory’s view, the body is not evil, but serves as a dwelling place of the *nous*, since it is also God’s dwelling place. Man is a unique and indivisible whole (58).

\(^{183}\) *150 chapters*, 24.


\(^{185}\) *150 chapters*, 24.

\(^{186}\) *Triads*, III.i.9.
locus: “like personal attributes, the energies must have a personal (or hypostatic) locus.”\textsuperscript{187} The personal locus of the energies of God are for Palamas, human beings, created in the image of God. In so doing, God “unites himself to them to the extent of dwelling completely in them, so that they too dwell entirely in Him.”\textsuperscript{188} It is only by virtue of their mode of creation in the image of God that human beings can be the personal locus of the divine energies. The result is the ability for human beings to attain \textit{theosis}: “the image is the potentiality to attain perfection in God…”\textsuperscript{189} Subsequently, in Palamas, the creation of humanity in the image of God “supposes grace and communion with God, in order to fulfil its own true destiny.”\textsuperscript{190} Papademetriou wrote, “the destiny of man, both body and soul, is to be developed into a more divine state or perfection, according to the capacity of the power or grace of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{191}

The supreme greatness of this grace is emphasized in that the energies of God do not just contact the human nature, but transforms the human nature so that God is all in all. Accordingly, wrote Meyendorff, humanity is “able to create as one recreated in the image of the Supreme Artist, since both share the same creative energy. The works of the saint are in a real sense the works of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{192} In \textit{theosis}, by the indwelling the Spirit, the extent of union goes beyond simply being able to see God, or come to knowledge about God. Anastos affirmed: “deification is becoming God, seeing through the eyes of God.”\textsuperscript{193} Accordingly, articulated Palamas, “such is the character of the union, that all is one, so that he who sees can distinguish neither the means nor the object nor its nature.”\textsuperscript{194}

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\textsuperscript{187} Meyendorff, \textit{Triads}, E.52.
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Triads}, III.i.29
\textsuperscript{189} Papademetriou, 61.
\textsuperscript{190} Meyendorff, \textit{A Study of Gregory Palamas}, 121.
\textsuperscript{191} Papademetriou, 57.
\textsuperscript{192} Meyendorff, \textit{Triads}, E134.
\textsuperscript{193} Anastos, 344.
\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Triads}, II.iii.36.
\end{flushleft}
In Homily 8 Palamas goes so far as to emphasizes that “the person who has been deified by grace will be in every respects as God is, except for His very essence.” This is a very daring statement for Palamas to make, but it springs from the telos of human beings, which calls human beings to full communion with God and to exist at the very same height as the “I Am.” As a result, the transformation inherent in theosis goes beyond mere virtues. Theosis is dynamic, and integral. The result of theosis is such that although God and the human person are hypostatically distinct, “the Trinity and the deified individual are energetically one.” This is the purpose of the creation of human beings, to dwell in full communion with God.

This special creation of human beings for the telos of theosis is also found in the human relationship to creation, which is also created for communion. Hence Meyendorff began his textbook on Byzantine Theology, within the framework of creation not as “a static, “closed,” autonomous entity, but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. The dynamic relationship between God and creation is a relationship of union. God created human beings to play a key role in the union of God and creation. Due to creation in the image of God, “only a human being dwells simultaneously in the realm of senses and the realm of the soul. This unique positioning in the structure of creation makes a human a replica of the whole universal arrangement.” Kharlamov further described the role of human beings: “all of the created universe is divided into intelligible-spiritual and sensible-material realms, only in human beings do these realms cross over and come together.” As such, humanity’s mode of

196 Anastos, 344.
199 Ibid., 165.
creation, as God’s image bearer, is to be the microcosm of God and creation.\textsuperscript{200} As the microcosm, wrote Meyendorff, “humanity is “called to “know” God, to “participate” in His life, to be “saved,” not simply through an extrinsic action of God’s or through the rational cognition of propositional truths, but by “becoming God” by reception of God’s energies.”\textsuperscript{201} The role of image bearers, who are the microcosm of creation, displays the unique and honourable place of humanity as not only the purpose for the creation, but also as the summit of creation. As the summit of creation, humanity has the divinely appointed vocation of ruling and caring for the creation. Sinkewicz commented that in Chapter 24, Palamas is emphasizing “creation is placed in the service of man, under his stewardship…”\textsuperscript{202} Therefore, for Palamas human beings, by virtue of being created in the image of God, are not created to possess an autonomous existence. Rather they were created for a dynamic divine-human relationship, which finds its completion in \textit{theosis}.

\textbf{Calvin}

Calvin also understood human beings to be the purpose and crown of creation. In the \textit{Institutes}, Calvin remarks that God created humanity on the last day, after he had finished creating everything else that humanity would need to live and flourish:

\begin{quote}
For if he had given him life before light, he would have seemed to provide insufficiently for his welfare. Now when he disposed the movements of the sun and stars to human uses, filled the earth, waters and air with living things, and brought forth an abundance of fruits to suffice as foods, in thus assuming the responsibility of a foreseeing and diligent father of the family he shows his wonderful goodness towards us.\textsuperscript{203}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{201} Meyendorff, \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 1.
\bibitem{202} 150 chapters, Intro, 14.
\bibitem{203} \textit{Institutes}, 1.14.2.
\end{thebibliography}
Later, Calvin further emphasized that God has “…shown by the order of Creation that he created all things for man’s sake. For it is not without significance that he divided the making of the universe into six days…he prepared everything he foresaw would be useful and salutary for him.”\(^{204}\) Torrance summarizes Calvin’s position as, “man is not created because of the world, but the world is created because of man.”\(^ {205}\)

Humanity, however, cannot be understood solely by its relationship to the creation. In contrast, humanity is understood only in its relationship to God. Calvin noted, “in fact, looking to creation for a sole understanding of humanity leads to sin and idolatry.”\(^ {206}\) Calvin further noted “as long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves most sweetly, and fancy ourselves all but demigods.”\(^ {207}\) Consequently, human beings cannot come to knowledge of themselves based on the creation. Instead, creation points human beings towards God, who bestows on them the true knowledge of themselves. Calvin wrote, “man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”\(^ {208}\) As such, it is only from their knowledge of God, from God’s accommodated self-communication, that human beings are complete.

The ability to receive God’s self-communication is due to humanity’s unique mode of creation as both a body and a soul.\(^ {209}\) The body is terrestrial in origin, formed by the hand of God from the clay of the earth.\(^ {210}\) Furthermore, Calvin commented that even the formation of


\(^{205}\) Torrance, 23.

\(^{206}\) *Institutes*, 1.2.2.

\(^{207}\) Ibid., 1.2.2.

\(^{208}\) Ibid., 1.2.2.

\(^{209}\) Ibid., 1.15.2, Calvin is firm in his belief that to be fully human is to have both a body and soul. They are distinct, yet inseparable in life.

\(^{210}\) Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis 3*. 
the human body from the clay of the ground, shows a distinction between humanity and the rest of creation:

Nevertheless, he, at the same time, designed to distinguish man by some mark of excellence from brute animals: for these arose out of the earth in a moment; but the peculiar dignity of man is shown in this, that he was gradually formed. For why did not God command him immediately to spring alive out of the earth, unless that, by a special privilege, he might outshine all the creatures which the earth produced?\textsuperscript{211}

In distinction to the rest of creation, not only did the hand of God form the human body, but the human body was also “endued with a soul, whence it should receive vital motion.”\textsuperscript{212} The soul, according to Calvin, is an “immortal, yet created essence.”\textsuperscript{213} The essence, however, is not to be mistaken for the essence of the divinity breathed into humanity. Rather, its essence is perceived through both understanding and will, by which human beings may exhibit something of the divine, including wisdom, justice and goodness.\textsuperscript{214} Therefore, the Spirit works in believers, to bring about the fullness of the divine image: “by the grace and power of the Spirit – who surely works in us without rendering us consubstantial with God…”\textsuperscript{215}

Consequently, wrote Torrance, the divine-human relationship is reflexive. It is reflexive in two ways: in divine self-communication and in the divine action in grace.\textsuperscript{216} Concerning divine self-communication, Torrance picks up on Calvin’s emphasis on human beings as the image of God and that therefore, the only way in which human beings can come to knowledge of themselves is through true knowledge of God who has been revealed by accommodated self-communication. Torrance wrote, “man can have true self-knowledge only when he knows God truly, and when in knowing God he so images Him as to be what he was made by God to be,

\textsuperscript{211} Calvin, \textit{Commentary on Genesis 2}.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Institutes}, 1.15.2.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 1.15.8.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 1.15.5.
\textsuperscript{216} Torrance, 14.
man in complete dependence on God.” \(^{217}\) Therefore, as noted above, “man is not created because of the world, but the world is created because of man. As man was created for God, the whole order of creation must be regarded as designed to incite man to respond to the Father in love and gratitude, in worship and in adoration of His glory.” \(^{218}\) Calvin, in his reply to Sadoleto, went one step farther than Torrance, and purports that the prime motive for humanity’s existence is “to illustrate the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves.” \(^{219}\)

The reflexive nature of the divine-human relationship in Calvin is further emphasized by Dowey in his book *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*. He begins by stating that Calvin’s theology, and thereby his understanding of the divine-human relationship, is utterly informed by the reality of “God as revealer and man as knower.” \(^{220}\) Dowey’s summary echoed Torrance’s language of the reflexive divine-human relationship, in that human beings cannot come to full knowledge of God without divine self-communication. Knowledge is an important word here, as Dowey is also careful to point out. For the word knowledge in Calvin, is not purely noetic, rather it is relational: Human beings come to full relationship with the divine though the self-communication of the divine. Furthermore human beings do not come to full self-knowledge without true knowledge of the divine. Dowey was careful to note, that:

> For Calvin, God is never an abstraction to be related to an abstractly conceived humanity, but the God of man, whose face is turned "toward us" and whose name and person and will are known. And correspondingly, man is always described in terms of his relation to this known God: as created by God, separated from God, or redeemed by him. \(^{221}\)

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\(^{217}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{218}\) Torrance, 23.
\(^{220}\) Dowey, 3.
\(^{221}\) Ibid., 20.
In the words of Calvin, “...all men are born to live to the end that they may know God...” He expanded on this statement, using the example of the philosopher Plato, stating, “Plato meant nothing but this when he often taught that the highest good of the soul is likeness to God, where, when the soul has grasped the knowledge of God, it is wholly transformed into his likeness.” Furthermore, “our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.” Parson, in his analysis of Calvin’s sermons on the book of Micah, noted that Calvin is so emphatic about the non-autonomous existence of human beings that he is, “rarely tempted to theorize or to speculate about the nature or being of either God or humanity in isolation.” Furthermore, “neither God nor humanity is to be considered in the abstract. Both are intrinsically relational and each is to be recognized as in a relationship with the other.”

The result of the relationship is the empowerment of the human being, by the Holy Spirit to act in God. Billings wrote, that “the Spirit empowers these actions and deserves the praise for these actions, but these actions are still ‘properly called ours’.” Billings continued that “Calvin denies the common medieval doctrine of ‘infused habits’, along with the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ virtues.” More precisely, Calvin emphasized that actions emerge directly from the divine-human relationship. Yet, noted Billings, “the human faculties are not bypassed in this process, but activated by the Spirit. Further, the divine will is not coercive toward the human person.” Rather, due to the divine-human relationship, human beings voluntarily obey and act, in God.

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222 *Institutes*, 1.3.3.
223 Ibid., 1.3.3.
224 *Institutes*, 1.1.1.
226 Parsons, 29.
228 Ibid., 49.
229 Ibid., 49.
Consequently, as image bearers who obey and act in God, human beings are given the task of ruling creation. In the end, for Calvin, human beings stand in both worlds, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, ruling and inhabiting one, finding their image and thereby their purpose and understanding in God. Niesel described this ability to participate in both worlds. He wrote that, for Calvin, humanity “embodies the complexities of the whole of the rest of the creation because he is that creature who participates both in the visible and the invisible orders.” It is this dual participation, which led Calvin, in continuity with the church fathers, to label human beings μικρίκοσμος, “a world in miniature.” As the microcosm of creation, humanity possesses a unique ruling place, above the rest of creation, as stewards. Calvin summed up this elevated place of humanity in relation to creation in his description of humanity as the “crown of creation”. Calvin commented on Genesis 3: “God, having both made him free in everything, and appointed him as king of the world.” Thus, observed Torrance, for Calvin, “the world is to be understood only in relation to man.” The living beings and creatures are to be understood by their relationship and role within the created order, and its service to, and care by, human beings. In so doing, human beings, especially before the fall, are a crucial part of God’s providential care of creation, as they act and obey in God.

Conclusion
For both Palamas and Calvin, God’s creation of human beings in the divine image highlights the crucial point that human beings were not created for an autonomous existence. They were created for an existence in which they received their life and identity from God through God’s self-communication. Their unique creation as image bearers also gave them a unique role within

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231 Calvin, Commentary on Genesis 1.
232 Calvin, Commentary on Genesis 3.
233 Torrance, 23.
creation as microcosm; a role in which they are charged with acting and obeying in God for creation. Despite their agreement that human beings were created in the divine image, so that they may engage in the divine–human relationship and receive God’s self-communication. The effects of that self-communication have different emphasises. As was noted in the previous chapter, for Palamas, the reception of the divine energies, and here as was examined, the ability to be receptors of the divine energies due to the creation in the image of God, brings about an indwelling with the goal of theosis. Calvin does not seem to take this position as strongly. He does agree that the creation in the image of God allows human beings to receive God’s accommodated self-communication, and that it is only through God’s self-communication that human beings come to a full knowledge of God and themselves. The divine image also enables human beings to fully radiate the glory of God and to reach the consummation of human life. The self-revelation itself, however, does not appear once again to enact a transformation indicative of Palamite theosis. Rather in referencing the image of God Calvin tended to only emphasize that human beings find their telos in relationship with God as ones who radiate the divine image and care for creation, but not necessarily by becoming God. To more fully understand how that telos comes about in both Calvin and Palamas, we turn now to their soteriologies.
Chapter 3
Soteriology

Up until this point, this thesis has focused on both Palamas’ and Calvin’s appreciation for the central role of the divine-human relationship in theological thought, including that of the telos of human beings. Their respective doctrines of God both embraced an understanding of God’s transcendence, as well as God’s self-communication. Their theological anthropologies highlighted a creation of human beings in the image of God which was complementary to receiving the divine self-communication. These theological elements described the divine-human relationship at its best, without the barrier of sin, or the destruction of the fall. The fall, however, did disrupt the divine-human relationship. Palamas responds to this disruption by recognizing the need for the incarnate One to expand his role beyond union to expiation, as well as add another dimension to the journey toward theosis, that of repentance and confession. For Palamas, soteriology is the continuation of God’s original plan for union in theosis. Calvin also recognizes that God’s action in redemption follows the theme of God’s intention for a divine-human relationship. It is also here in the discussion of redemption that Calvin uses the term union within the context of the human and divine. However, in distinction from Palamas, Calvin uses the words union and union with Christ only in reference to God’s work of justification. Hence, as will be noted below union in Calvin comes across as an ethical union, rather than a union of natures. Calvin does, however, speak of the renewal of the divine image, to the extent that human beings radiate the divine, in sanctification. It is here, in sanctification, that Calvin and Palamas are brought the closest to describing a similar telos for human beings which might be described as theosis.
Palamas

In Homily 16, Palamas affirmed that in the beginning, God created the first human being undefiled. The undefiled human being is the original nature of human beings. In this nature, Palamas asserts “he was formed by the hand of God and according to the image of God.”235 Human beings, by virtue of being created in the image of God, were not created to possess an autonomous existence. In Palamas, rather, their creation in the image of God, wrote Meyendorff, “supposes grace and communion with God, in order to fulfil its own true destiny.”236 Thereby, human nature before the fall was “capable of both knowing and receiving God…”237 In order to exhibit the depth of union possible between himself and his image bearers, God became incarnate: “the divine purpose for the human race, however, is seen in the union of our human nature to the divine person of Christ, the second person of the Trinity and in its being raised to the right hand of the Father.”238

Redemption, in addition to the incarnation, became necessary when the first Adam, rejected the dynamic union with God, and “turned aside after the pleasures of the flesh, underwent the defilement of sin, grew old and fell into what is contrary to nature.”239 The consequence, according to Palamas, was two types of death: the death of the body and the death of the soul. The death of the body is a process of time and aging: “our body was rendered mortal.”240 The death of the soul occurred immediately at the fall, when God left the soul and “separated from it.”241 Palamas explained, “the sentence of death for the soul which the transgression put into effect for us was according to the Creator’s justice, for without compulsion

235 150 Chapters, 24.
236 John Meyendorff, A Study of Gregory Palamas, 121.
237 150 Chapters, 24.
238 Homily Notes, p. 272.
239 Homily 16, 117.
240 150 Chapters, 52.
241 Homily 16, 118.
he abandoned those who abandoned him when they became self-willed.”

Once separated, averred Palamas, the soul “becomes more ugly and useless than a dead body.” The soul worked against itself, “sinking from bad to worse,” and eventually, “after the wretched soul has lived apart from the body without repenting, it will be handed over, together with the body, to the endless, unbearable bondage of eternal damnation which God has prepared for the devil and his angels.”

The fall detached human beings from God, by the chasm of sin and death.

Palamas described the two deaths as an “ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature.”

Human beings are powerless against the curse of death: “no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants.” Therefore the second person of the Trinity “took upon Himself our guilty nature from the most pure Virgin and united it, new and unmixed with the old seed, to his divine person.”

In doing so, emphasized Palamas, “the Lord did not just create man anew with His hand in a wonderful way, but held him near Him. He did not merely restore human nature and raise it up from its fall, but in an indescribable fashion clothed Himself in it and indivisibly united Himself with it.”

The incarnation not only accomplished the union of divine and human, but also redeemed the effects of the fall. Therefore the incarnation rendered the whole person “guiltless and righteous” by the cross.

For the cross of Christ alone, announced Palamas in Homily 11, “can take away the

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242 150 Chapters, 51.
243 Homily 16, 119.
245 Ibid., 34.
246 Ibid., 34.
247 Homily 16, 117-118.
248 Homily, 5, 34.
curse and condemnation, destroy corruption and death, and bestow eternal life and blessing” in order that there may be no separation between God and redeemed humanity. 249

Furthermore, it is by Christ’s resurrection that the body and soul of humanity are raised to the fullness of life in union with God. By the cross of redemption, human beings are returned to their pre-fall state whereby they can live in communion with God, and by the resurrection they are raised to live in communion with God. Therefore, for Palamas, what is being offered in the resurrection of Christ is “not a return to the Paradisiacal state, but something far greater: to ‘everlasting’ or ‘eternal well-being’ on the level of divine being and for this reason all the names that can be applied to God become, by grace, applicable also to man.”250 As such fallen human beings, by the grace of God, through the incarnation, cross and resurrection, can fulfill the goal of the divine-human relationship: theosis

The process of theosis, made possible by the incarnation and redemption occurs in two parts. Mantzaridis explained, “the resurrection of the soul takes place in the present life and as such precedes the resurrection of the body which will take place on the last day.”251 It is on the last day that theosis is brought to completion.

The resurrection of the soul in the present life occurs at baptism. In baptism an individual dies to sin and is raised to new life in Christ. Baptizands are, according to Palamas:

mystically renewed and recreated in such a way that they would no longer be from the old Adam and so attract the curse. Instead they would be born of the new Adam and so have God’s blessings... [they are ]God’s children who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God through Jesus Christ.252

249 Homily 16, 85.
250 Homily Note, p. 193.
251 Mantzaridis, 47.
252 Homily 16, 121.
The baptizands are brought from the old life of sin and death and resurrected into a new life of incorruptibility, sinlessness and communion with God. As such, wrote Mantzaridis, “man’s entry into the church of Christ and the start of his personal participation in deification and regeneration in Christ are effected by the sacrament of baptism.” The cleansing work of baptism is accomplished in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. Palamas asserted in his homily concerning baptism:

> Water is a means of cleansing, but not for souls. It can remove dirt from those being baptized, but not the grime that comes from sin. For that reason the Healer of souls, the Father of spirits (Heb 12.9), Christ, who takes away the sin of the world (John 12.9), enters the water before us to be baptized…. He draws the grace of the all-holy Spirit from above to dwell in the water with Him, so that later when those being baptized as He was enter the water, He is there, clothing them ineffably with His Spirit, attaching Himself to them, and filling them with the grace that purifies and illumines reasonable spirits.

The Spirit remains in the baptized, that they may continue to participate in the divine nature. The baptized also continue to be united with the divine through the Eucharist. For by partaking the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the baptized is united with the flesh of Christ and thereby shares in the divine energies. Mantzaridis summarized Palamas’ orientation to the Eucharist: “through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, however, we not only cleave to the body of Christ, we intermingle with it, and we become not merely one body with Him, but one spirit.” Thus through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the Spirit sustains and unites the redeemed with the divine.

**Repentance**
The presence of the Spirit is dependant on the will of the individual. Palamas warns, the Spirit “stays with those who live in repentance, and even if their sin does not leave them as we have

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253 Mantzaridis, 45.
255 Mantzaridis, 52.
seen from David (2 Sam 12.1ff, *cf.* Ps. 51.11), but forsakes those who sin without repenting, as we have found out from Saul (*cf.* 1 Sam. 16.14).”

For sin after baptism corrupts the health and purity of a person’s soul. To not repent of sin is to remain stained and sickly to the point of death. The only means of restoration and cleansing for a baptized individual is repentance and confession.

Palamas, therefore, encourages a life-long practice of repentance, rooted in the act of confession: “The confession of sins is the beginning of this cultivation, the state that is of repentance.”

The state of repentance, according to Palamas, included: “a humble attitude, compunction and spiritual mourning, a gentle heart full of mercy, loving justice, striving for purity, peaceful, peacemaking, patient, glad to suffer persecutions, losses, disasters, slander and sufferings for the sake of truth and righteousness.”

In practicing the way of repentance, the Holy Spirit “leads us towards greater longing, and grants us to fulfil our desire, not only to see Him but also to touch Him, to delight in Him, to take Him into our hearts, and for each of us to hold Him in our inmost selves.”

Repentance also included, for Palamas, living according to God’s commandments. For in the incarnation, Christ not only suffered, died and rose, but also set forth the way of living according to God’s commands: “let him heed my commandments and imitate as far as he can My own way of life. Let him follow My actions and teachings when I came to the world in the flesh to establish saving laws and offer Myself as a pattern.”

Wesche summarized Palamas as follows:

Come home. Repent. Turn your mind around. Follow me to the Good Shepherd to find your true self beneath the fragmented individuality of your ego. In the fear of God, with faith and love, draw near to the Sun of Righteousness born of Mary,
who sheds his rays upon the whole inhabited earth. Come into the true Light, receive his heavenly Spirit, and awaken to the secret of who you are: You are made in the image of God. You have a natural affinity for God. You are called to become a communicant of God, partaking of his uncreated life, light, joy and peace in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.  

Calvin  
In the introduction, it was noted that some scholars read the divine-human relationship in Calvin as radically oppositional. According to that position, the divine-human distinction is so great due to human depravity that Calvin is forced to synthesize the two extreme poles, through redemption. The result, notes Torrance, is that Calvin’s soteriology is reduced to nothing more than God’s answer to human depravity. To do so, however, is to lose sight of Calvin’s theological anthropology, which emphasized the creation of human beings for a relationship with the divine, and also to distort his soteriology, concerning union with Christ.  

In Calvin, alienation infects the divine-human relationship by the fall. The fall results in sin, which blinds and alienates human beings from God’s accommodation, so that “man is unable to descend humbly into himself to learn the truth about himself.” Human beings are in need of God’s accommodated self-communication in the incarnated redeemer due to “our miserable condition after Adam’s fall.” Adam’s fall is transmitted from one generation to another: “Hence Adam, when he lost the gifts received, lost them not only for himself but for us all.” The corruption “subsists not in one part only, but that none of the soul remains pure or untouched by that mortal disease.” Therefore, “we are so vitiated and perverted in every part of our  

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263 Torrance, 20.  
264 Ibid., 15.  
265 Institutes, 2.1.1.  
266 Ibid., 2.1.7. Here Calvin departs from Palamas, in that unlike Palamas, Calvin holds to the doctrine of Original Sin.  
267 Ibid., 2.1.9.
nature that by this great corruption we stand justly condemned and convicted before God” and
“this perversity never ceases in us, but continually bears new fruits.”

The fall, for Calvin, is the result of unfaithfulness. “It comes from their [human beings’] yielding to the devil and abandoning God their Creator.”

Human beings, who had been created for communion with God, “spurned God’s great bounty, which had been lavished upon him.” As a result, “Adam is chased from the garden of Eden and the terrestrial paradise; he is placed in the position of perpetual reproach; he sees that he is cut off from the heritage he had been given.” This heritage includes the image of God in human beings:

There is no doubt that Adam, when he fell from his state, was by this defection alienated from God. Therefore, even though we grant that God’s image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity.”

In reference to the lost image of God, Calvin refers to the animal skins in which human beings are clothed in Genesis 3, and today need to clothe themselves: “to cover our shame so we will always be apprised that we are not worthy to walk naked because we are stripped of all that glory God had imprinted in us when we bore his image.” The stripping of the image also resulted in a lost of relationship: “God is, so to speak, hostile to us, and his hand is armed for our destruction…”

The final result of human alienation from God is death. In death, the body returns to the dust of the earth. The death of the soul means to be alienated from God and to be overwhelmed by the sense of His wrath, as the apostle explains in saying, "Awake, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph 5.14). Certainly he is not referring to

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268 *Institutes*, 2.1.8.
269 Ibid., 2.1.4.
271 *Institutes*, 2.1.4.
273 *Institutes*, 1.15.4.
275 *Institutes*, 2.16.2.
unconscious bodies, but that which being buried in sin carry death and hell with them.  

Consequently, reconciliation is needed to restore the divine-human relationship. The question, for Calvin, is how this reconciliation is to be accomplished. The popular reading of Calvin is through the Anselmian lens of a necessary atonement, which lays for Helm, somewhere between two views of the atonement. The first view is the absolute view of the atonement: “Necessarily, given the fact of sin, there is to be reconciliation via the God-man.” The second view is the necessary view: “Necessarily, given the fact of sin, if there is to be reconciliation, then it will be via the God-man.” Helm noted that Calvin denies the absolute view: From his reference to the heavenly divine decree. For Calvin, it is not an absolutely necessary matter that there is salvation at all, even granted the fall. He does not appear to write about the necessity to restore the human race, or to provide human substitutes for the fallen angels as Augustine and Anselm did. 

Helm also did not argue that Calvin holds the necessary view. As evidence, he cited numerous references in Calvin, in which Calvin “…does not regard himself as speculating when he asserts that God might have saved us by a word.” Helm instead proposed a third view, the hypothetical view: “Given the fact of sin, if there is to be reconciliation, then possibly it will be via the God-man.” Helm’s argument for adopting the third view stems from Calvin’s emphasis on “union with Christ.” Helm wrote, “pardon by the declaration of God would have gained us pardon and acceptance. But most certainly, for Calvin, being ‘in Christ’ means much more than this. It means being adopted into God’s family with all that implies.” Therefore, an

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276 Treatise 6, 143.2.
277 Paul Helm, Calvin at the Centre, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 166.
278 Helm, 166.
279 Ibid., 166.
280 Ibid., 173.
281 Ibid., 166. He later adjusts this description to 3a, which reads: “Necessarily, if there is to be pardon, and if this pardon is to be optimally beneficial to those pardoned, then it will be by means of an atonement by the God-man.” (180).
282 Ibid., 178.
atonement that was mere pardon, even if ‘pardon’ is understood in a generous and rich way, would be inferior to atonement that involved the riches of union with Christ.” Helm continued: “the atonement has occurred. Perhaps it was necessary, perhaps not. But the atonement is a marvellous expression of divine love and mercy, perhaps the best possible one.” Such a reading brings to the forefront Calvin’s emphasis on human beings as created for relationship with the divine, shown in God’s original intention of grace in creating humanity in the image of God, and revealing godself in accommodation.

The recovery of the image of God is possible only through the incarnation. Calvin insisted that only the incarnated mediator could bridge the gap created by the fall between God and human beings:

> Since our iniquities, like a cloud cast between us and him, had completely estranged us from the Kingdom of Heaven, no man, unless he belonged to God, could serve as the intermediary to restore peace. But who might reach to him? Any one of Adam’s children? No, like their father, all of them were terrified at the sight of God. One of the angels? They also had need of a head, through whose bond they might cleave firmly and undividedly to their God. What then? The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended to us, since it was not in our power to ascend to him. Hence, it was necessary for the Son of God to become for us “Immanuel, that is God with us” and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together. Otherwise the nearness would not have been near enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.

Calvin takes a different perspective than Palamas on the incarnation. Calvin believed that the distance between the creature and the creator is so great that a Mediator was always necessary

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283 Helm, 178.
284 Ibid., 194.
286 Cf. Institutes, 1.15.4: “For even though Paul, contrasting the life-giving spirit that the believers receive from Christ with the living soul in which Adam was created, commends the richer measure of grace in regeneration, yet he does not remove that other principal point, that the end of regeneration is that Christ should reform us to God’s image.”
287 Institutes, 2.12.1.
for the divine-human relationship. Therefore, in the creation of the universe the Word is set forth as an intermediary (1.13.7). As an intermediary, the second person of the Trinity raises humanity to God. Yet, Calvin did not propose that the mediator must become incarnate before the fall. Rather, in referring to such a proposition by Osiander, Calvin writes:

One such speculation is that Christ would still have become man even if no means of redeeming mankind had been needed. Of course I admit that in the original order of creation and the unfallen state of nature Christ was set over angels and meant as their Head. [...] But since all Scripture proclaims that to become our redeemer he was clothed with flesh, it is too presumptuous to imagine another reason or another end.”

Partee commented on Calvin’s statement: “the conviction Christ would have become a man if mankind had not needed redemption, Calvin regards as idle speculation since it is contrary to fact.” Therefore Calvin spends little time trying to describe the contrary-to-fact situation of a sinless world in no need of a redeemer. However, in spite of Calvin’s lack of speculation, Partee also noted Calvin’s insistence that the incarnation was not forced on God by human sin. Partee comes to this conclusion based on Calvin’s requirement for a mediator, even without human sin. As noted above, God’s grace would have been extended to humanity in the Mediator even if the role of the Redeemer had not been required. Calvin understood that even without the fall into sin, human beings would not be able to ascend to God, therefore

it was necessary for the Son of God to become for us “Immanuel, that is, God with us’, and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together. Otherwise the nearness would not have been near enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.”

In Treatise 5, Calvin asks, in regards to Hebrews 2:

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288 Institutes, 2.12.4.
289 Partee, 148.
290 Ibid., 148.
291 Institutes, 2.12.1.
In addition, he (the apostle) says that by the means of the communication which He has with us, in His flesh and His blood, He is called our brother and enjoys true brotherhood with us (Heb 2.11). From that we have to conclude that the greatest benefit that we can have would be taken from us if Jesus Christ had not communicated with us in flesh and blood. For how could we be children of God without being His brothers?

In addition, Calvin writes: “The Spirit calls him ‘man,’ thus teaching us that he is near us, indeed touches us, since he is our flesh.” So in Calvin we have two realities, one that refuses to speculate on the incarnation in the pre-fallen state to the extent that he seems to deny the need for the incarnation of the mediator without sin, but also an acknowledgement on the part of Calvin that the incarnation into flesh and blood mediates between the divine and the human. It cannot be said, in conjunction with Palamas, however, that the incarnation reveals the divine purpose for the human race as theosis. Calvin used the second person of the Trinity as first and foremostely the mediator by whom the divine purpose for the human race as relationship with God is revealed. This is a crucial distinction between Calvin and Palmas concerning the incarnation. Palamas held the incarnation as the center of theosis, the means by which the two natures are joined, both before and after the fall. Therefore the incarnation is what enables theosis. As such, noted Mantzaridis, the role of the incarnation in the Palamite doctrine of theosis is occasionally called in the East the “physical” view, since it founds theosis in the incarnations’ hypostatic union of the human nature and more specifically human flesh, with the divine nature of the Second Person of the Trinity. Calvin does not hold to this view of the incarnation. For Calvin the mediator brought together the divine and the human in relationship before the fall and only after the fall, was the incarnation necessary to draw together the divine and the human. The emphasis in Calvin is not in drawing together the human flesh to the divine

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292 Institutes, 2.12.1.
293 Mantzaridis wrote: “In the person of Christ existed, in its entirety, human nature inidividually particularized, which, being hypostatically unified with the Logos of God, was deified and received the fullness of the divine energy. For Palamas and the Orthodox tradition, the flesh of Chirst, being the body of the Logos of God incarnate, is the point of man’s contact with God” (30).
nature in theosis. Rather it is a drawing together of relationship, which enhances and fulfils the human being to their full potential.

Calvin’s use of the incarnation as the means of redemption and thereby ascent after the fall, only further highlights the divine purpose of relationship. First of all, the incarnation extends God’s accommodated self-communication. Secondly, by means of the incarnation, redemption is accomplished, by which fallen human beings are raised to God. Concerning the first point, Calvin viewed the redeemer, and thereby the incarnation, as the second half of the twofold knowledge of God. Calvin recounts that “the natural order was that the frame of the universe should be the school in which we were to learn piety, and from it pass over to eternal life and perfect felicity.” However, the rebellion of human beings overwhelms “our souls with despair, so that even if God wills to manifest his fatherly favor to us in many ways, yet we cannot by contemplating the universe infer that he is Father.” The redeemer reveals for us the grace and love for God in salvation, but also reveals godself. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15) and “the Father, himself infinite, becomes finite in the Son, for he has accommodated himself to our little measure lest our minds be overwhelmed by the immensity of his glory.” Calvin comments on the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6):

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294 Niesel writes: “Calvin realizes that we are utterly dependent for our knowledge of God upon His self-revelation: upon the fact that He Himself has come down into our world. We meet God personally only in Jesus Christ, who in His living personal reality is the image of God the Father” and “He takes with real seriousness the unique, perfect, and exclusive revelation of God in Jesus Christ” (35). Some theologians even venture to call this accommodation par excellence in Calvin. Dowey writes: “in this concealing-revealing quality of the person of Christ, the divine incognito, we perceive at its sharpest and most paradoxical the double aspect of accommodation already pointed out. It is God's deepest condescension or descent from his own mysterious being, and at the same time it is both the high point of man's knowledge and the limit of it” (16-17). Dowey also adds: “Man, the image of God, is the summit of the general revelation, and Christ the God-man is the brightest mirror of both God's self-revelation and man's essential nature” (19). Helm echoes Dowey in his discussion on the incarnation, stating that Calvin’s use of accommodation is “an accommodation that has its end-point in the accommodation of God the Son in the Incarnation, although Calvin does not seem to use the term in developing his account of the Incarnation” (13).

295 Institutes, 1.2.1.
296 Ibid., 12.6.1.
297 Ibid., 12.6.4.
In the same sense in which [Paul] had previously said that Christ is the image of the Father, (2 Corinthians 4:4) he now says, that the glory of God is manifested to us in his face. Here we have a remarkable passage, from which we learn that God is not to be sought out (Job 11:7) in His unsearchable height, (for He dwells in light that is inaccessible, (1 Timothy 6:16)) but is to be known by us, in so far as He manifests himself in Christ. Hence, whatever men desire to know respecting God, apart from Christ, is evanescent, for they wander out of the way. True, indeed, God in Christ appears in the first instance to be mean, but he appears at length to be glorious in the view of those who hold on, so as to come from the cross to the resurrection. Again we see, that in the Word person there is a reference made to us, because it is more advantageous for us to behold God, as He appears in His only-begotten Son, than to search out His secret essence.  

Therefore, the incarnated second person of the Trinity fully reveals God to humanity, apart from his essence. He does so to the extent that after the fall, “no knowledge of God apart from the Mediator has had power unto salvation. For Christ not only speaks of his own age, but comprehends all ages when he says: ‘This is eternal life, to know the Father to be the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.” Calvin also adds, “For even though the light shone in the darkness before he assumed flesh (John 1.5), yet the light was hidden until Christ came forth in the nature of man, the Sun of Righteousness, and he therefore calls himself ‘the light of the world’” (John 8.12).

Yet, it is not by the incarnation alone that human beings are restored to relationship with God. The relationship is restored by the obedience of the incarnated mediator. This obedience is seen in his sinless life, but also in his willing obedience to death. In doing so, he became a substitute for sinful human beings; “This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God.”

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298 Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Cor 4:6.*
299 *Institutes,* 2.6.1, cf. also 2.6.4: “God is comprehended in Christ alone.” And “so today the Turks, although they proclaim at the top of their lungs that the Creator of heaven and earth is God, still, while repudiating Christ, substitute an idol in place of the true God.”
300 Ibid., 3.11.12.
301 Ibid., 2.16.5.
302 Ibid., 2.16.5.
under its yoke; Christ, in our stead, gave himself over to its power to deliver us from it.”

Christ thus destroyed death, and “kills the old man in us that he may not flourish and bear fruit. Christ’s burial has the same effect: we ourselves as partakers in it are buried with him to sin.” Consequently, “in Christ’s death and burial a twofold blessing is set forth for us to enjoy: liberation from the death to which we had been bound, and mortification of our flesh.” Or in other words, human beings “have in his death the complete fulfilment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, his righteous judgment is satisfied, the curse is removed, and the penalty paid in full.” The result of Christ’s obedience in life and in death, is the removal of the alienation between God and sinful humanity. Here Calvin and Palamas are in full congruence.

It is by Christ’s resurrection that human beings are raised into the fullness of the relationship between God and humanity. Calvin wrote, “we are said to ‘have been born anew to a living hope’ not through his death but ‘through his resurrection’ (1 Pet 1.3) For as he, in rising again, came forth victor over death, so the victory of our faith over death lies in his resurrection alone.” For that reason, “we divide the substance of our salvation between Christ’s death and resurrection as follows: through his death, sin was wiped out and death was extinguished; through his resurrection, righteousness was restored and life raised up…”

Human beings are united with the Mediator by faith, which is imparted only by the Holy Spirit. For human beings are bound to God, “not just by the physical flesh of the incarnated mediator, but also by the Spirit: For we know that the children of God are not born of flesh and

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303 *Institutes*, 2.16.7.
304 Ibid., 2.16.7.
305 Ibid., 2.16.7.
306 Ibid., 2.16.13.
307 Ibid., 2.16.13.
308 Ibid., 2.16.13.
blood but of the Spirit through faith. Hence flesh alone does not make the bond of brotherhood.”

Faith, according to Calvin, is a firm and certain knowledge of God, in Jesus Christ. By firm and certain, Calvin referred to a constancy of persuasion or posture towards God. Calvin depicts knowledge as assurance rather than comprehension. Assurance postures faith, not towards the church’s propositions, but towards God. The posturing of assurance cannot be innate, and unknown by the individual. Calvin refuted any idea of an innate faith: “that people who are touched by no fear of God, no sense of piety, nevertheless believe whatever it is necessary to know for salvation.”

Faith goes beyond the “knowledge of the sensus divinitatis and the conscientia... Those faculties only give one the most basic knowledge of God’s existence and awareness of God’s judgement.” As such, Calvin stated that, “it is not enough for man implicitly to believe what he does not understand or even investigate. But he requires explicit recognition of the divine goodness upon which our righteousness rests.” Therefore assurance is found only in the explicit recognition of the person and action of Jesus Christ, and is evidenced in “the obedience of faith.” The “obedience of faith” is the fruit of our union with Christ, by the Spirit, more so than in correct doctrine.

Calvin used a duplex gratia to describe the fruit of our union with the incarnate mediator. For “we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.” The duplex gratia includes justification and sanctification. For Calvin, neither justification nor sanctification may be considered alone. They are inseparable. At the

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309 Institutes, 2.13.2.
310 Calvin states, “when we call faith “knowledge” we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception.” (3.2.13).
311 Ibid., 3.2.8.
312 Dennis Tamburello, Union with Christ, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 52.
313 Institutes, 3.2.2.
314 Ibid., 3.2.8.
315 Ibid., 3.1.1.
same time they are distinct. Helm noted that the lack of distinction between justification and sanctification is one of Calvin’s critiques of Augustine:

For in the Augustinian way of thinking, while there is agreement that justification involves freedom from condemnation through forgiveness and the provision of righteousness, and that faith is active in it, subjective renewal is included in it. It is this merging of the two that, in Calvin's view, eventually led to appealing to good works as meritorious, and to the idea of supererogation on which the scandalous medieval abuses relied. 316

In Calvin, justification is “the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.”317 The imputation of Christ’s righteousness is realized through union with Christ. This union is not with Christ’s essence, in that it is the essence of God, rather it is an ethical union based on Christ’s obedience.318 In justification, union with Christ is the sharing in what Christ has suffered and done – done meaning the obedience of Jesus Christ in his incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection-ascension. Smedes, in his book Union with Christ, underlines that Calvin is not saying that “all that Christ is as the divine human Son of Man will be useless, but that what Christ did would be of no value to us.”319 Union with Christ, then, is the basis for our benefiting from the obedient actions of Christ. As a result, a person has union with Christ in the respect that he/she shares in the righteous character that Jesus displayed in his perfect obedience on earth. Smedes highlighted the point: “when Calvin speaks of getting the very substance of the life of Christ, we must understand that for him the moral qualities are the substance of personal life.”320 Calvin adds:

316 Helm, 208.
317 Institutes, 3.11.2.
318 In his refutation of Osiander, Calvin notes: “He says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ’s essence is mixed with our own.”
320 Smedes, 11 (italics mine).
Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union – are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.\textsuperscript{321}

Therefore, in justification, union with Christ is understood in terms of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, at the point of faith. Here is another point of diversion for Palmas and Calvin. As observed above, for Palamas, baptism is the beginning of redemption and the starting point of faith. In addition, Palamas clearly has an ex opera operata view of baptism, for the water itself is infused with the Holy Spirit and effects the journey towards theosis. Calvin on the other hand, recognizes baptism as a sign and symbol of God’s redemptive action and purpose for the individual. Therefore for Calvin, Baptism itself does not affect the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Rather, righteousness is imputed at the moment of justification.

Sanctification on the other hand, is the journey of becoming what we already are through justification. Helm uses the following descriptions:

First, since justification consists in the imputation of righteousness, when God sees a person as righteous he really is righteous, he is received into God's family, made a bona fide member of Christ's body. But he is not inwardly or subjectively righteous. He has a new moral status, but not a new moral nature. Second, the new moral nature is the inseparable concomitant of the new status, but it can never justify, not even contribute to, it, and so cannot be a part of the 'whole of righteousness.'\textsuperscript{322}

Calvin often uses the language of journey to describe the life of sanctification on its way to enabling human beings to reach their height as image bearers of God. He writes, “let each one of

\textsuperscript{321} \textit{Institutes}, 3.11.10.
\textsuperscript{322} Helm, 225.
us, then, proceed according to the measure of his puny capacity and set out upon the journey we
have begun."\textsuperscript{323} The journey is a life long journey, as sanctification occurs over time:

This restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives.\textsuperscript{324}

As the journey continues, advancement is made towards God, and the image of God shines more brightly in the individual.\textsuperscript{325} For the final result of sanctification is marked by regeneration into the image of God. The incarnate mediator, who is “the most perfect image of God” conforms human beings to that perfect image of God.\textsuperscript{326} It is not an imitation of the image of God, or a pattern of behaviour, but a transformation:

“…when Paul compares Jesus Christ with Adam (Rom 5:12-19). He not only understands that Jesus Christ is a mirror and pattern of all holiness for us to follow. He understands that, but more. Jesus Christ’s principal charge is not to show us what holiness and perfection of life are. He restored the life we lost. Now it is said that as we are righteous in him, we are also sinners in Adam (Rom 5:19). We are not righteous in Jesus Christ because we simply follow him, but because he regenerates us by his Holy Spirit and washes and cleanses us by his blood so that our sins will not be imputed to us before God and we will be acceptable to him.”\textsuperscript{327} Indeed, through Christ, human beings are not brought back to their original state, but an even better state: “…he may return not only to the estate from which he fell, but to that estate which is much more worthy and more excellent, in which, as a member of our Lord Jesus Christ, he will attain the immortal inheritance.”\textsuperscript{328}

The fullness of this conformity is attained in the life to come.\textsuperscript{329}

\textsuperscript{323} \textit{Institutes}, 3.6.5.
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., 3.3.9.
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 3.3.9.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 3.3.9:
\textsuperscript{327} John Calvin, \textit{Sermons on Gen} 3:4-6.
\textsuperscript{328} John Calvin, \textit{Sermons on Gen} 3:19-22a.
\textsuperscript{329} \textit{Institutes}, 1.15.4.
Repentance
Crucial to the journey towards full sanctification, according to Calvin, is repentance. Calvin defines repentance as “the true turning of our life to God.” Repentance consists of mortification and vivification. Mortification, describes Calvin, is “the sorrow of soul and dread conceived from the recognition of sin and the awareness of divine judgement.” Vivification, in contrast, is “the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth.” The practice of repentance, of mortification and vivification, is a constant practice in the journey of faith. Constantly, a person is brought to the true knowledge of his/her sin, and then s/he begins to truly hate his/her sin, and confesses him/herself to be in need of new life. In response to the heart’s confession, the Spirit responds with vivification. Calvin describes this vivification as the Spirit of God imbibing our souls so that they are “steeped in his holiness, with both new thoughts and feelings, [so] that they can be rightly considered new.” Yet, the old self will continually re-emerge, and will once again need to be confessed. Repentance is a long hard journey, on which the old self must constantly be confessed, and the new self raised up in Christ. Yet Calvin encourages the individual not to despair if the journey seems long, or difficult. He encourages the individual to continue in the journey, so that “we may make some unceasing progress in the way of the Lord” so that “with continuous effort” we may strive towards the end. A person is to keep his/her eye on the goal of sanctification: “only let us look toward our mark with sincere simplicity and aspire to our goal; not fondly flattering ourselves, nor excusing

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330 Institutes, 3.3.1.
331 Ibid., 3.3.3.
332 Ibid., 3.3.3.
333 Ibid., 3.3.7.
334 Ibid., 3.6.5.
our own evil deeds, but with continuous effort striving toward this end." The journey ends at death, and reaches complete fulfilment at the consummation.

**Conclusion**

Therefore for Calvin, soteriology is about more than pardon or expiation, it is about the restoration of a relationship at a much deeper level. As argued by Helm above, it is about a union with Christ in justification that is lived out, experienced and consummated in sanctification. Like Palamite *theosis* sanctification involves the transformation of human beings into the fullness of God’s design for God’s image bearers. However, once again the means of *theosis* and the means of Calvin’s restored relationship that enable the fullness of the divine image are different, as well as the language describing the final state. One key area is that of the incarnation. For Palamas, the incarnation is about the physical union of the divine and human by which *theosis* is accomplished. For Calvin, the incarnation is about the obedience of Christ in the flesh to bring about the restoration of the divine-human relationship. Therefore, as much as obedience for Palamas is important in repentance and confession, for Calvin, obedience is crucial for the bringing together of the estranged human and God in justification. In addition, for Palamas, the sacraments and contemplation play a much more active role in the journey towards the human *telos* than they do for Calvin. For Calvin, as it is shown in chapter one, concrete divine self-communication is the key means by which the Holy Spirit brings human beings to their *telos* with God.

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335 *Institutes*, 3.6.5.
Conclusion

As a brief survey of Palamas’ and Calvin’s thought concerning their doctrine of God, theological anthropology and soteriology has shown broad areas of agreement. These areas of agreement have included a description of God who is transcendent and yet communicates godself to human beings. In their theological anthropology, both Palamas and Calvin emphasized the creation of human beings in the divine image as the means by which they can be in relationship with God. Furthermore, the creation in the image of God not only allows for the reception of God’s self-communication, but also for God’s self-communication to be enacted by them, through the radiation of God’s glory and the human role of the microcosm of creation by which they are also called to tend and care for creation. In a very real and meaningful way for both Palamas and Calvin, human beings, as image bearers, as able to be the hands and feet of God in creation, all of which is enacted by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ. Therefore, when looking at the broad strokes of Palamite theosis it is easy to see areas of convergence with the thought of John Calvin which make room for the possibility of theosis. There is divine-human relationship, brought about by self-communication, and the state of image bearers. There is transformation brought about in the human being by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced in repentance and confession. Furthermore, in Calvin, there is a transformation that is enacted in the human being through theosis which brings about salvation.

Despite these congruencies, however, there are significant divisions between Palamas and Calvin. One is in the area of the kind of self-communication. Divine self-communication for Palamas is found in the energies and manifested in the divine light. Therefore, it is normally the result of vision or contemplation. Calvin takes a much different approach. Calvin focus’ on God’s concrete actions and special revelation through scripture and redemption. The Holy Spirit
illumines the eyes to see and the mind to know God through these means and ultimately enables human beings to know themselves. Hence Calvin’s language concerning revelation is much more about the relationship between human beings and God, rather than human beings union with God. In addition the doctrine of the incarnation is radically different in Palamas and Calvin. For Palamas, there is a necessity of the union of the divine and human nature both before and after the fall, and therefore the incarnation was always necessary as it enables theosis. For Calvin, the physical union of the incarnation was only necessary for redemption, especially in respect to obedience. Therefore prior to the fall the mediation of the Word of God was sufficient to buttress the divine-human relationship. Finally, even with the similarities in sanctification and theosis, there is a difference in language, and ultimately expectation of the final state. For Palamas, the final state is when God fully indwells the human, and is considered all in all. For Calvin, the final state is to fully exhibit and live out the glory of God as image bearers.

Consequently, due to the similarities concerning the foundational points of theosis: the self-communication of God, the creation as image-bearers, and the transformation in sanctification, I would put forward that the theology of John Calvin has the elements of a kind of theosis. This theosis however, as presented by Canlis and Billings in the introduction, is still distinct from the Palamite doctrine of theosis. Further investigation into Calvin’s eschatological descriptions of the consummation, the sacraments, and the working out of grace within the community could further cement the possibility for a different kind of theosis, and yet display its distinction from the Eastern Orthodox doctrine presented in Palamas.
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Calvin


Palamas


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Calvin


**Palamas**


