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Deification and Creation: A Comparative, Historical and Systematic View

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DEIFICATION AND CREATION:

A COMPARATIVE, HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMATIC VIEW

by

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This thesis is dedicated to the honor of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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NOTE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

All Bible passages in this thesis are taken from the New American Bible (NAB)

INTRODUCTION

One of the central elements of the spiritual and metaphysical worldview of Christianity is the seeming paradox of God's closeness yet otherness. In both the Old and New Testaments, the transcendence of God is affirmed, sometimes with rather strong terms. This can be seen in the words of Isaiah 55:9 ("As the heavens are above the earth, so are My Ways above your ways, and My Thoughts above your thoughts"), 2 Chronicles 2:6 ("...[T]he heavens and even the highest heavens cannot contain Him"), and Acts 17:24 ("The God Who made the world and all that is in it...does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands"). In the sixth chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the prophet who authored this book describes a vision of God that he had, in which God is seen seated upon a throne, as angels praise Him. Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on this verse in the A.D. 5th century, writes that the angels praising God signifies the "eminent dignity of God"[1] which "surpasses every spiritual nature".[2] He goes on to write, "His being seated on it [the heavenly throne] probably suggests as it were the stability, permanence, and the continuance in the quality of such good things. … [W]hile created nature is always and at every time subject to corruption...the Wisdom that is Artificer and Creator of all things is enthroned, as I said, that is, has a permanent enjoyment of such things."[3] That is to say, the loftiness of God's heavenly throne symbolizes the eternal, unending and transcendent nature of God, in contrast to the finite and passing nature of the

[1] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 1, trans. by Robert Charles Hill (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), pg. 144.

[2] Ibid., pg. 145.

[3] Ibid.

things of this world. What the angels cried out to God in praising Him - "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts" - is also theologically significant. The Catholic Biblical scholars Joseph Jensen and William H. Irwin, commenting on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, note that God's holiness is central to the Prophet Isaiah's message, so much so that it is seen by Isaiah as the "predominant attribute" of the God of Israel. What is more, Jensen and Irwin note the nature of this holiness: "Moral perfection is included [within Isaiah's definition of holiness], but primarily it refers to His transcendence and otherness."[4] Yet, Scripture also affirms the closeness of God. In Psalm 145:18, it is written, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him."

Scripture affirms that God is both close yet transcendent in an epistemic sense as well. In Exodus 33, Moses asks that God manifest His Goodness to him. God agrees, but says that as He makes His Goodness pass before Moses, He will block Moses's vision so that he will only see His Back and not His Face, God's Face representing the fullest or most direct manifestation of God to creation, and His Back representing a lesser or more indirect manifestation of God. The reason for this God makes clear: "The LORD answered: 'I will make My Goodness pass before you...But you cannot see My Face, for no one can see Me and live." (Exodus 33:19, 20) God's Goodness is so great that one would die if they were to lay eyes upon It in Its fullness. Paul builds on this theme by describing God as One "Whom no human being has or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). Nonetheless, two verses earlier, Paul writes that those who persevere in the obeying of God's commandments will, in the eschaton, have God manifested to them (1 Timothy 6:14). This parallels the words of Christ Himself in Matthew 5:8, wherein it is written that the pure in heart will see God. God, in Himself, cannot be seen by humans; yet, through

[4] Joseph Jensen, O.S.B. and William H. Irwin, C.S.B., "Isaiah 1-39," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1990), pg. 234.

growth in holiness, we purify the mind and the heart so as to become capable of seeing, albeit faintly, That which is incomprehensible to created realities.

In certain texts of Scripture, the metaphysical and epistemological elements intersect. In 1 John 3:2, it is written, “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” By grace, we are reconciled with God, and therefore made children of God. Yet, the spiritual and ontological state of the faithful in this life does not represent their final state. In heaven, they shall stand before God and comprehend Him to the fullest extent that the human mind is capable. The Apostle John, in this text, does not deny the transcendence of God; nonetheless, God’s transcendence does not undermine the ability of God, by His grace, to bring about an intimate knowledge of and union with God on the part of creatures. And such union and knowledge not only adds to our doctrine or philosophy of God, but says something about man: the knowledge of God transforms us to make us like God. We become conformed to the object of our knowledge.

Thus, the core of the Christian worldview is a belief in a God Who is transcendent and yet, in spite of His transcendence, is close to His creation, a God Who, in Himself, is incomprehensible, and yet makes Himself known to His creation. This paradox is only intensified with the central teaching of Scripture, the doctrine of the Incarnation. Nonetheless, such a worldview raises a series of questions, such as: “How can the same God be both transcendent AND immanent?” “How can there be any relationship between a finite being such as humans and an infinite, transcendent Being such as God?” “How can a finite reality such as the human mind comprehend an infinite Reality such as God, even in the faintest or most indirect manner?” These questions are only intensified when one examines the Christian view

of the afterlife: the human person, by the grace of God, is in a state of perfect union with God, in which they are in the direct presence of their Creator, and therefore comprehend God as directly or as fully as the human mind is capable.

The fact that many of the same questions that one sees when examining the Christian doctrine of creation, and by extension the more general metaphysical relationship between God and humans, carry over into the realm of soteriology draws our attention towards an important point: namely, the close doctrinal relationship between these two fields of theology. Heaven is a supernatural state, that is, it transcends the created order. Theologians, when discussing this topic, thus tend to emphasize the radical difference between the state of nature and the deified state. It is important here to briefly defined what is meant by deification. Deification, in a word, refers to the union with God brought about by grace. Such a union includes a perfection of the image of God within the human person, so that the human person is more closely conformed to God. Such a state is perfected only in heaven; nonetheless, the process of being deified begins with the reception of grace in this life.

While such an understanding of the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms holds true on an ontological level, it will be argued in this paper that such a sharp distinction cannot be made on a systematic level between the natural and the supernatural, between what God does in creating and sustaining our existence and what God does in deifying it. On a purely systematic or theoretical level, deification does not make sense without the doctrine of creation, for the doctrine of deification presupposes - albeit while also transforming and elevating - certain ideas first put forward in the Christian doctrine of creation, Christian metaphysics, and Christian anthropology. In particular, I will be examining how this is true with two specific theologians, namely Thomas Aquinas and Gregory Palamas. The reason why

these two theologians will be the subject of our analysis is that they are representative of the two largest traditions within classical Christian thought, namely the Latin and Byzantine, and more specifically these two thinkers lived at a time in which a great level of systematic nuance was being added to the thought of these traditions. Because these two thinkers frequently attempted to synthesize together and build off of the thought of various writers and intellectual traditions - Biblical, Patristic, and pre-Christian - there will be contained within our analysis of Aquinas and Palamas a brief analysis of the various thought traditions they made use of.

What will be argued for in this thesis that the doctrine of deification presupposes a certain metaphysics and anthropology which touches at the core of the Christian worldview. The point that I hope to demonstrate is that talk of deification cannot take place without having a specific and well-defined doctrine of creation and the relationship between God and the created realm, and between God and humanity in specific; in fact, the former is impossible without the latter. The emphasis of this paper is therefore systematic, that is, it is not making any metaphysical claims on the nature of creation or the nature of deification, but rather is meant to examine how the doctrine of deification builds off of and is informed by the metaphysical parameters of the doctrine of creation as understood by both traditions.

CHAPTER 1:

DEFINING DEIFICATION - A BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Before we begin with our exploration of how the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of deification relate, we must first briefly define what constitutes deification. In particular, let us focus on the Biblical and Patristic sources of the doctrine deification. One of the first major elements of deification, as articulated in Scripture and the Fathers, is union with Christ. Throughout the Bible, one sees references to the faithful being "in Christ" and Christ being "in them." In his letter to the Romans, Paul provides an in-depth analysis of what it means to be "in Christ," writing: "Miserable wretch that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I myself, with my mind, serve the Law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin. Hence, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death." (Romans 7:24-8:2) These verses dovetails with of Paul's description of the state of the sinner in Romans 7, in which the sinner is torn between two principles within himself, which Paul labels "laws": the law of the flesh, which represents the disordered desires that arise as a result of sin, and the law of the mind, that is, the human person's comprehension of the commands of God. The sinner desires to do what is right, but is constantly prevented from fully doing so by his own sinful tendencies. Yet, Paul gives thanks to God for what He did in Christ, since for those who are "in Christ," there is "no condemnation." That is to say, as Joseph Fitzmyer explains in his commentary on Romans, the human race, due to its sinfulness,

has incurred the curse of God's punishment. Yet, Fitzmyer points out, chapter 8 of Romans parallels Romans 5:1-11, which depicts Christ's saving mission as a manifestation of God's love, which is liberative in nature. What Christ's saving act does is "rescue" us from sin (to use Fitzmyer's language), and through faith we are united to Christ, as a result of which we are filled with the Holy Spirit.[5] The Holy Spirit allows us to escape the tug-of-war that exists within the individual between the law of the flesh and that of the mind, thereby allowing one to live in a manner pleasing to God.

In line with this larger theme are the words of our Lord Himself in John 6. As Pheme Perkins notes in her commentary on John's Gospel, the Bread of Life discourse speaks of true spiritual life both as a present and as a future reality. In verse 40, Jesus says that those who believe in Him "*have* eternal life" (a present reality) and "*will be* raised up in the last day" (a future reality). In verse 54, this sentiment is repeated almost verbatim. The language of both future and realized eschatology is used - that is to say, the faithful have been spiritually renewed in the here and now, and have the pledge of eternal life in the next life.[6] The reason for this is this is expressly articulated by Christ: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in Me and I in him." (John 6:56).

The fullness of spiritual life is a result of union with Christ, which is described simultaneously as being both "in Christ" and having Christ "in us." Scripture describes this union with Christ, and the eternal life that this brings about, in rather strong terms, in the second letter of St. Peter. In chapter 1, verses 3 through 4, it is written, "His Divine Power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of Him

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[5] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Romans," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pg. 852.

[6] Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel According to John," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pg. 962.

Who has called us through His Power and Glory. Through these, He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the Divine Nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world due to evil desire." Descriptions of union with God of this nature call to mind two other major themes, namely how union with God through Christ brings about purification from the effects of sin and, secondly, the vision of salvation as a participation in the Divine Nature. We are called by God to live lives of holiness and devotion, and God, in His Mercy and grace, has bestowed onto us everything needed to properly respond to this call. Contained within God's call to holiness, and the gifts which He bestows, is the promise that those who respond to God's call and make use of His gifts - and in doing so overcome all corruption and evil desire - will become partakers in the Divine Nature.

What one sees in these and similar verses is the following: 1) through union with Christ, the believer is purified of the corruption that results from sin; 2) one who has been so regenerated is given the ability to live a life pleasing to God; 3) the culmination of a life of holiness is participation in the Divine Nature. Various Patristic thinkers have attempted to explain what this participation in the Divine Nature means by using what some scholars have called the "Great Exchange Theory," which emphasizes the reciprocal nature of God's plan of salvation. God partook in the things of humanity so that humanity could partake in the things of God; God, through His descent and self-emptying, made possible the elevation and glorification of the human race.

In both Justin[7] and Irenaeus[8] (writing in the A.D. 2nd century), what one sees is the belief that immortality and incorruption are proper to God alone, and are present in humans in a contingent manner, that is, insofar as man is united to God. Through our disobedience, death and corruption entered into the human condition. The purpose of the Incarnation was to restore incorruptibility and immortality in the human race. Justin, for example, references such verses as Isaiah 14:1, which states that the Gentiles shall be united to the House of Israel, and Isaiah 42:1-4, which states that God will place Jacob as the judge of the nations, the one Who will make manifest God's Truth and Justice, and in whom even the Gentiles will trust. Justin argues that these prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ, in Whom the covenant between God and Israel has been fulfilled, and all who have faith in Christ are considered God's people. Justin goes further and makes a more radical claim: that those who are members of the covenant through their faith in Jesus are sons of God. Through obedience to God, we are united to God, and therefore are rightfully called sons of God; but, through sin and disobedience of the Divine commands, we become subject to suffering and death. As Justin writes, "...[T]hey [humans] were made like God, free from suffering and death, provided they kept His commandments, and were deemed deserving of the name of His sons, and yet they, becoming like Adam and Eve, work out death for themselves…"[9] Through union with Christ we regain the spiritual purity lost through sin, and therefore begin the process of regaining the incorruptibility and

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[7] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 123-124, trans. by Marcus Dods and George Reith, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). Accessed on: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01288.htm.

[8] St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, Book III, chapter 19, translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rabaut, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, Co., 1885). Accessed on: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103319.htm.

[9] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 124

immortality lost through sin. It is through the act of regaining this lost incorruptibility and immortality through union with Christ that we become sons of God. Justin explains what this means by asserting that the relationship between the faithful Christian and Christ is akin to the relationship between the individual Jew and Israel: just as the individual member of the nation of Israel is a descendent of Israel, and therefore is called Israel because they are, in a sense, "of Israel," likewise faithful members of the New Covenant bear the name of "Christian" since they, by grace, are "of Christ." As such, we participate in the things of Christ: Christ is the Son of God, and Christians, through our union with Christ, become sons of God. Justin thus states that humans, by grace, become "sons of God," and therefore "are deemed worthy of becoming gods" (terminology Justin bases on the words of Psalm 82:1), that is to say, participants in the Divine Nature.[10]

Irenaeus takes a view similar to that of Justin, in that both Justin and Irenaeus see deification in terms of incorruptibility and immortality that results from union with God through Christ and obedience to the Divine commandments. Yet, the method by which Irenaeus argues this point is, in some places, different; whereas Justin, in *Against Trypho*, was arguing against the Jewish claims against the Messianic identity of Jesus, Irenaeus was writing against the denial of Jesus' Divinity more generally. Irenaeus argues that Jesus could not free us from the bondage of sin unless He was the Word of God made man. The Word of God is "incorruptible" by nature, but humans are incorruptible only insofar as we are united to the Word of God. By becoming human, this incorruptible Word, Who is the Source of eternal life elevates human nature so as to make union with God possible. We, in a word, become what Christ is by virtue of union with Christ, and thus we are what Christ is in a derivative sense.

[10] Ibid., chapter 123

The Word of God is the Source of all incorruption and immortality, and we become incorruptible and immortal by virtue of our union with Christ, Who by His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection "swallowed up" that which was corruptible and mortal. Jesus is the Son of God, and we become sons of God by virtue of our union with Jesus. By denying the Divinity of Jesus, the faithless, Irenaeus says, "remain in mortal flesh," "are debtors to death," and "defraud human nature of promotion into God."[11] Here, Irenaeus comes to a lot of the same conclusions that Justin does, but through slightly different lines of argumentation, which he puts forward on account of his different ideological opponents.

Athanasius, a little under two centuries after these writers, unpacks the philosophical underpinnings of this teaching in his defense of Nicene orthodoxy. God is the Source of all being and existence, and sin is a turning away from God; sin, therefore, is a turning away from the Source of all being and existence and a turn towards nothingness. Athanasius identifies evil with non-being in the sense that it is a corruption of being. Evil results not only in metaphysical corruption, but also epistemological corruption: sin fogs mankind's knowledge of God, which causes sin to be self-perpetuating. God became man in the person of Jesus for two reasons: firstly, by uniting human nature to His Divinity, He restored human nature; secondly, since God is He in Whose Image we were created, in the Incarnation what one sees is humanity's Divine archetype appearing to man in the most immanent manner, allowing man to know his Creator with ever greater clarity.[12]

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[11] St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, Book III, chapter 19

[12] St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, translated by John Behr (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), chapters 4, 13-14.

Augustine, in a Christmas sermon delivered between A.D. 412 and A.D. 416, said that had not Christ been incarnate, the ultimate destiny of the human race would be death. What one sees in Christ is Truth and Justice itself entering into the created order for the sake of restoring it.[13] One possible manner of interpreting these words is, through sin, humanity abandons truth and justice, and therefore incurs corruption. Jesus, as God, is the eternal Source and Foundation of truth and justice, and through uniting created realities to Himself in one Person through the Incarnation, He restores truth and justice within the human race and within the creation more generally.

In these various Biblical and Patristic texts, there is an overarching view, namely that deification includes a union with God through Christ, a union whereby humanity overcomes the corruption caused by sin and becomes more receptive to the Perfections of God. The Perfections of God - being, goodness, virtue, wisdom, etc. - are found in beings outside of God, but only insofar as God shares His Perfections with His creation, which in turn implies a certain receptivity to the Divine Perfections on the part of created beings. As a result of sin, the human race becomes alienated from God, and therefore its ability to receive, reflect, and participate in the Perfections of God is inhibited, and as a result human existence is corrupted. The process whereby God deifies the human person is ultimately a process whereby God reestablishes union with humanity, allowing the human person to participate in the Perfections of God to ever greater degrees. The final state of the process of deification is perfect union with God, whereby we have a perfect receptivity to the Perfections of God, and therefore the ability to perfectly imitate God.

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[13] St. Augustine, "Sermon 185," in *Ancient Christian Writers* series, vol. 15 (*Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*), trans. Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York: Newman Press, 1952), p.76-77.

This is the working definition of deification presupposed by this paper. It is also present in the thought both Aquinas and Palamas. In Thomistic anthropology, the *imago Dei* rests in the human capacity to love God and to know Him in a manner analogous to God's knowledge and love of us and His knowledge and love of Himself.[14] In knowing God and loving God, we imitate God. The entire spiritual life for Aquinas is a continuous process of imitating God to ever greater degrees. Thomas frames the spiritual life in terms of humans becoming more likened unto God. Aquinas, in his treatise on grace, states that grace is an expression of that love on the part of God whereby God desires not only natural goods, but man's highest good, namely union with Him. In the act of granting us His spiritual gifts, God brings it about that this should be accomplished. Thomas therefore writes that by grace God "draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to the participation of the Divine Good."[15]

A similar implication is also found in one of the definitions of deification found in the works of Gregory Palamas. In the *Triads* III.1.28, Palamas writes, "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."[16] In the same section of the *Triads* where Palamas puts forward this definition, he further goes on to say that

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[14] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 93, A. 6 *respondeo*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1981), pg. 472.

[15] Ibid., *Summa Theologiæ* I-II, Q. 110, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 1132.

[16] Gregory Palamas, *Triads* III.1.28, translated by Nicholas Gendle, edited by John Meyendorff (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983), pg. 84. Such a definition is not Palamas's own; he claims to borrow it from Maximos the Confessor. John Meyendorff, in his translation of the text, claims that the exact location of this quote in the works of Maximos is uncertain, whereas Nicholas Gendle asserts that this definition is derived from Maximos's work *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*. See A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pg. 105, footnote 6; see also Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, translated by Nicholas Gendle, pg. 84, footnote 101.

the saints in heaven are "observing the light of the hidden and more-than-ineffable Glory," and therefore "are able to receive the blessed purity".[17] Deification, in Palamite theology, is a result of the human person entering into a deeper union with God, as a result of which the human intellect becomes enlightened by the Light of Divine Glory. The more the human person perceives the Divine Glory, the more we are purified of the corruption of sin and are therefore rendered capable of partaking in or imitating the purity that defines the Inner Life of God.

Deification therefore includes three elements: firstly, union with God through Christ; secondly, overcoming corruption and mortality; and finally, a greater imitation of or participation in the Perfections of God. Such a definition is at least implicitly found to some degree in the various Biblical and Patristic treatments of deification, and is present in both Thomistic and Palamite thought. It is this definition which will be presupposed in the analysis that follows. We will dedicate one chapter to Thomas Aquinas, and another to Gregory Palamas. Each chapter will in turn be subdivided into sections concerning: firstly, their view on the relationship between God and creation; secondly, their respective views on human nature; and finally, their views on grace, by which human nature is deified, and how their views on deification build off of their respective views on creation. Finally, I will conclude with a side-by-side comparison of these two theologians.

[17] Gregory Palamas, *Triads* III.1.28, pg. 84.

CHAPTER 2:

THE THOMISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF DEIFICATION

In this chapter we will analyze Aquinas's understanding of deification and its doctrinal or systematic relation to the of creation. For Thomas, both the doctrine of creation and that of deification are rooted in the notion of analogous participation. The vision of human nature and that of grace held by the Angelic Doctor serve as a bridge between these two areas of his theology (namely, creation and deification): humans, being created in God's image, are capable of a level of participation that goes beyond what non-rational creatures are capable of; yet, since deification is a supernatural end, that towards which the *imago Dei* is oriented is actualized only through grace and the moral and spiritual capacities it infuses into the soul. We will now proceed to an analysis of Thomas's thought on these matters, beginning with his view on the philosophical and theological parameters surrounding the concept of "participation."

Participation

In order to make sense of the Thomistic doctrine of deification, we must first understand the broad metaphysical parameters of the Thomistic worldview, and in particular the Thomistic view of creation. The Thomistic understanding of creation is defined by a specific understanding of the metaphysical relationship between God and creation. Thomas's view on the matter is one that centers on the concept of participation. He states explicitly what his view is in Question 44, Article 1 of the *Summa Theologiae* in which Aquinas deals with the doctrine of creation: "I answer that, it must be said that being in any way existing is from God.

For whatever is found in anything by way of participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially, as iron becomes ignited by fire."[18] Just as metal is hot only insofar as it participates in the heat of fire, likewise created things only have existence and the things predicated onto it insofar as they participate in that which has these things necessarily or essentially.

In a sense, the participation model of creation is shared by many Christian schools, both East and West, throughout the Patristic, Medieval, and even to some extent the modern era. The Catholic theologian Paul J. Griffiths outlines the philosophical parameters of the concept of participation in the following terms:

> Participation is therefore a peculiar relation: its virtue is to permit you to partake of (to share in) some quality or property not proper to your own nature - a quality you would not possess were you not to gain it by participation, and which comes, ideal-typically at least, from what and where you are not, as a gift.[19]

The Reformed theologian Najeeb Awad says something similar, providing more detail by adding that creatures are what they are "by virtue of being caused by God as God's creature."[20] In a word, if the ontological foundation of one's existence, goodness, virtue, or wisdom are not within oneself, it must be traced back to some source outside of the self. Put another way,

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[18] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 44, A. 1 *respondeo*, pg. 229.

[19] Paul Griffiths, "Participation," in *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar*, by Paul Griffiths (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), pg. 77.

[20] Najeeb Awad, "Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of 'Relation' and 'Participation' and Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," in *The New Blackfriars*, vol. 93, no. 1048 (November 2012), pg. 664.

when one looks at beings within what Christians would call the created realm (humans, angels, plants, animals, books, rocks, automobiles, etc.), there is a difference between the subjects in question, considered in themselves, and the qualities predicated of them. The concept of "human" and that of "existence" or "goodness" are distinct. A given human person represents a specific instantiation of goodness or existence. Insofar as there is a difference between goodness, or wisdom, or existence considered in itself and the specific instantiations of these predicates, this leads to the question of what the source of these predicates is. Insofar as these attributes are objective realities, they must have an ontological origin or foundation which allows for their existence. Such a Reality Christians call God. These perfections exist in God in a proper sense, that is, they have their origin in God, and have no existence independent of God.

Creaturely existence and all that is predicated of it is thus intrinsically derivative in nature. Created beings exist because all that they have originates in God and is shared by God to creation; the manner in which they exist is determined by the manner or extent to which God shares His Perfections with creation. The question now remains: how is it that created beings can share in the Perfections of God? Part of Thomas's answer is rooted in his view of God. For Aquinas, God is not one being among many, but rather can be described as *ipsum esse subsistens* ("being subsistent in itself"), Who transcends all the different modes of being found within creation. In this sense, Thomas is not unique, but rather is building off of certain trends found in Patristic thought. Augustine, for example, writes,

> For God is existence in a supreme degree - He supremely is - and He is therefore immutable. Hence He gave existence to the creatures He made out

> of nothing; but it was not His own supreme existence. To some He gave existence in a higher degree, to some in a lower, and thus arranged a scale of existences of various natures. … Thus, to this highest existence, from which all other things that are derive their existence, the only contrary nature is non-existence.[21]

Augustine is here asserting that God is existence "to a supreme degree." What this supreme degree of existence implies for Augustine is that it is not opposed to any other mode of being. That is to say, this "highest existence" or "supreme degree" of existence is not one category of being among many, the alternative to which is some other category of being; rather, the only thing that stands in opposition to supreme being is non-being. The highest degree of existence is not one type of existence, but rather is that from which all other modes of existence come forth.

One sees a similar view put forward in other Church Fathers. Maximos the Confessor writes that God is not "a substance, meant as unqualified or qualified substance". The term used here for "substance," in Greek, was οὐσια, a term which had a multiplicity of distinct though related meanings, including "substance," "quality or property," and "essence," and had distant etymological ties to the Greek term for "to be." As with Augustine, Maximos does not see God as being defined by a specific mode of being, but rather as that which lays the basis for all other modes of being, which is why he goes on to assert that God is a "substance-

[21] Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, chapter 3, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Group, 2003), pg. 473.

causing Reality while beyond substance".[22] God transcends all specific substances and modes of being, and even the very concept of substance itself. It is for this reason that Maximos says that God is neither a "qualified substance" (a substance whose existence is defined by certain specific ontological parameters), nor is God even an "unqualified substance" (a substance whose existence is not defined by any of the limits found in creaturely existence). Since God transcends all concepts and modes of being associated with the created realm, Maximos is therefore hesitant to apply any creaturely descriptors to God, even with the provision that within God they are without limit. The reason for this is that Maximos fears that this may lead to a vision of God wherein God is simply a larger or unbounded version of what one sees in creation. While Maximos's approach is rooted in certain trends unique in Eastern thought, which we will explore in the following chapter (see chapter 3.1), what Maximos shares in common with Augustine is the belief that God is not limited to or by any of the modes of being found in the created realm. John of Damascus, writing a century after Maximos, continues this larger trend found in both Augustine and Maximos, saying that God's Being can be seen as "comprehending all in Itself", and that, as a result, it "contains existence itself as an infinite sea of substance".[23] The Divine Substance does not fall under a specific mode, but rather is infinite, which implies, for John, that it transcends all specific categories. All specific modes of existence are, in a sense, contained within God, insofar as God is their cause.

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[22] Maximos the Confessor, *Two Hundred Chapters on Theology*, Book I, century 4, trans. by Luis Joshua Salés (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2015) pg. 45.

[23] John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, Book I, chapter 9, trans. By E.W. Watson and L. Pullan, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1899). Accessed on: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3304.htm. This text is also explicitly quoted by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiæ*, I, Q. 13, A. 11.

Aquinas's vision of God is thoroughly in line with this general trend. Aquinas, though, has an unique way of articulating this particular train of thought. For Aquinas, God is not a composite Being. God cannot, for instance, consist in the composition of act and potency, for there is no potency in God. Further, it cannot be said that God's Being includes any other distinction besides the act-potency distinction, since all distinctions presuppose some prior potency that unites the distinct parts. What is more, distinctions within a thing presuppose the existence of someone or something else outside of the subject in question that brought all the parts together, and composition includes the possibility of decomposition, both of which go against God's Nature as the eternal and unending Foundation of all being and existence. As Aquinas writes,

> Their parts [that is, the different parts of composite beings], likewise, are brought together as being in potency in respect to the union...But in God, there is no potency. Therefore, there is no composition in Him. … Every composite, furthermore, is potentially dissoluble. This arises from the nature of composition...Now, what is dissoluble can not-be. This does not fit God, since He is through Himself the necessary Being. There is, therefore, no composition in God.[24]

Further, Aquinas notes that matter is what allows for a specific instantiation of certain qualities or essences. Yet, since God is immaterial, the Divine Essence, Aquinas notes, "exists through

[24] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, chapter 18, translated by Anton C. Pegis, F.R.S.C. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pg. 103.

Itself as a singular existent and individuated through Itself".[25] A point of metaphysical nuance is necessary here: just because a being is incorporeal does not mean it is without parts. Incorporeal or spiritual substances simply lack the distinction between matter and form, as well as the sort of distinctions that concern physical existence. Aquinas notes that the absence of the matter-form distinction does not negate the existence of other distinctions within a being, including the essence-existence or act-potency distinction. This is the case, for example, with angels. Thomas, in the *Summa Theologiæ*, quotes from Ambrose of Milan, who states that the sorts of limitations that apply to physical beings do not apply to angels, who are incorporeal; yet, there are certain metaphysical (what Ambrose calls "substantial", or what Aquinas calls "essential") limits on their being. That is to say, there are certain metaphysical principles that apply to other created beings that also apply to angels.[26] Incorporeal thus does not mean without distinctions. Yet, the fact that no distinction exists between matter and form in God points towards a broader, and more radical, point for Aquinas. It is not only that God is not physical, but, more generally, there is nothing outside of God's form or essence that actualizes the essence. It is for this reason that Aquinas denies the matter-form distinction in God. It is for this same reason that Aquinas also denies the essence-existence distinction within God: God has both Essence and Existence; yet, God's Existence is not ontologically distinct from the Essence. Whatever God is, definitionally, substantially, or essentially, God's Existence is that. God's Existence is not merely a specific instantiation of that; rather, God is His own Essence. There is thus no distinction between God and His Essence, or between God and the various

[25] Ibid., Book I, chapter I, pg. 117.

[26] Ibid., S*umma Contra Gentiles*, Book 2, chapter 54, pg. 156-158; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 50, A. 1, pg. 259-260.

Qualities or Perfections predicated of Him, just as conversely there *is* a distinction between Socrates, for example, and his humanity.

This leads one to an important element of Thomistic thought: namely the doctrine of Divine simplicity. In the writings of Thomas, as well as Thomism more generally, it is asserted that the human mind speaks of the different aspects of God's Existence *as if* they were different since the created world, being finite and composite by nature, reflects the perfections of God in what some have described as a "refractory" manner.[27] It is easy to find a justification for such a belief in the words of Thomas himself, who wrote that the Perfections of God "pre-exist in God unitedly and simply, whereas in creatures they are received and multiplied and divided".[28] Peter Totleben, commenting on the Thomistic understanding of God within the context of the debates between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, notes that the different aspects of God's Existence "sound like they are properties distinct from the Essence...nonetheless, they are not really properties of the Essence when they are predicated of God".[29] This does not mean, Totleben goes on to say, that the different perfections we predicate onto God are, at base, synonymous with one another. What this means is that the different perfections predicated onto God are distinct - and, in his words, "inadequate" - ways of naming the Divine Essence, which is something so vast that it expresses itself through different distinct perfections.[30] Because of Divine Simplicity, there is no distinction between the Divine Essence and the Qualities and Perfections predicated of the Essence.

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[27] Peter Totleben, O.P., in "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis", uses such terminology, though the idea behind it is not unique to him, but rather is drawn from other Thomistic sources and from Thomas himself.

[28] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 13, A. 4 *respondeo*, pg. 63.

[29] Peter Totleben, O.P., "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis" (Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception: 2015), pg. 67.

[30] Ibid.

Finally, Aquinas argues that existence, in the case of created beings, is to essence what act is to potency, in that the concrete existence of a thing is what actualizes the essence. But since there is no potency in God, there is no need to frame God's Existence as something distinct from or outside of God's Essence as something which actualizes It.[31] Thus, God is His Own Essence, and whatever God is, is fully actualized with no admixture of potency. The reason for these claims becomes clearer when one looks at Aquinas's definition of God: God is not a particular being, but rather is *ipse essum subsistens* ("self-subsistent being" or "being subsistent in itself"). What it means for God to be "self-subsistent being" can be found by looking at Aquinas's meditation upon one of God's titles - Yahweh ("I am") - in the *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 13, A. 11. This name is a proper name of God, Aquinas argues, since "it does not signify form, but simply existence".[32] There is no one particular form that defines God; rather, God is He Who lays the basis for all other forms. It is for this reason that Aquinas notes that this name is, in fact, the most appropriate name for God. The more universal the name, the broader, more general, or vaguer it sounds, for it is less connected with specific, concrete things and pertains more to realities that transcend the particular. When the mind hears more universal terms or titles, it is less likely to think of a specific, concrete reality. Names for God that are less universal in nature tend to call to mind images which, due to being more closely tied to specific modes of being, less sufficiently describe God. Therefore, since God lays the basis for, and as a result transcends, all specific modes of being, no name is more fitting for

[31] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, I, Q. 3, A. 4, *respondeo*, pg. 17.

[32] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 13, A. 11, pg. 70.

God than that name which is the most universal in nature, that name which implies existence without implying a specific mode of existence.[33]

Aquinas's discussion here is reminiscent of, and in many ways builds off of, his discussion in the *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 3, A. 5, where Aquinas asks whether God can be classified as a part of a genus. Aquinas answers this question in the following maner: "...God is the principle of all being. Therefore He is not contained in any genus as its principle."[34] God's Being or Essence is not determined by some higher metaphysical principle associated with a particular mode of being, nor is God the ontological principle of a specific mode of being; rather, God is that which determines all other modes of being.

God is thus not determined by any reality outside of Himself, but rather is He Who is determinative of all created realities. Therefore, since created beings are not determinative of their own existences, and, as a result, do not contain the foundation of their existence within themselves, everything creation is and has is contingent on a reality more ontologically foundational than itself. The various qualities predicated of created beings thus must trace their roots back to something outside of itself. Yet this cannot be said of God, being the ontological foundation of all of reality outside of Himself. The qualities of creatures - existence, goodness, beauty, wisdom, strength - are thus traced back to God as their Source.

Such a vision of God - one in which God cannot be defined by, and in fact lays the basis for, and therefore transcends, any categories or modes of being within creation - can easily be paired with a belief in a transcendent God. Yet, the Thomistic view is also one in which creatures exist because God shares or communicates what He is or what He has with

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., I Q. 3 A. 5, pg 18.

creation. How is such self-communication reconcilable with belief in a transcendent God? Aquinas here makes use of a particular theoretical framework put forward by Augustine, though it is important to note that Aquinas nuances such a view by infusing it with elements of Aristotelian thought.

Augustine writes in his 187th Letter that God is present in His fullness to of creation. This is a metaphysical and theological necessity, since, if God were not present to something, it would not exist. Augustine can thus use rather strong language to describe the immanence of God. For example, he states that the fullness of God's Being is present to every part of creation, and goes on to describe God as "the very creative substance of the world." Yet, in describing God in such a way, he is not asserting a pantheistic worldview, but rather that God is that which creates and sustains the world in its existence. Now, that which creates and sustains, and that which is created and sustained, are distinct. God is therefore not a quality of the world. God can therefore be *present to* the world without being *a thing within* the world.[35] Thus, for Augustine, Divine transcendence and Divine immanence are not contradictory or competing concepts, but rather qualify or complement each other.

Though Aquinas does not directly quote from this particular work by Augustine, Aquinas, over the course of his writings, does articulate a similar view, and in constructing his view does directly borrow from Augustine. For Aquinas, like Augustine, God's Presence permeates every part of creation, but this is not seen as contradicting God's transcendence. Aquinas's thought on the matter can thus be seen as continuing the same train of thought first articulated by Augustine, but makes use of certain philosophical and theological concepts,

[35] St. Augustine, "Letter 187," translated by Sister Wilfrid Parsons, S.N.D., from *Letters*, vol. 4, in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), pg. 231.

particularly those borrowed from Aristotelian metaphysics, and in particular Aristotle's understanding of causality, to add a deeper level of nuance to Augustine's view. In the *De potentia*, Aquinas summarizes a passage from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*, in which he states that "nature cannot exist except through God's action, for it would fall into nothingness were it not preserved in being by the action of the Divine Power." Aquinas concludes from this teaching the following, "Therefore, nature cannot act unless God act also."[36] The larger point here is clear: the Divine Power permeates every part of creation, and that such is necessary for the created realm to exist; nonetheless, the reality that God is present to His creation does not undermine Divine transcendence.

For Aristotle, causal influence is not just something prior to and surrounding the effect, but is at work even *within* the effect. Thus, Anne Clifford, commenting on the history of the Christian view of creation, writes that for Thomas, applying such a view to the Christian understanding of creation, God is "conjoined with every being insofar as God is its causal source"[37]. Such a view can be seen in the works of Aquinas himself. More specifically, in *De potentia*, Aquinas writes, "Accordingly Divine Power must needs be present to every acting thing…Consequently we may say that God works within everything forasmuch as everything needs His Power in order to act..."[38] No created reality can exist or operate apart from the presence of the causal activity of God. Because the existence and operation of all created things is an effect of God's causal power, God's causal power is said to be present to and at

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[36] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*, Question III, Article VII, translated by the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Newman Press, 1952), accessed on https://web.archive.org/web/20180531082154/http://dhspriory.org/thomas/english/QDdePotentia.htm#3:7.

[37] Anne Clifford, "Creation," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Gavin (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), pg. 221.

[38] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*, Question III, A.

work in all things; further, because of the doctrine of Divine simplicity - at least as understood in the Thomistic tradition - wherever God's causal power is present, so too is present His Essence. Aquinas writes that God "is His own power," and therefore "wherever the power of God is there is His Essence".[39]

Nonetheless, Aquinas does not assert that the Divine Essence is present to creation in an unqualified sense. Aquinas writes, "...He [God] is in all things not as a part of their essence but as upholding them in their being."[40] That is to say, the presence of God's causal activity within created beings does not imply any identity between God and creation. Aquinas explains how this is the case in the following manner: "Everything is therefore called good from the Divine Goodness, as from the first exemplary, effective, and final principle of all goodness."[41] God creates and sustains the existence of good things outside of Himself (that is, things capable of imitating His Goodness); further, God, as the Source of all Goodness, is not a particular type of goodness, but is That from which the goodness of all other things is derived, thereby making God the Standard of goodness in other things; finally, God is that good towards which all other goods are oriented, such that in desiring other goods we ultimately desire God's Goodness.

Thus, for Aquinas, God is the efficient, final and exemplar cause of all things. Note, though, that of all the different causes posited in Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, the two which Thomas does *not* apply to God are the formal and the material. If God operates as a final, efficient and archetypal cause, God can, Thomas reasons, be present to His creation

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 6, A. 4, *respondeo*, pg. 28.

without being considered a thing *within* creation; God's act of creation, or the effects thereof, can be at work within created realities without them being considered a part of created realities. If God were the material cause of creation, then God would, in a sense, be the raw material out of which creation was made; if God were the formal cause of creation, then He would be an organizational principle within a thing that causes it to be the way it is. All of this would imply pantheism. Thomas thus concludes that creation participates in the Perfections of God by virtue of having the foundation of its perfections lie not within itself, but within Someone outside of itself (namely God) Who through His creational activity brings it into being out of nothing; further, creation participates in God by virtue of the fact that in having its perfections derived from God, it imitates God to some degree, since God, as the Source of all perfections, is the standard by which we measure such things as goodness, existence, virtue, or wisdom; and finally, creation participates in God to the extent that the more it develops its own perfections, thereby imitating God to ever greater degrees, it is drawn into deeper levels of union with God.

Therefore, God is good or exists or is virtuous or wise in a proper sense, insofar as He is the Source or Foundation of these things, and these perfections are present in creation insofar as God shares them with us, insofar as His causal power is at work within us creating and sustaining us. Yet, God's Goodness, as the Source of all goodness, or His Existence, as the Source of all existence, transcends all modes by which goodness, existence, or other perfections exist or manifest themselves within creation. God, in creating or sustaining creaturely perfections, is creating a being that reflects the Perfections of God in a specific manner or to a certain specific (and limited) degree. No created being has goodness, or existence, or wisdom, to an infinite degree, nor does any created being have existence as such,

or goodness as such, or wisdom as such, but rather a specific mode of existence, goodness or wisdom. Creaturely existence and perfections are thus analogous by nature.

Thomistic Anthropology

All of creation participates in, and therefore reflects, the Perfections of God. Yet, only rational creatures, including humans, attain by grace a level of participation in the Perfections of God which would constitute deification. The reason for this is because it is the rational creature alone which was created in the image of God. Thus, anthropology is just as important an element of any doctrine of deification as an understanding of the broad metaphysical relations between God and creation.

What precisely does it mean for rational creatures to be in the image of God? For Aquinas, the solution begins with differentiating the concept of image and that of likeness. A likeness is a sharing of certain qualities. The concept of an image, on the other hand, while similar to (and, in Aquinas's view, even presupposing) the concept of likeness, intensifies this concept. An image refers specifically to something copying or imitating an exemplar.[42]

What is it about the nature of the human person that makes us in the image of God? This was hotly debated in the early Church, but one tradition says that the *imago Dei* rests in the rationality of the human person. Origen of Alexandria, writing in the early A.D. 3rd century, writes, "For He [God] made our rational nature, which He created 'in His own image and likeness' (cf. Genesis 1:26), incorruptible, and therefore the soul, which is immortal, is not shut out by the shortness of our present life from the Divine healing and remedies."[43] What is

[42] Ibid., I, Q. 93, A. 1, respondeo, pg. 466.

[43] Origen, *On First Principles*, Book III, chapter 1, translated by G.W. Butterworth (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2013), pg. 233.

clear in such a viewpoint are three elements of the *imago Dei*: the immortality of the soul, its purity, and rationality. The soul imitates God through its purity, by which it is united to God and therefore partakes in the Life of God. Humans pursue purity through right reason. In a sense, the *imago Dei* for Origen is thought of as a state of being rather than a particular part of the soul. As Origen writes, humans are torn between contemplating our Divine Archetype, by which we are transformed so as to imitate God to a greater degree, and imitating the devil, a state defined by being guided by the passions over and against reason.[44]

Unfortunately, Origen's belief that the soul is something torn between reason and the passions, when read in light of such passages as *On First Principles* Book II chapter 2 and *On First Principles* Book I chapter 4, led to certain beliefs among those who claimed to be his disciples and ideological successors which the Church later condemned as heretical. For example, the late A.D. 4th century monk and spiritual writer Evagrius. Although quite popular during his own life (and even for several centuries afterwards, in spite of his condemnation by the Second Council of Constantinople), Evagrius suggested that all created beings, prior to the Fall, existed in a purely spiritual mode of existence. With the rise of sin, though, humans were distanced from God, and therefore experienced a decrease in the presence of Divine Love within them. One of the most explicit effects of this decrease in the presence of the Love of God was that humanity sank to a lower level of existence and took on a bodily form. The purpose of prayer and spiritual growth was to overcome bodily things, to return to that state of pure mind or pure spirit from which we fell.[45]

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[44] Origen, *Homily I on Genesis*, in *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, translated by Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), pg. 66-67.

[45] Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pg. 238-240.

Nonetheless, the general sentiment behind Origen's thought - namely the close association of the *imago Dei* with reason - would remain an integral part of Church teaching. One of Origen's contemporaries, Clement of Alexandria, wrote similarly in his *Exhortation to the Heathen*, in which he writes that since God, being incorporeal in nature, exists as pure Mind, the image of God within the human person must lie in the mind.[46] Roughly two centuries after the death of Clement, Augustine writes that in Scripture, the title of *imago Dei* is something applied only to humans of all created beings. It must therefore rest with something unique to humans. The image of God cannot rest with the body, for humans have this in common with all physical beings, nor can it rest with the soul, for this humans have in common with all other living beings. It must therefore rest with a specific part of the soul unique to humanity, and this is reason.[47]

Aquinas uses a similar line of reasoning in his treatment of the image of God in the *Summa Theologiæ*. In one objection, Aquinas's hypothetical interlocutor notes that Pseudo-Dionysius asserted that all effects are images of their cause; therefore, since all of creation was the result of God's act of creating, all of creation, not just humanity, is an image of God. Aquinas concedes that there is a broader manner of understanding the concept of "image," one that encompasses all of creation. All of creation, insofar as it was created by God, reflects the Perfections of God. Yet there is a more specific sense of the term "image" that applies to rational creatures alone. The likeness that constitutes an image in this narrower sense, as Aquinas says, "requires likeness in species." It must be more than generic or accidental. More

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[46] Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, chapter 10, translated by William Wilson, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). Accessed on: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/020810.htm.

[47] Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 84, translated by Fr. Roland J. Teske, S.J. (The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p. 185-186.

specifically, there are three things that define God: He exists, He is living, and He is rational. Only a creature whose specific mode of existence includes all of these qualities can be considered an image of God.[48]

It is *this* which gets at the heart of not only the Thomistic understanding of "image" more generanlly but also the Thomistic understanding of the *imago Dei*. There is a point of nuance that must be taken into consideration. This "likeness in species" that defines the image of God within the rational creature does not mean that God and those creatures that bear His image are the same type of being. Rather, for Aquinas there is some fundamental element of human nature that reflects, parallels or imitates the fundamental elements of Divine Nature in a fuller manner than non-rational creatures. Aquinas asserts that, in the strict sense, Jesus, Who is begotten of the Substance of the Father and therefore is consubstantial with Him, is the image of God. This concept was affirmed by many thinkers in the tradition of the Church. Clement of Alexandria writes that "the image of God is His Word," and that the human race is the "image of the Word".[49] Origen builds on this, noting that in the translation of Genesis 1:26-27 available to him, it is written that the human race was created "*according* to the image of God," which implied that the image of God was a principle outside of the human person in accordance with which the human person was created. Origen, based on the authority of such Biblical texts as Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:13, and John 14:9-10, concludes that Jesus is the Image of God. Jesus is united to the Father in an intimate manner; this is true to such a degree that the Perfections of God shine in and through Christ in such a way that He is the perfect reflection of the Father. For humans to be created in the image of God is for us to imitate

[48] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, I, Q. 93 A. 2, pg. 470.

[49] Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, chapter 10.

Christ, to partake in the Son's likeness to the Father.[50] Augustine, in his ninth sermon *de tempore*, writes similarly, comparing the image of the Father found in the Son to that of the image of a king found in his son, whereas the image of God found in the human person is compared to the image of a king on a coin. Aquinas quotes this sermon directly in the *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 93, A. 1, reply to objection 2.[51] It is on account of the fact that Aquinas makes this distinction that he makes a point of noting that in the translation of Genesis 1:26-27 used by him, it is translated "God created man *to* His image…" The term "to" here is important: it, in Aquinas's words, "represents a certain approach, as if from a distance"[52].

Humans do not share in the same essence as God, yet, through the use of reason, they are capable of imitating certain fundamental elements of the Divine Nature. Yet, Aquinas does not stop merely with saying that the image of God rests with reason or the intellect alone. Aquinas makes use of a strongly Augustinian concept that if God is Triune, so too must the image of God within the human person. Augustine puts forward various analogies for the Trinity, and in doing so shows how the *imago Dei* within the rational creature is triune in nature. Augustine first suggests the analogy of the mind, thoughts, and love. Thoughts proceed from the mind just as the Son is begotten of the Father, and just as the Son is a mirror of the Father, so too the mind's thought of itself is a mirror image of the mind. Now, a lover can only love the beloved insofar as the beloved is known by the lover. The mind, insofar as it knows itself, is capable of loving itself. Hence, from the relationship between the mind and the mind's thought of itself, the mind's love of itself comes forth, in a manner analogous to how the Holy

[50] Origen, *Homily I on Genesis*, in *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, pg. 65.

[51] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ,* I, Q. 93, A. 1, reply to objection 2, pg. 469.

[52] Ibid.

Spirit proceeds from the relationship between the Father and the Son. This analogy falls short, though, insofar as the mind is the substance from which thoughts and love proceed, whereas the Father is not the Substance of God, but rather One of the three Persons in Whom the Substance of God subsists.[53] Augustine then proposes a variant of this analogy, wherein the triune nature of the image of God is associated with three capacities *within* the mind, namely memory, thoughts, and love. Memory, in Augustinian thought, refers not merely to the ability of the mind to store information, but also to the more general principle of consciousness within the mind, which includes or lays the basis for - but is not ultimately reducible to - the ability to store information. Memory or consciousness allows for thoughts, and therefore thoughts proceed from memory in a manner similar to how the Son is begotten by the Father. When memory turns in on itself, the mind produces a thought of itself, the mind's thought of itself being analogous to how the Son mirrors the Father, being consubstantial with the Father as One coming forth from Him. The mind's love of itself results from the relationship between memory and the mind's understanding of itself that it produces, just as the Holy Spirit comes forth from the relationship between the Father and the Son.[54]

An important point to note is that Augustine, later in the *De Trinitate*, nuances this analogy further. Augustine does not identify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit merely with certain capacities in the soul, but rather with the acts that come forth from these capacities. Augustine writes, "...[F]rom the moment it [the mind] began to be, it has never stopped remembering, understanding, and loving itself, as we have already shown. And

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[53] St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book IX, chapter 1, edited by John E, Rotelle, translated by Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Books, 2015), pg. 272-274.

[54] Ibid., Book X, chapter 4, pg. 301; David Meconi, *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Catholic University of America Press, 2013), p. 41-45; Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pg. 74.

therefore when it [the mind] turns to itself by thought, a trinity is formed, in which a word too can be perceived. It is formed of course out of the very act of thought itself, with the will joining the two together."[55] As we will see in Aquinas's thought, this nuanced distinction is also found: the Son and the Holy Spirit are not associated merely with the capacity for thought or love, but with the act of knowing and loving itself.

In his treatment of the image of God, Aquinas writes, "Likewise as the Uncreated Trinity is distinguished by the Procession of the Word from the Speaker, and of Love from both of these, so we may say in rational creatures wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and the procession of love in the will, there exists an image of the Uncreated Trinity, by a certain representation of the species."[56] This presupposes a comprehension of the Thomistic vision of the Trinity. Aquinas notes that there are "two processions in God, one by way of the intellect, which is the procession of the Word, and another by way of the will, which is the procession of Love…"[57] Concerning the first procession within the Trinity, Aquinas states that the term "word" can have a multiplicity of meanings. The three relevant to this discussion refer to, firstly, the movement of the mind from a state of ignorance to a state of understanding; secondly, it may refer to the thought, idea, or mental image conceived of in the mind as a result of this metal movement; thirdly, it may refer to a sound produced in a physical sense by which we give expression to thoughts and ideas. The Son is the Word of God in the second sense of the term "word"[58] Now, the term "word" may be taken either in an essential or

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[55] Ibid., Book XIV, chapter 3, pg. 383.

[56] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I, Q. 93, A. 6 *respondeo*, pg. 473.

[57] Ibid., I, Q. 37, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 189.

[58] Ibid., I, Q. 34, A 1, *respondeo*, pg. 177-178.

in a personal sense. It is taken in an essential sense when it applies to God's act of understanding, but it is taken in a personal sense when interpreted to refer to the Son, since in this sense it refers to "that which emanates from another," namely in this case the Divine Mind.[59] When the Divine Intellect turns in on Itself, and therefore the Father knows Himself perfectly, that which emanates from the Divine Mind in the Father's act of understanding Himself is the Son, the Word. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is the Love shared between the Father and the Son; yet, this Love - like with the concept of the Word - is taken personally and not essentially, that is, it refers not merely to the ability to love, but to the actual love itself shared between the Father and the Son.[60]

With this in mind we can now better understand how Aquinas viewed the Triune nature of God being reflected in the image of God. The rational faculty within the mind produces a mental word, and when the intellectual faculty turns in on itself, it produces a thought of itself analogous to what happens when the Father begets the Son. When the mind comprehends itself, it comprehends its own goodness, and therefore loves itself; the mind's love of itself therefore is something born out of the relationship between the mind's ability to know and its thought of itself, in a manner analogous to how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the relationship between the Father and the Son.

[59] Ibid., I, Q. 34, A. 1, reply to objection 2, pg. 178.

[60] Ibid., I, Q. 37, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 189.

Grace and Deification, and the Elevation of the Image of God

Such an understanding of human nature leads to Aquinas's conclusion: "Now the intellectual nature imitates God chiefly in this, that God understands and loves Himself".[61] To know the good - to comprehend it on a rational level, that is, to do more than simply be aware of the existence or presence of some good, to desire it on the level of instinct, but rather to comprehend what makes something good, and therefore to have some understanding of the concept of goodness itself - and to love it, is what defines creatures made in God's image. The fulfillment of this image is to direct this capacity to know and to love towards the Highest Good, God. Aquinas further specifies that the image of God is perfected in the ability to know God and love God perfectly, which is possible only in the glorified state in heaven.

Yet, God is a supernatural reality, that is, a reality that transcends the created realm. Human nature is thus fundamentally oriented towards a good that transcends its ability to obtain. How can a finite reality such as the human will truly love an infinite Being such as God? How can a finite reality such as the human mind truly comprehend a transcendent Object? Therefore, an inevitable result of anthropology is soteriology, and more specifically the doctrine of grace.

Aquinas has a very specific, threefold definition of grace. Firstly, grace refers to a sense of love or favor shown by one person towards another; secondly, it refers to something which someone does or gives to another as a result of this sense of love or favor; finally, it refers to a sense of gratitude on the part of the receiver of these gifts. Grace in the first sense implies

[61] Ibid., I, Q. 93, A. 4, *respondeo*, pg. 471.

something within God alone; grace in the latter two senses implies something within the soul of the one who receives God's love or favor.[62]

God loves His creation, and expresses His love through the various gifts He bestows on them. This love is different than created love. Love is the desire for some good. Yet, the love that creatures show towards their object presupposes the existence of some good in the object of our love. A thing is good prior to or independent of our love of it, and we love it only after recognizing its goodness. But for God to desire the good of creation does not mean that God desires some pre-existent good in creation; rather, God, in willing the good of creation, brings about that good which He desires for creation. Aquinas articulates this fact in the following manner: "...[S]ince the creature's good springs from the Divine Will, some good in the creature flows from God's love, whereby He wishes the good of the creature"[63]. Yet, Aquinas makes a further distinction: grace refers not merely to God's love or the gifts He bestows more generally. As Aquinas writes, "...[A]ccording to this difference of good the love of God to the creature is looked at differently. For one is common, whereby He loves 'all things that are' (Wisdom 11:25), and thereby gives their natural being. But the second is a special love, whereby He draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good…"[64] That is to say, there is a difference between God willing some natural good for creation, and God desiring for His creation the supernatural good of union with Himself. Existence, health, wealth, intelligence, various talents and skills are all goods pertaining to the created realm; yet, God, as the creator of all things, transcends the created

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[62] Ibid., I-II, Q. 110, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 1132.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

realm, and therefore union with God also transcends the created realm. As a result, those gifts that directly pertain to our salvation are of a higher order than those gifts that pertain to this world. The love whereby God gives us those gifts pertaining to our salvation is of a higher order than that common love whereby God loves all of creation.

It is important to note here that contained within the Thomistic definition of grace is a distinction that would go on to become important to the Thomistic view, and to a great degree the Catholic view of grace more generally, namely the distinction between created and uncreated grace. In the *Summa Theologiæ* I-II, Q. 110, A. 1, Aquinas asks, "Does grace imply anything within the soul?" The answer (as stated in the previous paragraph) was that grace could refer to a sense of love or favor on the part of God towards His creatures, but could also refer to the gifts that God gives on account of this love or favor. (Aquinas, again, also notes that the Latin term for grace - *gratia* - could refer not only to a gift given, but also to a sense of gratitude within the recipient on account of receiving such a gift.) Thus, Aquinas sees the term "grace" as referring *both* to something within God as well as something within the human soul; it refers to God's love, mercy, or favor as well as the effects of that love or favor within the human person. Various Catholic theologians, particularly in the West, built on this definition to make a distinction between what is called "uncreated grace" and "created grace": God's love or favor is an uncreated reality, whereas the effects of this love or favor are a created reality; nonetheless, insofar as the term *gratia* could refer to both a sense of love or favor as well as to a gift given, both could rightfully be considered grace. Garrigou-Lagrange, in his commentary on Aquinas's treatment of grace, repeats this threefold definition of grace put forward by Aquinas, and explicitly refers to the latter two definitions of grace as a "created grace." He further goes on to specify that there are two types of created grace: those external to the soul

(such as the preaching of the Gospel or the example of Christ), and those internal to the soul (that whereby the soul is sanctified, or the charismatic gifts).[65] Charles Journet writes similarly, saying, "The *uncreated divine grace*, the uncreated Divine favor, causes in us *created graces*, created gifts and benefits, for which we render acts of thanksgiving."[66] In a word, the dispositions within the human soul infused into the soul by grace are a reality created by God.

Daria Spezzano, commenting on the Thomistic view on deification, notes that God, in His grace, transforms or renews the human person. The infused virtues therefore become actual inherent qualities of the graced soul. The Divine Love, Favor or Mercy is itself an uncreated reality, but this Love, Favor or Mercy causes within man the infused virtues. The attempt on the part of some theologians to undermine the distinction between created and uncreated grace in the thought of Aquinas, mainly for ecumenical purposes (i.e., the attempt to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western Christian thought), undermines the reality that deification is a participated likeness on the part of the creature in the Perfections of God, God making the created being a sharer or partaker in the things of the Divine.[67]

Thus, for Thomas, there are certain expressions of the Divine Love that purify and elevate the human condition. Most importantly for the Thomistic view of grace, understood in such terms, is the fact that he describes the final end or purpose of the giving of grace as the human person being made a partaker in the things of God. Aquinas describes this supernatural end as God "drawing the rational creature above its natural condition." Here we see an almost

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[65] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, Q. 104-114*, trans. by the Dominican nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1952), pg. 5.

[66] Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, translated by A.V. Littledale (Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 1996), pg. 17.

[67] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria: Sapientia Press, 2015), pg. 362-364

paradoxical concept: union with God includes the human person knowing and loving God as God knows and loves Himself, and, in knowing and loving Himself, knowing and loving His creation. This end is, again, supernatural, that is, it transcends the created realm. The rational creature would be rendered incapable of this supernatural elevation were it not for the fact that it had a rational nature, for the rational creature alone has an intellect and a will, and therefore the capacity to know and to love. Yet, natural faculties can only be ordered towards natural ends. What this means is that the human desire to know can only be satisfied in God; the same is true with the human desire for goodness (something part and parcel of the Thomistic definition of love). Human existence is thus oriented towards an end that transcends the proportion of its nature. Bernard Lonergan, commenting on the thought of Aquinas, summarizes this paradoxical view: the human mind desires to know the sum total of all of reality, which includes a knowledge of God; and, more precisely, it is in God that the human desire for knowledge is fulfilled.[68] Now, while there are some truths about God which the human mind can understand by its own power, there are others which transcend the capacity of the human mind to understand. Lonergan's understanding is summarized by J. Michael Stebbins in the following manner: "Consequently, although by the natural powers of the intellect one can attain the concepts of God as the cause of being, as one, as perfect, as good, etc., there is no naturally attainable concept of God *ut in se est*."[69] The human mind can know that God exists, and can comprehend some of the qualities of God, but can never directly comprehend God as He is in Himself. The human person thus has "a natural desire to know

[68] J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative, Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pg. 173.

[69] Ibid.

God," which is ultimately a desire to attain "a concept of God *ut in se est*," yet such a knowledge can only be attained "through the light of Glory in the beatific vision".[70]

Lonergan believed that the human person had, by nature, a desire for a type of knowledge which they could not attain by their own powers. Lonergan and his ideological heirs represent but one, very specific strand of Thomism, one voice or set of voices among many within the Thomist tradition. In particular, in the middle of the twentieth century, one hotly debated theological question was how one can affirm that the human person has a natural desire to see God: what was at stake was that if the human person had no natural desire to see God, this would seem to deny that human nature is fundamentally ordered towards the end of union with God; yet, if the human person did have an inherent or natural desire to see God, this would seem to undermine the supernatural and grace-infused nature of faith and the beatific vision. Lonergan's solution, one that he shared with other Scholastics of his time - that of the obediential potency - was just one of many.[71] The merits of his answer, or how consistent it is with the original thought of Thomas and the other Medieval Scholastics, are not what is being analyzed. The important point to keep in mind is how Lonergan articulates the paradox of Thomistic soteriology: that human nature is, by definition, ordered towards an end which it cannot bring about by its own nature.

One view within 20th century Neo-Scholasticism that was contemporaneous with that of Lonergan is the thought of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, who, in his commentary on Aquinas's treatise on grace, writes the following concerning Question 109, Article 2 in specific: "...[C]ertain truths are articles of faith. 1. It is of faith that not all the works of infidels

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., pg. 142, 144-157

or sinners are sins...2. It is of faith that supernatural good cannot be effected by fallen man without grace."[72] The fact that the human race is fallen does not do away with its ability to do good on a natural level; nonetheless, the human race, after the fall, is deprived of grace, and therefore lacks the capacity for supernatural acts of goodness, whereby we order our lives towards the end of union with God.

What has remained consistent within the Thomistic tradition throughout the past eight centuries is the notion that there is a certain knowledge and a certain type of moral striving which is impossible for man apart from grace; but this supernatural knowledge and supernatural virtue is intimately tied with our final end. Human nature thus cannot bring about its own fulfillment. As Aquinas writes:

> I answer that, imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers...But man's perfect happiness, as stated above, consists in the vision of the Divine Essence. Now the vision of God's Essence surpasses the nature not only of man, but of every creature…[73]

Human nature is oriented towards a specific end, it exists for a specific purpose, and it is in the attaining of this end that the human person experiences true happiness and fulfillment. Yet the end proper to human nature cannot be fulfilled by any capacity or power within human nature. And this is what defines grace: grace is that which elevates and transforms human nature, that

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[72] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, Ia IIae, Q. 109-119*, pg. 52

[73] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, I-II, Q. 5, A. 5, *respondeo*, pg. 612.

which takes what defines human nature - our capacity to know and to love - and orders it towards the supernatural end of union with God. Aquinas can therefore, on the basis of this, conclude that grace, and the growth in wisdom and holiness that it brings about, can be defined in terms of a participation in the Divine Nature. The infused virtues, which are granted to us by grace, "dispose man...towards a higher end, and consequently in relation to a higher nature, i.e., in relation to a participation in the Divine Nature."[74]

We see this with regard to the assent of faith. In the Thomistic understanding, every act of comprehension is a movement of the mind from potency to act. Certain truths can be understood by the mind by its own power, including certain truths about God, such as that He exists or that He is One. Other truths about God, such as the Trinity, cannot be known by reason. God must therefore move the mind in a manner that goes beyond its natural capacity, so that it can comprehend a higher set of truths. God by His grace moving the human mind in such a way that it can comprehend a higher set of truths that go beyond its normal capacity to understand is identified by Aquinas with the light of faith.[75]

Aquinas makes a similar argument with regard to the moral life more generally. Aquinas makes a distinction between the natural virtues and the supernatural (or theological) virtues. The natural virtues stem from the capacity for goodness inherent to or resulting from human nature as such. The natural moral capacities inherent to the human person allow the human person to attain certain goods within the created realm, but do not allow man to strive towards goods that transcend the created realm. Aquinas articulates this truth in the following terms: "...[M]an by his natural endowments could wish or do the good proportionate to his

[74] Ibid., I-II, Q. 110, A. 5, *respondeo*, pg. 1134

[75] Ibid., I-II, Q. 109, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 1123.

nature, such as the good of acquired virtue; but not surpassing good, such as the good of infused virtue."[76] In order for man to order or arrange his life towards the supernatural end of union with God, it is necessary for there to be a moral capacity added to the human soul which transcends our natural moral capacity. Such are the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which the human person does not and cannot obtain by its own moral striving (though it is possible to deepen or harness these virtues once they are granted by God); rather, the fact that the soul has the ability to exhibit these virtues is a result of Divine grace infusing them into the soul. It is for this reason that Aquinas also states that it is impossible for the human person to merit eternal life apart from grace, for no natural capacity can merit a supernatural end.[77] Grace is necessary not only for the elevating of human nature, but also for its healing. As a result of the Fall, humanity not only lost grace, but saw the corrupting of its nature. The corruption of human nature weakened or limited the human capacity to pursue the natural virtues. Grace is thus necessary for both the healing or renewing of the natural moral capacities of the human person as well as the infusing of the supernatural or theological virtues.[78]

None of this implies that human nature lacks any ability to love or desire the supernatural. Since the human person has a natural capacity to know that God exists, and that God is the Source or Creator of all things, we can comprehend God as the Highest Good; we can also comprehend that a thing is deserving of love to the extent that it is good; therefore, humanity, by its own power, can love God as the Highest Good. Yet, apart from grace, it is impossible for man to love God "as the giver of beatitude" within the context of "fellowship

[76] Ibid., I-II, Q. 109, A. 2, *respondeo*, pg. 1124

[77] Ibid., I-II, Q. 109, A. 5, *respondeo*, pg. 1127

[78] Ibid.

with God".[79] For humans to recognize that God and God alone is the provider of true happiness and ultimate fulfillment, and further, that this happiness from God is possible only within the context of friendship with God, is possible only as a result of grace. Thus, it is not the act of loving or knowing God, in and of itself, that is infused into the soul, but the mode by which we know or love.

This is the leitmotif of Thomistic soteriology: partly because of the finite nature of the human person, and partly because of human sinfulness and the alienation from God this causes, fellowship with God is naturally impossible. But, based on the authority of 1 Corinthians 1:9 - "God is faithful, and by Him you were called to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" - this is exactly what is established by grace: a created reality can enter into union with an Uncreated Reality, with the Source of all reality. This union has a strong moral element to it, for it includes specifically the nature of friendship. Aquinas identifies friendship as a species of love rooted in benevolence and mutuality. God, out of a sense of love for the human race, communicates Himself to the human person through grace, which enables the recipient of His grace to reciprocate this love. Grace bestows onto the soul charity, and charity establishes friendship between God and humanity. Friendship between us and God is thus rooted in the self-communication of God to humanity - which is the cause of the perfecting of the image of God within the human person.[80] Grace, and especially the gift of charity it bestows, is also identified by Aquinas as that whereby humankind is deified. Aquinas articulates the link between grace and deification in the following manner: "...[G]race is nothing else than a participated likeness of the Divine Nature, according to 2 Peter 1:4, 'He hath given us most

[79] Ibid., I-II, Q. 109, A. 3, reply to objection 1, pg. 1125

[80] Ibid., II-II, Q. 23, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 1263.

great and precious promises; that we may be partakers of the Divine Nature.'"[81] For Aquinas, to the extent that a thing participates in the Divine Nature, it is united to the Divine Nature, and to the extent that creatures participate in (and are therefore united to) the Divine Nature, they are likened to It. The spiritual life is therefore a process of increasing our likeness to God. Such a point is emphasized in Spezzano's commentary on the Thomistic understanding of deification: the spiritual life, in Thomistic thought, is a process of "progression in the perfection of the Divine image" which "culminates in deiformity."[82] Spezzano further writes, "The rational creature predestined for eternal life is on a journey of transformation toward the beatific vision, which takes place by increasing participation in the Divine likeness, beginning from its creation with a nature that shares in the light of the Divine intellect."[83] That is to say, human nature is oriented towards the end of the beatific vision. While striving towards this end, the image of God within the human person becomes more and more perfect, until it finally reaches perfect likeness to God. In this, God perfects what is started in creation: humans, by virtue of what they are as creatures created in the *imago Dei*, imitate and participate in the Divine Nature in a manner that surpasses that of non-rational creatures. In the glorified state (which is the culmination of deification), the human person is united to God in such a manner that it shares in the Divine Nature to a greater degree than it does now. Even though such a participation presupposes a rational nature capable of knowing and loving God, the actualization of such an end is something brought about by grace.

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[81] Ibid., III, Q. 62, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 2350.

[82] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas*, pg. 103.

[83] Ibid.

Garrigou-Lagrange expounds this point more explicitly: "In the natural order, a stone has an analogical likeness to God inasmuch as He is being, the plant inasmuch as He is living, man and angel inasmuch as He is intelligence. Sanctifying grace, which is far superior to the angelic nature, is an analogical likeness to God inasmuch as He is God, or to His Deity, to His intimate life…"[84] Garrigou-Lagrange notes that one could respond to such a vision of deification by saying that if such a state was innate to the human person, then this would imply an indefinite number of hypostases added to the Trinity, for we would be partaking in the Divine Essence in the same manner that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit do. Yet, he further notes that in Thomistic theology, deification goes hand-in-hand with the notion of adopted sonship. Created existence results from the communication of Divine Goodness and the other Perfections of God; likewise, in Thomistic theology, adopted sonship results from humanity, by grace, having a share in the Sonship of Jesus. The Glory which Jesus has by virtue of being the Only-Begotten Son humanity partakes in, because humanity is united to and conformed to Christ. This union with and conformity to Christ is something caused by the Father, Who accomplishes it through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through grace, humanity is conformed to the Sonship of Christ. A major difference is that the Sonship of Christ is caused by the Father as a Cause consubstantial with the effect; God causes us to be sons of God and partakers in the Divine as an efficient and material cause, but as a cause which still infinitely transcends, and therefore can never be consubstantial with, creation.[85]

What is more, not only is man perfectly united and conformed to God, but deification also presupposes an element of friendship as well. The deified soul is conformed to God in the

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[84] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: A Commentary on the Summa theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14*, pg. 403

[85] Ibid., pg. 403-405

act of knowing and loving God. Yet, it is in knowing and loving the other that we enter into friendship with God. Grace, in bestowing onto the soul the capacity to know and love God, also established friendship between us and Himself. Through friendship with God, we receive the Love of God in such a way that the human person, under the influence of this Love, is enabled to imitate and reciprocate this Love to the greatest extent that a created being is capable. Hand-in-hand with the love of God is a knowledge of God, for love is impossible without a knowledge of the object of our love. Thus, friendship with God also includes a perfection of our knowledge and charity. The more we grow in the love and knowledge of God, the more we grow in the other moral and spiritual perfections. It is this which is central to the Thomistic understanding of deification.

Finally, the vision of deification as including a union with God, a union whereby the deified soul attains a perfect likeness to God and therefore an increased participation in the Perfections of God, also leads to the final major element of deification in Thomistic thought: namely, the notion of deification as including adopted sonship. As Aquinas notes, when one adopts another as a son or daughter, they "admit...him as heir of his estate." Since God is good, it makes sense that He would give us His blessings, thereby making us a partaker of good things. Now, God gives special blessings to the rational soul, namely those associated with eternal salvation, since rational creatures are "made to the image of God, [and therefore] are capable of Divine beatitude." By creating us in such a way so that we are capable of Divine beatitude, and by drawing us back to such an end after we had fallen, God makes us partakers of His estate, that is, partakers of the things unique to God, namely the enjoyment of the Goodness of God.[86] There is a strong Christological element to this as well: Jesus, as the Only-

[86] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, III, Q. 23, A. 1, *respondeo*, pg. 2141

Begotten Son of God, is the heir to the Kingdom of the Father. By becoming human, Jesus unites the things of God and the things of creation. By grace, we are united to and conformed to Jesus, and thus, Thomas, based on the words of Romans 8:17 and Romans 8:29, can claim that we become coheirs with Christ.[87]

[87] Ibid., III, Q. 3, A. 8, *respondeo*, pg. 2044

CHAPTER 3:

THE PALAMITE UNDERSTANDING OF DEIFICATION

Now that we have analyzed the thought of one of the giants of the Medieval Latin tradition, we turn to a thinker of similar stature from the same period of the Greek tradition, namely Gregory Palamas. One major theme in Gregory Palamas's theology was the Essence-Energies distinction. Originally formulated within the context of a very specific debate - namely on how to reconcile the transcendence and immanence of God - the Essence-Energies distinction came to bear greatly not only on the Palamite vision of God and His relation to creation, but also his view of grace, mysticism, and, ultimately deification. This creates a very specific vision of how man is deified. The Palamite vision therefore differs greatly from that of the Thomistic vision, and the points they do have in common are articulated in different manners, as they are nested within the context of different metaphysical and theological systems.

Palamas, Participation, and the Essence-Energies Distinction

We now proceed to our analysis of Gregory Palamas. A near contemporary of Aquinas, born a mere 22 years after Aquinas's death, Palamas occupies a stature within the Byzantine tradition of similar import to that of Aquinas within the Latin tradition. One key difference, though, was that Palamas, in spite of his status as a man of noble origins, and the fact that he received one of the best educations available to one in the late Byzantine period, was not

primarily a scholar or a preacher. Aquinas, being both a professor at the University of Paris and a member of a religious order which had as its charism preaching (and the founding of which was inspired by the desire to counteract various heresies which were emerging throughout Europe during the Medieval period), dedicated most of his career to responding to various heresies, both past and present, and synthesizing the various sources of Christian doctrine into a singular, overarching system of thought. Palamas did the same for his tradition, but his motives were different. Palamas was inspired by a series of very specific theological debates the extent of which rattled the very foundations of the Byzantine church. Palamas was brought into these debates quite unintentionally, not as a result of some larger ecclesial, pastoral or academic project.

After abandoning the aristocratic life at the age of 20 to pursue the monastic life, Palamas spent most of his early career as a monk on Mount Athos, and later a hermit (with his monastic life being only temporarily interrupted by the Turkish invasion of Mount Athos, during which time Palamas and some of his fellow monks fled to establish a monastic community in northern Greece). Yet Palamas was forced into the arena of public theological discourse as a result of certain theological controversies which had been developing under the surface for quite some time. During the Fourth Crusade in the 13th century and the subsequent establishment of the Empire of Constantinople by the Latins, Catholic missionaries were sent to the territories once ruled by the Byzantine Empire. These missionary activities were led in particular by the Dominicans, who established two provinces for the Dominican order, one in Greece, the other in Jerusalem. In 1261, the Latin ruler Baldwin II was overthrown and the Byzantine Empire was reestablished. Yet, starting roughly three quarters of a century later, there emerged an increased political amiability between the Byzantine Empire and various

Western European powers, as well as an increased interest within the Byzantine church in restoring union with Rome. This resulted in Pope John XXII consecrating two Dominican friars - Francesco de Camerino and Richard of England - to the status of bishop with the task of meeting with the Byzantine Emperor and negotiating a union between the Latin and Byzantine churches. In 1334, Francesco and Richard appeared before John Kalakas, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and presented him with a text defending the use of the *filioque* clause in the Latin translation of the Creed. Yet, such texts were rejected by the Orthodox, who did not see their rejection of the *filioque* as something open to debate.[88]

In response to Franceso and Richard, the Italian-born Constantinopolitan monk and professor Barlaam of Calabria delivered a lecture against the use of the *filioque*, and shortly thereafter wrote a series of treatises against what he saw as the various heresies of the West. In this latter work - titled simply *Anti-Latin Treatises* - Barlaam used fairly standard theological argumentation, stating an opinion, followed by a series of quotes from various Biblical, Patristic, and Magisterial sources in support of his position. Yet, in his fifth treatise, Barlaam used a more philosophical approach, attempting to demonstrate his position through a series of deductive arguments. In the year following the publication of this text, Palamas - who at the time was still living as a monk - received a copy of the fifth treatise, and became disconcerted by the epistemology he saw as implicit to Barlaam's works. Even though some scholars assert that Palamas was responding to an oversimplified version Barlaam's arguments, taking them out of their original context, the parameters of the debate quickly became framed in very specific terms: Barlaam's theology came to be presented as rooted in a vision in which Divine Revelation was seen as a series of Divinely revealed premises from which we draw certain

[88] John Meyendorff, "Introduction," in *The Triads*, by Gregory Palamas (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983), pg. 5-6; Peter Totleben, "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis," pg. 25-26

conclusions. The larger epistemic framework was that to demonstrate a claim was to show its rational coherence via a process of logical deduction, and knowledge was to assent to such a rationally coherent statement. Palamas, on the other hand, saw the demonstration of a point as something that included absolute certainty, and knowledge as - in the words of Peter Totleben - "an intuitive grasp" of a particular reality. Palamas thus believed that it was necessary to balance the logical with the experiential, believing that the direct encounter with God was central to the Christian life.[89]

Such a view was in turn rooted in the context of Palamas's spiritual formation: Palamas's spirituality was shaped by the hesychastic method of prayer. The hesychastic method of prayer traces its roots to the teachings of various spiritual writers from the Patristic and early Medieval period, and which was undergoing a period of renewed popularity among the various monastic circles of Mount Athos (though the monks who practiced this method of prayer were known for their missionary mindset, promoting this method of prayer beyond the confines of the monastery, so much so that it became popular even within the urban centers of the Byzantine world). In the hesychast method of prayer, one would focus on their breathing as a way to sharpen their concentration and get rid of any distracting or even sinful thoughts. While doing so, they would continually recite various short prayers, including and especially the Jesus Prayer, which were meant to direct the focus of one's mind towards God. Some of the monks who practiced this form of prayer claimed to have experienced the presence of God in their lives in a particularly immanent manner, seeing the Glory of God appear to them in a bright light. Barlaam, in his debates with Palamas, began to investigate his opponent's spiritual formation, including the various spiritual influences on his thought; in doing so, he discovered

[89] Meyendorff, "Introduction," pg. 6; Totleben, "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis," pg. 27-28

this method of prayer, and accused the proponents of hesychasm of being supporters of Messalianism. This late Antique heresy, of which we know very little today, claimed, among other things, that it was possible to physically perceive the Essence of God with the bodily eyes[90].

Thus, what started off as a debate on epistemology and theological methodology quickly evolved into a debate over the validity and orthodoxy of hesychasm. Palamas, while never claiming to defend the specific mystical experiences of specific monks who took part in this form of prayer, nor claiming to have ever had these mystical experiences himself, sought rather to create an intellectual framework within which to show that the hesychastic method of prayer was not theologically problematic as its opponents claimed. In particular, Palamas wanted to demonstrate how it was possible for the human person to have an intimate experience of God - in the sense of the mind being able to directly perceive the Light of God's Glory, however faintly - while also affirming the transcendence of God. He did so through the Essence-Energies distinction. This doctrine states that the Essence of God is ontologically distinct from the Energies of God (that is, His operations or actions); the Essence and the Energies of God represent two distinct parts of God's Existence. The Energies of God are what allows a transcendent God to interact with His creation.

What we see in this doctrine is a particular expression of a larger train of thought: there are certain things that can be said of God, but God, when considered in Himself, infinitely transcends anything that can be said of Him. In the quote from Maximos mentioned in chapter 2.1 of this paper, it is stated that God transcends even the notion of substance itself, even the

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[90] Meyendorff, "Introduction," in the *Triads*, pg. 3-4, 9; Totleben, "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis," pg. 7-8; Gregory Palamas, *Triads* I.2.7-9, pg. 45-48; *Triads*, II.2.8, 12, pg. 50, 51-52.

notion of infinite or unbounded substance. To think of God in terms of anything found in the created realm, even as an infinite or unbounded version of that thing, is to limit God somehow. Maximos himself states this in a very direct manner: the virtues are "qualities appertaining essentially to God"[91], and yet "God infinitely transcends these participable virtues an infinite number of times".[92] As with Aquinas in the West, Maximos sees the virtues as predicated onto God in a proper sense; nonetheless, the core of God's Being infinitely transcends even the concept of virtue. Such a view has been passed down in the liturgical tradition of the Byzantine church: in the Anaphora of John Chrysostom, the priest says, "…for Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever existing and eternally the same…"[93]

None of this implies, for those within the Byzantine tradition, that theological discussions about God are frivolous or impossible. The larger view is that God is so utterly transcendent that any way of describing or speaking of God, however accurate or true, is by definition insufficient. This, though, seems to negate the closeness of God or the ability of God to manifest Himself to His creation. Pseudo-Dionysius writes,

> In the Scriptures the Deity has benevolently taught us that understanding and direct contemplation of Itself is inaccessible to beings, since it surpasses being. Many of the Scripture writers tell us that the Divinity is not only invisible [cf. Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17, Hebrews 11:27],

[91] St. Maximos the Confessor, *Gnostic Chapters*, chapter 48, quoted by Gregory Palamas in *Triads* III.2.5, pg. 95.

[92] St. Maximos the Confessor, *Gnostic Chapters*, chapter 49, quoted by Gregory Palamas in *Triads* III.2.5, pg. 95.

[93] *Service Book of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church according to the use of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*, tenth edition (Englewood: The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 1997), pg. 122.

> but also 'unsearchable and inscrutable' [cf. Romans 11:33]...And yet, on the other hand, the Good is not incommunicable to everything.[94]

God is so utterly transcendent that He is beyond even the concept of being itself, and is therefore in Himself incomprehensible to His creation. The French scholar H.-F. Dondaine describes the Dionysian view in the following manner: "The entire work of Dionysius forcefully inculcates the absolute transcendence of God. In its super-essential essence, beyond light and darkness, beyond being, God is unknowable; it would be folly for the creature to aspire to the secrets of God."[95] Nonetheless, Divine transcendence does not render God incommunicable to His creatures. What Divine transcendence rules out is the possibility of the creature comprehending God or ascending to God by its own power; it does not rule out the possibility of God manifesting Himself to His creation.

There are thus two general trends that define Byzantine spirituality and theology in this area: 1) a very high view of Divine transcendence, which in turn led to the belief that the Essence of God infinitely transcends anything predicated of Him; 2) the belief that such a high view of Divine transcendence is not in any way in conflict with the belief that God can and does communicate Himself to His creation. These theological tendencies undergird Palamas's defense of hesychasm, and are expressed particularly in his doctrine of the Essence-Energies distinction.

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[94] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* I.2, in *The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), translated by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, pg. 50.

[95] H.-F. Dondaine, "L'objet et le 'medium' de la vision béatifique chez les théologiens du XIII e siècle," in *Researches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, vol. 19 (January-June 1952), pg. 63.

In order to understand the Essence-Energies distinction, we must first define the relevant terminology. The essence of a thing is what a thing is. The term "energy" is derived from the Greek term *energeia*, meaning "action" or "operation." The energy of a thing refers to the operations unique to a particular essence, though what Palamas says about the operations of God he says also about the Qualities or Perfections of God more generally. For example, Palamas writes in his *Capita* 150, "The Supreme Intellect, the uttermost Good, the Nature which transcends life and divinity, being entirely incapable of admitting opposites in any way, clearly possesses goodness not as a quality but as essence. … [T]he Supreme Intellect both is that good and surpasses goodness."[96] God can never be anything other than good, since God is not one specific type of good, but rather is the Source of goodness. Goodness is therefore something which God is definitionally, essentially, and formally. Nonetheless, the Divine Essence transcends even the concept of goodness, as He transcends anything predicated of Him. Totleben notes that *this* is the major difference between Thomistic and Palamite thought: whereas for Thomas the Qualities or Perfections of God are different ways of describing the Divine Essence, for Palamas there is a difference between that which is predicated and The One on Whom we predicate it.[97]

Palamas, in a word, believed that there was a real ontological distinction between the Essence of God and the Energies originating from or the Qualities associated with It. Palamas says as much in Book III of the *Triads*: "Nonetheless, there is only one unoriginate Essence, the Essence of God; none of the Powers that inhere in it is *an* essence, so that all necessarily

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[96] Gregory Palamas, *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 34, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber), pg. 359.

[97] Totleben, "The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis," pg. 67-68.

and always are *in* the Essence."[98] (emphasis added). The Energies of God are in a sense *contained within* the Essence; yet, that which contains and that which is contained are distinct. The 20th century theologian Georges Florovksy argues that one of the reasons why this is the case is that Palamas sees a distinction between being and acting. He writes: "These two dimensions, that of being and that of acting, are different, and must be clearly distinguished. Of course, this distinction in no way compromises the 'Divine simplicity.' Yet this is a real distinction, and not just a logical device."[99] Being and acting represent two elements of existence that are, in a real ontological sense, distinct. The difference is not merely a conceptual or logical one.

Florovsky briefly alludes to a point which is also pivotal to the Palamite position, but which has also been the source of much controversy. In spite of the fact that Palamas believes that there is a real distinction within God between His Essence and His Energies, he also affirmed the doctrine of Divine simplicity, and did not see the doctrine of Divine simplicity and the Essence-Energies distinction as being in any way contradictory. In order to understand this point, we must first understand another nuanced element of Gregory's thought: Palamas did not accept what some theologians and commentators have called "absolute Divine simplicity," that is, that there are no distinctions within God at all. Palamas is a realist: he believes that anything that implies a distinction has an extra-mental correlate. Goodness, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and all of the other Actions and Perfections of God are therefore truly distinct. Yet, Palamas believes that the Essence of God is simple, that is, without parts. If the Essence of God is truly simple, it must be distinct from the Perfections and

[98] Palamas, *The Triads* III.2.5, pg. 93.

[99] Georges Florovsky, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers," in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 1 (*Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*), pg. 119.

Energies of God, for if the Essence of God is not distinct from the Energies of God, and the Energies of God are plural, this would introduce distinctions into the Divine Essence. As Palamas expresses it:

> But since God is entirely present in each of the Divine Energies, we name Him from each of them, although it is clear that He transcends all of them. For, given the multitude of Divine Energies, how could God subsist entirely in each without any division at all; and how could each provide Him with a name and manifest Him entirely, thanks to indivisible and supernatural simplicity, if He did not transcend all these Energies?[100]

For Palamas, God is present in each of the Divine Energies as things proper to His being. Yet, God (or, more specifically, His Essence) cannot be reduced to His Energies; otherwise, if the Divine Essence was reducible to His Energies, there would be distinctions within the Divine Essence, which Palamas sees as running counter to the Christian conception of God.

Amidst the various theological and philosophical reasons for affirming the Essence-Energies distinction, the one most central to Palamas's thought, and most relevant to his defense of hesychasm, was to balance Divine transcendence and Divine immanence, to find a way to make sense of how a transcendent God can be near to His creation. The Divine Essence is transcendent, which implies that it is incomprehensible and, further, that it is beyond all contact with creation. Yet Scripture makes it clear that God does in fact directly interact with and make Himself known to His creation. If the Divine Essence is transcendent, there must be

[100] Palamas, *Triads*, III.2.7, pg. 95-96.

some aspect of God's Existence distinct from the Essence whereby God interacts with His creation. Such are the Divine Energies. Since the Divine Energies are rooted in or come forth from the Essence of God, they are truly Divine, and therefore when encountering the Divine Energies we are truly encountering God; yet, since the Divine Energies are distinct from the Essence, there is no necessity that they be transcendent in nature.

Such a view is implicit in Palamas's treatment of God's act of creation. He writes, in *Capita* 150, "If the Divine Essence does not in any respect differ from the Divine Energy, then the act of generation and of procession will in no respect differ from the act of creating."[101] Both creation and the procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father include a certain coming forth from God. Yet creation - a Divine Energy - is something that takes place outside of the Divine Essence, whereas the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit is something takes place *within* the Divine Essence. Palamas is thus distinguishing between that which takes place within or directly pertains to the Essence and that whereby the God extends beyond Itself and interacts with creation.

The distinction between the Divine Essence and the Divine Energies is thus a distinction between God as He is in Himself and that whereby He extends beyond Himself and interacts directly with His creation. Palamas applies this to the hesychast controversy when he says, "This light is not the Essence of God, for that is inaccessible and incommunicable; it is not an angel, for it bears the marks of the Master."[102] The light which the practitioners of hesychasm claimed to see while praying is not the Divine Essence, for the Divine Essence, being transcendent, is incomprehensible and incommunicable. And yet, it must be Divine in

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[101] Gregory Palamas, *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 97, in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pg. 392.

[102] Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II.3.8, pg. 57.

nature, and not a created reality, since it has all the marks of something Divine. If the Divine Essence is truly transcendent, any experience of the Divine must be of some part of God's existence outside of the Essence.

This leads to an interesting metaphysical point. Palamas, like Aquinas, accepts a participationist model of creation. Yet, Palamas and Aquinas have radically different manners in which they express such a vision of creation. For Palamas, God is Good, Wise, or Virtuous in a proper sense, and creatures are good, wise, or virtuous insofar as they participate in the Perfections or Qualities of God. But, since the Qualities or Perfections of God are distinct from the Essence, which is utterly transcendent in relation to creation, what the human person participates in is not the Divine Essence Itself. Further, God's creative activity, whereby God establishes the created realm and shares His Perfections with them, is an Energy of God. Now, in creating, God establishes a direct point of contact between Himself and creation, and becomes present to His creation. If the Divine Essence is transcendent in nature, there can be no point of contact between God's Essence and creation. Therefore, that whereby God creates and sustains our existence cannot be the Essence of God. Palamas affirms that creaturely existence is a participation in the things of God, but denies that this includes any participation in the Essence of God Itself.

Such a view is rooted in an important theme in Palamite theology, and, more specifically, a metaphysical presupposition that underlies Palamas's thought. For Palamas, to participate in a particular essence is to be in possession of that essence. To participate in the human essence, for example is to be human. Keeping in mind this line of reasoning, to participate in the Divine Essence would make us Divine. Palamas explicitly says as much in the *Capita 150*, "Further, that which participates in something according to its essence must

necessarily possess a common essence with that in which it participates and be identical to it in some respect. But who has ever heard that God and we possess in some respect the same essence? St. Basil the Great says, 'The Energies of God come down, but the Essence remains inaccessible.'"[103] The solution, given such a metaphysical worldview, is to say that there is something distinct from the Divine Essence whereby God establishes union with His creation. No created thing can partake in the Divine Essence, but we can be partakers in the Divine Energies.

There is some controversy, even within Eastern Orthodox circles, concerning the proper interpretation of this element of Palamas's thought. In particular, one controversy is historical in nature: how the thought of Palamas relates to similar views held by Maximos the Confessor, the Church Father who arguably had the most influence on Palamas's thought. Maximos' answer to the question of how created beings participate in the Perfections of God lies in his doctrine of the *logoi*. The doctrine of the *logoi* was seen by Maximos as an inevitable consequence of the larger Christian doctrine of creation more generally considered. If the world has a specific order to it, and the Cause of this order is, as Christians believe, more than simply a vague, impersonal force, but rather has an Intellect and a Will, then this order must have somehow existed within God from all of eternity. Maximos provides an in-depth analysis of what this means in his *Ambigua to John*: "[I]t was *with reason* and wisdom that God brought things *into existence* out of nothing…From all of eternity, He contained within Himself the preexisting logoi of created beings. When, in His goodwill, He formed out of nothing the

[103] Ibid., *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 70, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 397

substance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so on the basis of these logoi."[104] Maximos also quotes directly from Pseudo-Dionysius, who defines the *logoi* as "Divine Wills" and "predeterminations".[105] The *logoi* are ideas within the Divine Mind, or intentions within God, concerning how God wanted to create each type of thing. As Andrew Louth explains, "[T]hey are principles in accordance with which everything in the cosmos was created through the Word of God, the *Logos*."[106] They are, to use the terminology of Lars Thunberg, "the presence of the Divine Intention and principle of every single nature and species".[107]

Palamas's theology of the Divine Energies and their relation to the Divine Essence bears many similarities to Maximos's view of the relation of the *logoi* to the Divine Essence, since Maximos claimed that the *logoi* are multiple and distinct from the Divine Essemce. Thunberg notes how there are some theologians within the Orthodox tradition, such as John Meyendorff, who claim that Maximos's doctrine of the *logoi* can be interpreted in a Palamite manner, and therefore Maximos's theology was a historical prelude to that of Palamas; others, such as Vladimir Lossky, assert that the concept of the *logoi* is simply another term for the uncreated Energies of God, and therefore Maximos and Palamas are saying the same thing in different manners. Thunberg notes, however, that Maximos never - at least not explicitly - interprets the doctrine of the *logoi* as Divine Energies. Maximos never (explicitly) says that God's Qualities or Operations are ontologically distinct from His Essence, though Maximos at

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[104] St. Maximos, *Ambigua to John*, in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Nicholas Constas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), pg. 95.

[105] Ibid., pg. 195.

[106] Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), pg. 37.

[107] Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), pg. 138.

certain points does speak in a manner similar to that of Palamas.[108] Thunberg points to, as an example, a passage in the *Ambigua to John*, in which Maximos says that in perceiving the *logoi*, we also perceive the Divine Energies, writing: "In perceiving naturally all the *logoi* that are in the beings, in the infinite of which it contemplates the Energies of God…" Thunberg claims here that Maximos is using the term *energeia* as a synonym for *logoi*. The larger context is that Maximos is asserting the true distinction between the *logoi*, and thus Maximos's assertion of the existence of a fundamental relation between the *logoi* and the Energies of God leads him to conclude that the Energies of God are truly distinct. Each *logoi* represents a distinct manner in which God could interact with His creation. Maximos explicitly affirms this, saying that "the mind...makes numerous and infinite differences between the different Divine Energies it perceives." The implication here is that the different Activities or Operations of God are truly distinct but inseparable. Thunberg admits that the passage in question is a difficult one to translate.[109] In the translation of the *Ambigua to John* by Nicholas Constas, it reads not "in the infinite of which it contemplates the Energies of God…", but rather "contemplates within them the infinite Energies of God".[110] This implies less of a direct identity of the *logoi* and the Energies, but rather the emphasis is on the notion that the Divine Energies are present within the *logoi*. Constas's translation does, though, say, "...[I]t [the human mind] recognizes the differences of the Divine Energies it perceives to be multiple and - to speak truly - infinite."[111] This translation, like the one utilized by Thunberg, implies that the relationship between the Divine Energies and the *logoi* points towards a multiplicity of Divine

[108] Ibid., pg. 137-138, 139-140.

[109] Ibid., pg. 140.

[110] St. Maximos, *Ambigua to John*, in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, vol. 1, pg. 449.

[111] Ibid.

Energies. This, when looked at in light of Maximos's belief that the *logoi* are distinct from the Essence of God, would seem to imply that Maximos and Palamas were simply affirming the same belief in different manners.

The Greek Orthodox scholar Nikolaos Ludovikos falls within the camp that states the Maximian concept of the *logoi* and the Palamite notion of the Divine Energies are two different manners of making the same point. While this, as our current discussion implies, is a hotly debated topic, what does seem to be the case is that both of these theological systems are born out of the same general sentiment, which Ludovikos articulates in the following manner:

> We thus see that Maximus does not hesitate to make a distinction without any ontological separation between the Essence of God and His (always equally uncreated) logoi that are His Will acting outside Himself. In Maximus (as well as in Palamas many centuries after him), this distinction, precisely because of its existential character, cannot be clearly translated into logico-metaphysical terms of an autonomous natural theology with its subsequent metaphysics, and be called, for example, "formal", (in the Scotist logico-metaphysical sense of the existence of more than one form of a subject, e.g. of God's Essence and its Energies); this happens not only because uncreated essence and uncreated logoi/energies coexist without any ontological, or typical, or virtual separation (αχωρίστως), but because it is impossible to see [the] logoi "around the essence" and [the] essence as two or more logical 'forms' of Divine being, because they are, in this sense, totally and numerically one, as it is impossible to conceive of the existence and the attitude of any personal subject as two or

> three, united or not, forms of its being - unless one is neurotic! … [C]reated things have their existence only through participation in the uncreated logoi/acts/wills 'around God' - that means in a God willing, loving and acting in a relationship outside of Himself.[112]

Both Palamas and Maximos were motivated by the belief that there is a distinction between Who God is in and of Himself and God's act of extending beyond Himself to interact with His creation. These are two distinct aspects of God's Existence, and therefore are distinct but inseparable. These two elements do not constitute two distinct entities; there is only One Entity in question, God, and the Essence and the Energies or *logoi* are two different elements of this One Entity. The relationship between God and His Energies or *logoi* parallels the distinction between an individual, considered in themselves, and the thoughts, emotions, intentions, or dispositions within that person. The latter are something produced by or which flow forth from the former, and are therefore distinct from the former; yet, this distinction does not imply a separation, whether real or logical, for each element constitutes one subject. Yet, insofar as this distinction is real, Palamas and Maximos can both affirm that the Divine Essence is incommunicable, yet still affirm that there is an aspect of God's Existence that is distinct from the Essence which is communicable and participable.

Palamas and Anthropology

As said in chapter 2.2, there were a variety of definitions of the *imago Dei* within the Christian tradition. One stream of thought, exemplified by Clement of Alexandria, Origen,

[112] Nikolaos Ludovikos, "Reciprocal Logoi in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas, and the Genesis of the Self-referring Subject," in *Revista Portuguesa Filosofia*, T. 72, Fasc. 1, 2016, pg. 121, 122.

Augustine, and Aquinas, associated the image of God with reason. Yet other views were held, and sometimes a single theologian could hold several different views, simultaneously associating different parts of the human person or different aspects of the human condition with the image of God. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, associates the image of God with humans imitating or partaking in God's sovereignty over creation,[113] but also with the will[114] and with reason.[115]

Some scholars, including Georgios I. Mantzaridis, have asserted that Palamas does not associate the *imago Dei* with a specific element of human nature, or even with multiple distinct elements of human nature, but rather attempted to create a more holistic view, one that encompasses the fullness of human nature. Such a tendency is found even within certain strains of Patristic thought. Nicholas Constas notes that in some of the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, there is a certain hesitancy to pursue a line of reasoning that draws too close a union between the *imago Dei* and the mind. Certain proponents of this line of reasoning, particularly Clement of Alexandria and Origen, were described by Constas as being "intellectualist" in orientation, that is, they associate *imago Dei* with, or believe that the *imago Dei* somehow resides in, the intellect. The movement away from such a view was partly motivated by Gregory's debates with the Platonists, and in particular his rejection of the Platonic notion of reincarnation. Gregory made use of a line of argumentation based on Aristotle's matter-form distinction,

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[113] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, chs. 4-5, translated by H.A. Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), accessed on: www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm.

[114] Ibid., ch. 16; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, chapter 12, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co.,1893), accessed on: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2907.htm.

[115] Ibid., ch. 11; *On Virginity* chapter 12

stating that soul cannot preexist the body since the human person consists in the union of soul and body, and humans are only living in the full sense when this union takes place; because of this, Gregory concludes that though there are certain qualities or operations unique to the soul or the mind, these qualities or operations manifest themselves or play out in and through the qualities and operations of the body. Because the soul is not physical, it can be separated from the body after death. Yet it is precisely because the soul is not physical that it can continue to maintain some sort of metaphysical connection to the body even after death: unlike the body, it itself never dies or experiences decay, and hence the soul can separate from the body at death, but because it transcends space, the soul can remain connected to the body even if one's bodily remains were scattered. What defines human nature is thus not the soul or the body alone, but the union of both.[116]

Epiphanius of Salamis, writing around the same time as Gregory of Nyssa, stated that it is not of importance to the faith to say exactly with what the *imago Dei* subsists, but simply to affirm that humans are, in fact, as God's Word says, in His image.[117] The Greek Orthodox scholar Gregorios Mantzaridis, commenting on this teaching, writes that the image of God is "not confined to one facet nor is it fully represented by one aspect of human nature, but is expressed and manifested, as through a prism, throughout the whole of human existence."[118]

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[116] Nicholas Constas, "'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream': The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 55, 2001, pg. 97-98.

[117] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies* 70., quoted in Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Christian Tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), pg. 16.

[118] Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), pg. 16.

This carries over into the thought of Palamas. Gregory Palamas, in the words of Mantzaridis, has a "many-sided and dynamic conception of 'image'".[119] This, at first, is not entirely evident when one analyzes the Palamite system of thought, since Palamas, like Origen, Clement, Augustine, and Aquinas, sees a close relationship between reason and the *imago Dei*. Yet, Palamas frames the *imago Dei* within a larger metaphysical and anthropological framework that gives this concept a greater level of depth.

As with Aquinas, Palamas sees a distinction between the image and likeness of God. Palamas suggests that as the mind overcomes the passions, it is given a greater ability to cultivate the virtues. As it cultivates the virtues, its understanding of reality becomes clearer, which can be seen in the fact that it better comprehends intelligible or spiritual realities, realities which transcend what is immediately perceptible but which metaphysically undergird reality as it is immediately seen. Moral growth thus always leads to epistemic growth, the epitome of which is the vision of God. In Palamas's epistemology, the first thing the mind comprehends - and the easiest for it to comprehend - is physical or sensual things. The mind then grows to comprehend realities of a spiritual or intelligible nature; yet, the mind, when it first envisions intelligible realities, pictures them in physical terms, associating them with images, something which is then replaced with the ability to conceptualize intelligible realities in purely non-physical terms. The culmination of such a process is the human mind, by the grace of God, being able to directly see God in His Energies. The process of epistemological or noetic growth is, at its core, a process of the mind detaching itself from earthly things, a process which allows it to see He Who transcends all earthly realities - a Reality that, for Palamas, even transcends all concepts - namely God. Palamas quotes Evagrius, who asserts

[119] Ibid.

that the proper state of the mind is that in which it detaches itself from or transcends all concepts and categories in order to directly see God. This capacity to understand reality, and ultimately its Source (God) is identified with the *imago Dei*. Yet, Palamas goes on to quote Diadochos, who asserted that there are two effects of Baptism, namely the forgiveness of sins (which is an immediate effect), and an increased consciousness of the Presence of God (a long-term effect harvested through a lifelong cooperation with Divine grace). Diadochos explicitly identifies this process of increasing our awareness and knowledge of God with the human likeness to God.[120]

Palamas, in a word, identifies the image of God with our ability to know God, and the likeness of God with different degrees of actual knowledge of God. This is born out of two underlying presuppositions: firstly, the belief - which is the common property of the Christian tradition - that God is a rational and immaterial Being, and therefore exists as pure spirit or pure mind (the conclusion of which is that the human person imitates God most in searching for truth); secondly, a belief that is particularly prominent in Palamite views on deification, namely that it is in experiencing God that we are transformed by God. Put another way, the ability to know God is that in which the image of God rests, but to the extent that this ability to know is actualized, we see the image of God within us intensify its likeness to its Divine archetype.

Palamas, like Augustine and Aquinas, saw the image of God as being inherently Trinitarian in nature. He even uses a variant of the psychological analogy employed by Augustine and Aquinas. He spells out the Trinitarian element of the *imago Dei* in one of his central texts, the *Capita*. For Palamas, God exists as Pure Mind, and begotten by God is the

[120] Gregory Palamas, *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia*, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 316-318.

Logos of God, which Palamas defined as the "Intelligence-content" of God. That is to say, the Divine Logos is the thought of God produced by God the Father knowing Himself. Palamas further states that it would be absurd for mind to exist without life. The Holy Spirit is therefore the Divine Life within God. Yet, Palamas creates a close connection between the concept of the Divine Life and the concept of the Love of God. Therefore, Palamas defines the Holy Spirit as "a kind of ineffable yet intense longing or *eros* experienced by the Begetter [of the Word] for the Logos born ineffably from Him…" The Father, in seeing the Son, sees His own Goodness reflected in the Son, and therefore loves the Son. Now, while this sounds similar to the view of Augustine and Aquinas, Palamas does not see this as something implying the *filioque*, for the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit are coextensive with one another. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father in the same act whereby the Father begets the Son. While Palamas admits that the Son receives and reciprocates the Love of the Father towards Him, the Son already possesses this Love simply by virtue of being begotten by the Father. The mutual nature of the Holy Spirit therefore reflects the function of the Holy Spirit and the fact that He has a fundamental relationship to both the Father and the Son rather than His ontological origin.[121]

The Inner Life of the Trinity is reflected in the human person in the following manner: in the human person, one sees the intellect, which is comparable to the Father; within the intellect is the mind's knowledge of God. The mind's knowledge of God, considered in itself, is distinct from the mind considered in itself, just as the Father is distinct from the Son. Yet, just as the Father begets the Son, so too the mind's knowledge of God comes forth from the

[121] Gregory Palamas, *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 35-36, in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pg. 360-361; Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, pg. 18.

mind, in that knowledge of God is impossible without reason. This thus makes the mind's knowledge of God comparable to the Son as the Perfect Image of the Father. Finally, in the act of reflecting upon itself, and in doing so reflecting upon its knowledge of God, a sense of love for God comes forth.[122] Now, this is distinguished from the Western model insofar as the Father, in begetting the Son, sees His Goodness perfectly reflected in the Son, and therefore loves the Son; the love shared between the Father and the Son therefore originates with the Father. The Holy Spirit, in terms of its ontological origin, is associated with the Father and not the Son. Insofar as the Son receives and reciprocates this love, the Holy Spirit can, in Palamite thought (and Byzantine thought more generally), be associated with both the Father *and* the Son, but the Holy Spirit originates from the Father alone. Likewise, the mind's love for itself originates from the mind itself. It doesn't trace its ontological origin to both the mind and the mind's thought of itself.

Even though there were some differences between Palamas's Trinitarian theology and that of his Western contemporary which in turn led to nuanced differences in terms of how they saw the Trinity reflected in the human person, both Aquinas and Palamas saw the core of the image of God within the human person as being expressed in the human ability to know and to love its Creator. Yet, Palamas does not stop with identifying the *imago Dei* with a specific quality or capacity within human nature. This was born out of a larger theological and philosophical mindset: Palamas sees the essence-energies distinction not only as something describing the Inner Life of God, but also as a philosophical tool that could be used to describe certain metaphysical realities even within creation. For Palamas, the ability to know and love

[122] Gregory Palamas, *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 37, in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pg. 362.

God is an energy proceeding from a specific nature. Hence, while Palamas explicitly connects the *imago Dei* with certain specific qualities or capacities, he also sees the image of God as referring to something broader than simply a specific set of qualities or capacities: it also points towards an underlying nature configured in such a way so as to allow the human person to imitate God. Unique to each nature is a set of energies that are defined by the general ontological structure of that nature. Knowing and loving God can thus be viewed as energies that are unique to human nature as a nature created in the *imago Dei*.[123]

Palamas on Grace and Deification

Like all major Christian theologians before him, Palamas believes that while the human person, by nature, is oriented towards the end of union with God, because of the reality of Divine transcendence and the supernatural nature of God's Essence, as well as the reality of human sin, the full actualization of this potential requires Divine grace. Palamas has a very systematically consistent understanding of the nature of grace which builds off of his more general vision of God and how God relates to the human race. For Palamas, grace is a Divine Energy whereby God brings about union between Himself and the faithful Christian. Palamas asserts in his *Letter to the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* that the early stage of repentance is defined by grief, a sense of sorrow for our sin. Sin produces what Palamas - building off of the thought of Basil the Great and Mark the Ascetic - calls a darkness of the mind. Humans only sin once they have become blinded to the true moral and spiritual character of their actions (which is itself a form of mental darkness), and the more one sins, the more this darkness grows. This can be seen in the fact that the sinner usually does not fully comprehend, or is

[123] Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, pg. 17.

indifferent towards, the sinful nature of their thoughts, actions, words or desires, or is too weak to overcome them if they do recognize their sin. This darkness leads to a state of grief and anguish, but this state of anguish in turn can lead to one of two other states of the soul: it can either lead to a sense of despair or hopelessness, or, conversely, it can lead us recognize the depravity of our situation and desire the mercy of God. It is the latter that constitutes the first stage of repentance. This stage of repentance is described by Palamas as "painful," since it is often "conjoined with the fear of God," that is, a fear of God's wrath and punishment. Yet, such fear eventually gives way to a sense of love for God. The reason for this is because, Palamas argues, implicit to our desire for mercy is a desire to be united to God, and God does not reject those who sincerely seek Him. This desire for union with God Palamas, based on the words of Scripture, compares to the desire of one spouse for another.[124] As Palamas writes:

> In addition, the initial stage of grief resembles something that appears to be almost unattainable - a kind of petition for betrothal to God. Thus those who grieve in their longing for the Bridegroom to Whom they are not yet united utter as it were certain words of courtship, smiting themselves and calling upon Him with tears as though He were not present and perhaps may never be present. But the consummation of grief is pure bridal union with the Bridegroom. For this reason St. Paul, after describing the married couple's union in one flesh as a 'great mystery', added, 'but I say this with respect to Christ and the Church' (Ephesians 5:32). As they are one flesh, so those who are with God are one spirit, as St. Paul clearly testifies elsewhere when he

[124] Gregory Palamas, *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia*, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 319-321.

> says that he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:17).[125]

The first step in release from darkness is a recognition of the fact that we are spiritually lost, together with a desire to return to God, something that is impossible in our sinful state. A sincere spirit of repentance includes a desire for God that is so strong that Palamas, building off of the words of St. Paul, states that it is comparable to the love of a husband for a wife. Such a desire for God is fulfilled only in union with God.

God dwells in the soul of each person who sincerely calls out to Him for His mercy. That whereby God dwells in the soul of each believer is an Energy of God, a Divine Operation. It is because the Operations or Actions of God are distinct from the Divine Essence that God can be close to His creation through grace while also remaining transcendent. Yet, it is precisely because Palamas accepts such a definition of grace that he can reject certain Western Christian, including (and especially) Thomistic, views on grace. As stated earlier, Aquinas made a distinction between uncreated and created grace, with the former referring to the Love of God for man (an uncreated reality), and the latter referring to the effects of such Love within the human soul (a created reality). Yet, insofar as Palamas has a much more limited understanding of grace, one centered on the notion of grace as God dwelling in the soul of the individual believer, he also makes a strong distinction between grace as such and the effects of grace. While Palamas admits that grace is an uncreated reality, whereas the effects of grace are a created reality, he rejects any definition of grace wherein both grace and its effects on the human soul are grouped together under the title of "grace."

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[125] Ibid., pg. 321-322.

Palamas explicitly says as much: "What are we to say, then, to those who regard the grace that dwells in God's saints as created? Let them know that they blaspheme against the Spirit Himself Who, in giving His grace, is united to the saints."[126] Palamas goes further, asserting that the multiplicity of Divine Energies makes possible a multiplicity of manners in which God, present to the saints through grace, operates. An example he uses is the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he interprets as distinct Energies of the Spirit.[127] Because energies are distinct yet inseparable from the essence which produces them, energies reflect the essences which produce them. If the Divine Essence is uncreated, then so, too, are the Divine Energies, including grace. Palamas writes, "Yet no intelligent person would suppose that grace, here distinguished from the Divine Nature, is created, for obviously no one would be in any danger of supposing a created thing to be the Divine Nature."[128] If grace is a created reality, then so, too, would the Divine Nature be a created reality; if, on the other hand, the Divine Essence is an uncreated reality, then grace, it follows, must also be an uncreated reality.

One could question whether this critique, when applied to Aquinas himself, is justified. To some degree, it is simply a matter of difference in terminology and emphasis. Aquinas is simply using a broader definition of the term "grace": grace is a gift; thus, both God's Mercy, Love or Favor, as well as the effects thereof, can be referred to by the title of "grace". What is more, it is obvious that Aquinas, like Palamas, would deny that God's Mercy, Love or Favor is itself something created, nor is the Divine Presence in the human soul brought about by grace a created thing. Things such as the infused virtues, as they are exhibited in the graced soul, may

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[126] Gregory Palamas, *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia*, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 322.

[127] Ibid., *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetical Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*, capita 70, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 378.

[128] Ibid., capita 108, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 4, pg. 395

be considered created realities, and may be called - if we are to accept the general parameters of Thomistic terminology - a “grace,” but created grace, in this sense, does not imply that everything classified as “grace”, or the Divine Essence, or the Divine Actions or Operations, are created.

While Palamas has a high degree of systematic precision with regard to the nature of grace and its relation to the Divine Essence, his thought becomes less clear-cut as it pertains to the human side of this question, that is, how grace and free will relate to one another. Gregory’s thought on that matter was not as well defined as it was in the West, mainly on account of several historical factors, two in specific: firstly, Pelagianism was never as widespread in the East as it was in the West; secondly, the Reformation - some of the hot button debates within which included debates on justification and predestination, which, in turn, like the debates surrounding Pelagianism, brought into the fore debates on the relationship between grace and free will - was something that emerged within the Western church and which arose mainly in response to certain issues within the Western Church. The two most theologically intense debates on the relationship between grace and free will were thus never the center of attention for the Byzantine Church. Like in the West, the Orthodox Church simultaneously affirms two ideas: firstly, that salvation is something utterly dependent on the grace of God, and secondly, since humans have free will, we also bear a certain level of moral responsibility. Yet, due to above the historical circumstances, the question of how to reconcile these ideas was never as precisely defined. This paradox was only intensified by the fact that while the West also had a strong monastic tradition, monasticism was central to Eastern Christian spirituality. The strong emphasis on ascesis that defined monastic spirituality also

permeates the spiritual writings of the East more generally; nonetheless, this does not undermine the gratuitousness of salvation in the Eastern view.

Palamas thus sees no need to fit his views on grace and their relationship to free will within the parameters of an Augustinian or post-Augustinian framework. As a result, it is easy for Western audiences to misinterpret or misrepresent the thought of Palamas on this matter. A.N. Williams notes that growth in virtue was such an important part of his vision of deification that in the Palamite tradition virtue is a "cognate" of deification.[129] Yet, just because virtue is one of the central elements of the Palamite vision of deification, and the relationship between virtue and grace is articulated in a manner that does not resonate with the Western (Catholic and Protestant) intellectual ethos, does not imply that his thought is Pelagian or quasi-Pelagian. Georgios Mantzaridis writes,

> Release from this vicious cycle [of sin] is achieved only through the imitation of Christ and participation in His life. … The notion of imitation of Christ, so often met with in morals and moral treatises, is easily misunderstood. If we allow that man is able by himself to imitate the God-man, then we obviously overestimate man's power and align ourselves with the Pelagian or Messalian heresies. If, again, we dismiss the possibility of an imitation of Christ, we make nonsense the notion of 'cooperation' and overlook a basic teaching of Scripture and the Fathers.[130]

[129] A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, pg. 106-108.

[130] Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, pg. 63-64.

To say that humans can imitate Christ by their own power alone, without any assistance from God, is an outright theological error. Yet, to reject the human ability to imitate Christ would be to reject the notion that humanity has a moral obligation to cooperate with the grace of God, which is seen as a fundamental teaching of both Scripture and the Fathers. Palamas reconciles these two truth claims in a more subtle, indirect manner. He, for example, will at times describe deification as a result of humanity assimilating itself to God, which it does by lovingly obeying the Divine commands, and, in other places, he will (quoting from Basil the Great) describe deification as a "reward" for a life of virtue.[131] Yet, in other places, Gregory will say that a life of virtue can bring us to the verge of deification, but cannot actually lead to deification; the crossing of the threshold separating man's current state from the fully deified state is a result of grace.[132] Here, Palamas clearly sees virtue as a preparation for deification, but not as something that in itself can actually bring about deification. It is for this reason that Palamas explicitly states that deification does not rest solely or even primarily in virtue: "Do not imagine that deification is simply the possession of the virtues; rather, it resides in the radiance and grace of God, which actually comes to us through the virtues."[133] The virtues can therefore be seen as instrumental causes of our deification, things which can prepare us for the deified state but which cannot, in themselves, make us partakers in the Divine Life.

In a word, Palamas believes that through sin, human knowledge of God is darkened and our union with God was thrown into disarray. Through repentance, the sinner develops a

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[131] Gregory Palamas, *Triads* II.1.40 and III.1.34, quoted in Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, pg. 106.

[132] Ibid., I.3.17, quoted in Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, pg. 107.

[133] Ibid., III.1.26, quoted in Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, pg. 120.

yearning for God, an openness to the Divine Presence which they lost through sin. Those with a truly repentant spirit thus showcase an openness to God, and those who exhibit such an openness receive God's grace. God's grace, for Palamas, is seen as an Activity of God whereby God becomes present in the soul of the individual believer, thereby sanctifying them. The more one grows in holiness, the more they harness or make use of God's graces, thereby allowing us to become more and more permeated by them. The spiritual life is thus seen by Palamas as a continual process of being permeated by the Divine Presence to ever greater degrees, which culminates in the fully deified state. In the fully deified or glorified state, there is perfect union between the rational creature and God. In such a state, the deified soul is perfectly receptive to the Energies of God, and is permeated in every part of their being by these Divine Energies. Such a vision of salvation is an inevitable result of the broader Palamite vision: the Energies of God are that which creates and sustains our existence. To be perfected in our being is thus to be perfectly receptive to the creative and sustaining Activity of God.

CONCLUSION:

AQUINAS AND PALAMAS - A SIDE-BY-SIDE ANALYSIS

The role of grace in the systematic relationship between deification and creation can be seen in the maxim "grace perfects nature." The Christian tradition presupposes a real distinction between the natural and supernatural realms, between the realm in which the human race was created and that state to which it is elevated by grace. Nonetheless, grace presupposes a created nature which has a certain receptivity to this supernatural elevation. It is for this reason that the gift of grace, and God's larger plan of salvation, is directed towards rational creatures alone: only the rational creature was created with the capacity for union with God; only the rational creature was created with the capacity to willingly choose to deviate from such an end, and only the rational creature could return to the path leading to their proper end after deviating from it. In some strains of Christianity, particularly in the East, the entirety of the created order is seen as being encompassed by God's saving plan. Kallistos Ware speaks of a ceremony in the Eastern Orthodox Church associated with the Feast of Epiphany, in which the celebrant throws a cross into a body of water to be retrieved by a group of swimmers. In this ceremony, the water is believed to be blessed by the presence of the cross. What this signifies is the sanctification not only of the human person, but of creation as a whole. This points towards the "cosmic significance" of Christ's plan of salvation, how Christ's plan of salvation can be seen as "embracing the whole created order." Ware goes further and states that, while human Baptism represents our cleansing, Christ, when entering into the water in His Baptism, purifies it, and this, in turn, plays on the larger theme of the Incarnation: it signifies

how Jesus, in entering into the created order, sanctifies it.[134] This builds off of the notion found in Revelation 21:1 of a "new heaven and new earth" being brought into existence when God's plan of salvation reaches its culmination or final manifestation in the End Times. Nonetheless, the cosmic vision of deification - that notion that creation as a whole will be more closely united to God and will therefore reflect the Glory of God in a greater manner - does not imply that non-rational creatures have immortal souls or will attain the level of likeness to God found in creatures with the *imago Dei*. Because deification and the beatific vision presupposes the presence of the *imago Dei* in the soul, the relation between the state of nature and the deified state is not seen as an opposition but rather a transcendence. It is for this reason that one's view of creation can be seen as delineating the broad parameters of one's view of salvation and deification.

By looking at both the Thomistic and the Palamite visions of creation/anthropology, grace and deification, we see how the close systematic relationship between creation and deification is present in the two thinkers who in many ways epitomize their respective ecclesial-theological traditions. For Thomas, deification is union with God, a union in which we partake in the Divine Essence, as a result of which we imitate God. The fact that Aquinas frames deification in such a manner can easily be seen as resulting from the Thomistic view of how God interacts with creation: God's causal activity is present to all things, and by this the Perfections of God are communicated to creation. Yet, the Perfections of God are communicated to created beings in a specific manner and to a specific degree. Therefore, created realities embody not goodness or wisdom as such, but specific modes of being good or wise. Created beings thus partake in the Perfections of God in an analogous manner, relative to the manner in which God exhibits

[134] Kallistos Ware, "A Sense of Wonder," in *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), pg. 70.

these Perfections. Creaturely existence is therefore an analogous participation in that which properly belongs to God. While Aquinas sees the fully deified state as transcending the natural state, Aquinas also sees the fully deified/glorified state, like the created state, as including participation in God. Yet, the glorified state is transcendent of the created realm, since it is a state in which we perfectly know, perfectly love, and are in a state of perfect union with God. Nonetheless, since all levels of human existence, both natural and deified, include a certain level of union with God, one sees in Thomas's thought the notion that our union with God in the deified state is, like in our natural state, an analogous participation in the Perfections of God. This can be seen as an inevitable conclusion of the more general Thomistic teaching. Deification is not understood by Aquinas as those in heaven having a likeness to God whereby we perfectly mirror God. Not only is this clear in Thomas's teaching on creation and anthropology - in which he makes a distinction between humanity being "*to* the likeness of God," but Christ alone being "*in* the Image of God," or being the "image of God" in the proper sense - but is also true with regard to man's supernatural participation brought about by grace. This is said in a multiplicity of manners, both implicitly and explicitly, by both Aquinas and his commentators. In the *Summa Theologiæ* I-II, Q. 112, A. 2, Aquinas defines deification as "a partaking in the Divine Nature by a certain participated likeness."[135] When looked at in light of such passages from the *Summa Theologiæ* as I-II, Q. 109, A. 3, reply to objection 1, and II-II, Q. 23, A. 1, *respondeo*, Aquinas believes that in the spiritual state in which one is fully deified, the saints not merely are in union with God in the broad metaphysical sense that allows for creaturely existence more generally, but are in a state of fellowship with God, whereby they attains a higher level of participation in the Divine Nature, and therefore a greater level of

[135] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* I-II, Q. 112, A. 2 *respondeo*, pg. 1140

likeness to that to which we are united. Yet, it is a *participated* likeness: that is to say, that of which we have a likeness is something that, properly speaking, inheres to God, but which is present in us, or which we imitate, by virtue of union and participation.

That is to say, that which is inherent or natural to God is something outside of or external to the human person. Through grace, we are united and conformed to Christ, and thus become partakers of His Sonship, in which state the Father becomes present within the human soul and therefore causes humans to become united to Himself. Yet, unlike in the case of Christ, that which we are united to is not consubstantial with us. Deification does not undermine the fact the deified soul remains a creature and God remains God. Thus, the deified soul has a likeness to God that takes place because of a certain participation in a reality outside of and above us.

Put another way, humanity imitates and participates in the Divine Nature as sons of God in Christ; yet, we can never participate in the Divine Nature in the same manner or to the same extent as Christ does. Garrigou-Langrange thus writes,

> From all eternity God the Father has a Son to Whom He communicates His Whole Nature, without dividing or multiplying It; He necessarily engenders a Son equal to Himself, and gives to Him to be God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. And from sheer bounty, gratuitously, He has willed to have in time other sons, adopted sons, by a filiation which is not only moral (by external declaration) but real and intimate (by production of sanctifying grace, the effect of God's active love for us). … It is thus that He has

> predestined us to be conformable to the image of His only Son, that this Son might be the first-born of many brethren (Romans 8:29). The just are accordingly of the family of God and enter the inner cycle of the Trinity. Infused charity gives us a likeness to the Holy Ghost (personal love); the beatific vision will render us like the Word, Who will make us like unto the Father Whose Image He is.[136]

Deification thus rests in union with Christ, by which we become partakers in His Divine Sonship. Just as the Son has a certain likeness to the Father because He is the Son of the Father, likewise those who are deified are given a likeness to God because of our adopted sonship. Through this adopted sonship, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, Who, as that love shared between the Father and the Son, is the means by which the Love of God is communicated to humanity; through this adopted sonship, we also have an increased knowledge of God, and it is this knowledge which transforms us to have an increased likeness to our Object. Yet, since that in Whose likeness we become in the deified state is infinitely transcendent in relation to creation, Garrigou-Lagrange thus nuances these above claims: "...[W]e consider sanctifying grace to be a formal, *analogical* participation in Deity as it is in itself."[137] Further, "Sanctifying grace...is an *analogical* likeness to God inasmuch as He is God, or to His Deity, to His intimate life, which is not naturally knowable in a positive way."[138]

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[136] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, Ia IIae, Q. 109*-119, pg. 405

[137] Ibid., pg. 409

[138] Ibid., pg. 405

In the thought of Thomas and the Thomistic tradition more generally, both creation and deification include God sharing His qualities with creation. Everything creation is and has results from creation participating in that which properly is attributed to God. This reality - that of creation participating in the Perfections of God - defines the very nature of creaturely existence, and is intensified by grace in the deified state. Yet, since that which the human person participates in has its origins outside of creation, in a Source which is infinitely transcendent of created realities, humanity shares in these qualities insofar as we participate in them, that is, share in something outside of the self. Our likeness to the Perfections of God is thus a *participated* likeness. Further, as humans participate in the things of God, we do not embody these qualities in the same manner or to the same extent as God does, and therefore we can never perfectly imitate God. Our likeness to and participation in the Perfections of God is therefore *analogous*. This is something Aquinas applies to both creation and deification. It is thus clear here how Thomistic metaphysics more generally, and the Thomistic vision of creation more specifically, sets the doctrinal and systematic framework for the Thomistic view of deification.

What is said of Thomas is also said of Palamas: his vision of creation and how God relates to His creation lays the basis for the doctrinal and systematic context of Palamas's vision of deification. Nonetheless, the specifics of how Palamas treats this are radically different than how Aquinas and his ideological disciples do so. Aquinas reconciles Divine transcendence and Divine immanence by asserting that God is present to and operative within creation as that which creates and upholds the existence of a thing; yet, God is present to and at work within creation in such a way so as to not - for the lack of a better term - ontologically "merge" with the essence of a created thing, thereby allowing for rather strong and radical

articulations of Divine immanence that also allows for God to be distinct from His creation. Because God is present to creation in such a way, our participation in and likeness to God is therefore analogous. Palamas, on the other hand, sees Divine transcendence as ruling out any possibility of direct contact between God's Essence and creation, and therefore must assert that there is an element of God's existence which serves as an ontological mediator between the innermost part of God's Existence (His transcendent and supra-essential Essence), and His creation. While Aquinas, in *De potentia*, sees creation as a result of the operations of Divine Power and the presence of the effects of such operations within creation - to use Eastern terminology, a Divine Energy - Aquinas also makes it clear that the Divine Power (or Its operations) are not something distinct from the Divine Essence. (Something similar could be said about the process of sanctification, and the culmination of such a process in deification.) Further, Aquinas, as stated in chapter 2.1, makes use of the Augustinian notion that God being present *to* the world is distinct from asserting that God is *a part of* the world. Creation and deification are, to different degrees, a participation in the Divine Essence. Yet, presupposed by Palamas is the notion that to participate in a particular essence is to be properly in possession of that essence. To be human is to participate in the human essence; likewise, to be Divine is to participate in the Divine Essence. It is for this reason that Palamas believes that creaturely existence, as well as deification, include a participation in God, but it is not a direct participation in the Divine Essence.

In both Palamas and Aquinas, the broad metaphysical parameters of how they envision the metaphysical relationship between God and creation creates the framework for how they envision the deified state. Yet, what we also are led to conclude is that these two thinkers express two radically different ways of approaching the relationship between God and man

within the context of creation, which leads to two radically different ways of articulating the relationship between God and creation within the context of deification. Again, for Palamas, any direct participation in the Divine Essence on the part of creation undermines Divine transcendence. What one thus needs is an element of God's Existence which serves as an ontological mediator between the Divine Essence and creation. Such are the operations which proceed from the Divine Essence. Both creation and deification result from, and can be defined as a participation in, these Divine Energies. The Divine Energies are that whereby a transcendent God becomes present to and operates within creation. Deification, for Palamas and the Palamites - and for the Byzantine tradition more generally - is thus an increased participation in and union with the creational activity of God. For Thomas, the solution to the problem is the concept of *analogous participation* and *analogous likeness*: all of created reality is united to God and participates in the Perfections of God. Yet, humans can never exhibit the Qualities or Perfections of God in the same manner as God does. Therefore, humans can never have a perfect likeness to God, which would imply equality with God and therefore undermine the doctrine of Divine transcendence.

By analyzing the relationship between the doctrine of creation and that of deification, we begin to better understand the inner systematic structure of the doctrine of deification. In doing so, one may begin to realize that the notion that the deified state transcends the created state should not lead one to view deification, and soteriology in general, in isolation from the doctrine of creation. In the deified state, as in the state of nature, we continue to exist as creatures, and therefore continue to relate to God as His creation. Insofar as the Creator-creation dynamic continues to exist in the deified state - admitting, nonetheless, that such a relationship is radically transformed by grace - how one understands or articulates the

underlying metaphysical parameters of how God and humans relate in the natural realm is determinative of how one envisions the deified state. Recognizing that the doctrine of creation is a necessary precondition for the doctrine of deification demonstrates the holistic nature of Christian theology; but, what is more, comparing how this fact plays out in different theological traditions has profound ecumenical implications.

In particular, what is at stake when comparing Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition with Palamas and the Palamite tradition is the fact these two thinkers and the respective traditions that emerge from them approximate each other in rather interesting manners, yet underlying these similarities is a radically different set of metaphysical implications. They both believe that deification is a result of grace, whereby the love and presence of a transcendent God fills the soul. Yet, how this transcendent God becomes present to His creation is explained in radically different manners, manners determined by their vision of God and His relation to creation more generally. Both Thomas and Palamas attempted to make sense of certain realities which are, in many ways, the common property of the entire Christian tradition, Catholic and Orthodox, Latin and Byzantine.

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