

THEOLOGISCHE UNIVERSITEIT APELDOORN

**Union with God:  
An Assessment of Deification (*Theosis*) in the Theologies of Robert Jenson and  
John Calvin**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Object of the present study

*Theosis* or *deification* is commonly accepted as an Eastern/ Greek Orthodox concept. The hope of partaking in God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) has its earliest formulation in Irenaeus' *theologoumenon* in which we become what God is himself.<sup>1</sup> The notion implies at least two stages, the original stage and the final stage. There is a progress that leads to a closer unity from the earlier existing gap between God as Creator and humans as creatures. *Theosis* then describes how a human being in the final stage of salvation participates in God's life or being as Triune. The chief concern of *theosis* relates to the question, "how to do justice to the Creator-creature distinction." The present study discusses this question by means of a systematic-theological evaluation of Robert Jenson's concept of *theosis*.

Robert William Jenson (1930–2017), a Catholic-Lutheran American theologian considers *theosis* in his 2 volumes magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*, published in 1997 and 1999. In general, Jenson wrote his Systematic Theology as a Western system but with "some of its key position [as] reinventions of Orthodox wheels."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.2.1.i.a.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1: *The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), preface. Hereafter abbreviated as *ST* Volume.Part: Chapter.Section.

Thus, Jenson's work counts as an important modern Western Systematic Theology that incorporates the notion of *theosis*.

Unlike the later Greek orthodox tradition that often leads to a mystical union (mis-)understood by mixing with God in his essence, the Reformed tradition strongly maintains the Creator-creature distinction. Therefore, in this present study, Jenson's *theosis* is to be evaluated from within a Reformed theological framework. As one of the reformers who has significant influence on later theologians, John Calvin (1509–1564) is chosen to be the representative of Reformed theology.<sup>3</sup> We will critically employ Calvin to prevent a non-objective judgment towards Jenson. The research question in this study is: *to what extent can Jenson's idea of theosis be integrated within the Reformed theology, as exemplified by John Calvin's theology?*

To answer this question, an examination of the historical context of Robert Jenson, and John Calvin, is needed in view of the developed interest in *theosis* from the Greek Orthodox tradition. We will offer in section 1.2 a survey of Greek Orthodox concept of *theosis* and its renewed interest in the West, then in section 1.3 understand the historical context of Jenson and Calvin as to their reception of *theosis*. From this general overview and specific historical contexts, to carry on an

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<sup>3</sup> Considering that Reformed theology has never been monolithic from the beginning, we will limit our study to Calvin's theology rather than incorporating differences with other reformers or later reformed theology like the Dutch Neo-Calvinism.

evaluation, a set of criteria is needed to assess Jenson's *theosis*. In section 1.4, these criteria are to be drawn from Calvin's work in his polemical writing directed to Andreas Osiander's doctrine of essential righteousness. Having established the historical context of Jenson and Calvin, and the criteria set for this evaluation, the method and outline of this study is sketched out in section 1.5.

## **1.2. Theosis as Common Tradition**

*Theosis* found its impetus in various nuances from the Church Fathers. While *theosis* seems to be more at home in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Western tradition has never really lost its significance in her articulation of the final blessedness as *visio Dei*. The Enlightenment rendered *theosis* dormant until the rediscovery of this common root through the recent interactions between the West and the East in their traditions.<sup>4</sup>

Norman Russell in *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* has done a survey of *theosis* in at least twenty three theologians from Ignatius of Antioch to Gregory Palamas.<sup>5</sup> This work should be complemented by Hans Boersma's book, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition*, which covers a few Greek theologians like Gregory Nyssa and Gregory of Palamas, the Latin

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<sup>4</sup> See Gerald Lewis Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 1196.

<sup>5</sup> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Father Augustine, Medieval theologians like Aquinas and Palamas, and the Reformer John Calvin with more modern theologians from the Calvinist/Reformed tradition; a total of at least seventeen figures.<sup>6</sup> We will be selective in our delineation so as to include only those theologians whose notion of *theosis* is formative and relevant in the development of John Calvin and Robert Jenson.

### ***1.2.1. The Eastern Orthodox idea of Theosis***

There is a lack of agreed upon definition on *theosis*. Gavriilyuk observes the exalted status of *deification*, and yet there is no explicit mention of it in the dogmatic definitions of the first Seven Ecumenical Councils (325 – 787 AD).<sup>7</sup> This results, he adds, in a considerable fluid concept of *theosis*. Similarly, Russell notes that *deification* was most often used metaphorically by the earlier patristic writers before Dionysius the Areopagite of the sixth century.<sup>8</sup>

For our initial study, we could engage the issue temporarily by adopting this provisional definition. Russell describes that the doctrine of *theosis* expresses the true fulfillment of our humanity in which

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<sup>6</sup> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Gavriilyuk, “The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum,” *MT* 25 (2009), 648, cited by Daniel A. Keating, “Typologies of Deification” *IJST* 17, no.3 (July 2015): 281.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.



by sharing in the divine sonship of Christ with all that implies in ecclesial and ascetical terms, our identity can be redefined as “gods by grace” destined to be transformed by divine glory through participation in the triadic fullness of life.<sup>9</sup>

At a glimpse, *theosis* deals with our future life in God that is characterized by grace, related to Christ, such that we can be called as gods through participation. We will first briefly survey how *theosis* is being articulated by the common Greek Fathers of the church: Irenaeus of Lyons, Athanasius of Alexandria, the Cappadocian Fathers, and Cyril of Alexandria; Then, we will go in depth at how *theosis* was being differentiated by some later Greek theologians: Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas and John Zizioulas.

*i. The Greek Fathers' teaching*

a. Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202)

Irenaeus in *against Heresies* teaches *theosis* Christologically again and again.<sup>10</sup> He writes about our being “one with God (III.18.7)”, “been united to incorruptibility and immortality (III.19.1)”, “having embraced the Spirit of God (IV.20.4)”, and also the oft repeated *theologoumenon*, “Jesus...become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself (V. Pref.).” Incarnation then is a pivotal point of one’s salvation in becoming divine or godlike. The polemical context

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<sup>9</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 320.

<sup>10</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1885), III.10.2; III.18.7; III.19.1; IV.20.4; IV.33.4; V.Pref.; V.16.2.

Irenaeus theologized was against the Gnostic view of salvation that undermines the material world.<sup>11</sup> As described above, salvation is more than just adoption in Irenaeus' concept.<sup>12</sup> It is about one's union with God in which one is being imbued by the qualities of the divine nature: incorruptibility and immortality, and to be embraced by the Spirit of God.

Irenaeus conceives the Creator-creature distinction; thus Russell notes that Irenaeus employs the accommodation principle: that human beings as created things are inferior to him who created them, and as such we are to grow and mature until we can accept God's gratuitous gift of eternal existence, thus becoming gods.<sup>13</sup> Russell clarifies how Irenaeus maintains the distinction: though the gap between created and uncreated has been achieved historically by the incarnation and potentially by individual Christian baptism, yet we are limited in our ability to attain God's vision rapidly.<sup>14</sup> Irenaeus then has placed the earliest boundaries of *theosis* by maintaining the distinction intact, *finitum non capax infiniti*.

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<sup>11</sup> Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 41.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Carl Mosser, "The Earliest Patristic Interpretation of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification," *JTS* 56 (2005): 41, who sees that Irenaeus prefers Pauline notion in terms of adoption rather than Johannine divine sonship.

<sup>13</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 107.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

b. Athanasius of Alexandria (296–373)

Athanasius also teaches *theosis* through incarnational Christology (*On the Incarnation of the Word*, § 54).<sup>15</sup> There is a development in the *theologoumenon* where Athanasius specifies the significance to the incarnated body of the Son of God. As he says in the *Letter to Maximus*, “we are deified not by partaking of the body of some man, but by *receiving the Body of the Word Himself*.”<sup>16</sup> This contains the germinal seed of *deification* as *totus christus* before Augustine. In addition to that, as noted by Russel, the sentence may be a veiled reference to the role of the Eucharist in *deification*.<sup>17</sup>

Athanasius spells out the proto *extra-calvinisticum*, “For He was not, as might be imagined, circumscribed in the body, nor, while present in the body, was He absent elsewhere;[...]”<sup>18</sup> As such, the Creator-creature distinction in Christ’s two natures is maintained by Athanasius. Athanasius aptly summarizes the difference between Christ and us as gods, “We are made by God first, begotten next; creatures by nature, sons by grace. Christ begotten first, made or created afterwards.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In *NPNF* 2.4, 65, “For He was made man that we might be made [θεοποιηθῶμεν] God.”

<sup>16</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, “Personal Letters,” in *NPNF* 2.4, 578–579. *Italic* is added.

<sup>17</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 176.

<sup>18</sup> “On the Incarnation of the Word,” 45, § 17 subtitle “How the Incarnation did not limit the ubiquity of the Word, nor diminish His Purity. (Simile of the Sun.)”

<sup>19</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, “Four Discourses against the Arians,” in *NPNF* 2.4, II.XXI., page 379.

Apart from defending the humanity of Christ in the incarnation, Athanasius spends his lifetime fighting against the heretical Arianism whose best view of Christ is only as a creature. The importance of the outcome is not simply to defend the deity of Christ, but it also lies in our salvation as *deification*. Thus, Athanasius states his *soteriological concern*,

For man had not been deified if joined to a creature, or unless the Son were very God; nor had man been brought into the Father's presence, unless He had been His natural and true Word who had put on the body. And as we had not been delivered from sin and the curse, unless it had been by nature human flesh, which the Word put on (for we should have had nothing common with what was foreign), so also the man had not been *deified*, unless the Word who became flesh had been *by nature* from the Father and *true and proper* to Him.<sup>20</sup>

This understanding of *deification* based on the *hypostatic union* of Christ's two natures is not only held firm by Athanasius who represents Eastern/ Greek theology, but also by his contemporary Western theologian Hilary of Poitiers (c.300–c.367).<sup>21</sup>

### c. The Cappadocian Fathers

The Cappadocian Fathers: Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390), Basil of Caesarea (330–379), and Gregory of Nyssa (335–395) contribute to the *theosis theologoumena*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 2.70, page 386, italics added.

<sup>21</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, "On the Trinity," in *NPNF* 2.9a, 8.14, page 141–142. "there might be taught a perfect unity through a Mediator, whilst, we abiding in Him, He abode in the Father, and as abiding in the Father abode also in us; and so we might arrive at unity with the Father, since in Him Who dwells naturally in the Father by birth, we also dwell naturally, while He Himself abides naturally in us also."

further. Their concern is more focused on the trinitarian *theologoumena* that would avoid polytheism, modalism, and subordinationism.<sup>22</sup> In their time, the doctrine of the Spirit received its proper attention. This is found in Basil's expression in *On the Spirit*; of the *visio Dei*,

And He [the Spirit], like the sun, will by the aid of thy purified eye show thee in Himself the image of the invisible, and in the blessed spectacle of the image thou shalt behold the unspeakable beauty of the archetype.<sup>23</sup>

Then, it is through the Spirit's shining, dwelling, and illuminating,

[...] comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, *the being made God*.<sup>24</sup>

Thus we have found the emphasis made by Basil on *theosis* as the perfecting work of the Spirit; for it is impossible for the fallen creature to be perfected without the work of the Spirit when even for the unfallen angels to be sanctified and continued in it requires the holiness perfected in the work of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

*Gregory of Nazianzus* speaks on the equality of the Son with the Father that "Sonship is not a deficiency".<sup>26</sup> Like the Son, the Spirit is God because he is consubstantial, springing from the same source of the Father; thus one substance

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<sup>22</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1.II: 6.III.

<sup>23</sup> Basil of Caesarea, "The Book of Saint Basil on the Spirit," in *NPNF* 2.8, 9.23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* *Italic* added.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.38.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, "Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen," in *NPNF* 2.7, 31.9, page 320.

with the Source.<sup>27</sup> Gregory has a clear explanation concerning the relation among the three *hypostasis*,

For one is not more and another less God; nor is One before and another after; nor are They divided in will or parted in power; nor can you find here any of the qualities of divisible things; but *the Godhead* is, to speak concisely, *undivided in separate Persons*;<sup>28</sup>

Not only does Gregory reject subordinationism, he too rejects any sequential temporality in eternity in understanding the begotten and proceeding that characterize the *proprium* of the Son and the Spirit. In other words, eternity cannot be understood in a temporal “before and after” manner. Lastly, Gregory concludes that the *ousia* of God are fully present in each *hypostasis*.<sup>29</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus believes that what we receive in our salvation, through the incarnation, is God who imparts himself as the integral unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit:

But if all that the Father has belongs likewise to the Son, except Causality; and all that is the Son’s belongs also to the Spirit, except His Sonship, and whatsoever is spoken of Him as to Incarnation for me a man, and for my salvation, that, taking of mine, He may impart His own by this new commingling;<sup>30</sup>

*Gregory of Nyssa* contributes to the understanding of the oneness in God, in which he understands it is not of nature, but of operation/*energy*. His

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 31.10, page 321.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 31.14, page 322.

<sup>29</sup> This is the *autotheos* notion of Trinity in Calvin, that later expressed by T. F. Torrance as *in solidum*. See section 3.1.1.ii.

<sup>30</sup> “Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen,” 34.10, page 337.

formulations brought to the *theologoumenon opera ad extra indivisa*, that “every operation which extends from God to the Creation,[...] has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>31</sup>

However, Gregory of Nyssa does not reject the idea that there is a divine nature in God, which he holds to be unlimited and infinite.<sup>32</sup> Anyone who participates in the goodness of God who is himself the Good, will have his/her desire stretched out limitlessly.<sup>33</sup>

This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more. Thus, no limit would interrupt growth in the ascent to God, since no limit to the Good can be found nor is the increasing of desire for the Good brought to an end because it is satisfied.<sup>34</sup>

This participation is termed *epektasis*, and is described by Anthony Meredith as “the eternal growth of the human person towards and into God.”<sup>35</sup> As to God’s nature, Meredith notes that Nyssa differentiates between divine incomprehensibility and divine infinity.<sup>36</sup> In divine incomprehensibility, the

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<sup>31</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, “On “Not Three Gods,”” in *NPNF* 2.5, 334.

<sup>32</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), I.7, page 31; “Gregory of Nyssa against Eunomius,” in *NPNF* 2.5, § 15, page 51 where he says that “the unlimited is the same as the infinite.” Or a better term, “divine inexhaustibility” Cf. John Meyendorff, introduction in *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist, 1983), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., II.239, page 116.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 12; *Gregory of Nyssa* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 22.

<sup>36</sup> Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 13.

emphasis lies on the weakness of the human mind to know God in his divine majesty; but in divine infinity, the mysteriousness lies in God himself who is limitless as the source of all and can be limited by none.<sup>37</sup> Thus, God's *ousia* is inaccessible, but his *energeia* can be known.<sup>38</sup> Nyssa's *epektasis* respects the *finitum non capax infiniti* that assures a progress of ascent of the saints without end to God.<sup>39</sup>

#### d. Cyril of Alexandria (378–444)

*Cyril of Alexandria* goes beyond Athanasius, who emphasized the Word's body or the incarnation. Cyril shows the importance of the sacraments in our *deification*.

And as the Body of the Word Himself is Life-giving, He having made it His own by a true union passing understanding and language; so we too who partake of His holy Flesh and Blood, are quickened in all respects and wholly, the Word dwelling in us Divinely through the Holy Ghost, humanly again through His Holy Flesh and Precious Blood.<sup>40</sup>

This is in line with his commenting on John 6:35 where he sees that the partaking of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) is conceived in the sacrament as the holy partaking of Christ so that we can ascend to life and incorruption.<sup>41</sup> We also

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>39</sup> Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Five Tomes Against Nestorius*. LFC 47 (1881) Book 4. §5, [www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/cyril\\_against\\_nestorius\\_04\\_book4.htm](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/cyril_against_nestorius_04_book4.htm) (accessed April 20, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), 325c, page 111.



see how Cyril holds to the significance of Christ's two natures in our *deification*, his divine indwelling through the Spirit and his human body as life-giving.

As reflected in his *commentary on John* 1:12, Cyril remarks that we ascend to a dignity that transcends our nature on account of Christ; yet we are called sons by adoption and by imitation, in grace rather than naturally like the Sonship that Christ is in reality.<sup>42</sup> Yet, commenting on the next verse, Cyril takes a further step of interpretation that “[w]e are therefore called gods, not simply by grace [...] but because we already have God dwelling and abiding within us, [...]”<sup>43</sup>

The intricate relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are explained clearly in the commentary on the phrase in verse 14, “and dwelt in us.” First, Cyril portray the resurrection of Christ (Romans 1:4) as the result of our raised status and designation as gods and sons of the Most High (Psalm 82:6); Then through our mystical union in Christ, we are given the gift (2 Corinthians 8:9) to attain the likeness to him to his own proper and superlative good; Lastly, this God's own “good” means sonship, that with the Son's dwelling “in us”, we in his Spirit can “cry Abba! Father!”<sup>44</sup> The Trinitarian expression of our union in Christ becomes clearer in Cyril's.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 91c, page 101.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 93d, page 103.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 96c–97b, page 107.

ii. *Differentiation in Greek Orthodox Tradition*

a. Maximus the Confessor (590–662)

In *Philokalia*, we find three accounts of deification by Maximus the Confessor:

*On the Lord's Prayer, Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God: Written for Thalassios, and Various Texts on Theology, The Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice.*<sup>45</sup>

As discussed in *On the Lord's Prayer*, the *deification* of human nature is found in the counsel of God the Father, in which the unfathomable self-emptying of the Son is its content.<sup>46</sup> The outcome of that counsel is our adoption through the agency of the Logos who “grants us birth and deification which, transcending nature, comes by grace from above through the Spirit.”<sup>47</sup> In Maximus, we also note the importance of the Eucharist as a means for us to participate in the divine life.<sup>48</sup> Then towards the end, Maximus gives a *kataphatic* description of *deification* in the active role of Christ who makes us co-worshippers with the angels, which he then leads up still further on the supreme ascent of divine truth to the Father of lights, and makes us share in the divine nature through participation by grace in the Holy Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “St Maximos the Confessor: Introductory Notes,” in *Philokalia* Vol. 2, 49–50.

<sup>46</sup> Maximos the Confessor, “On the Lord's Prayer: A Short Interpretation Addressed To a Devout Christian,” *Philokalia* Vol. 2, 286.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 303–4.

In *on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God*, Maximus understands the saints as the body of Christ in a soteriological sense, to be conformed to the likeness of the Lord's flesh by shaking off the corruption of sin.<sup>50</sup> Unlike Gregory of Nyssa's *epektasis*, Maximus does not see the state of the perfection of the saints in the kingdom of God as a growth that consists of progress and change, but in sustenance in godlike perfection, a state of eternal well-being.<sup>51</sup> Yet the end that Maximus conceives is described in a poetical manner that characterizes music and worship figures of speech:

He who through virtue and spiritual knowledge has brought his body into harmony with his soul has become a harp, a flute and a temple of God. [...] a harp by preserving the harmony of the virtues; a flute by receiving the inspiration of the Spirit through divine contemplation; and a temple by becoming a dwelling place of the Logos through the purity of his intellect.<sup>52</sup>

In *Various Texts on Theology, The Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice*, the cosmic and Platonic description of *theosis* is found. Maximus describes *deification* as the encompassing and fulfillment of all times and ages, and of all that exists.<sup>53</sup> He fully describes it in this manner:

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<sup>50</sup> Maximos the Confessor, "Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God: Written for Thalassios," in *Philokalia* Vol. 2, Second Century, 84, page 158–9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Second Century, 88, page 160.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Second Century, 100, page 163.

<sup>53</sup> Maximos the Confessor, "Various Texts on Theology, The Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice," in *Philokalia* Vol. 2, Fourth Century, 19, page 240.

This encompassing and fulfillment is the union, in the person granted salvation, of his real authentic origin with his real authentic consummation. This union presupposes a transcending of all that by nature is essentially limited by an origin and a consummation. Such transcendence is effected by the almighty and more than powerful *energy* of God, acting in direct and infinite manner in the person found worthy of this transcendence. The action of this divine *energy* bestows a more than ineffable pleasure and joy on him in whom the unutterable and unfathomable union with the divine is accomplished. This, in the nature of things, cannot be perceived, conceived or expressed.<sup>54</sup>

Maximus explains the supranatural divine realities in an *apophatic* manner.

The union itself seems to be impersonal in God's *energy* rather than in relation.

This powerful energy results in a mixing (union) of a person with the divine that is just unutterable and unfathomable.

We notice that there are signs of disjuncture between this description and the earlier descriptions by Maximus: *apophatic*/ *kataphatic*, one who is worthy of this transcendence/ by grace; union through energy that leads to union with the divine/ participating in the divine nature of the Son to ascend to the Father in the Holy Spirit; an unutterable and unfathomable union/ a harmony of virtues in divine contemplation of the pure intellect.

In Maximus, we find a perfect example of how the Eastern concept of salvation takes a diverted approach which, despite the common origin from the church Fathers' locus in the incarnation, ends up in an *apophatic* ascent of union.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The experiential participation in God's energy which constitutes the *deification* of the saints stated by Maximus would be firmly established by Gregory Palamas who greatly influenced the rest of the Eastern orthodox tradition.

b. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359)

*Gregory Palamas* has great authority as a figure in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition.<sup>55</sup> Known as a theologian of the glory of God, Palamas focused on the distinction between the essence and energies of God. Palamas taught that God is known through divine revelation and can be experienced in the life of prayer, *Hesychia*; in which we know the uncreated energies of God while his essence remains unknown.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Palamas outlines three realities instead of two that pertain to God: *οὐσία*/ essence, *ἐνέργειαι*/ energy, and the triad of divine *ὑπόστασις*.<sup>57</sup> Palamas thinks that our being united with God in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17) is understood not in *οὐσία* (that none can participate), but rather with respect to His *energy*, understood as the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup> *Energies* of the divine Spirit are understood as *ad-extra*, but are uncreated and are to be

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Jenson, "A Decision Tree of Colin Gunton's Thinking," in *The Theology of Colin Gunton*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 13, places him on par with Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>56</sup> *EEOC*, s.v. "St. Gregory Palamas."

<sup>57</sup> Gregory Palamas, "Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts," in *Philokalia* Vol. 4, cap.75, page 380.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

indivisibly distinguished from the single and wholly undivided essence of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

Alexis Torrance observes that it is vitally important to Palamas that the *energies* are uncreated (*anarxos*), and are present in his thought by their “indivisibility” from the *ousia*.<sup>60</sup> As a result, Torrance notes of this important derivation based on Palamas’ three realities, that

just as the divine simplicity is not compromised by the οὐσία - ὑπόστασις distinction hammered out by the Cappadocians, so too the οὐσία - ἐνέργειαι distinction does not introduce division within the Godhead.<sup>61</sup>

He then draws the consequences from the above; “the deified person is not made a trinitarian ὑπόστασις, nor is he subsumed in God’s οὐσία, but he is nevertheless made θεός.”<sup>62</sup> Palamas maintains the Creator-creature distinction with his view of the divine simplicity, unity and incomprehensibility of God while at the same time makes possible the *theosis* of the saints by participation through the *energy* of the Spirit.

Another important development that we find in the Eastern orthodox is the emphasis taken on the role of the Spirit as God’s *energy* in one’s salvation, rather than the Son’s role as developed in the Western church. Why does the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., cap. 68, page 377–8.

<sup>60</sup> Alexis Torrance, “Precedents for Palamas’ Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers,” *VC* 63 (2009): 50.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 64.

theological development have taken this direction regarding the Spirit in his divine *energies*? The plausible answer is because the Greek tradition has totally secured Christ's identification with humanity in the incarnation; Thus, they have to ask, "how does salvation come to the saints and not to the whole of mankind?"<sup>63</sup>

John Meyendorff tries to defend the eminent Spirit in Palamas' theology by linking it to Christology through participation in the Eucharistic communion.<sup>64</sup> Meyendorff describes that illumination as the shining of *uncreated* light—the very divinity of Christ—through his humanity which works from within the human soul which has been mingled and exists in Christ, and no longer from without through the intermediaries of the physical eyes like it was in the Mount Tabor transfiguration.<sup>65</sup> But Palamas himself does not link the illumination directly to Christ nor the eucharist; and this *hypostatic* light illumination may be differently experienced from one person to the other.<sup>66</sup> Palamas describes Paul's *visio Dei* account in 2 Corinthians in a speculative manner,

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<sup>63</sup> This may be originated earlier in Origen. Cf. Martien Parmentier, *St. Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Reprinted from *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* Vol. 58 (1976), 59 (1977) and 60 (1978), 47, "The Spirit is subordinated under the Son, because he "sanctifies the saints", a more limited operation than that of the Son, who "works in all rational beings". The Son, in his turn, is subordinated under the Father, who works everywhere in creation." (n.19 Cf. Kreschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, p. 63 and B. Drewery, *Origen and the Doctrine of Grace*, London 1960, p. 170–199.)

<sup>64</sup> John Meyendorff, introduction in *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist, 1983), 19.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, 57. As in the case of Stephen, Moses, or Paul.

He saw absolutely no limit to his vision and to the light which shone round about him; but rather it was as it were a sun infinitely brighter and greater than the universe, with himself standing in the midst of it, having become all eye.<sup>67</sup>

Palamas differentiates between sensible light and the light of the intellect; the saints see both with the sense of sight and with the intellect, which surpasses both sense and intellect in the manner that “God alone knows and those in whom these things are brought to pass.”<sup>68</sup> Palamas’ description of *deification* is Christlike in his two natures:

he remains entirely man by nature in his soul and body, and becomes entirely God in his soul and body through grace, and through the divine radiance of the blessed glory with which he is made entirely resplendent.<sup>69</sup>

Palamas defends *deification* as seeing God in the *hesychasts*, as the occurrence where there is mutual interpenetration between God and the saints, each in their entirety; “[God] embraces [the saints] as the soul embraces the body, enabling them to be in Him as His own members.”<sup>70</sup> This interpenetration then explains the participation in the *energy* of the Spirit as the illuminating light that would be impossible to be sensed by sight or intellect without God himself giving, by

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>68</sup> Gregory Palamas, “The Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defence of Those who Devoutly Practise a Life of Stillness,” in *Philokalia* vol. 4, 424, quoting Gregory of Nazianzus.

<sup>69</sup> Palamas, *Triads*, 109–10.

<sup>70</sup> Palamas, “Declarations” in *Philokalia*, 421.



grace, someone the ability to know it by transcending both his body and soul.

Palamas' account nuances the eminent role of the Spirit in illumination.

c. John Zizioulas (b. 1931)

Some recent Greek Orthodox theologians whose emigration from Russia between World War I and World War II have brought the influence of their teaching to the Western church.<sup>71</sup> In this study we focus particularly on *John Zizioulas*, whose works bear some similarities with Jenson's.

Unlike Maximus or Palamas, whose views have led Greek orthodox tradition to a more spiritual or mystical understanding of *theosis*, Zizioulas contributes by redirecting *theosis* to its Christological locus coupled with the importance of the Eucharist. In his *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Zizioulas states that the being or substance of God has no ontological content apart from communion.<sup>72</sup> He sees love—identified as God's ontological freedom/ supreme ontological predicate—as the mode of existence that “hypostasizes” God or constitutes His being.<sup>73</sup> With ontology being defined in a personal manner, Zizioulas understands *theosis* in a more acceptable manner:

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<sup>71</sup> Meyendorff, introduction in *The Triads*, xiii, mentions Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958) in Paris and himself (John Meyendorff, 1926–1992) in the US. Bray, *God Has Spoken*, 1196, mentions John Zizioulas (b.1931) in the UK. There are still others like Georges Vasilievich Florovsky (1893–1979) in Paris (1920–1949) and New York (1949–1979), or a Romanian, Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993) who remained in his country under the communist regime.

<sup>72</sup> (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 17.

<sup>73</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 46.

*Theosis* means participation not in the nature or substance of God, but in His personal existence. The goal of salvation is that the personal life which is realised in God should also be realized on the level of human existence.<sup>74</sup>

Zizioulas proceeds to see a person as an “image and likeness of God” who can be seen in two modes of existence: *hypostasis of biological existence* and *hypostasis of ecclesial existence*.<sup>75</sup> Christ as a man has no *hypostasis of biological existence*, but rather *hypostasis of the Son of the Trinity*, according to Chalcedon.<sup>76</sup> Defending Cyril’s, contra Leo I, approach to the *hypostatic union* as the starting-point of Christology, Zizioulas identifies Christ’s hypostasis as “perfect man” not seen in his nature, but as freedom and love.<sup>77</sup> So, “God as a person” and “man as a person” are identified in the same manner; as freedom and love that *hypostasizes/* constitutes a person’s being.

Zizioulas steers away from the usage of *energies* (understood substantially in God’s *ad-extra*) to Christ’s *hypostatic* manner that describes the God-world relationship.<sup>78</sup> In the note, Zizioulas puts the blame on modern Orthodox

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 30. See also n.51.

interpreters who fail to see how Maximus and Palamas bridged the gap between created and uncreated being by the Incarnation.<sup>79</sup>

As for the role of the sacraments, baptism is understood by Zizioulas as one's *hypostasis* taking place in the identification of one's *hypostasis* with the Son of God's *hypostasis*,<sup>80</sup> whereas the Eucharist makes the future ontological *hypostasis* of human an *ecclesial* being, realized in the resurrection of Christ, to be tasted and experienced in the present.<sup>81</sup> The work of the Spirit is brought to significance primarily in communion, that "there is no Kingdom of God outside the work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>82</sup> Creaturely truth is a fact in *communion by participation*, in God who is truth as *communion without participation*.<sup>83</sup>

Zizioulas understands the incarnate Christ as the purpose of history.<sup>84</sup> But history itself is understood in three stages, following Maximus, "The things of the Old Testament are shadow (σκιά); those of the New Testament are image (εικών); and those of the future state are truth (ἀλήθεια)."<sup>85</sup> It is not certain whether

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 243 who argues that in the Western theology *theosis* cannot be accepted without reservation due to the conception of union in terms of nature, instead of person. But this is Zizioulas unique standpoint that does not truly or fully represent the Greek tradition. Cf. Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Divine Energies or Divine Personhood: Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas on Conceiving the Transcendent and Immanent God," *MT* 19, no.3 (2003): 358, quoted by Roger Olson, "Deification in Contemporary Theology," *TT* 64 (2007):191; and Pitts, "Theosis," 40.

<sup>80</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 59, 64–5.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 205. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 85, remarks "[t]here is no *theosis* outside the Eucharist, for it is only there that communion and otherness coincide and reach their fullness."

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 99., Maximus, *Sch. in eccl. hier.* 3, 3:2.

Zizioulas' answer can truly satisfy the critic as he himself is aware that the incarnation is somehow a less true reality than Christ's second coming.

In his other work, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Zizioulas brings into focus the possibility of the church or of the human being lies in their relation to the Trinitarian God.<sup>86</sup> *Theosis* has been reshaped by Zizioulas as relational instead of participation in God's glory and other *natural* qualities.<sup>87</sup> The Creator-creature distinction of *theosis*, so as not to be absorbed by the divine nature, is safeguarded in the Chalcedonian two natures in Christ "without confusion".<sup>88</sup> Zizioulas has chosen the better path in his Christology.

### ***1.2.2. Renewed Interest in the Western Tradition***

Before the Palamites revival by the Greek contemporaneous theologians, modern Western tradition's view of *theosis* was seen as a familial metaphor of adoption.<sup>89</sup> Abraham Kuyper, for example, says that "what St. Peter calls "to become

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<sup>86</sup> ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 31, n.51.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 37. This revision comes after Zizioulas' 20 years earlier interpretation wherein he neglected two natures doctrine by Leo I.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Olson, "Deification," 188. In a relatively recent survey of contemporary theologians by Olson, *theosis* has gathered great interest across the denominations: from Catholic theologians of Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Hans Urs von Balthasar; Lutherans Tuomo Mannermaa, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson; Methodist Bruce Marshall, Thomas Oden; Anglican and Episcopalians Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, A. M. Allchin, F. W. Norris; German Reformed Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg; and also Evangelicals Clark Pinnock, Stanley Grenz, Robert Rakestraw, Daniel Clendenin, Veli-Matti Kärkäinen.

partaker of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4) is called in another place, to become *the children of God*.<sup>90</sup> To become children of God does not mean we are the *essential* children of God, rather we are His *adopted* children.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, as the Greek tradition sprang up in the West and became more ecumenical, Western contemporary theologians have started to dig up our own traditions to find the notion and vocabularies of *theosis* that are closer to home.

*i. Augustine on Deification*

Augustine (354–430) undoubtedly is the most authoritative Latin Father who has left his indelible mark on the Western church, whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed. The question at present is whether or not Augustine endorses the notion of *theosis* or *deification* in his writings.

Jenson, who defends *theosis* in his Lutheran tradition, argues that the notion exists in Augustine as *totus christus* (where Christ is viewed totally as the head and body, Christ and His church) but is considered only recently rediscovered after being ignored for quite some time.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps one of the earliest modern interlocutors of Augustine is S. Joseph Cyrillus in his work “*Totus Christus*” in

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<sup>90</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 333.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 334. Cf. Hans Boersma, “Christ and Vision: Puritan and Dutch Reformed Articulations of the Beatific Vision,” in *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 338–346 highlights the ignored “mystical” aspect of Kuyper.

<sup>92</sup> Robert W. Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifried, Paul Metzger and Carl Trueman on Finnish Luther Research,” *WThJ* 65 (2003): 247.

*Saint Augustine's "Enarrationes in Psalmos"*.<sup>93</sup> In a more recent work by David Vincent Meconi, *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (2013), he notes that Augustine also coined his own term, "*totus homo deificatus*" which means "one who is completely and wholly godly," in which, "*deification* is explicated in terms of God's gift and adoption."<sup>94</sup> Hans Boersma's work, however, focuses on another aspect, trying to find in Augustine the theme of seeing God (Matthew 5:8).<sup>95</sup>

As shown by Cyrillus, in various Psalms we can find Augustine's understanding of Christ as the whole, head and body (*caput et corpus*, Ps. 80:1), based on Paul's inspiration in 1 Corinthians 12:27 (Psalm 59:2).<sup>96</sup> The union of Christ and the church results in the mystical body of *totus christus*, where this union is different from the incarnation (the Word and Humanity) or from the union in nature between the Word and the Father.<sup>97</sup> The incarnation itself lies within the corridor of Chalcedon with no monophysite signification despite Augustine's earlier expression of Christ as *homo dominicus*.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> (Trivandrum: St. Joseph's Press, 1966).

<sup>94</sup> (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 107.

<sup>95</sup> Boersma, "Anticipation and Vision: Augustine on Theophanies and Ecstasy," in *Seeing God*, 96–126.

<sup>96</sup> Cyrillus, "*Totus Christus*" in *Saint Augustine's "Enarrationes in Psalmos"*, 16–7, quotes Augustine of Hippo, "Expositions on the Book of Psalms," in *NPNF* 1.8. To number a few: Psalms 18:51, 80:1, 141:3, 63:2, 59:2. Note that the chapters and verses number may be a number lower in the Latin version. Cf. Augustine of Hippo, "On the Catechising of the Uninstructed," *NPNF* 1.3, 19.33, page 304.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Augustine later retracts its use.

Augustine too understands the *theosis theologoumenon* that has its locus in incarnation, for example in Psalm 71:10:

In His person according to His weakness, not according to His power; according to that whereby He had transformed us into Himself, not according to that wherein He had Himself come down. [...] He rose Himself the third day, promised a resurrection at the end of the world. Already there hath gone before the Head, the members are to follow.<sup>99</sup>

In his treatise on *The Trinity* (14.17.23–18.24), Augustine too connects our *deification* to the resurrection of Christ that we too, having been perfected in God's likeness, will be immortal in our body like God the Son. But in having the Son, we too have the Father, as explained by Augustine that "*Finis Christus est* (Psalm 57:2, 46:1)." Christ is not the stepping-stone to the Father, but in attaining Christ's likeness we already share the satisfaction and perfection of the Father. Christ is the End, not in the sense of consummation, but in the sense of perfection.<sup>100</sup>

Cyrillus has interpreted Augustine correctly when seeing that reconciliation bears two aspects: the negative in the forgiveness of sins, and the positive in *deification* (Psalm 50:2).<sup>101</sup> In Psalm 50:2, Augustine does not hesitate to use

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<sup>99</sup> Augustine, "Expositions on the Book of Psalms," 318–9.

<sup>100</sup> Cyrillus, "*Totus Christus*", 32. The translation by A. Cleveland Coxe, "Not as one that consumeth, but one that consummateth..."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 53. Cf. Augustine, "Expositions on the Book of Psalms," 178: "But He that justifieth doth Himself deify, in that by justifying He doth make sons of God."

numerous expressions of *deification* while holding the Creator-creature distinction intact: “[we are] deified of His grace, not born of His substance”; “If we have been made sons of God, we have also been made gods: but this is the effect of Grace adopting, not of nature generating”; “The rest that are made gods, are made by His own Grace, are not born of His Substance, that they should be the same as He, but that by favor they should come to Him, and be fellow-heirs with Christ”; “We are therefore in hope, not yet in substance”; “The Only Son is like Him by birth, we like by seeing. For we are not like in such sort as He, who is the same as He is by whom He was begotten: for we are like, not equal: He, because equal, is therefore like.”

*Deification* then is not a foreign notion in Augustine. It was not so much a prominent theme in his twenty years of labor (400–420 A.D.) *On the Holy Trinity*. Nevertheless it is more obvious in his earliest and parallel work *Exposition on the Book of Psalms* which he preached or had written down for twenty six years from



392–418 A.D.<sup>102</sup> Since Augustine is not just one of the leading voice in the Roman church, but also for the Reformers, we should take heed of his theology.<sup>103</sup>

*ii. Finnish Lutheran Interpretation*

Since the 1980s there has been a rediscovery of reading Luther spearheaded by Tuomo Mannermaa, a Finnish Lutheran theologian.<sup>104</sup> The Finnish Lutheran has rediscovered in Luther its roots regarding deification, after some interaction with the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>105</sup>

Mannermaa notes that “[t]he term *deificatio* and/ or *Vergöttlichung* appears in Luther’s texts more often than the term *theologia crucis*.”<sup>106</sup> Mannermaa shows that Luther’s expression of *Vergöttlichung/ deification* has the same *theologoumenon*

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<sup>102</sup> Sabine McCormack, “Augustine on Scripture and the Trinity,” in *A Companion to Augustine*, eds. by Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (Blackwell, 2012), 398 quotes Hendrikx 1955:11–13, 557–66. Introduction in *St. Augustine on the Psalms*, trans. and annots. Dame Scholastica Hebgin and Dame Scholastica Corrigan (New York: Paulist Press, 1960), 17–19.

<sup>103</sup> John Paul II, *Oriental Lumen* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 5. Roman church acknowledges the Greek Orthodox church’s interpretation of 2 Peter 1:4 as the goal of communion with the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

<sup>104</sup> Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ present in Faith: Luther's view of Justification* (1989), ed. and trans. Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), Robert W. Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifried, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman on Finnish Luther Research,” *WThJ* 65 (2003): 245–50, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Deification View,” in *Justification: Five Views*, eds. Paul Rhodes Eddy, James K. Beilby, and Steven E. Enderlein, Spectrum Multiview Book Series (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 221. Risto Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness: Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue, 1959–1994, KK* 40 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997). Carl R. Trueman, “Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning? A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki Circle,” *WThJ* 65 (2003): 231–44.

<sup>105</sup> Luther use the term “*Vergottung*” in his *Galatians Commentary* and he referred to the justified Christian as a divine creature (*ein göttliche Creatur*). See Bruce Marshall, “Justification as Declaration and Deification,” *IJST* 4, no.1 (2002): 3–28, cited by Olson, “Deification,” 186.

<sup>106</sup> “Theosis As a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” *PE* 4, no. 1 (Wint 1995): 37.

of *theosis*: “[...] For the word becomes flesh precisely so that the flesh may become word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. [...] in order to impart what is his to us.”<sup>107</sup>

The Lutheran *theologoumena* in the *Formula of Concord* (1577) choose to differentiate between the “righteousness of faith” (justification) and “eternal and essential righteousness” (thus the indwelling of God/ *inhabitatio Dei*). However, Mannermaa claims Luther sees differently; that in the righteousness of faith we receive not only the work of Christ, but also the person of Christ.<sup>108</sup> Christ is both the *favor* (forgiveness of sins) and the *donum* (God himself, present in the fullness of his essence).<sup>109</sup> That is why the rediscovery is captured in the slogan *in ipsa fide Christus adest* (in faith itself Christ is really present).<sup>110</sup> As such, justifying faith is understood as participation in the person of Christ, hence in the essence of God.<sup>111</sup> *Inhabitatio Dei* is a future reality but already a real participation in Christ through faith. In this understanding, Luther polemicizes against the scholastic teaching *fides caritate formata* understood as works righteousness, and changes it to *fides Christo formata*.<sup>112</sup> So, Mannermaa understands Lutheran’s justification not

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 43. The *theologoumenon* can be found in Irenaeus.

<sup>108</sup> Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 3–4.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Also, Braaten and Jenson, *Union with Christ*, viii.

<sup>111</sup> Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 16–18.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 26–28.

only in the sense of imputation, as *Christus pro nobis*, but also as an impartation of *Christus in nobis*.<sup>113</sup>

There are dissenting voices to this Finnish Lutheran “rediscovery” view;<sup>114</sup> nevertheless this finding initiates a rethinking of *theosis* within the western tradition. Unlike the Eastern church, the Western church like the German Lutheran has gone through the Enlightenment era that shaped her theology into a stereotype of a post-Kantian reading, encumbered with its mere “ethical relation”.<sup>115</sup> It is in such a context that Jenson showed his appreciation for Finnish Lutherans.

### *iii. Reformed on Deification*

*Deification* has been a fiery issue among theologians within the reformed tradition.<sup>116</sup> There are two polarizing views: one group claims that Calvin endorsed a notion of *deification* compatible with the Eastern Orthodox;<sup>117</sup> and

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<sup>113</sup> Braaten and Jenson, *Union with Christ*, viii. Cf. Risto Saarinen, “Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue: A Comparative Perspective,” *PE* 5, no. 2 (1996): 212.

<sup>114</sup> For example, Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 685–6.

<sup>115</sup> Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Roland Herbert Bainton, *The Reformation of the sixteenth century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 125. Cf. Carl Mosser, “An Exotic Flower? Calvin and the Patristic Doctrine of Deification,” in *Reformation Faith: Exegesis and Theology in the Protestant Reformations*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), 48, also identifies François Wendel and Wilhelm Niesel in the same position as Bainton.

<sup>117</sup> See James Weis, “Calvin versus Osiander on Justification,” *ACC* 5: 353–369 ; Trevor Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,” *SJT* 42 (1989): 67–84; Julie Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in

another group totally rejects this view, seeing incompatibilities with the non-negotiable principles in the Reformed tradition.<sup>118</sup> Both positions agree at the very least that Calvin holds to his view of participation in the life of God; it is described as, “being one with the Lord as the everlasting blessedness.”<sup>119</sup>

Carl Mosser was among the first who argued for the presence of *deification* as concept and imagery in Calvin’s theology.<sup>120</sup> Jonathan Slater responded and thought Mosser had interpreted falsely, or at least overstated Calvin’s position.<sup>121</sup> Yang-Ho Lee then reassessed these two positions and concluded that Calvin distinguished our partaking of the divine nature, contra Osiander, not in

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God,” *IJST* 6, no. 2 (2004): 169–84; J. Todd Billings, “United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification,” *HTR* 98, no. 3 (2005): 315–34; Yang-Ho Lee, “Calvin on deification: A Reply to Carl Mosser and Jonathan Slater,” *SJT* 63, no. 3 (2010): 272–84; A. J. Ollerton, “Quasi Deificari: Deification in the Theology of John Calvin,” *WThJ* 73 (2011): 273–54; Heleen E. Zorgdrager, “On the Fullness of Salvation: Tracking theosis in Reformed Theology,” in *JRT* 8 (2014): 357–381. From a Lutheran perspective of Calvin, see Timothy J. Wengert, “Philip Melancthon and John Calvin against Andreas Osiander: Coming to Terms with Forensic Justification,” in *Calvin and Luther: the Continuing Relationship*, Refo500 Academic Studies 12, ed. R. Ward Holder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan Slater, “Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Reply to Carl Mosser,” *SJT* 58, no. 1 (2005): 39–58. Bruce McCormack, “Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,” in *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge Zur Gotteslehre. Festschrift für Eberhard Jüngel zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. Ingolf U. Dalferth, Johannes Fischer, Hans-Peter Grosshans, 347–374 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). See also Andrew McGowan, “Colossians 3: Deification, Theosis, Participation, or Union with Christ?,” in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 154–70.

<sup>119</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 3.25.10. Hereafter abbreviated *Inst.* by book, chapter and section.

<sup>120</sup> “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,” *SJT* 55, no. 1 (2002): 36–57.

<sup>121</sup> “Salvation as participation in the humanity of the Mediator in Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion: a reply to Carl Mosser,” *SJT* 58, no. 1 (2005): 39–58.

“divine essence” but in “divine kind.”<sup>122</sup> Mosser later on argues convincingly the fact of Calvin’s familiarity with *deification*.<sup>123</sup>

McGowan surveys various terms which are used to represent *theosis* in Calvin or Reformed theology.<sup>124</sup> Mosser prefers to use *deification* as the term attributed to Calvin’s usage in the commentary on 2 Peter 1:4.<sup>125</sup> Myk Habets, prefers to use *theosis*, and not *deification*, claiming that *theosis* in Calvin is present as a “theme” and not as a “doctrine”.<sup>126</sup> For his own proper use, Habets assents to T. F. Torrance’s “union with Christ”, understood as our engrafting into Christ which involves more than imputation understood in an extrinsic manner.<sup>127</sup> The third term “participation” is endorsed by a number of theologians such as T. F. Torrance, Julie Canlis, J. Todd Billings and Bruce McCormack.<sup>128</sup> In this study,

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<sup>122</sup> Yang-Ho Lee, “Calvin on deification: a reply to Carl Mosser and Jonathan Slater,” *SJT* 63, no. 3 (2010): 272–284.

<sup>123</sup> Carl Mosser, “An Exotic Flower? Calvin and the Patristic Doctrine of Deification,” in *Reformation Faith: Exegesis and Theology in the Protestant Reformations*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), 38–56.

<sup>124</sup> McGowan, “Colossians 3”.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–4.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 164–5. See Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 14–15.

<sup>127</sup> Habets, *Theosis*.

<sup>128</sup> McGowan, “Colossians 3,” 165–9.

*theosis* and *deification* are used interchangeably, while participation is implied in Calvin's terminology of "union with Christ".<sup>129</sup>

Two of the most recent works which represent views either against or endorse *deification* are found in Bruce McCormack (2017) and Hans Boersma (2018).

McCormack argues the non-negotiable doctrines in Reformed theology are "justification and atonement" and then "Christology and sacramentology".<sup>130</sup>

Here McCormack argues for a forensic *extra nos* understanding of justification, that is as imputation that has no *ontic* significance.<sup>131</sup> McCormack has interpreted Calvin in a rather restricted sense of Western theology. Western theology interprets Christology more along the lines of Christ's work of salvation (with its focus on the cross) in which his natures/ life is viewed in supporting roles; Eastern theology interprets in the opposite way, that Christ's work of salvation is found in the natures/ life of Christ, that is, from the point of view of the incarnation. Therefore, whereas the emphasis of Western theology is more on imputation, Eastern theology is more focused on impartation which secures

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<sup>129</sup> Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 59, 63. See Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), appendix: References to Union with Christ in the 1559 *Institutes* and Other Selected Calvin Texts, where he lists: "Engrafting", "Communion", "Fellowship", "In the Spirit", "Mysterious/Incomprehensible", "Not a mixture of substances", "One flesh/spiritual marriage", "Spiritual union", "Mystical Union", "Growing together/becoming one", "Union with God", "Adoption", "Regeneration", and "Partakers of Christ".

<sup>130</sup> Bruce L. McCormack, "What is Non-Negotiable in any Theology that wishes to be 'Reformed'?" *A Lecture Delivered to the 17th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference* (Aug. 30, 2017), 4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

salvation. Calvin does not fit into one of these restrictive theological boxes, he affirms justification without jeopardizing the significance of the incarnation.<sup>132</sup> As Calvin himself remarks, “[Christ’s] whole *life* was nothing but a sort of perpetual *cross*.”<sup>133</sup> This may be the reason why McCormack argues for the “Christology and sacramentology” doctrine to ease the unbearable tension of a restricted view of salvation in justification and his suggested foreign reinterpretation of Calvin’s view of *participation* “in Christ” as *extra nos*.<sup>134</sup>

Second, McCormack tries to defend Calvin’s position within his “Calvinist” interpretation based on some confessions, arguably influenced by Calvin.<sup>135</sup> However, Calvin has a rather lax view towards the ancient creeds, and even towards the confessions drafted in his own time. This can be seen in: his resistance to blindly subscribing to the words instead of understanding, as in *the Athanasian creed, the Nicene creed*; his willingness to sign *the Augsburg Confession Variata* (1540); and his compromise in drafting *the Consensus Tigurinus*.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 2.14.5. Cornelis van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God: A Diptych* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 212.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 3.8.1

<sup>134</sup> McCormack, “What is non-negotiable?”.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, *the French Confession* (co-authored by Calvin); *the Belgic Confession* (which was influenced by the French); and *the Second Helvetic Confession* (drafted in 1561 and published in 1566).

<sup>136</sup> References to Calvin’s account to these creeds are to be dealt later, except for *Augsburg Confession*. The *variata* has been modified so that it fits Calvin’s interpretation. However, Calvin himself can easily use councils as part of his argumentations. Anthony N. S. Lane, introduction in John Calvin’s *The bondage and liberation of the will: a defence of the orthodox doctrine of human choice against Pighius* ed. Anthony N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Baker, 2002), xxiii, mentions three Councils: of Carthage, Milevis, and Orange.

McCormack rightly points out the Creator-creature distinction as the non-negotiable principle that the Reformed hold on to. This is true even in the two natures of Christ himself, that is the *extra-Calvinisticum*; unlike the Lutheran with its interpretation of *Communicatio Idiomatum genus maiestaticum* teaching.<sup>137</sup>

Boersma in *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition*, picks up the theme of the *visio Dei* in his view of eternal blessedness. Boersma argues that this manner of blessedness is embraced by Calvin, the puritans and even by the more this-worldly tendency of the Dutch Reformed Neo-Calvinist, Abraham Kuyper. Overall, the book shows the continuity in the tradition of the church from the early fathers, through the medieval period and into modern protestant thought.

Boersma contributes to the discussion by offering a compelling interpretation of Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”.<sup>138</sup> He describes what should appear obvious; Jesus as the subject of the first and second part of his saying.<sup>139</sup> Jesus is the very definition of “pure in heart” and united to Christ we are enabled to see who God is *in Jesus*; in Jesus, means and end converge.<sup>140</sup> Boersma develops and incorporates Nicholas of Cusa’s insight, “it is only God’s gaze in Christ that calls creation into being and sustains it in its

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. Colin E. Gunton's book-chapter “Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson: An Encounter and a Convergence,” in *TTC*, 80–93. Carl E. Braaten, “The Person of Jesus Christ,” in *CD* 1, 506–11.

<sup>138</sup> Boersma, *Seeing God*, 413.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*



created form.”<sup>141</sup> Boersma’s hypothesis is that God’s providential vision of us in Christ will transfigures our body and soul in an eternal progression of face-to-face vision of God.<sup>142</sup> Boersma’s work encompasses more than just the Reformed tradition, nevertheless his treatment of Calvin’s face-to-face Vision in chapter 9 is an interesting and complementary approach which is different from the one taken in this study. Furthermore, there is a research gap in Boersma’s work, as pointed out by some reviewers of his book; that is the absence of Luther and the Lutheran tradition.<sup>143</sup> This study on Jenson's and Calvin's theologies is a perfect fit.

It is clear that an assessment whether *deification* is compatible with the Reformed tradition is needed. In order to do justice with the pluriform reformed theologies, we look instead to the common root of Reformed theology found in the works of John Calvin as one of its major proponents.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 395.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>143</sup> William C. Weinrich, “Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition,” *CTQ* 83, no. 1–2 (Jan. 2019): 188. Mark C. Mattes, “Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition,” *LQ* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 365–6. Logan Craig Koontz, “Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition,” *SoJT* 61, no. 2 (Spr 2019): 227.

### 1.3. The Historical Contextualization of Robert Jenson and John Calvin

In this section we will see the theological impetuses that formed and shaped Jenson's and Calvin's theologies. The design of this study commenced in the year of Jenson's death (†2017). In his lifetime, the publication of his magnum opus *Systematic Theology* in two volumes were so appreciated by Wolfhart Pannenberg who calls him as “one of the most original and knowledgeable theologians of our time.”<sup>144</sup> In his memoirs, Jenson is recalled as the most significant (systematic) American theologian since Jonathan Edwards.<sup>145</sup>

#### 1.3.1. *Impetus in Robert Jenson's Theology*

Back in 2007, Robert William Jenson presented his theological autobiography, marking his retirement and also the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his theological training.<sup>146</sup> In those nine pages, he strolls through his life to show the influences, traditions and theologians that moulded and shaped him. Seven years later, he compiled some of those theological traditions into just a few passages that sum up his *theology as a revisionary metaphysics*.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Systematic Theology: Volumes I & II,” *First Things* (May 2000), [www.firstthings.com/article/2000/05/systematic-theology-volumes-i-amp-ii](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2000/05/systematic-theology-volumes-i-amp-ii) (accessed Oct. 25, 2018).

<sup>145</sup> Carl E. Braaten, Scott Jones, and Gerald McDermott acknowledge this fact in their memoirs of Jenson (†2017). See [www.e-ccet.org/robert-w-jenson/](http://www.e-ccet.org/robert-w-jenson/) (accessed Nov 6, 2018). David Bentley Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson,” *First Things* (Oct. 2005), [www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson) (accessed Nov. 6, 2018). Stanley Hauerwas, “Only Theology Overcomes Ethics; or, Why ‘Ethicists’ Must Learn from Jenson,” in *TTC*, 252–268 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 264.

<sup>146</sup> Jenson, “A Theological Autobiography to Date,” *Dialog* 46, no. 1 (2007): 46–54. He entered Luther College in 1947.

<sup>147</sup> Jenson, preface to *TRM*.

There are several factors that contribute to Jenson's eventual blossoming regarding *theosis*: the eschatological emphasis, his appreciation of the patristic roots that transcend his denominational boundary and drives him to be ecumenical, some philosophical challenges that he faced, and his creative banding of fragments from dismembered theological systems of various theologians across the spectrum of traditions.<sup>148</sup>

*i. Eschatological Emphasis*

Jenson's first theological upbringing was in the Lutheran tradition, which he first studied at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1951. He interacts with reformed theology, even though not the firsthand source in Calvin's but as presented by Karl Barth. In Heidelberg, he wrote a dissertation on *Cur Deus Homo? The Election of Jesus Christ in the Theology of Karl Barth*.<sup>149</sup> Jenson's theological formation was shaped through critical interaction with Barth's in his early years.<sup>150</sup>

In 1968 Jenson recognized the label that he earned as a theologian of hope, though he was not really fond of it, due to his different way of working out

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<sup>148</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1.I: 1.VI.

<sup>149</sup> Carl A. Braaten, "Robert William Jenson—A Personal Memoir," in *TTC*, 2.

<sup>150</sup> In addition to his dissertation that was published in 1959, there are *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963), *God After God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, as Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (1969; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

positions from Pannenberg, Moltmann, Braaten, Altizer, and Sauter.<sup>151</sup> The truth is, Jenson disliked the labels put on him, whether as a theologian of hope, a Barthian, or a Lutheran!<sup>152</sup> Referring to Acts 17:28, Jenson did not mind being labeled a "panentheist", as long as it fits within his revisionary metaphysics theology.<sup>153</sup> The panentheist label makes a rather interesting inquiry as related to the question of the Creator-creature distinction in the overall makeup of *theosis*.

In his revisionary metaphysics project, Jenson leans toward an eschatological emphasis in the Spirit locus. *Theosis* as the eschatological hope however, only started to appear in his writing in 1981.<sup>154</sup> Jenson incubated this notion for another twelve years before he finally wrote an article on *theosis*.<sup>155</sup>

## ii. *An Ecumenical Theologian*

Jenson was also a passionate ecumenist, not only pragmatically, but more so theologically.<sup>156</sup> In his *Systematic Theology*, Jenson's theological position was

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<sup>151</sup> Robert Jenson, preface to *The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); "A Theological Autobiography to Date," 48.

<sup>152</sup> Jenson, *Story and Promise*, vii; Preface to *ST* 1, ix, in his early theological reflection, Jenson found his vocation as a theologian of culture.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Jenson, "Does God Have Time?" in *ETC*, 199, n. 14.

<sup>154</sup> Robert Jenson, "The Doctrine of Justification and the Practice of Counseling," in *ETC*, 113, "The Eastern church's talk about divinization is the message that the final fulfillment of human being is to become not merely spectator but participant in the triune life of God; for it is the *triune* God of which they spoke." *Italic* original.

<sup>155</sup> Robert Jenson, "Theosis," *Dialog* 32, no. 2 (1993): 108–112.

<sup>156</sup> See Robert Jenson, "How My Mind Has Changed: Reversals," *CC* 123, no. 9 (April 2010): 32; "A Theological Autobiography to Date," 52–3, where he was involved in the national Episcopal-Lutheran and the international Catholic-Lutheran dialogues, co-hatching ecumenical schemes.

driven by reinventing its key positions on Orthodox theology.<sup>157</sup> In its explicit ecumenical agenda, Jenson attempted to transcend confessional habits.<sup>158</sup> Earlier in 1984, Jenson with Carl A. Braaten, whom he claimed as his chief theological companion,<sup>159</sup> had written and co-edited a comprehensive systematic theology, *Christian Dogmatics*, with an ecumenical orientation.<sup>160</sup> With the same companion, Jenson started a new journal *Pro Ecclesia - A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* in 1991.<sup>161</sup>

Braaten pointed out that Jenson was engaged with the thought of Catholics (Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar) and Orthodox (John Zizioulas and Vladimir Lossky).<sup>162</sup> There are many common *theologoumena* shared by Jenson and Zizioulas like “freedom and love”, “*anamnesis* and *epiclesis*”, and the notion of the *hypostatic* union of Christ with the church turns into *hypostasis ecclesial existence*, the taking on Cyril’s approach to Christology as the starting point of relational and future-oriented ontology.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1, viii. His order of preference is Orthodox within Western tradition, in which Catholic is espoused, though Reformation is mandated, and Lutheran is preferred when diverging from the Reformed.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>159</sup> Robert Jenson, preface to *Story and Promise*, (1973; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2014), ix.

<sup>160</sup> Robert W. Jenson, preface to “The Triune God,” in *CD*, xvii–xviii.

<sup>161</sup> Jenson, “A Theological Autobiography to Date,” 52.

<sup>162</sup> Carl A. Braaten, “Robert William Jenson: A Personal Memoir,” 4.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985). On *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*, these are common terminologies from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, also known as *Lima Document*, a Christian ecumenical document produced by World Council of Churches in January 1982. These terms are used by Jenson in *CD* published in 1984; Cf. *Story and Promise*, published in 1973, 166–171, the notions are there without the terms.

Jenson extended his ecumenical position to the common Jewish-Christian theology: not merely as an exchange of views, but as a joint reflection on shared theological problems.<sup>164</sup> Yet Jenson was never uncritical. He argued from the common part of scripture of both religions that the God of Jewish Theology is Trinitarian; and that the fundamental difference that separates this religion from Christianity is Jesus' resurrection.<sup>165</sup>

Jenson was also critical of the divided church that theology may be impossible in such a situation; and it has caused the church to live in self-contradiction.<sup>166</sup> He even criticized his own roots, the Lutheran tradition, with its false understanding or misrepresentation of the gospel as "justification by faith";<sup>167</sup> for him the gospel is rather the narrative that makes a promise—the story of Jesus Christ in Israel.<sup>168</sup>

As one who describes himself as a catholicizing Lutheran/ Episcopalian, Jenson had lamented Rome's rejection of *the Joint Declaration* which ends the effort to achieve Catholic/ Reformation reconciliation by consensus-dialogue, though not without proposing the possibility of accommodating respective

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<sup>164</sup> Jenson, "How My Mind Has Changed," 31. Andrew W Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection: The God of Israel in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

<sup>165</sup> Robert Jenson, "What Kind of God Can Make a Covenant?," in *Covenant and Hope: Christian and Jewish Reflections*, eds. Robert W. Jenson and Eugene B. Korn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>166</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1, vii.

<sup>167</sup> Jenson, "How My Mind Has Changed," 32.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

doctrinal teaching.<sup>169</sup> Jenson was critical towards *the Vatican's Response*; for him, “theology – is not the reporting of goals, but the proposing of propositions to achieve them.”<sup>170</sup> That was the reason Jenson had kept doing theology, which he was thankful can be done, despite the divided church, in view of the anticipated one church.<sup>171</sup>

### *iii. Philosophical Challenges*

Jenson articulates his theology in response to the Enlightenment, including post-Enlightenment challenges that appear to firmly hold on to the adage “the finite is not capable of the infinite.”<sup>172</sup> In particular, Jenson criticizes three figures: Kant, whose “religion within the limits of reason alone” produces Jesus as a moral teacher; Schleiermacher, who locates religion in dependency of feeling or experience which produces a Jesus who is divine by virtue of having the perfect consciousness of God; and Hegel, who constructs a Trinitarian Christology in which the overcoming (*Aufhebung* in the sense of *Versöhnung*/reconciliation) is actualized between the Father and the Son by the Spirit.<sup>173</sup> In Hegel's scheme, the

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<sup>169</sup> Jenson, “A Theological Autobiography to Date,” 53. Robert Jenson, “On the Vatican's “Official Response” to the Joint Declaration on Justification,” *PE* 7, no. 4 (1998): 404.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Jenson, “Reflections on the Lutheran-Reformed Proposal for Full Communion,” *PE* 1, no. 1 (1992): 19.

<sup>171</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1, viii.

<sup>172</sup> Robert Jenson, introduction to *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>173</sup> Jenson, *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology*, 8–9; “A Theological Autobiography to Date,” 49. Though Jenson fairly criticizes Schleiermacher and Hegel in their reactions to Kant, he is more inclined to Hegel's solution as represented by Pannenberg in the view of history as a whole.

Father is infinite and distinct from the Son whose finitude is like the other creatures.

Kant in his notion of transcendental unity of apperception in *Critique of Pure Reason* has presupposed space and time as *a priori* in our human mind, thus as “pure reason”.<sup>174</sup> Kant's phrase “*Bedingungen der Möglichkeit*” is one that Jenson familiarly employs as “conditions of possibility” throughout his works. Jenson seeks to criticize and challenge this *a priori* in Kant's epistemological validation. As we will see, Jenson's *revisionary metaphysic* changes the conditions of possibility not on the human mind nor space and time, but even space-time itself has its conditions of possibility in the triune God. He did so with the help of Hegel whose philosophy is a reaction to the problem of duality in Kant's philosophy.<sup>175</sup>

It is not a dishonoring thing to describe Jenson as a critical Hegelian theologian.<sup>176</sup> Jenson showed his deep appreciation for Hegel when he, as a

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<sup>174</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 222 (B122). “[...] space and time are thus pure intuitions that contain *a priori* the conditions of the possibility of objects as appearances,[...]”. Cf. Frank Hartmann, *Medienphilosophie: Vorlesung 1.3. Kants Subjektphilosophie* (2003) <https://homepage.univie.ac.at/frank.hartmann/Vorlesung/ws03.htm> (accessed Oct 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

<sup>175</sup> See Nicholas Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 21ff. Kant's transcendental idealism that results in dual opposition is viewed by Hegel as pairs which are triadic. Jenson was not the first in his metaphysic revision, but carries on from Barth whose work does not start with prolegomena, but the triune doctrine of revelation.

<sup>176</sup> This would of course be different from the pejorative use by George Hunsinger, “Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology: A Review Essay,” *SJT* 55, no.2 (2002): 161–200. Stephen John Wright and David Bruner assent that Jenson's problem is that he is not Hegelian enough. See section 4.3.5.



graduate student in Germany, first learnt about him from Wolfhart Pannenberg.<sup>177</sup> But Jenson had some reservations regarding Hegel, especially of his view of the end, as highlighted by Pannenberg: for Hegel history ends as a timeless rationality of Spirit.<sup>178</sup> In fact, Jenson regrets Hegel's lack of disposition: "Despite his grandiloquent talk of *Geist*, he like most Western theology did not make the biblical Spirit's role decisive for his construal of deity."<sup>179</sup> The label "Hegelian" metaphysics, that Jenson employs, does not necessarily carry a pejorative sense, because Hegel's philosophy is an overcoming of Kant's severe disjunction of God and creatures; one that has led to the secularism of the modern world. In fact, it serves as a viable option to the commonly accepted Platonic dualistic metaphysics, which Jenson critically remarks as an intrusion of Greek philosophy into Christian theology.

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<sup>177</sup> Robert Jenson, "Second Thoughts about Theologies of Hope (2000)," in *TRM*, 42–5. Jenson and Pannenberg show deep mutual respect towards each other's works. Jenson appreciates Pannenberg's 1961 *Revelation as History*. See *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology*, 148. However, in 1995 Jenson notes the less radical approach of Pannenberg in his conception of time and eternity. Cf. Jenson, "Parting Ways," *First Things* (May 1995), [www.firstthings.com/article/1995/05/001-parting-ways](http://www.firstthings.com/article/1995/05/001-parting-ways) (accessed April 30, 2020). As to Jenson's critical engagement with Hegel, this can be seen as an appreciation. A relation that he notes too exists in Pannenberg: "For all his [Pannenberg's] sometimes pointed critique, he was at home with and indeed loved these thinkers [Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Hegel]. When he disagreed with any of them, it was in the way that they disagreed with each other."

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 42. Hegel applies historical development scheme in art as well, from *Darstellung*/ presentation, then religious imagery of unclear concepts as *Vorstellungen*/ representations, which will find their realization in *Geist* as *Begriff*/ a concrete, infinite reason. See Kenneth R. Westphal, "Hegel's Phenomenological Method and Analysis of Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Kenneth R. Westphal (printed in Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 10; and Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 467, 480.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

Jenson is aware of this acute problem in theology, and he reacts by adopting the Hegelian concern to take history seriously.<sup>180</sup> In Jenson's perspective, Hegel's philosophy has no theological interlocutor, or perhaps can be seen as already as theological as it was "trinitarian".<sup>181</sup> Jenson employs the Hegelian historical concern with his trinitarian structure while at the same time being critical towards Hegel.<sup>182</sup> We can find Jenson's brilliance employing Hegel in his revision the Greek Platonic ideals of truth, goodness and beauty in a historical trinitarian manner.<sup>183</sup>

Since Jenson is a critical Hegelian,<sup>184</sup> it is important for us to understand what Hegel means by *Aufhebung* (sublation).<sup>185</sup> Charles Taylor identifies this term *Aufhebung* in Hegel as a dialectical transition in which a lower stage is both

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. Justo L. González, "Hegel's System in Protestant Theology," *The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 of *The Story of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985), 289.

<sup>181</sup> One could say that Karl Marx was the one who most successfully adopted Hegel's thesis of *Aufhebung* (sublation) in consciousness, albeit not in theology but in a materialistic sense of class struggle that resulted in the bloody revolutions of Communism in the twentieth century. Jenson "Second Thoughts," 39, in fact makes a brief comparison between the Marxist eschatology and the Christian eschatology.

<sup>182</sup> Jenson, "Second Thoughts," 38–49.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Boersma, "Philosophy and Vision: Plato, Plotinus, and the Christian Faith," in *Seeing God*, 45–75, who presents the ideals in the Greek philosophers. See Jenson's creative re-articulation of these ideals in section 2.1.1.ii.b.

<sup>184</sup> See Stephen John Wright, "Restlessly Thinking Relation: Robert Jenson's Theological Uses of Hegel" in *Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 140–161. David Bruner, "Jenson, Hegel and the Spirit of Recognition," *IJST* 21, no. 3 (29 Jul 2019): 314–335. Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection*, 209 quotes Jenson from *The Knowledge of Things Hoped For*, 233: "Hegel's only real fault was that he confused himself with the last judge; but that is quite a fault."

<sup>185</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), IV. a, ¶178–¶196.

annulled and preserved in a higher one.<sup>186</sup> It is the state of becoming that has mediated the previous state of being and nothing. “It is a non-being but as a *result* which had its origin in a being. It still has ... *in itself* the *determinateness from which it originates*.”<sup>187</sup> *Aufhebung* has a twofold meaning: to preserve or maintain and to cause to cease or put an end to.<sup>188</sup> Thus, something is removed from its immediacy and so from an existence which is open to external influences, in order to preserve it.<sup>189</sup> In becoming, being that was being and nothing that was nothing are now as coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be.<sup>190</sup> It is a process of negation *and* preservation at one and the same time.<sup>191</sup> When something is *Aufgehoben* (sublated), it is deprived of its independence and brought into “unity with its opposite”.<sup>192</sup> It carries everything along with it.<sup>193</sup> Thus, because of non-abolishment of both distinctions, this can be identified as “reconciliation” (*Versöhnung*).<sup>194</sup> Jenson too carries the sublation insight into his triune

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<sup>186</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; repr., 2003), 48.

<sup>187</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), 199.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>194</sup> Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 48.

construction of history: “The notion that thesis and antithesis are sublated by and into a new future, is precisely the biblical point.”<sup>195</sup>

Fast forwarding to the post-Enlightenment era, Jenson views nihilism as the philosophical challenge that the church has to face. Jenson then aims to present the relevance of the gospel for the present nihilistic culture or society.<sup>196</sup> At the same time, he addresses the issue about ecumenicity of the church;<sup>197</sup> These are his two chief agendas. The assimilation of *theosis* as the *telos* in salvation fits nicely in both.

Brought about by postmodernism, nihilism is defined as hopelessness caused by the mere negation of faith in progress.<sup>198</sup> Postmodernism is a reaction against the rationalism of the scientific and technocratic world<sup>199</sup> – that is, modernism, which attempts to live in a universal story without a universal story teller.<sup>200</sup> Nihilism is the only alternative to faith in God.<sup>201</sup> Jenson saw that the threat of nihilism’s advent has been the chief spiritual determinant to life in the West since

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<sup>195</sup> Jenson, “Second Thoughts,” 44.

<sup>196</sup> *ST* 1, Preface: III. Also *ST* 2.V: 18.II.

<sup>197</sup> *ST* 1, Preface: IV.

<sup>198</sup> Robert Jenson, “How the World Lost Its Story,” in *TRM*, 59. Also Robert Jenson, “Hope, the Gospel, and the Liberal Arts,” in *ETC*, 182. Cf. Clyde Leonard Manschreck, “Nihilism in the twentieth century: a view from here,” *Church History* 45, no. 1 (Mar. 1976): 85–96.

<sup>199</sup> Robert Jenson, “What is a Post-Christian?” in *The Strange New Word of the Gospel: Re-Evangelizing in the Postmodern World*, eds. Robert W. Jenson and Carl E. Braaten (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), viii.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. also in Jenson, “How the World Lost Its Story,” 54–5.

<sup>201</sup> Jenson, “Second Thoughts,” 48.

the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>202</sup> However, it has not come to full fruition yet because despite massive secularization a wholly secular world has not been realized.<sup>203</sup>

In unmasking the inconsistency of nihilism, Jenson writes “Can we have a story?”<sup>204</sup> Our lives story is not a story of just the church, or other aspects of creation, but the meta (in a superlative degree) narrative of Triune God’s story, the story of God and His creation. It is a story that is not oppressive à la modernism, nor nihilistic à la post-modernism, but rather a story of “love for the good”.<sup>205</sup> This story, like other stories, will have not just an end but “The end”; *theosis*, which is music.<sup>206</sup>

It is in this context that the *theosis* of the Eastern tradition catalysed the Western church to escape the clutch of Post-Kantian theology.

#### *iv. Creative Theological Constructions*

Earlier we described Jenson as a critical Hegelian, but one important note is that this does not mean he has no commitment to the biblical story (which he takes seriously), nor that there are no other influences. As mentioned in his *Systematic*

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<sup>202</sup> Stated in 1995 in Preface to *ETC*, then in 1997 in Preface to *ST* 1.

<sup>203</sup> In 2002, “What is a Post-Christian?,” vii.

<sup>204</sup> Robert Jenson, “Can We Have a Story (2000),” in *TRM*, 64.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>206</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 35

*Theology*, in order to construct a comprehensive systematic theology, one has to reuse the fragments of every theological system dismembered earlier.<sup>207</sup>

Working on his lifelong project of revising metaphysics, Jenson retraced his theological path, his repentance of the suppositions of Hegelian metaphysics, his awareness of Thomas Aquinas' revision of Aristotle's doctrine of creation, and his revision based on the Lutheran Johannes Brenz's revision of the whole structure of ontology around the maxim *finitum capax infiniti*.<sup>208</sup> He was also indebted to Karl Barth with his massive Christological metaphysics, to the Cappadocian fathers with their eschatological narrative, and finally to Jonathan Edwards who revised the Enlightenment project and turned to the vision of the Trinity.<sup>209</sup> As a trinitarian theologian, when Jenson worked out *The Triune Identity*, owes the theological influence not from Barth, but from Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria and Maximus.<sup>210</sup>

On *theosis*, Jenson agrees wholeheartedly with the rediscovery of Luther by the Finnish Lutheran, Tuomo Mannermaa.<sup>211</sup> Jenson appreciates him for uncovering the ignored Lutheran tradition: of "justification [as] "a mode of deification".<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> *ST* 1.I: 1.VI.

<sup>208</sup> Jenson, preface to *TRM*, vii.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, viii. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>210</sup> Jenson, "A Theological Autobiography to Date," 54.

<sup>211</sup> See *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*.

<sup>212</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

Mannermaa notes Luther *theosis theologoumenon* in the *Commentary on Galatians*:

“By faith the human person becomes God.”<sup>213</sup> Jenson opines there is no distinction between the Eastern church’s notion of *theosis* and the Western church’s notion of the *visio Dei* in Thomas Aquinas and Philip Melancthon; these are but different evocations of the same expectation.<sup>214</sup> He further adds the influence of Jonathan Edwards, “Deification and vision – both are participation in a *life* with whose activity we cannot keep pace.”<sup>215</sup> This is a recurring idea of Gregory of Nyssa’s *epektasis* which Jenson redefines as temporal infinity.<sup>216</sup>

It is noteworthy that ever since the publication of Jenson’s *Systematic Theology*, no in-depth response to his conception of *theosis* has been written.<sup>217</sup> Surely more

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid. A note to be taken is that the later Luther increasingly emphasized the forensic aspect of justification in comparison with the early Luther. See Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 680.

<sup>214</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.III.

<sup>215</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.V; *ST* 2.VII: 33.III.

<sup>216</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.II; 1.III: 13.IV, “God’s deity is *temporal* infinity.”

<sup>217</sup> Works that assess Jenson’s other aspects of theology: Anne Hendrik Verhoef, “Alfa en Omega: ‘N Studie in Die Trinitariese Denke van Robert Jenson” (PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2008), <https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/1346>, on God and time; Stephen John Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics: A Theology of Beauty in Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), on Aesthetic; Scott R. Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), on the doctrine of God; Sang Hoon Lee, *Trinitarian Ontology and Israel in Robert W. Jenson’s Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2016), and Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection*, share the same interest in looking at the post-supersessionistic Jenson’s Trinitarian theology of Israel, and her God; Chris E. W. Green in *The End is Music: A Companion to Robert W. Jenson’s Theology* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018) extracts and summarizes Jenson’s theology, yet Jenson’s own words are better in *A Theology in Outline: Can These Bones Live?* transcr., and ed. Adam Eitel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

work needs to be done to one of the most creative Trinitarian theologians in recent times.

### ***1.3.2. Impetus in John Calvin's Theology***

We will look at the possibility of Calvin received *theosis* tradition from the church Fathers. We will also see his struggle in unifying the reformation parties concerning the divisive doctrine of the Lord's Supper; which is not a novel idea found in the more recent ecumenical movement.<sup>218</sup> Then, with a brief description of Calvin's contemporary struggle of religious persecution, this situation shapes his view on eschatology; a locus that sometimes fails to get its proper appreciation.

#### *i. A Patristic Student*

It is well-known that the beloved Augustine has been an authoritative figure in Calvin's theology. But what about other Fathers? Anthony N. S. Lane has contributed a great deal in providing this uneasy construction of theological and literary relations in *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*.<sup>219</sup> We will however focus our attention on Irena Backus, *Calvin and the Greek Fathers* whose work has been discussed by Lane as well, so we will supplement Backus with Lane when necessary.

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<sup>218</sup> It is in chapter 4 that we will go in depth to see how the Supper in particular is important to Calvin's understanding of our union with God.

<sup>219</sup> (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).



Backus says that it would be inappropriate to consider Calvin as a patristic scholar.<sup>220</sup> However, Backus shows us how Calvin uses the Fathers despite his limited *corpus*.<sup>221</sup> Calvin's appreciation for both the Greek and Latin Fathers is shown in the preface of his *Reply to Pighius*: Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine for the Latins; Chrysostom, Origen, Athanasius, Basil, Cyril of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus for the Greeks.<sup>222</sup> Among the Latin Fathers, Calvin places Chrysostom first, then follows Cyril.<sup>223</sup> Calvin adopts his austere look on life which involves the ascetic life based on Cyril's interpretation of Genesis 3, a disciplinary model of the consistory, to admonish and excommunicate especially in the administration of the Lord's Supper, and Cyril's aspiration to the angelic life.<sup>224</sup> In his dispute with Servetus, Calvin is forced to appeal to the ante-Nicene Fathers Irenaeus (Greek), and Tertullian (Latin), with Justin and Origen not explicitly mentioned.<sup>225</sup> But in the *Institutes*, Calvin affirms the doctrine of the Trinity more from Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, but mainly his arguments are based on scriptural exegesis.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Irena Backus, "Calvin and the Greek Fathers," in *Continuity and Change, The Harvest of Late-Medieval and Reformation History*, eds. Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 253.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 259–63.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 267–8.

In Backus' observation, Irenaeus is the only ante-Nicene Father that Calvin puts great interest in and makes use of;<sup>227</sup> this highlights the view that Calvin is aware of the *deification theologoumenon* which is repeated by Athanasius, Augustine, and Luther. In fact, Calvin himself has already paraphrased the *theologoumenon* in the *Institutes* 2.14.5 which shares the same *soteriological concern* of Athanasius, "'Yet Christ had to be above them [angels who are called "sons of God"] in rank in order to reconcile them to the Father. [...] applying it also to mankind."<sup>228</sup>

One important note should be made, that Calvin was not a blind subscriber to ancient creeds nor confessions. Benjamin B. Warfield notes this in Calvin's resistance to Peter Caroli's misleading charge against Calvin's view of the Trinity due to his unwillingness to subscribe *the Athanasian creed*.<sup>229</sup> It is well accepted that Calvin's approach in his theological work is more towards a constant addition and rearrangement of his *Institutes*, informed by his commentaries or homilies.

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. Lane, *Student of the Church Fathers*, 76–7.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 10, 68, 77–81, Lane notes that Athanasius is the sixth-most cited Greek father after Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Cyril, and Chrysostom. Calvin in *Inst.* 2.14.5, discusses the *theosis theologoumenon*: "Men ... become God's sons by free adoption because Christ is the Son of God by nature", the *totus christus*: "they could not actually be sons of God unless their adoption was founded upon the Head".

<sup>229</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, WBBW 5 (Bellingham: Logos, 2008), 206, notes on Calvin that "because he appealed to Scripture only, he refused to be coerced in his expression of the doctrine by present authority or even the formularies of the past." Calvin had a reservation about *the Nicene Creed* as well, which we will see in chapter 3. Cf. Lane, *Student of the Church Fathers*, 78.

ii. *An Ecumenical Reformer*

Calvin was no stranger to polemical writings and disputations. Yet he marched to the drumbeat of a unified Christendom to unite the Protestant front. As a second-generation Reformer, Calvin should be recognized as the ecumenical Reformer. He was assiduous to take the disputed subject of the Supper from *the Marburg Colloquy* of 1529 between Luther and Zwingli, and turn the subject, in 1541, into an exhortation to exercise fraternity and communion.<sup>230</sup>

Calvin was willing to be identified as Lutheran by his Roman Catholic enemy, Albert Pighius.<sup>231</sup> In that 1543 treatise's preface Calvin dedicated the writing to Philip Melanchthon, whom he honored as a most famous man.<sup>232</sup> Calvin had been keeping close contact with Melanchthon, whom he first met during his interim ministry in Strassbourg, to embrace the German Protestant churches.<sup>233</sup> It had partial success, with Calvin signing the *Augsburg Confession variata* (1540) which was revised by Melanchthon to reflect Calvin's interpretation of the Supper.<sup>234</sup> On the other front, Calvin had invested his time since 1546 in reaching

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<sup>230</sup> John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord in Which is Shown Its True Institution, Benefit, and Utility* (1540), in *ToTS*, §55 – §60, the exhortation in §60.

<sup>231</sup> John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: a Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*, Repub. *TSRPRT* 2, 30.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, preface, xiii.

<sup>233</sup> Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 164.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 246.

out by drafting an agreement on the Supper with Bullinger that came to fruition in 1549 with the *Consensus Tigurinus*, which was published later in 1551.<sup>235</sup>

Calvin faced an ecumenical challenge by Andreas Hosemann Osiander (1498–1552).<sup>236</sup> Osiander, who departed from his Lutheran position, wrote *Disputation on Justification* in 1550, holding that justification was not the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer, but its actual impartation. Then, in 1551 Osiander published his *Confession of the Only Mediator and of Justification by Faith*, in which he taught that Christ was mediator according to his divine nature.<sup>237</sup> Towards Osiander, then, Calvin strove to defend his position that Christ was mediator according to his human nature. In a rather opposite manner, towards Francesco Stancaro (1501-1574), an Italian Polish minister who taught that Christ was mediator only as a man, Calvin had to defend the orthodox position that Christ was mediator in his divine nature also.<sup>238</sup> Stancaro would charge anyone who opposed his teaching with Arianism.<sup>239</sup> It is unknown why Calvin chose to deal with Osiander in his 1559 edition of the *Institutes* when Osiander had

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<sup>235</sup> Heiko O. Oberman, “Calvin and Farel: The Dynamics of Legitimation in Early Calvinism,” in *JCRR*, 215. See the chronology in *Consensus Tigurinus: Heinrich Bullinger und Johannes Calvin über das Abendmahl*, eds. Emidio Campi and Ruedi Reich (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 2009), 383–9.

<sup>236</sup> Weis, “Calvin versus Osiander on Justification,” 365.

<sup>237</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, “Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro,” in *ACC* 5, 163–4, n.13.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 166. This is ironic since Stancaro was against the anti-trinitarian movement in Poland. See Joseph N. Tylenda, “Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin’s Second Reply to Stancaro.” *CTJ* 8, no. 2 (Nov. 1973): 136. n

already died, 7 year earlier. Why did Calvin not choose to deal with Stancaro in his *Institutes*? The charge of Arianism surely deserves greater priority of refutation than the “Osiandrian heresy”. We have no answer yet to this intriguing question.

In the political arena, as the result of the invasion of Wittenberg (1547) by Charles V, the German Reformation fortress lost its hold and thereafter Luther’s disciples started to bicker with one another. The Augsburg interim (1548) and soon after, the Leipzig interim (1548) has caused an inevitable division between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans. Furthermore, due to Melanchthon’s close affiliation with Calvin, he was also labelled a crypto-Calvinist by Joachim Westphal.

In 1552, Westphal published his *Farrago*, where he identified all the views of Eucharistic interpretation and condemned Calvin, along with others, such as sacramentarians like Zwingli.<sup>240</sup> He refers to the 24<sup>th</sup> article of the *Consensus Tigurinus*,

We deem it no less absurd to place Christ under the bread or couple him with the bread, than to transubstantiate the bread into his body.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Carlstadt, Peter Martyr, Oecolampadius, Bucer, the Zurich ministers, Bullinger, and John Laski. See Joseph N. Tylenda, “Calvin-Westphal Exchange: The Genesis of Calvin’s Treatises against Westphal,” in *ACC* 5, 184.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

Westphal continually charges Calvin with error on the Eucharist.<sup>242</sup> Calvin eventually lost his hold;<sup>243</sup> or rather it was Melanchthon and other Lutheran ministers who kept their distance from Calvin when Calvin wanted their support for his *Defense*. Melanchthon, who had been devalued by others of his right as Luther's rightful successor, was unwilling to be involved and sought to be silent.<sup>244</sup> Met only with Melanchthon's ambivalent response, Calvin's hope to maintain a united protestant front failed.<sup>245</sup>

### *iii. Religious Persecution*

Apart from these ecumenical challenges, Calvin also faced the impact of religious persecution. There were many exiles seeking refuge, which created a constant challenge. Calvin faced this challenge abroad by concentrating his efforts on "turning French".<sup>246</sup> This concern occupied Calvin's mind for some time since 1541 when the first French edition of the *Institutes* was published.<sup>247</sup> Since there were severe persecutions in France, Calvin's writings had a major influence in his call to leave the country, following his own example. Calvin strengthened the

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<sup>242</sup> See Tylenda, "Calvin-Westphal Exchange."

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 196. Melanchthon eventually spoke out against Westphal in 1558, but the moment was lost since Calvin had given his *Last Admonition* to Westphal.

<sup>245</sup> Tylenda, "Calvin-Westphal Exchange," 196.

<sup>246</sup> Heiko O. Oberman, "Europa Afflicta: The Reformation of the Refugees (1992)," in *JCRR*, 181ff.

<sup>247</sup> A copy of 1536 french translation cannot be found. Cf. Herman J. Selderhuis, "4. The *Institutes*," trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres, in *CH*, 205.

persecuted churches by revising and publishing his 1545, 1551 editions of the *Institutes* in his mother tongue. Calvin's final French edition was released in 1560. The time, however, was unfavorable because then the French churches no longer needed to depend on Calvin.<sup>248</sup>

In the trials of persecution, Calvin was not a stranger, since he himself was a refugee and he spent most of his ministry as an alien in Geneva; Eventually Calvin accepted citizenship when he was offered it in 1559. Thus, Calvin's vision of a Christian life as a pilgrimage is not an abstraction but the reality that he lived out day by day. What is home for the exile is not a location, but union with God.<sup>249</sup> This life is but a journey towards eternity.<sup>250</sup> As a pilgrim, Calvin took his calling firmly as a reformer. He was not just a city reformer; though he regarded himself as a soldier stationed in Geneva, he was at the same time an officer directing a European army.<sup>251</sup> Calvin was not only a reformer of Geneva, but also a reformer out of Geneva.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Oberman, "Calvin and Farel: The Dynamics of Legitimation in Early Calvinism," 217.

<sup>249</sup> Gordon, *Calvin*, 57, 334: "This had also been the theme in the psalms commentary, where he spoke of exiles having no home other than in God."

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>251</sup> Oberman, "Europa Afflicta," 187.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 193. Cf. Peter A. Dykema, "Introduction," 17.

*iv. Eschatological View*

We started earlier with three portraits of Calvin, of him being the critical inheritor of past tradition, his contemporary theological concern as a reformer, and him being a pastor of the persecuted church. Now we come to his view of the future.

Richard Muller has an interesting discussion regarding Calvin's positing faith as either intellectualism or voluntarism.<sup>253</sup> Though Calvin does not necessarily prefer one over the other, his tendency is more towards voluntarism.<sup>254</sup> This has a correlation to eschatological blessedness. In intellectualist approaches, like Thomas', faith's perfection lies in the *visio Dei* as an intellectual vision; However, in the voluntarist approach of Scotus, eternal blessedness lies in union with God as the *summum bonum*, the proper and ultimate object of the will (*summum volendum*).<sup>255</sup> J. H. van Wyk shares the same observation; not from the medieval background perspective but from Augustine's theology that was influential to Calvin.<sup>256</sup> Calvin's view is closer to Augustine's *frui Deo* than the *visio Dei*, though the latter is also found in Augustine's *De Trinitate*.<sup>257</sup> Earlier we saw that Boersma has taken the *visio dei* theme as the means by which to assess Calvin's

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<sup>253</sup> Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 171.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> J. H. van Wyk, "John Calvin on the Kingdom of God and Eschatology," *In die Skriflig* 35, no. 2 (2001): 199.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.



view of eschatology. This will complement the study being undertaken which sees blessedness more in terms of union with God but not excluding the *visio dei* as part of the eschatological hope conceived in Calvin's theology.

Muller also notes of Calvin's late insertion of a new *locus*, 3.25 on *the Final Resurrection*, in the 1559 *Institutes*;<sup>258</sup> That it is placed after the discussion on election/predestination. Is eschatology a less important *locus* in Calvin? Heinrich Quistorp seems to think so; he observes that Calvin, like the other reformers, emphasizes justification/ soteriology more than eschatology.<sup>259</sup> He also criticizes the lack of cosmic breadth in Calvin's eschatology.<sup>260</sup> However, we disagree with Quistorp.<sup>261</sup> In the *Institutes* the eschatological outlook also takes priority, as it is presented first. Calvin presents the order in "the present life of a Christian" where he places the *Meditatio Futurae Vitae* (3.9) before *The Present Life* (3.10), and thereafter to the soteriological topic of *Justification* (3.11). Eschatology is prior to soteriology in Calvin.

Eschatology is placed as part of the *duplex cognitio dei* structure that Calvin utilizes. Eschatology connects to the notion of God's kingdom. As pointed out by

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>259</sup> Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight, 1955. First English Edition. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 11.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>261</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), 90 shows on the contrary, that "[from] 1534 to his death his exposition of Biblical eschatology characterised all his preaching and writing .... How profoundly eschatology had penetrated into the very heart of his faith." Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Heb* 6:1.

Heiko A. Oberman, that Christ rules *etiam extra ecclesiam*. Calvin regards God as *Dieu des armées*, and in this manner, Christ has *duplex regnum* not only *intra-ecclesial* but also *extra-ecclesial* work of intervention to advance his kingdom by ruling in a hidden and incomprehensible manner by manipulating the kingdom of Satan.<sup>262</sup> Within this cosmic warfare, the Christian is essentially *homo politicus*.<sup>263</sup> This picture fits well with the austere outlook of the Christian life in Calvin. He does not necessarily reject a this-worldly orientation but sees the first and foremost duty of a Christian as to expect the coming of God's kingdom, expressed in the Lord's prayer.<sup>264</sup> In the 1545 *Catechism*, Calvin explains the petition of the Lord's prayer concerning God's Kingdom:

[The kingdom of God] consists chiefly of two branches – that he would govern the elect by his Spirit – that he would prostrate and destroy the reprobate who refuse to give themselves up to his service, [...] <sup>265</sup>

Eschatology is once again understood closely connected to the doctrine of election/predestination. Calvin is consistent in taking eschatology prior as the topic *the Final Resurrection* (3.25) is placed at the very last of the *Institutes* book 3

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<sup>262</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (1986; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 238–9.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>264</sup> John Bolt, ““A Pearl and a Leaven”: John Calvin's Critical Two-Kingdoms Eschatology,” in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 253.

<sup>265</sup> John Calvin, *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), in *ToTS*, 76.

focused on soteriology, right after *the Election* (3.24). Torrance points out the same pattern that “for Calvin election and eschatology are twin doctrines (pre-destination and post-destination) which must not be separated.”<sup>266</sup> Thus, in Calvin, eschatology is placed at both the relatively beginning and the end of his book three.

#### 1.4. Criteria

In this study, we employ the reformed theology's framework of Creation-Fall-Redemption. Therefore, we seek to assess Jenson's *theosis* from these three loci, which can be formulated as follows: (i) the doctrine of the triune God as Creator in his relation to creation, (ii) the role of Christ, and (iii) the concept of self from its originating point until the telos of creation.

Since the subject of *theosis* is related to salvation, we can then derive from Calvin's critique of Osiander on the issue of justification (*Inst.* 3.11.5–12) as our criteria.

(i) Calvin sharply and pointedly criticizes the error of Osiander in transfusing the essence of God in “essential righteousness” to the believer. Osiander does not only attribute the essential righteousness transfusion solely to Christ, but also to

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<sup>266</sup> Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 105.

the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>267</sup> This Osiandrian view has failed to maintain the Creator-creature distinction.

(ii) Calvin agrees that God alone is the source of righteousness, but it is the human nature of Christ that is instrumental, through his death and resurrection.<sup>268</sup> It is only in Christ's flesh that what lies in the deep and secret spring becomes a fountain open to us; making what Christ has acquired to be profitable.<sup>269</sup> Osiander had discredited Christ's human nature, as the means through which Christ acquired righteousness for us, and in which we can participate.<sup>270</sup> Calvin maintains the Creator-creature distinction firmly of Christ's two natures united in his person.

(iii) Calvin describes a new path of holiness and righteousness of life that can be realized through our *mystical* union with Christ pneumatologically.<sup>271</sup> He strongly defends the imputation understanding of justification.<sup>272</sup> Without compromising it, Calvin also affirms the righteousness and sanctification through the Spirit, out of Christ's fullness.<sup>273</sup> However, we need to be critical of

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<sup>267</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

<sup>268</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.8–9.

<sup>269</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9.

<sup>270</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.8.

<sup>271</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

<sup>272</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.11.

<sup>273</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.12.

Calvin, especially in his interpretation about the body in the *eschaton* which at times seem to be compromised due to his Platonic inclination.<sup>274</sup>

So, the evaluating criteria are: (i) the affirmation of Creator-creature distinction in rejection of the essential righteousness transfusion, (ii) the emphasis on Christ's humanity in his mediatory role that respects the Chalcedonian Christology in dispensing God's righteousness, (iii) the pneumatological understanding of self-transformation in the eschatological redemptive work. All these criteria – of God, of Christ, and of man – have one focus, which is to maintain the Creator-creature distinction.

Since the study has outgrown its initial projection from an evaluation to a comparison, the author wishes to state that his position is to be found within the reformed theology. Thus, like Jenson who prefers his tradition of Lutheran position when faced with a divergence from the Reformed position, the author too seeks the Reformed position when irreconcilable differences appear.<sup>275</sup> This stance however does not compromise in our assessment of Calvin's notion of *theosis* as will be stated further in the methodology section.

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 1.11.3; 2.12.6.

<sup>275</sup> Jenson, *ST* 1, Preface.

### 1.5. Method and Outline

We have surveyed *theosis* from the common Patristic tradition that led to its differentiation in the Greek Orthodox tradition, and then saw this notion gaining interest in the Western traditions of the Roman, the Lutheran and the Reformed. We have also depicted the historical context of both Robert Jenson and John Calvin to see some impetuses that drive them being proponents of *theosis* in their periods. We have also outlined three criteria for assessing Jenson's *theosis* within Calvin's theological framework.

Now we can turn to our research question in more detail "To what extent can Robert Jenson's idea of *theosis* be integrated within the Reformed theology, as exemplified by John Calvin's theology, with regards to the relation between the Triune God as Creator and the created world, the mediatory role of the incarnate Christ, and the understanding of self?"

To answer that question, three necessary steps are worked out to get the answer. First, conducting of a systematic analysis to get a clear idea of the *theosis* notion in Jenson's and Calvin's theologies. Second, conducting of a systematic comparison between Jenson and Calvin in their respective views of *theosis* to see how it corresponds to the praxis of the church in the Lord's Supper. Third, conducting of a systematic theological assessment to evaluate Jenson's notion of *theosis* using the criteria from Calvin as the theoretical framework.

In the systematic analysis, the character of *theosis* in Jenson and Calvin are worked out. Appreciative readings, respectively in chapter two and chapter three are done to show Jenson's and Calvin's *theosis* in three loci: of God as Creator and the world as creature where *theosis* occurred from its possibility to actuality; the intricate relation of Christ's mediating role with regards to *theosis* in his incarnation and resurrection stages;<sup>276</sup> and the view of self, conceived in the protological and eschatological stages.

In order to level the comparison of our subjects, in delineating Calvin's notion of *theosis* we have to analyze beyond the non-speculative boundary marks in Calvin's epistemology. The author maintains an open and critical reading of Calvin by assessing his ontological, instead of only epistemological, notion of reality. This probing is necessary due to the ontological character of Jenson's theological discourse. This is the reason why there is an introduction in chapter three, but not in chapter two.

In chapter four, a systematic comparison is made to compare the three characterized loci of Jenson and Calvin's *theosis* in their view of the Lord's Supper: how their notions of *theosis* surface in their respective notion of the Supper. The found characters in previous chapters are to be used in our comparative assessment.

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<sup>276</sup> Christ's pre-existence will be discussed as well, but Jenson views it more as post-existence.

In chapter five, a systematic theological assessment and comparison of Jenson's concept of *theosis* is offered by using the criteria from section 1.4. These criteria are expanded further based on our findings in chapter three by keeping the main focus on the Creator-creature distinction.

In chapter six, the conclusion is drawn from Jenson's positive contributions for the purpose of enriching the Reformed comprehension and practices on *theosis*. In Jenson's terminologies, the *lex orandi* and *lex proclamandi* as *lex credendi*.



## CHAPTER 2: JENSON'S NOTION OF THEOSIS

There are three *loci* of Jenson's conception on *theosis* that we seek to characterize: the relation of the triune God to the created world, the role of Jesus, and the concept of self.

### 2.1. Divine Discourse: Creation in the Creator <sup>1</sup>

In the first locus we seek the reality of the triune God and his creation. Jenson took considerable efforts to revise the traditional metaphysics, which he considered as a pagan Greek intrusion into Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> His radical revision applies to history, arguably in a triune manner, by coalescing the commonly distinct reality of the triune God as Creator with the reality of creation. Yet, he still organizes his *Systematic Theology* into *ad intra* – subtitles: *The Triune God* in Vol. 1 (1997) and *ad extra* – subtitles: *The Works of God* in Vol. 2 (1999).<sup>3</sup> Jenson's effort is seen through incorporating the locus of Jesus' life and works (ST 1.III: 10–12), which is commonly seen as *ad extra* of God's story with us, into the *ad intra* of God's own life. The crucifixion-resurrection of Jesus is seen

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<sup>1</sup> An alternative to Divine Discourse is Triune *Sermo*. See Jenson, "On truth and God: 2 The Triunity of Truth," *PE* 21, no. 1 (Wint. 2012): 51–55.

<sup>2</sup> ST 2.V: 23.VI. Jenson argues the opposite should be the right case due to the missionary character of the gospel.

<sup>3</sup> ST 2. Preface.

as constitutive of God's life.<sup>4</sup> What is then this reality in the triune God? And how is this (same) reality of creation being articulated?

### ***2.1.1. Reality of the Triune God***

In this section, the reality of the Triune God is to be shown as the condition of possibility for *theosis* to happen. The openness of God in himself as Triune is the pre-necessary condition that makes room for beings/ life other than God. We will see how Jenson's view of God as Triune is delineated.

#### *i. Eschatological Prior in God as Trinity*

##### **a. The Triune God's Identification as Immanent Trinity**

Who is God? Following Barth, Jenson agrees that the primal systematic function of trinitarian teaching is to identify the *theos* in theology.<sup>5</sup> That "who God is" is prior to "whether he is" or "what he is."<sup>6</sup> The key element that Jenson uses in identifying God is by securely grounding God's identification in history.<sup>7</sup> The approach is hermeneutical, by reading the scripture as a narrative to concur with the view of history as narrative.<sup>8</sup> Within both the narrative of scripture and history, "who God is" is identified *by* and *with* Exodus and Resurrection.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ST* 1. Preface.

<sup>5</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.VII, n.100.

<sup>6</sup> *God After God*, 97.

<sup>7</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.II.

<sup>8</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.VI, n.92; *ST* 2.IV: 15.III.

<sup>9</sup> *ST* 1.I: 1.V; *ST* 1.I: 3.II; 1.I: 3.VII, Jenson, "What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?" 37.

Why *by* and *with*? For Jenson, the sole use of “by” preposition does not secure God’s identity firm enough; for a different God could be lurking behind the one who is identified by the events.<sup>10</sup> To dispel this potential modalism, Jenson uses the “with” preposition, as such the immanent trinity *is* securely identified with the economic trinity. This “*by* and *with*” identification agrees with Rahner’s famously known axiom, “the economic trinity *is* the immanent trinity, and vice versa.”<sup>11</sup> However, Jenson takes a step further; not only are these trinitarian characters two ways of describing the *same* reality,<sup>12</sup> but the narrative risks in historical drama — of which the crisis climax in the death (and resurrection) of Jesus, *is constitutive* to the Triune God.<sup>13</sup>

In securely grounding the immanent trinity in history, does this not restrict God’s freedom? The issue is if God’s freedom is restricted, then God is not God.<sup>14</sup> Jenson thinks that there are two kinds of freedom in the immanent trinity: hypothetical and actual. A hypothetical freedom is understood in a way that the

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<sup>10</sup> ST 1.I: 3.VII. “Were God identified by Israel’s Exodus or Jesus’ Resurrection, without being identified *with* them, the identification would be a revelation ontologically other than God himself.”

<sup>11</sup> Jenson, “Does God Have Time? (1991),” in *ETC*, 192; *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (1982; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 139, cites Karl Rahner, *Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, (1970; repr., New York: Continuum, 2001), 22. Cf. Timo Tavast, “Challenging the Modalism of the West: Jenson on the Trinity,” *PE* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 355–368. Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Systematic Theology: Volumes I & II,” in *First Things* (May 2000), [www.firstthings.com/article/2000/05/systematic-theology-volumes-i-amp-ii](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2000/05/systematic-theology-volumes-i-amp-ii) (accessed Oct. 30, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Jenson, “The Futurist Option of Speaking of God,” *LQ* 21, no.1 (Fall 1969): 25.

<sup>13</sup> ST 1.I: 3.III; 4.II. Stephen John Wright, “Restlessly Thinking Relation: Robert Jenson’s Theological Uses of Hegel” in *Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 143, marks this constitutive as *theogony* in Jenson’s theology.

<sup>14</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 141.

immanent trinity could have been God other than “Jesus, the Father of Jesus and the Future of Jesus.”<sup>15</sup> The fact that it is not so because “the immanent trinity is not and must not be *abstracted* from the full [biblical] tale.”<sup>16</sup> As he states differently, “we will not at any height or depth of God get past Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>17</sup> Besides, due to the closure in the historical life-story of Jesus, the freedom in Trinity can only be hypothetical.

Nevertheless, God’s hypothetical freedom does not contradict his actual freedom due to the Spirit. The Spirit who works in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and determining him to be the Son of God in temporality is the same Spirit in eternity who liberates the Father and the Son to love each other.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the Spirit is the future of God in both temporality-eternity metaphysic. This actual freedom in temporality then can be seen as the manifestation of condition of possibility from the eternity; and somehow is the “at once” act that coalesce eternal-temporal reality. The coalescence locus is in the future, where the resurrected Jesus as the living one now resides in the freedom

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<sup>15</sup> “The Futurist Option of Speaking of God,” 25. Jenson, “Justification as a Triune Event,” *MT* 11, no. 4 (Oct. 1995): 427, n.17.

<sup>16</sup> Jenson, “Ipse Pater Non Est Impassibilis (The Father Himself Is Not Impassible),” in *TRM*, 99; “The Trinity in the Bible,” *CTQ* 68, no.3 (2004): 206.

<sup>17</sup> Jenson, “What If It Were True?” in *TRM*, 33; “Futurist Option,” 25; *The Triune Identity*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the identification of *dramatis dei personae* of the Son in death *ST* 1.II: 4.II; 1.II: 5.III; 1.III: 10.III; 1.III: 12.III; on the Spirit *ST* 1.II: 5.VI; 1.II: 8.IV; on Resurrection and determine as the Son of God *ST* 1.II: 8.IV.

of the Spirit. Thus, the “futurity” in Jenson’s identification of God as the immanent trinity is located in the Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

With the above lineaments of eschatological futurity, Jenson sets up a different position from Barth with regards to God’s freedom. For Barth, God *is* the act of his decision; as such the doctrine of election is the center of the doctrine of God’s being.<sup>20</sup> In Jenson’s assessment, Barth has placed everything “before all time”, that is before the event of creation – such that Jesus’ incarnation happens in eternity as the foundation of its happening in time.<sup>21</sup> Coupled with his major tenet that God’s act of revelation is an event, Barth’s notion of eternity is the eternal present in time that lacks the perspective of God’s eschatological future.<sup>22</sup> However, Jenson places the triune life in the *eschaton* – not in the post-temporal eternity sense of a layered-cosmology, but in the eternity redefined as a “transcendent future”<sup>23</sup> or “faithfulness to the last future.”<sup>24</sup> So according to

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<sup>19</sup> ST 1.III: 10.II.

<sup>20</sup> ST 1.II: 8.IV.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., n.81. At first, Jenson’s view seems to have no significant difference with Barth’s; but the eschatological prior in Jenson’s theology has shifted the emphasis more in the resurrection rather than the incarnation. Of course, Barth’s concept of time is a bit more complex with the *historisch* and *geschichte* distinction.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>23</sup> ST 1.III: 12.III. Cf. Francesca Aran Murphy, *God Is Not a Story: Realism Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 302, sees Jenson’s emphasis of the future is simply shifting the problem. Also Andrew W. Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection: The God of Israel in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 199, sees “Jenson does not, in the end, avoid a *decretum absolutum*—instead the *decretum* takes the shape of God’s concealed “power of futurity” that “goes out” from “the Spirit.”

<sup>24</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 141.

Jenson in the common eternal-temporal reality, the immanent trinity is simply the eschatological reality of the economic trinity.<sup>25</sup>

In shifting the ontological priority of Triune God from a kind of protological understanding to the transcendent future of the Spirit, it is possible to say that God is free despite his (past) decision to be with us.<sup>26</sup> This future decision of God, which is a promise for us, is in the Son.<sup>27</sup> The willing obedience of the Son's death and resurrection reconciled the Father's decree with the Spirit's freedom.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Jenson's identification of the triune God in history (the *by* and *with*) does not compromise God's freedom due to God's locatable decision in the future.

#### b. The Critique of the Pneumatological Deficit in Trinitarian Traditions

Jenson re-models the notion of Trinity with its locus shifted to the Spirit. In retrospect he criticizes the existing trinitarian models, both of the Latin-West and the Greek-Orthodox, to be equally unsatisfactory with regards to the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> He questions whether we truly think of the Spirit as person?<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>26</sup> We can say that the past decision is of the Father within Jenson's trinitarian view of time. See section 2.1.2.i.b.

<sup>27</sup> ST 1.II: 4.III.

<sup>28</sup> ST 2.IV: 16.IV, "the Son mediates the Father's originating and the Spirit's liberating, thereby *to hold open* the creatures' space in being." More in section 2.2.1.i.b.

<sup>29</sup> ST 1.II: 9.I–VI on "the Pneumatological Problem."

<sup>30</sup> ST 1.II: 9.I.

Jenson first points out the problem in the Western triune conception as represented by Augustine.<sup>31</sup> This problem is detected in *filioque*, a doctrine employed by the West to guarantee the Son's deity with the Father, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. It is common in the West to understand the relation between identities of the triune as relation of origins. However, a difficulty arises in *filioque* that how the Spirit as a person can come from an impersonal process. The process is seen as impersonal because what the Son holds in common with the Father is none other than the divine nature.<sup>32</sup> Thus, if the Spirit does not proceed from the identities, but from the common divine nature, the Spirit cannot be personal.

Then in *ST* 1.II: 9.II, Jenson directs his criticism towards the pneumatological deficit in Greek Orthodox theology. Palamas is the one who posited three distinctions in God: *ousia*, energy, and the triune *hypostases*. Of these three, Jenson points out that Palamas sees "the *ousia* is not the deity of the identities and their mutual energies but has become "God himself," the chief referent of discourse about "the one God"." In such usage, Palamas keeps possible modalism intact. That God himself (*ousia*) is above the biblical narrative, whereas what can be

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<sup>31</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.I–II. Jenson follows Colin Gunton's earlier work, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *SJT* 43, no.1 (1990):33–58. Gunton sees the Spirit in Augustine is treated as substantially rather than personally and relationally (40); he then charges Augustine as modalistic due to the underlying being of God is unknown even in the economy of salvation (45).

<sup>32</sup> This criticism is from Lossky who bases it on the Second Council of Lyon in 1274.

known of God applies only to his activities. This potential modalism is unacceptable to Jenson since for him any trinitarian conceptions must not be abstracted from the biblical narrative.

In *ST* 1.II: 9.III, Jenson directs his criticism to Barth. According to Jenson, Barth is devoted unquestioningly to the West's standard teaching that the Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. This teaching, in Jenson's view, is more of a binitarian "I-Thou relation" instead of trinitarian. As such, the spirit is *not* a partner in the inner-divine community. It is with regards to this dual ontology that Jenson decides to draw help from Hegel's insight of the "Lord and Master" section of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* iv.A.<sup>33</sup> Jenson changed the supposed term "slave/servant" with "master". This corresponds well to "the LORD (יהוה) and Lord (אֲדֹנָי)" usage in Psalm 110. Jenson's usage of Hegel simplifies much of consciousness development in Hegel's philosophy. But he critically makes use of Hegel's understanding of the Spirit for his purpose. However, at this juncture, Jenson keeps the foreign inherent struggle of Hegel's I (self-consciousness) and not-I/ Thou (other self-consciousness) by projecting this into the relation of the Father and the Son; which relation is to be liberated (or in Hegel's term: sublated) by the Spirit as the third party. Jenson calls this a

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<sup>33</sup> It should be "lordship and bondage" as was translated by Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 76, or "mastery and servitude" as was translated by Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108.



paradigm of the intrusive third party; in which the Spirit is indeed true love but has his own intention as another person who liberates the Father and the Son to love each other.

Jenson claims that his approach resolves the pneumatological deficit that plagues the West and the East. Furthermore, he claims that this has construed the divine life by the biblical narrative's eschatological character, thus correcting the one-sided protological character. What Jenson has done is securing the Lordship not only of the Father but also the Spirit. "[The Spirit] is the eschatological reality of God, the Power as which God is the active Goal of all things, as which God is for himself [...]." <sup>34</sup>

Timo Tavast concurs with this reading in his study, "Challenging the Modalism of the West: Jenson on the Trinity." <sup>35</sup> Tavast shows that Jenson's shift-move of futurity has amended the Nicene trinity by complementing the traditional model. Jenson's model has a more active role for the Spirit. As such, the doctrine of the trinity is no longer one-sided with the Father as the "source" of deity, but balanced with the Spirit as the "goal" that determines the reality of

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<sup>34</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.V. However, Jenson has a hindsight of the christological deficit as he articulates in *ST* 1.II: 9.IV, "The Son—whatever might have been—is not only God but as God also a creature, and so another than God. Thus he too, in his very different way as Jesus of Nazareth, stands over against the Father and the Spirit." *ST* 1.II: 8.III, "Obeying the Father is identical with his subsistence as the Son." The Son's way of being (*tropos hyparxeos*) is none other than as the "master" struggle to Lordship, thus lacks his true Lordship. Jenson indeed sees the submissiveness of the Son constitutes his deity.

<sup>35</sup> *PE* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 355–68.

the Father and the Son, and liberates them to love each other.<sup>36</sup> One criticism addressed by Tavast is the missing of “breathing” (which is important in the traditional *theologoumenon*) in the self-differentiating nature of the Spirit. To this Jenson makes his immediate reply:

God the Father is monarch or source not of a static divine being but of a divine *life*. God agitates God into being God; he breathes life into Godhead. And that agitation, that breath of life, is so perfectly the father’s own agitation, that like the Son it is the same God as the Father.<sup>37</sup>

We will try to interpret this dense paragraph. God (The Father by the Spirit) agitates God (the Son) into being God (who is Spirit); he (the Father) breathes life (the Spirit) into Godhead (where the Son is resurrected and ascended). And that agitation, that breath of life (the Spirit), is so perfectly the Father’s own agitation (the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father), that like the Son it (the Spirit) is the same God as the Father (which implies that the Son is the same as the Father).

Therefore, Jenson’s notion of the triune God is not a static view of God, but a lively – not arbitrary – God whose life is dynamic.<sup>38</sup> The agitation of the Spirit is also the Father’s breathing the Spirit; this is God’s life itself. This breath is perfect

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 361. Cf. Earlier Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142, wants to use the term “principle and source” to the Spirit just like to the Father. But eventually he follows to the eastern understanding of the Father as the only monarch.

<sup>37</sup> Jenson, “Response to Timo Tavast,” *PE* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 370. Cf. Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 147, already has a tendency to repel the relation of origin, or perhaps to prevent any subordinationism in which he substitutes the common “begets” and “breathes” terms into “intends” and “gives.”

<sup>38</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.IV.

which shows the Spirit is, like the Son is, the same God as the Father. To put it differently, the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father, like the Son. Together their ways of being show the one God.

### c. The Construal of Temporal Triune Metaphysics

As a trinitarian theologian, Jenson believes there can be no abstraction of anything apart from the triune understanding; this includes metaphysics as our framework of thought.<sup>39</sup> The triune presupposition draws Jenson to reject two Hellenistic understandings. First, the understanding of deity that is abstracted from and immuned to time.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the deity of the triune God as Israel's God, is seen in his "faithfulness through and by time".<sup>41</sup> Secondly, Jenson rejects the layered metaphysics consist of eternity in God and temporality in created world.

As we shall see, Jenson seeks to construe his "temporal coalescent metaphysics" based on the Cappadocians' trinity while being critical towards the West/Augustinian Trinity. What temporal means is the non-immunity of deity in eternity; while coalescent means both "the condition of possibility of

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 6.V.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 6.II.

<sup>41</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.IV, Jenson rooted eternity definition to the Old Testament expression as faithfulness, that is God's commitment within time. Cf. Jenson, "Jesus, Father, Spirit: The Logic of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Dialog* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 246.

temporality in eternity” and “the constitutiveness of what happens in temporality is at once related and affected the eternity”.

Jenson's triune presupposition follows the Cappadocians' notion of Trinity. There is a difference in conceiving the oneness of God between the Eastern and Western Trinitarian traditions, either as “singularity” or as one “life” which is communal. Augustinian Trinity, according to Jenson, has its starting point with a sheer unity, along with the simplicity that lacks all inner differentiation.<sup>42</sup> Jenson argues that Augustine's God has no room in himself for us; he cannot bless us with himself, instead he can only do so in our externality to him, with “created” gifts.<sup>43</sup> To be fair, Jenson follows Gunton's reading that misrepresents Augustine's position.<sup>44</sup> Lewis Ayres shows that Augustine rules out the idea that the divine essence is prior to the divine persons.<sup>45</sup> Boersma's reading of Augustine also refutes Jenson's view.

As for the Cappadocians, Jenson adopts their view of *God as the life that the Father and the Son lives in their Spirit*.<sup>46</sup> In like manner, we can become participants in that *life* of God, and so become gods.<sup>47</sup> Jenson indicates his agreement with

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<sup>42</sup> Jenson, “Theosis,” in *Dialog* 32, no. 2 (1993): 110.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See p.75, fn. 31 above. *ST* 1.II: 6.V, n.144.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 381. Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 102, n.17, sees that Augustine, despite his Platonic inclination, has a notion of participatory metaphysics in the eternal Word.

<sup>46</sup> Jenson, “Theosis,” 110.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. This makes an apt definition of what eternal life is. Cf. Jenson, *God After God*, 128.

Gregory of Nazianzus' notion that of Father, Son and Spirit it may indeed be said that they are God in that they each instantiate the divine nature.<sup>48</sup> Then, explaining God's *ousia*: "it may equally be said also of them that they are God in that they jointly live the divine life."<sup>49</sup> So the notion of *ousia* as life entails the idea that when we as creatures join the divine life/*ousia*, we are being *deified*.

Now, Jenson also owes to Augustine despite following the Cappadocians understanding of *ousia*.<sup>50</sup> He does so at least on two notions: Augustine's trinitarian notion of love and his psychological understanding that secures the oneness of the Trinity as a person.<sup>51</sup> On the former, Augustine teaches that the Spirit is the mutual love by which the Father as the lover and the Son as loved, love one another;<sup>52</sup> and on the latter, Jenson develops Augustine's psychological understanding of the Trinity.<sup>53</sup> Earlier, Jenson called his proposed trinitarian relations an Augustinian-Hegelian insight.<sup>54</sup> From Hegel, Jenson perceives that the personal being of God is constituted in the inner dialectics of consciousness.<sup>55</sup> The Augustinian's triad of "memory/ knowledge/ will" is rephrased in Hegel's

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<sup>48</sup> ST 1.II: 6.III, n.114 Gregory of Nazianzus earlier, *Orations*, 31.14, "Differentiated though the hypostases are, the entire and undivided godhead is one in each." Calvin articulates as *autotheos* in each *hypostasis*.

<sup>49</sup> Jenson, "Theosis," 110.

<sup>50</sup> ST 1.II: 6.V.

<sup>51</sup> ST 1.II: 9.I; 7.IV.

<sup>52</sup> ST 1.II: 9.1. Cf. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 9.2 quoted by Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 158, n.183.

<sup>53</sup> ST 1.II: 7.IV.

<sup>54</sup> Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 147.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

terminology as “immediate self-consciousness/ objective knowledge of self/ freedom” which are unified in the *Aufhebung*.<sup>56</sup> At a later stage, Jenson redesignated his Augustinian-Hegelian insight. First by not attributing his notion of God’s self-hood to Augustine, and secondly by attributing the consciousness of understanding, not from Hegel, but from Kant.<sup>57</sup> However, it is obvious that the basic triadic structure of “consciousness/ ego/ freedom” bears the mark of Hegel.

The fact that God is triune is seen from the future as his eternity; while in the process of history, Jenson’s God discovers himself to be self-conscious and so becomes personal.<sup>58</sup> So, the idea of personality in God that Jenson accepts is consciousness in becoming instead of *omniscience* in a transcendent manner.<sup>59</sup> There is an openness to such consciousness. It is ontologically the *possession* of an individual, the “I”. In the triune God, “the Father [as] a unity of consciousness, knows his *I* as the *arche* of Son and Spirit, as the oneness of the one Trinity.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>57</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 246 (B132) has a notion of consciousness as ‘transcendental unity of apperception’. See also section 2.2.1.i. about the embodiment of God that Jenson develops as the object of ego in God.

<sup>58</sup> Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 144. “God [...] is himself as Subject; is himself his own Object, to be self-consciousness; and, discovering *himself* as object, *is* himself only as the occurrence of this discovery, to be Spirit. Just and only so, God is personal.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

The only objection Jenson has to the above Augustinian-Hegelian understanding of personality in God is that it can be seen as a pure monad, an internal dynamic dialectic.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, he proposes that personality can only be understood communally.<sup>62</sup> As such, tensions between each “I” in God’s “we”, such as the “Lord-Master” Hegelian struggle, are actual that shows the dynamic in God.<sup>63</sup> In affirming the oneness of God, Jenson seeks to hinder the possible monad notion lurking behind. So, God’s “I” is not a monad but a communal we. Jenson directs us that the Cappadocian’s notion of the triune *life* combined with the Augustinian-Hegelian personality of God leads to the view that God in his deity is non-immune to time.

On the notion of eternity, Jenson again appeals to the Cappadocians rather than Augustine.<sup>64</sup> It was Gregory of Nyssa who thinks infinity in a temporal manner.<sup>65</sup> Gregory defines God’s *ousia* as *temporal* infinity that “[t]here is no temporal activity can keep up with the activity that he is.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, Jenson also holds on to Barth’s triune character of time in eternity; that God is the

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<sup>61</sup> Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 144.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See p.76, fn.33 above.

<sup>64</sup> Jenson thinks Augustine was uncritical to the more static conception of time in the pagan Greek metaphysic. *ST* 1.III: 13.IV, in Aristotelian Greek metaphysics, an infinite something would have no spatial shape, no form, and so in their thinking would be nothing at all. Thus more of a static rather than dynamic eternity.

<sup>65</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.IV.

<sup>66</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.IV.

“Source – Movement – Goal” of pure duration.<sup>67</sup> However, “pure duration” is possible to be interpreted in modalism manner (monad understanding of God’s time). This maybe the reason Jenson formulates a more distinct role of each identities in the triune God in his metaphysic of time: the whence of time as the Father, the whither of time as the Spirit and the Son as life’s specious present. In this manner, God’s time is analogous to the created time.<sup>68</sup> In his triune revisionary of time, Jenson then is able to maintain the unity of time in God’s time and maintain the distinction of the poles that constitute this time.

The uniqueness of Jenson’s metaphysic of time is the Spirit’s antecedence of him coming from the last future. In fact, eternity which Jenson conceives as the inexhaustibility of the Son’s life is due to *the Spirit’s* rest on the Son.<sup>69</sup>

In view of God’s dynamic life, Jenson conceives the being of the triune God in terms of becoming – thus lies his determining from the future. At the same time what happens in history is seen as constitutive to God’s being/ life. Affirming these two positions is a paradox, where God becomes triune in Jesus even though God himself is post-destinely triune due to the Spirit as the future.<sup>70</sup> This paradoxical view often leads to confusion caused by the intrusion of the future

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<sup>67</sup> ST 1.III: 13.IV.

<sup>68</sup> ST 1.III: 13.V.

<sup>69</sup> ST 1.III: 13.V. *italic* added. The Father’s role as the specific loving consciousness gives the character of the infinite as personal.

<sup>70</sup> Jenson, *Story and Promise*, 121–2. On a different locus, one can see this in how Jenson defines predestination as “postdestination”.



into the present that disrupts the common cognitive reasoning about time based on the forward direction linearity in our way of living. Despite this confusion, what Jenson emphasizes is the involvement of God in history is real, not in a detached manner. This is shown in how he criticizes the normally understood predestination in his wry expression, “[i]f a Decider throned outside of time settled our destinies as one might sort potatoes, this would indeed end human freedom.”<sup>71</sup> God has decided not to be a God without us.<sup>72</sup> This statement shows the transformative in God, but not in pre-temporal eternal decision. Rather, God’s absolute decision is from the future that characterizes the openness of history. The Lordship of God is shifted to the future which takes into account of human freedom,<sup>73</sup> not from the past divine decision; thus Jenson characterizes the decision of God as eschatological instead of protological.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>72</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VI, Jenson applies Barth’s insight that election as part of the doctrine of God.

<sup>73</sup> This will be most crucial in Jesus’ decision in Gethsemane in Jenson’s theology; without which the drama would be unreal. But Jenson’s belittling the past aspect of God’s decision makes us wonder, “whose will did Jesus struggle to submit himself to?”

ii. *Reality as Word: Intra-Divine Discourse*<sup>74</sup>

Based on the above delineated framework Jenson explains the reality of Word in God as Creator, and then in us as creatures. This reality of God's being is described by Jenson that God is a conversation.<sup>75</sup>

a. Reality of the Word in God

The trinitarian character can be seen in this intra-divine discourse. In John's prologue the Son is clearly identified as the Word or *Logos*. *Logos* should be interpreted more as *sermo*, a speech or utterance that is communicated rather than as *verbum*, reason or a concept that can be possessed. As *sermo*, *Logos* is more appropriate to the preferred hearing paradigm that intrudes, rather than as an object in the seeing paradigm as one that needs to be worked up by our agency as human.<sup>76</sup>

Entailed with this paradigm preference is Jenson's modification to Boethius' definition of person as an individual.<sup>77</sup> Jenson's view of a person is more of a social *persona*; one whom other persons can *converse*, or *address* in hope for a response.<sup>78</sup> This notion of *persona* fits both the Western and Cappadocian

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<sup>74</sup> *Intra-Divine Discourse* is a term coined by Francis Watson to Jenson's theological thought in, "“America's Theologian”: An Appreciation of Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology, with some remarks about the bible,” *SJT* 55, no. 2 (2002): 208.

<sup>75</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VII.

<sup>76</sup> *ST* 2.V: 23.II.

<sup>77</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.II; *ST* 2.IV: 15.II.

<sup>78</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.II–III.

understanding of *hypostasis*: as subsistent relations or *tropos hyparxeos* (way of having being).<sup>79</sup>

The Word is first to be understood not as what *Jesus* says but Jesus as what the *Father* says.<sup>80</sup> However since a conversation is not a monologue, thus when the Father addresses the Son responds.<sup>81</sup> The Spirit comes in a way that in the Father's act of addressing the future comes. The spirit also relates to the word such that, "the *word* is the bearer of spirit and spirit is the power of the word."<sup>82</sup> This intra-divine discourse, then, is none other but the Father conversing with the Son in the Spirit.<sup>83</sup> Thus God speaks and hears when the Word is both spoken by and to God.<sup>84</sup> Jenson aptly puts the reality in God that "Christian eternity is not silence but discourse."<sup>85</sup>

Jenson also employs Ernst Fuchs' thought in seeing that the *word* of God is triune. It appears that every utterance depends on a *given* language; and it *aims* at mutual understanding which is achieved by finding a new language. Thus Jenson sees God is "Language – Utterance – New Understanding", who is

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<sup>79</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.II.

<sup>80</sup> *ST* 1.III: 10.II.

<sup>81</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.II; "Three Identities of One Action," *SJT* 28, no. 1 (February 1975): 14. "To be God is to be word that works. God happens in the way that address and response happen together."

<sup>82</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VI.

<sup>83</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.II.

<sup>84</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VI.

<sup>85</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VI.

respectively the first – the second – the third *Hypostasis*.<sup>86</sup> God is that Utterance whose presupposed Language is no other language than the New language of Understanding which He will achieve—and this is his aseity, his deity.<sup>87</sup>

In the fact that the eternity is not conceived by Jenson as timeless nor in a different metaphysical plane, God’s discourse then has to take place temporally, first in God’s time, then also in our time.<sup>88</sup> In God’s intra-divine discourse, the “eschatological” is prior, thus asymmetrical.<sup>89</sup> “He is primarily future to himself and only thereupon past and present for himself.”<sup>90</sup> As is the case in God’s temporal infinity, it is equally so in our time that God’s discourse has to be seen as either teleological or eschatological.

In the layered metaphysics, God’s conversation would be understood as revelation that bridges the ontological gap between the Creator and his creatures. But in Jenson’s trinitarian metaphysics it is a common reality of conversation both of the triune Creator and the creatures.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jenson, “Futurist Option,” 25.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.IV.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid; *ST* 2.VI: 24.III, on discussing predestination. “[...] it is not that God has *already* decided whether I am or am not of his community. He *will* decide and *so* has decided; and *has* decided and so *will* decide; and so *decides* also within created time.”

<sup>91</sup> Jenson, “The Praying Animal (1983),” in *ETC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 125, it is first of all true as God in his being, “God [...] is to and from all eternity both subject and object of an address and its response; indeed, his being is specifiable as *conversation*.”

It is oblivious in appreciating Jenson's solution unless we are familiar with the contemporary philosophical problems he dealt with. Language is one of them, including (or especially) theology with all our sayings about God. Can our creaturely speech about God as human speech has an authentic relation to the reality and intelligibility of God?<sup>92</sup> The identification of Jesus as God's Word with its triune ramifications is a contribution so obvious that Jenson re-offers in his concise *theologoumenon*.<sup>93</sup>

#### b. The Content of the Word

The content of the intra-divine discourse is identified by Jenson as the occurrence of the law and the gospel.<sup>94</sup> The discourse of the law or Torah in God are issues of justification and righteousness. Justification however is understood by Jenson as a triune event; it is the righteousness that happens in God as *perichoresis*, as *active faithfulness to community*.<sup>95</sup> God's discourse then is linked with *perichoresis*.<sup>96</sup> Unlike the Law/ Gospel false dichotomy interpretation, God's law is indispensable since it is God's own true self-expression.<sup>97</sup> What about the gospel? As the last word of God, the gospel is unconditional and has

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (1969; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 53.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 77ff., Torrance also takes the same Christological starting point as the intersection of God and the world in the axis of Creation-Incarnation. Jenson's solution is more radical with his revisionary common metaphysics.

<sup>94</sup> Jenson, "Futurist Option," 25.

<sup>95</sup> Jenson, "Justification as a Triune Event," 427.

<sup>96</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.V.

<sup>97</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 142.

unsurpassable character to it.<sup>98</sup> Both the Law's and the Gospel's importance are equally affirmed by Jenson.

The triune God is life that opens for participation. Jenson understands that life in God, in the classical understanding, is "Truth (*verum*), Goodness (*bonum*), and Beauty (*pulchrum*).<sup>99</sup> These are translatable to God's knowability, lovability, and enjoyability.<sup>99</sup> God is truly "Truth, Goodness, and Beauty" because of the underlying divine simplicity that there is no real distinction between God and his attributes.<sup>100</sup> By participating in these attributes, we participate in God himself. The Gospel can be elaborated in these "transcendental" concepts which Jenson reinterprets in a temporal manner as in the dramatic narrative of history.<sup>101</sup> So how do we understand the gospel?

First, God's inner discourse is the truth itself – *dei sermo est ipsa veritas*.<sup>102</sup> Truth is seen as a harmonized dialectical notion. The gospel is the "triunity of truth" that is played out by each of the *dramatis dei personae*.<sup>103</sup> The unity of this truth

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<sup>98</sup> Jenson, "Toward an Understanding of "...Is Risen",<sup>98</sup> *Dialog* 19, no.1 (Wint. 1990): 36.

<sup>99</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.I.

<sup>100</sup> Jenson, "Luther's Contemporary Theological Significance," in *CCML*, 284. Jenson sees this in Luther, as referred by Tuomo Mannermaa, "God's "good things" are God himself; God is his own Word." Cf. Jenson, "Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman on Finnish Luther research." *WThJ* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 247, attributes this to Luther, "as God, Christ is not in *re* distinct from his word." In fact, this may come from Augustine whose saying Jenson also uses in *ST* 1.II: 6.V, "what (God) has, he is."

<sup>101</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14; "On truth and God 2 The triunity of truth," *PE* 21, no. 1 (Wint 2012): 53.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>103</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.I; "Three Identities of One Action," 6. Cf. "Christ as drama," 198.

lies in the unity of a narrative of universal history.<sup>104</sup> However, since the last time has not come, debates exist about the coherence of the story. Jenson then sees truth not simply as one, but is now being unified, to be accomplished in and through time.<sup>105</sup> As a consequence, this “triunity of truth” achieves itself in time, in discourse, in argument, and in confrontation.<sup>106</sup> “It is not *there*, waiting to be found; it *will* be.”<sup>107</sup> Truth is future oriented-temporal rather than timeless-eternal. How do we see that history is not fragmented despite the debates, arguments, and confrontations? Jenson finds the unity in the one event of Jesus’ resurrection; it is the event that reconciles the past and the future.<sup>108</sup> The resurrection as the end of the gospel’s story, is the final truth about being.<sup>109</sup>

It is worth noting that despite Jenson’s insistence on God being knowable due to his being as triune, Jenson maintains the tension of God’s hiddenness in the Lutheran tradition. The emphasis again is locatable in the fact that God is Spirit.<sup>110</sup> Jenson follows Luther who locates God’s hiddenness in three aspects: (1) his very present rule of his creation, (2) Jesus hung on the cross as the Son of God, and (3) faith as a hiding of God, Christ in the soul.<sup>111</sup> Jenson argues that

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<sup>104</sup> Jenson, “The Triunity of Truth,” 94.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 93–4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 29.III.

<sup>110</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.V; also in, “The Hidden and Triune God,” in *TRM*, 76.

<sup>111</sup> “The Hidden and Triune God,” 69–70.

there is no modalism in this hiddenness. This is contrasted with Palamas' *ousia-energeia* distinction, that we as creatures can never participate in God's essence/*ousia*.<sup>112</sup> Jenson criticizes Palamas' view as a subtle modalism, due to the gap between the unknown *ousia* and the known economic trinity in *energeia*.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand Jenson also criticizes Barth's dialectic of revealedness in Christ with hiddenness in the Father in order to maintain God's deity, as a subtle subordinationism.<sup>114</sup>

Jenson seeks to conceive the hiddenness of God in a triune manner without modalism nor subordinationism vestiges. Therefore he formulates this in each *hypostasis*: that in the Father there is no *hinterfragen*,<sup>115</sup> In the Son "God comes to us so exclusively in suffering and rejection that no one could possibly turn to him out of self-serving;"<sup>116</sup> In the Spirit, he is surprising when the future comes, and he is present only in anticipation.<sup>117</sup> Thus Jenson maintains the paradoxical present-hidden dialectic of God in Lutheran tradition in his triune *theologoumena*. Seen in the divine discourse reality of law and gospel, the hiddenness of God is located in his temporal transcendence. Such that, even though we live in the

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 72–3.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 74. Jenson describes *hinterfragen* in this manner: "Man kann die Tatsache des Vaters Vaterseins nicht hinterfragen. One cannot question one's way back behind the Father's Fatherhood."

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



same temporal metaphysics with God we cannot keep up with the moral intention nor fully understand what God is up to next.<sup>118</sup> His life is temporal infinity, as such God remains transcendent—in temporality, hidden from us who are finite and sinful.<sup>119</sup>

Next, how can we participate with God in his goodness, which is lovable? Jenson locates God’s goodness first in the Torah as his moral discourse, but also in the gospel as his promise.<sup>120</sup> This goodness is to be found first of all in God’s *own discourse* as a moral discourse: that God is three persons who mutually command and obey.<sup>121</sup> In God, this righteousness is a spoken righteousness as a discourse, not a silent perfection.<sup>122</sup> This communal righteousness is perfect because each has his entire investment in self-giving to the others—*perichoresis*.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, God’s goodness has an identity, which is Jesus. Jesus as the Word

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Jenson, *God After God*, 96. Jenson follows Barth in that “God comes to be understood not as a transcendent thing but as a transcendent happening, and his transcendence therefore understood not as his timelessness but as his radical temporality.” *ST* 1.III: 14.V, God is hidden due to: first, our finiteness that we are unable to share the infinite life of God, (this is the closest of Jenson’s forced acknowledgement of *finitum incapax infiniti*), and second, the contingency of God presented as a crucified man. Notice that Jenson does not use the term “being” since it will contradict his definition of “being as conversing”, then “sin” was also missing, but he quotes Luther’s paradox about justifying by making guilty.

<sup>120</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.II. “When God declares his creation good, it is in view of both sides of its destiny, its glorious salvation and the sin from which it needs saving.” Thus, eschatological and soteriological.

<sup>121</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 25.VII.

<sup>122</sup> Jenson, “The Triunity of the Common Good,” in *In Search of the Common Good*, eds. Dennis P. McCann and Patrick D. Miller (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 341.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

has to be recognized as Torah.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, goodness found its narration or dramatic coherence in Jesus as the Torah and the Gospel. To know God is not only to know his benefits – the gospel, but also to know his moral will – the Torah.<sup>125</sup> In Torah, we too know Jesus as the Word.

Again, we need to note that in Jenson’s temporal metaphysics the goodness in God’s discourse is not only an *ad-intra* reality as in John 1. In fact the *ad-intra* discourse in John 1 is “realized” in the *ad-extra* of the John 17 discourse, of the Son’s prayer to the Father that we overhear.<sup>126</sup> Thus we are invited to participate in that goodness, knowing that we are being discussed (v.9) in that intra-divine discourse to be one with Jesus and the Father (v.21), all along with the Spirit as well, referred to as love (v.26).

Lastly, on God’s beauty, Jenson follows Thomas’ maxim, “*Deus est ipsa...pulchritudo*, God is...beauty itself.”<sup>127</sup> The maxim captures the understanding that God is *beauty*, and to be God is to be enjoyable.<sup>128</sup> Jenson

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<sup>124</sup> Jenson, “Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism,” In *Jews and Christians: People of God*, eds. Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 12.

<sup>125</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.IV; *ST* 2.VII: 33.III. Jenson differentiates the church with the Jewish community; that the Jewish is a community based on Torah, whereas the church is based on the gospel.

<sup>126</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>127</sup> Jenson, “Deus Est Ipsa Pulchritudo,” 210, quote from Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, 35:2.

<sup>128</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.V.

develops a concept of beauty that takes its starting point from plurality and not singularity.<sup>129</sup>

There is a credit in this approach—though in the end we must affirm that both God’s integral perfection as unity and his plurality contributes to his enjoyability. To simply have plurality without harmony will be mere chaos. Therefore, it is relatively easier to enjoy the beauty of a singularity, especially when there is nothing to compare it with. God, because he is triune, has unsurpassed beauty in his plurality and simplicity.

Jenson understands the harmony in plurality as the actual living exchange between Father, Son, and Spirit; this exchange is perfect as it *sings*.<sup>130</sup> With harmony is understood in musical manner, Jenson identifies God as *fugue*.<sup>131</sup> Fugue is musical type of composition that consists of subject, counter-subject, and the answer.<sup>132</sup> Jenson opines that in infinite *fugue* the creatures are included such that “the harmony of our love [will be] finally perfectly harmonized with

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<sup>129</sup> Jenson, “Deus Est Ipsa Pulchritudo,” 212. Jenson agrees with Edwards that for something to be beautiful it must be inwardly plural, “one alone cannot be excellent”.

<sup>130</sup> *ST* I.III: 14.V. This perfect harmonious singing is defined by Jenson as the triune *perichoresis* itself, that this singing “transcends its character as goodness because it has no purpose beyond itself, being itself God.”

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> A definition of fugue by J. Stainer, and W.A. Barrett, ed. *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179–80, “a polyphonic composition constructed on one or more short subjects or themes, which are harmonized according to the laws of counterpoint, and introduced from time to time with various contrapuntal devices; the interest in these frequently heard themes being sustained by diminishing the interval of time at which they follow each other (the *stretto*), and monotony being avoided by the occasional use of episodes, or passages open to free treatment.”

the supreme harmony, [and be included] in the divine fugue of as many voices as there are blessed creatures.”<sup>133</sup> At present this enjoyment is an anticipation, but at the same time one that can already be enjoyed in our communal worship.

Despite the author's non-expertise in music, I shall try to probe the identifiers of God in the fugue elements that Jenson endorses. The subject is obviously seen in the role of the Father as initiator; the counter-subject is seen in the Son's role whose response is directed to the Father and can accommodate multiple voices of creatures due to his willing obedience to be identified with the creatures; and lastly, the answer is in the Spirit who brings the whole composition of Subject and counter-subject to its concluding rest.

Jenson's understanding of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty should be appreciated even more, given the background of their origins in Greek philosophy. In Plato's *Symposium*, ancient Greeks taught *summum bonum* as the ultimate object of pursuit.<sup>134</sup> Whereas, in the famous story of Plato's cave in the *Republic* we read about knowledge of the truth in order to reach the Good.<sup>135</sup> Then in Plato's *Phaedrus* is told about the vision (or contemplation) of truth as the *telos* in a race between man in his tripartite soul and the gods.<sup>136</sup> The race is upward, thus presents a struggle for man to peek his head above the clouds to

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<sup>133</sup> Jenson, "The End is Music," 170.

<sup>134</sup> Boersma, *Seeing God*, 48–55. After debating on a few other possibilities like Love and Beauty.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–59.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–63.

gaze (*theoria*) the truth; man's reason acts as a charioteer that controls the passions depicted as two horses of the good desire along with the evil lust. The soul is depicted with wings that can either be strengthened in its journey with the gazing or fall into earthly embodiment due to failure in sustaining contemplation which the lust contributes. Later, these concepts in their original story form have been transformed by Plotinus into a ladder like structure to reach the One or the Good.<sup>137</sup> These are then found their admission and usage in Christian theology. Jenson reinterprets these transcendentals from commonly conceived layered cosmology to a dialectic process that can be participated in the temporal future.

In view of his charge of the pagan Greek philosophies intrusion to theology, Jenson has done a creative revision of metaphysics. There he seeks to do justice to the biblical narrative, that there is no passive role of any identities (*dramatis persona dei*) of the Triune God. What were originally abstracts in their Greek background have been replaced with the reality of speech which is none other than the intra-divine discourse of the Father and the Son in the Spirit.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 63–68.

### 2.1.2. Reality in Creation

#### i. The Envelopment of Creation in the Creator

Jenson conceives the reality of creation as an actualized possibility due to the reality within the Triune God himself. Creation is not a closed entity, but rather an open one with its *telos* conceived at the very beginning.<sup>138</sup> In divine discourse reality, the *telos* of creation is none other than *theosis* as living in God's life. We will now see how Jenson articulates the metaphysics of this divine discourse reality in creation.

#### a. The Paradigm of Hearing

The triune God is one who tells a tale, who may or may not mention creation prior to its creation point. Creation is contingent, but not the triune God. Jenson explicates the triune God in his three identities to be the one to tell, the one to hear, and the one to be the telling.<sup>139</sup> Creation as an auricular event find its occurrence in God's conversation that is telling His own story.<sup>140</sup> Space is not an independent entity, but rather understood by Jenson as narrative room that God creates.<sup>141</sup> Creation then cannot be abstractly conceived as a cosmos with no narrative.<sup>142</sup> But rather as a history, which is none other of God's telling his own

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<sup>138</sup> ST 2.IV: 15.III. The end can only be in either nothingness (Barth's *das Nichtige*) or God.

<sup>139</sup> Jenson, "God, the Liberal Arts, and the Integrity of Texts," in *ETC*, 214.

<sup>140</sup> Jenson, "On Truth and God: 2. The Triunity of Truth," 52.

<sup>141</sup> ST 2.IV: 17.II.

<sup>142</sup> Jenson, "What Kind of God Can Make a Covenant?," in *Covenant and Hope: Christian and Jewish Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 18.

story. Jenson tries to explain the deepest reality of existence: of our cosmos as a story which comes from God, and where triunity structure is implicit.<sup>143</sup>

Creation is a reality of God's Word as Torah and Gospel. The gospel is a promise for creation which is history with a plot.<sup>144</sup> As God's unsurpassable word, the gospel is explicated in a discourse of eschatology.<sup>145</sup> Part of the promise was fulfilled in Israel's existence and in the church; while the rest of the promise is in anticipation within the general history of humankind.<sup>146</sup> The gospel, which conveys the promise for creation, will be finalized in *theosis* as our participation in God's own reality.<sup>147</sup>

The gospel is rightly seen as the promise of Creation's end, but what comes first at the beginning point of Creation is Torah. *Logos* who uttered Torah is the agency of creation who has moral intention. In creation, this moral character is seen in creatures coming into existence and flourishing as an act of obedience to the spoken command of Torah.<sup>148</sup> So, with Torah as divine discourse, Torah and

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<sup>143</sup> Kees van der Kooi helps to summarize.

<sup>144</sup> Jenson, "Hope, the Gospel, and the Liberal Arts," in *ETC*, 186. Also "God, the Liberal Arts, and the Integrity of Texts," in *ETC*, 214. Cf. Jenson, *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 148, Jenson twists Pannenberg's thesis "revelation as history" into "creation itself as history." The involvement of God in creation is greater as a result. Also in Jenson, "An Ontology of Freedom in the *De servo arbitrio* of Luther," in *TRM*, 163.

<sup>145</sup> Jenson, "The End is Music," 161.

<sup>146</sup> Jenson, "Creation as a triune act," 37. Jenson, "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," 23.

<sup>147</sup> *ST* 1.II: 4.III.

<sup>148</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.II. Jenson, "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," 19.

righteousness are the very being of any creature's reality.<sup>149</sup> This in fact bears a greater moral character in human beings. Jenson highlights the difference between humanity and animals, that "the blessing of fertility given to other animals becomes a speech of moral commission that requires acceptance."<sup>150</sup>

Still on the discussion of Torah in creation, Jenson recognizes a repeatable command/ obedience theme in six-day account of creation as a rhythm of musical character.<sup>151</sup> The out-of-rhythm occurrence happens at the creation of humans.<sup>152</sup> This musical insight in creation aligns with Jenson's view of God as great *fugue*, and of the end as music. The hearing paradigm then undergoes a development from divine discourse to *fugue*. What is our role as creatures in a musical creation? That we belong to the counterpoint and harmony of the triune music,<sup>153</sup> are freed in our answers to God's divine decision in his freedom,<sup>154</sup> and are a revelation of God's will to be a "created word" from God.<sup>155</sup> The divine discourse secures the ontology of creatures, both protological in Torah and eschatological in the gospel.

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<sup>149</sup> Jenson, "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," 19.

<sup>150</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.II.

<sup>151</sup> "Let there *be*...", "God *said*...", "God said, *let* there be... and there was" in *ST* 2.IV: 15.II; "God said..." as downbeat and "it was good" as upbeat in *ST* 2.IV: 15.III.

<sup>152</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.IV. "Let us make..."

<sup>153</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.IV; *ST* 2.V:21.IV, where this is also true for other creatures, exist as counterpart of the divine *perichoresis*/ *fugue*.

<sup>154</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.V.

<sup>155</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.VI; *ST* 2.V: 23.IV, "Sun, moon, heaven, earth, Peter, Paul, I, you, etc., are all words of God, or perhaps rather syllables or letters in context of the whole creation."



Jenson sees the being of creatures is more of hearing paradigm, rather than seeing.<sup>156</sup> In the paradigm of hearing, reality is not apprehended as “phenomena” (things that appear) but rather as “legomena” (things that are spoken of).<sup>157</sup> God as the *word* evokes being-as-communication.<sup>158</sup> What makes a creature to be is to be mentioned in the triune moral conversation.<sup>159</sup>

#### b. History as Temporal-Spatial Reality

Jenson conceives creation in a temporal manner rather than spatial. The creation that God creates is a history instead of a cosmos.<sup>160</sup> But what is time and space? Jenson differentiates between God’s time and created time, and between God’s place and creatures’ place.

*Ad intra*, God is his own place.<sup>161</sup> *Ad extra*, space is one aspect of time; space is the horizon of the present tense.<sup>162</sup> Jenson elaborates that, “Space is precisely the

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<sup>156</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.I. This is contrast with the Greek—Plato and Aristotle, who conceive being in the paradigm of seeing.

<sup>157</sup> *ST* 1.II: 4.III.

<sup>158</sup> Jenson, “Futurist Option,” 25.

<sup>159</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.III.

<sup>160</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.III; 2.IV: 17.VII; “Christ as drama,” 204; “Second Thoughts,” 44, “God does not create a cosmos, which thereupon is shocked into movement so as to have a history. God creates precisely a history, which is a universe, an intelligible whole, because it has an intended end.”

<sup>161</sup> Jenson, “Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation,” in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History, and Philosophy*, ed. Colin Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 24; *ST* 2.IV: 17.VII. Jenson quotes John of Damascus, *The Catholic Faith*, 6.6–8; *The Orthodox Faith*, 13.11.

<sup>162</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.VII.

present as against the past and the future. Space is precisely that in which things are present [...]. Space is that in which *presence* occurs.”<sup>163</sup>

Jenson transposes the traditional metaphysic of conceiving time in space, “God creates temporal-spatial objects, [...] in a more precise language, [...] histories.”<sup>164</sup> Inherent in the “roominess” of God between the Father and the Son, “space is the form of consciousness that enables distinguishing other reality from oneself.”<sup>165</sup> When God opens this otherness between himself and us, there he presents room as temporal reality for us.<sup>166</sup>

Jenson shows the *ontological finality* of the relation between space *ad intra* and *ad extra* as defined by the risen Son’s location at the right of the Father.

When now we speak specifically of heaven as God’s own space we are speaking of the space between the man Jesus and the Father, insofar as this space is *at once* the space between a creature and God and the inner-triune difference between the Son and the Father. The latter difference is the possibility of space and creatures in it; its identity with the former is the possibility of God’s spatial location over against them.<sup>167</sup>

The two elements are again present here: the Creator reality as condition of possibility for the reality of creation, and yet what happens in temporality is constitutive to eternity.

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<sup>163</sup> Jenson, “God, Space, and Architecture,” in *ETC*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

<sup>164</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.VII.

<sup>165</sup> *ST* 2. IV: 17.VII. Cf. *ST* 1.III: 14.I.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *ST* 2.V: 21.III. *Italic* original

Now, what about time? Criticizing the common conception of time *ad extra*, Jenson notes the inadequacy both of Aristotelian's impersonal acausal time—the metric of external physical movement, and of Augustine's time as *distentio animi*—the inner horizon of human experience.<sup>168</sup> Jenson sublates these two notions that time does not only consist in an Aristotelian nor Augustinian manner, but “*both* the inner extension of a life [...] *and* the external horizon and metric of all created events [...]”<sup>169</sup> However created time is not independent; it is accommodated in God's eternity for other than God.<sup>170</sup>

The original contribution of revisionary metaphysics by Jenson is to view time *ad intra* as God himself. He is God of the Future, God of the Past and God of the Present. The role which the Spirit plays is the goal, the *telos* of history; while the Father as the origin, the *arche* of history; and the Son as the reconciliation of history.<sup>171</sup> God's time is also referred to as narrative time.<sup>172</sup> There are poles of time that are defined with mutual roles in the biblical story; the Father as the “whence” of divine events, the Spirit as the “whither” of God's life, and the Son

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<sup>168</sup> Jenson, “Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation,” 26. *ST* 2.IV: 17.I.

<sup>169</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.II.

<sup>170</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.IV. Jenson, “Does God Have Time?,” 199.

<sup>171</sup> Jenson, “Creation as a triune act,” *Word & World* 2, no. 1 (1982): 40; “Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation,” 24–25; “Futurist Option,” 23–24.

<sup>172</sup> Jenson, “Ipse Pater,” 97. “Narrative time [...] is neither linear nor cyclical, nor is it accommodated merely by talk about *kairoi* or such. Narrative time is the ordering of events by their mutual reference, and the narratively-temporal extension of an event is thus its relation to other events in a set.”

as the “specious present”.<sup>173</sup> The Father as the “whence” of divine events is the unsent sender.<sup>174</sup> The Spirit as the “whither” is “the power of the future” whose coming from the future breaks the present open to himself.<sup>175</sup> The “specious present” is Jesus the Christ in whom the Father finds himself, and whom the Spirit liberates from sinking into the past, in whose resurrection the Spirit’s liberating act is powerful.<sup>176</sup> It seems “specious present” is Jenson’s way to define space that is not absolute in itself, but rather dependent in temporal manner on the Son’s *hypostasis*. Thus, he mentions that “space is but time’s present tense.”<sup>177</sup> It is within this narrative triune time that creatures appear to enact God’s life.<sup>178</sup> God can indeed include other persons in his life without distorting that life. Thus, for the creature “to be in time is to share God’s life in its temporality.”<sup>179</sup>

How is time *ad intra* related to time *ad extra*? Time *ad extra* is not independent from God as “*acausal* past-present-future [...] to be absolute.”<sup>180</sup> The aspect of God’s eternity is the condition of possibility of created time.<sup>181</sup> Taking the bits

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<sup>173</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.V; 2.IV: 17.II; Jenson, “Does God Have Time?,” 194–5.

<sup>174</sup> Jenson, “What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?,” 39.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* *ST* 1.I: 2.I.; 1.II: 9. Jenson again takes a further step than the eschatological theology school (Pannenberg and Moltmann) by identifying the power of the future (as eternity) in the Spirit. Cf. *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 150.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.III.

<sup>178</sup> Jenson, “Does God Have Time?” 199.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 196, n.13.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

and pieces from Augustine and Aristotle, Jenson defines time in God as *dramatic distention*.<sup>182</sup> It is time that posits a *distentio*, not of finite persons—contra Augustine—but precisely *of* God in three *dramatis dei personae*.<sup>183</sup> Time is in the supreme conscious life—God, and just so it is the enveloping horizon of all events that are not God,<sup>184</sup> because nothing in God recedes into the past or approaches from the future.<sup>185</sup> Therefore, as another reality than God, creation is enveloped in God—in His conversation.<sup>186</sup> God creates by making accommodation in his triune life for other persons and things besides the three whose mutual life he is.<sup>187</sup> God *opens room* in himself, and that act is the event of creation.<sup>188</sup> In that act, the triune God brackets us in time.<sup>189</sup> Thus, what envelopment means for creature is “to be in a specific way bracketed by the life of the triune persons.”<sup>190</sup>

So, time is not to be understood abstractly apart from the triune God, rather to be understood triunely with its poles: of the Father at the past, the Son at the

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<sup>182</sup> Jenson, “Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation,” 25.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Jenson, “Does God Have Time?” 196.

<sup>186</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

<sup>187</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.IV.

<sup>188</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.I; *ST* 2.IV: 16.IV.

<sup>189</sup> Jenson, “Creation as a triune act,” 42.

<sup>190</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.IV.

present and the Spirit at the future. Space then is the horizon of the present; creation is made possible due to the otherness of the Son from the Father.

A summarized definition of *opera ad extra* by Jenson captures the common temporal reality of “God and the creature”:

The occurrence and plot of the life of God’s people with God depends as a whole upon the occurrence and plot of the life of God with his people. It does so precisely as this one life is in both aspects constituted in the Father’s originating, the Spirit’s perfecting, and the Son’s mediating of the two, and as it is the whole reality of God on the one hand and of the creature on the other.<sup>191</sup>

Jenson then proposes the same reality both for God and creatures with this envelopment. This same Creator-creature reality would readily fall into a more panentheistic kind of thinking, if not kept distinct within the trinitarian framework, especially the inherent dialectic struggle that Jenson adopts.

At this juncture we must take a bit of a detour and ask, in light of Einstein’s *General relativity theory* with its curvature of spacetime, is it relevant to distinguish time and space in this way? Jenson defines the encompassing reality of the universe in its eschatological plot rather than as cosmological or political or some other kinds of history.<sup>192</sup> Even so, the universe that Jenson conceives is not much different from Einstein’s where time and space are relative and not absolute as they used to be conceived. Hans Schwarz notes that “in contrast to

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<sup>191</sup> ST 1.II: 6.V.

<sup>192</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.V.

Kant, 150 years later Albert Einstein (1879–1955) showed that space and time *belong to the material and are not instruments* for the perception of the observer.”<sup>193</sup> Jenson relates time and space in this manner, “Space [...] is the distention in God that accommodates a present tense of creatures.”<sup>194</sup> If we consider time and space as part of the material universe as creation, then Jenson believes that this material world is malleable as God intended.<sup>195</sup> This is not a contradiction since “natural laws are in any case the regularities of God’s intentions.”<sup>196</sup> Even when time and space are conceived as immaterial, these are still bound in their existence as intended by God, and not abstractly nor independently, hence they are malleable.

Jenson thinks the problem with modern science’s general account of the universe is that it has bracketed out teleology and freedom. In other words, it is a closed, not an open world that can have real change. Such real changes can come only due to God’s word of promise. Therefore, in its abstraction, modern science has offered an *ateleological* explanation, divorced from the truth.<sup>197</sup> Even so, when present time has receded into the past, would not this make God in created

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<sup>193</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Theology in A Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years* (Cambridge, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 5. *Italic* added. Cf. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 58 who sees the same notion of absolute space and time both in Kant, and Newton was rejected by Einstein. In page 18–21, Torrance compares and describes the relation between scientific and theological statements on space.

<sup>194</sup> *ST* 2.V: 21.III.

<sup>195</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.VI.

<sup>196</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.V.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* See the explanation of truth, not as timeless, but as historical in character in section 2.1.1.ii.b.

time – as enveloped in God’s time – still chained by time to the past? Not quite, since the blessedness of the future is conceived in *totus christus* as *non posse peccare*; Jenson says, “The memory of their sins will be joy to [the saints].”<sup>198</sup> In *totus christus*, God and the blessed live in the same reality of the Spirit, of freedom and love. The eschatological takes priority, even to the determination of the past.

c. Trace of Hegelian Thinking?

With time being conceived in the earlier manner, we may ask, “Is Jenson Hegelian in his metaphysic of time such that God seems to be collapsed and absorbed in time and history?” Jenson, by revising the metaphysics of time and space in a trinitarian temporal manner, asserts that “God is not merely or predominantly the Origin of all things, he is at least equally the *Eschatos*, the upsetting Goal of all things, the Coming One who will create anew and overturn the orderings of this world.”<sup>199</sup> This implies that “the relations of futurity [...] also [are] constitutive of God’s triune being.”<sup>200</sup> Indeed, for Jenson, God’s being is in his becoming.<sup>201</sup> So, in one sense, Jenson seems to endorse the view of Hegel that God is himself a history, the God who is the archetype of thesis, antithesis and

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<sup>198</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 32.IV.

<sup>199</sup> Jenson, “Trinity in the Bible,” 206.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Jenson, *God After God*, 108.



synthesis, that of the triune God.<sup>202</sup> But Jenson criticizes Hegel in his lack of an identification of God,

he [...] did not make the biblical Spirit's role decisive for his construal of deity. His God, [...] is timeless reason, it lacks life, and therefore the sublation of history into his God is after all a return to the beginning and very much like death.<sup>203</sup>

Jenson's metaphysic of time then is defined Triunely with the future of the Spirit as prior. The temporal-eternal reality is a dynamic kind, even to God himself. Furthermore, given to Jenson's assents to Nyssa's understanding of God's *epektasis* and Luther's paradox of God's hiddenness, Jenson maintains the transcendent aspect of God even within the common temporal reality.

It is fair to say that Jenson, having no affinity for understanding deity as immunity to time, reconstructs a temporal metaphysic based on Hegel's triad framework as we have seen earlier in section 2.1.1.i.c. Jenson seeks to respect the scripture narrative as history with the Triune God actively involved in it; his breakthrough however in seeing history as part of God's life himself. Jenson thinks the pagan Platonic metaphysic has influenced Christian metaphysics such that God's eternity is seen as timeless. He argues this timelessness is contradictory to the more dynamic Nicene understanding of eternity. There is a clear before and after in the inner-trinitarian relations though it cannot be plotted

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<sup>202</sup> Jenson, "Second Thoughts," 45.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid; The Knowledge of Things Hoped For, 233.

on a straight timeline, such as the begetting of the Son by the Father.<sup>204</sup> This “before and after” is also true when we think of God’s divine will. Both examples demand a before and after of some sort, something analogous to time rather than opposite time.<sup>205</sup>

*ii. The Eschatological Being of Creation*

Earlier we have seen that creation is commenced with the end in view, and its reality is being enveloped by God, both in time and space. Is there a distinction, then, between God the Creator and his creature?

*a. On the Being of Creatures*

Jenson defines “being” in a creature as eschatological in its ontology.

Eschatological means not in bondage to the persistence of the past, but lies in its openness to the future.<sup>206</sup> He argues this is true in creatures because this is true in God in the first place.<sup>207</sup> What belongs to the being of a creature is “having a conclusion, and being shaped by it, and in that sense anticipating it.”<sup>208</sup> “It is in that we *will* be what we will be with him, that we *are* at all.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Jenson, “Ipse Pater,” 100.

<sup>205</sup> Jenson, “Creator and Creature,” in *TRM*, 157.

<sup>206</sup> Jenson, “Futurist Option,” 21.

<sup>207</sup> Jenson, “Creation as a triune act,” 42, “the Biblical God is not the Persistence of the Past but the Power of the Future.”

<sup>208</sup> Jenson, “Christ as drama,” 204.

<sup>209</sup> Jenson, “Creation as a triune act,” 42.

Jenson's insight concerning this future openness is due to the communication as word-event.<sup>210</sup> "To be is being-as-communication means that it is not to resist change, but rather to be open to change; being is not immunity to the threatening future, but the call to the future."<sup>211</sup> Being is communication, thus to be is to be addressed.<sup>212</sup> Positively stated, this communication is love; thus being is conceived as love that my being is the occurrence between you and me which relates us.<sup>213</sup> Being is also to be conceived in Jesus' life, not in abstraction of "goodness and truth" but by acting a role in the narrative of Jesus.<sup>214</sup>

What is the purpose of a creature in the divine discourse? The content of divine discourse is law and gospel. Philip Melanchthon in his *theologoumenon* states that "to know God is to know his benefits."<sup>215</sup> According to Jenson, in the modern context where the *identity* of the God cannot be securely known antecedently, this *theologoumenon* has been a disaster for the church.<sup>216</sup> So Jenson reformulates it into "to know God is to know his moral will."<sup>217</sup> Jenson complements Melanchthon's one sidedness of the divine discourse as the gospel.

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<sup>210</sup> *ST* 1.III: 10.III, modifying Bultmann's sense of word-event, not eschatological in existential-timeless manner, but eschatological in temporal-future.

<sup>211</sup> Jenson, "Futurist Option," 22.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.IV, n.68.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 131. Cf. Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes Theologici*, in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, trans. Lowell J. Satre, rev. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck (London: Westminster John Knox, 1969), 21.

<sup>217</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.IV.

The divine discourse as the law is also needed to know God in his moral will.

Hence for a creature to be in the divine discourse is to have the purpose of knowing God in law and gospel, in his moral will and his benefits.

The eschatological being of creation also sums this up by relating “the law and gospel” distinction with knowing God’s Truth and enjoying His Goodness.

Jenson amends Thomas’ *theologoumenon* on reason which emphasizes that “God is the Explanation, creatures are that-which-needs-explanation, and therefore to be is to be intelligible—*ens est veritas*,”<sup>218</sup> to “God is the resurrection, creatures are that-which-needs-to-be-raised—*ens est surgere*.”<sup>219</sup> Thus, the creature’s ontology and epistemology—to be is to be knowable, according to Thomas—is found only eschatologically in the future *resurrection*, not in timeless abstraction. Truth for the creatures is historical in Christological sense, in the one who was crucified and raised. Christ is himself the truth by which he judges.<sup>220</sup> There is no standard of judgment apart from the cross and resurrection.<sup>221</sup> This truth is the same for us as it is for God in Christ.

Since history is to be brought to a close,<sup>222</sup> the truth can be sensed as a repression of the unfaithful who barely can understand themselves

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<sup>218</sup> Jenson, “Three Identities of One Action,” 15.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 32.II.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

dramatically.<sup>223</sup> But to the deified, truth will no longer be merely external, but will transform and make the saints participate internally, and embody the truth of the cross and resurrection.

b. On the Materiality of Creatures

Now, is the end simply a return to the beginning in the paradigm of hearing? At the *eschaton*, a cosmic transformation is expected to happen. However, the universe will not have an independent existence abstracted from human history.<sup>224</sup>

In the paradigm of hearing, the universe exists as history that has *telos*, rather than a cosmos devoid of meaning. Jenson describes the existence of the universe as the stage for the story of God with his people.<sup>225</sup> There is a continuity of understanding the universe as stage in the end; but it is qualified by the life of Jesus as the encompassing interpretation of all lives in that eternity as an event.<sup>226</sup>

We can sense that as the stage, the universe will still be material as a counterpart to the *perichoresis*.<sup>227</sup> There seems to be no change to the materiality of the universe then. In line with his sublation/ *Aufhebung* view of history,

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<sup>223</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 32.VII.

<sup>224</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.V.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

Jenson says, “The End, human *and* cosmic, will be the great triumph of the Spirit, that is, of freedom and love.”<sup>228</sup>

As referred to earlier discussion concerning the musical insight of creation and God as *fugue*, creatures exist as counterpart to the internal *perichoresis* of the infinite God who is capable harmoniously to have many voices as counterpoint.<sup>229</sup> “[T]he world is what Father, Son, and Spirit command in order to ordain a community that can include others with themselves.”<sup>230</sup> Thus creatures exist within the Triune God.

### ***2.1.3. Conclusion on Creator and Creatures in Divine Discourse***

*Theosis* fits well into his eschatological-oriented theology such that his temporal triune metaphysics becomes the condition of possibility for *theosis*. Jenson revises all that he considers pagan Greek’s influence: of spatial prior to temporal with regards to creation and heaven,<sup>231</sup> the static and impersonal concept of God’s being to a dynamic and personal of God’s *ousia*/ life,<sup>232</sup> the spatial infinity to

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> ST 2.V:21.IV.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Of heaven, ST 1.III: 12.IV. Of creation, ST 2.IV: 16.IV, “the Son mediates the Father’s originating and the Spirit’s liberating, thereby *to hold open* the creatures’ space in being.”

<sup>232</sup> Greek: persistence, ST 1.II: 9.V; 1.III: 13.I. Cf. Trinitarian (event, hypostatic, and infinite), ST 1.III: 13.IV; hypostatic/personal, ST 1.II: 4.I; eschatological/ post-existence of Christ “being going to be born”, ST 1.II: 8.IV; dynamic, ST 1.II: 9.V.

God's own life which is temporal infinity,<sup>233</sup> and timeless eternity to a biblical interpretation of faithfulness through and by time.<sup>234</sup> All of these are radical revisions in his theology.<sup>235</sup> In Jenson's view, God's metaphysical reality is an eschatological reality of God himself.<sup>236</sup>

What Jenson seeks to bring with the transformation of spatial-time metaphysics is for us to see history as narrative, a temporal reality with an asymmetrical accent towards the future. This reality is conceived in the divine discourse, which find its eternal occurrence in God's intra-trinitarian conversation, and then inclusive to creatures at the point of creation with God's rhythmic Torah and the gospel promise of its end. Within this discourse the paradigm of being is hearing, entailed in its openness to the future.

In terms of trinitarian traditions, Jenson seeks to address the pneumatological deficit that does not do justice to the Spirit's true portrayal of his "Lordship". Driven by his eschatological approach to theology, Jenson seeks to balance the traditional protological understanding of the Trinity that has been one-sided all along. This in a way ensures the purging of any vestiges of modalism that have

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<sup>233</sup> Greek, *ST* 1.II: 9.II. Cf. Infinity of a life: *ST* 1.II: 8.IV; 1.II: 9.II; 1.III: 13.IV; infinity of the Spirit/ inexhaustibility of the Son, and of intention/ specific loving consciousness, *ST* 1.III: 13.V; of love *ST* 1.III: 13.V.

<sup>234</sup> Timeless, *ST* 1.II: 6.II. Pre-temporal "before time", *ST* 1.II: 8.IV; 1.III: 13.IV. Cf. Temporal infinity, *ST* 1.III: 13.IV; 1.III: 13.V.

<sup>235</sup> Jenson, "Response to Watson and Hunsinger," *SJT* vol. 55, no. 2 (May 2002): 232.

<sup>236</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.V. Cf. Mark C. Mattes, "An Analysis and Assessment of Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology," *LQ* 14, no. 4 (Wint. 2000): 484, cited by Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection*, 210.

been lurking in traditional West and East models. God has been involved in the history all along because history is the telling of God in his way of being as the triune God. With the eschatological prior in his theology, Jenson seeks to do justice to God's freedom even to himself, which results in his depiction of how God becomes triune in a constitutive manner.

Jenson modifies the transcendence of God which is commonly seen in spatial manner to temporal by subscribing to Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of God's life as temporal infinity. In doing so he revises the Creator-creature distinction from spatial to temporal sense.

The Cappadocians' trinity opens the possibility of *theosis* with its definition of God's *ousia*; not as an unknown essence to his creatures, but as his mutual *life* that is inclusive. In this *ousia* humans can then participate due to the fact that God is triune. Thus, opposing modalism and subordinationism in conceiving being as *apophatic*, *ousia* reflects God's knowability, lovability and enjoyability as Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. These are not timeless attributes of God, but in God's time. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are known—yet also hidden paradoxically due to God's offensive availability—to humans in history through dialectic, Torah, and harmony. All these have their locus in Christology and being so is trinitarian.



## 2.2. Jesus: The Creator in Creation

In this section, Jenson's understanding on who Jesus is and the significance of His work that he undertakes on behalf of the creature will be characterized to enrich the understanding of *theosis* in humankind.

Jenson's revisionary metaphysics in the Christological locus is difficult to accept by some people. Jenson is aware of his prone-to-be-misunderstood position, hence he offers some responses towards his critics to clarify his position.<sup>237</sup> In this section, we will first see Jenson's articulation of his belief in his trinitarian metaphysics concerning Christology, especially its significance for his notion of the pre-existence of Christ and along with it his rejection of the *logos asarkos*.

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<sup>237</sup> Sang Hoon Lee mentions some of Jenson's critics in, "The Preexistence and Transcendence of the Risen One in Robert Jenson's Theology," *PE* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 401–14. See George Hunsinger, "Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology: A Review Essay," *SJT* 55, no.2 (2002): 161–200; Simon Gathercole, "Pre-existence, and the Freedom of the Son in Creation and Redemption: An Exposition in Dialogue with Robert Jenson," *IJST* 7, no.1 (Jan. 2005): 38–51; Oliver D. Crisp, "Robert Jenson on the pre-existence of Christ," *MT* 23, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 27–45, "Concerning the Logos asarkos: interacting with Robert W. Jenson," *SBJT* 19, no. 1 (2015): 39–50; John Byung-Tek Song, "An Assessment of Robert Jenson's Hermeneutics on Divine Im/Passibility and the Emotions of God," *IJST* 15, no.1 (Jan. 2013): 78–96; David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2003), 160–67, and "The Lively God of Robert Jenson," *First Things* (Oct. 2005) at [www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson). (accessed Nov. 6, 2018). Some of Jenson's responses are in "Review essay David Bentley Hart, *The beauty of the infinite: the aesthetics of Christian truth*," *PE* 14, no. 2 (Spr 2005): 235–37, "Response to Watson and Hunsinger," *SJT* 55, no. 2 (2002): 225–32, "Once More the *Logos Asarkos*," *IJST* 13, no. 2 (Apr. 2011): 130–33, or its book format in *TRM*, 119–26.

### 2.2.1. *The Embodiment of God*

#### i. *The identity of the Son*

Jesus Christ is both one of the Trinity and one of us.<sup>238</sup> Jenson, in pursuing his earlier concern for identifying the *theos* in theology, sees the identification of the Son as indispensable in our knowing God as the Trinity.<sup>239</sup> According to Jenson, to speak simply of Jesus the individual as by himself the second identity of God would be an abstraction.<sup>240</sup> Instead, Jesus must be conceived as *totus christus*, because even in his death he is *for* us.<sup>241</sup>

#### a. The Ramifications of the Embodiment of Jesus

The primary trinitarian sense of the Son is that “he is another *by* and *with* whom God is identified.”<sup>242</sup> The Son, who is Jesus, then has the epistemological priority to identify the other two identities/ persons with reference to his story.<sup>243</sup> Jenson sensibly argues that our identification of someone is done through the means of his/her body. He then proposes that Jesus is the embodiment of God, in a way that “God is a body for himself.”<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Jenson, “Conceptus... de Spiritu Sancto,” *PE* 15, no. 1 (2006): 100.

<sup>239</sup> Jenson, “Christ in the Trinity: Communicatio Idiomatum,” in *The Person of Christ*, eds. Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 67.

<sup>240</sup> Jenson, *On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 12.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.II. *Italic* added.

<sup>243</sup> Jenson, “Three Identities of One Action,” 7.

<sup>244</sup> Jenson, “Evil as Person,” in *TRM*, 140.

In general, the implication of a “body” according to Jenson is multi-faceted: 1) it is the *object-presence* of the person, 2) it is *also* the object-presence *to himself*, 3) it is the *to-be-transcended* presence of the person by mediating the past, and 4) it is by mediating the past that the body becomes the person’s *identifiability*.<sup>245</sup> Within God himself in his intra-divine discourse, the sense of “body” is implicit. When God addresses God, God intends God.<sup>246</sup> God can turn to himself by turning to Jesus;<sup>247</sup> that in knowing and willing Jesus, God knows and wills himself.<sup>248</sup> That means God as triune can look at himself in the Son.<sup>249</sup> Jesus is the one in whom the Father intends himself, and *at once*, Jesus is an item of and subject in our history.<sup>250</sup> This is Jenson’s significant revision towards Hegel’s dialectic who places the world instead of the Son as God’s object of self-consciousness.<sup>251</sup>

Jesus’ embodiment is not only for God, but at once fully and richly embodied *for us*.<sup>252</sup> Within his role as object, the Son’s deity is determined not in terms of his Lordship through command/ assertion, but in terms of obedience through his reception to be fully identified with the creatures.<sup>253</sup> Jesus in his obedience is

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<sup>245</sup> Jenson, “The Body of God’s Presence,” 82–5.

<sup>246</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 146.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Jenson, “Evil as Person,” 140–1.

<sup>250</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 146.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>252</sup> Jenson, “Evil as Person,” 141.

<sup>253</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 144.

willing to be intended by the Father for us to see as his beloved Son. So, we too can see Jesus as God's embodiment.

The gospel then is encapsulated in this embodiment of Jesus. For Jenson this embodiment is important, because in a "true mutuality is *mutual self-objectification*."<sup>254</sup> As a result, God's address to us in the gospel is liberating and not enslaving.<sup>255</sup> In fact, the embodiment of Jesus brings the possibility of salvation through the cross; "[...] he can give himself over to us and be maltreated by us."<sup>256</sup> Eventually, this salvation comes not only by mutual self-objectification but by identification through his embodiment. As phrased by Jenson, "the Father, [...], sends the Son into eternal identification with us, even unto *Sheol*, so that we simply cannot escape being one with the Son [...]."<sup>257</sup>

Another significant aspect that Jesus' embodiment as an object brings is the possibility of community consisting of "I" and "you".<sup>258</sup> We can draw from Jenson that the begetting of the Son is the condition of possibility of community in God.<sup>259</sup> Temporally in history, it was not until the resurrection of Jesus that the notion of body would undergo a redefinition by Jenson from its proper

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Jenson, "Evil as Person," 141.

<sup>257</sup> Jenson, "On the Doctrine of the Atonement," in *TRM*, 135.

<sup>258</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 147. "The Father is "I" over against the Son as "you" —who is the same "I" the Father is, and yet a genuine "you", so God could have been community for himself."

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

understanding to “availability” as the object for other persons.<sup>260</sup> This redefinition, however, greatly serves this possibility of community which will be strongly fastened to the church as communion.<sup>261</sup>

b. A Kind of Modalism (?)

Not everyone agrees with Jenson’s notion of Jesus as the embodiment of God. For example, Andrew Burgess charges Jenson as a kind of modalist in his description of Jesus as the body of God.<sup>262</sup> This is not an insignificant charge, because if Jenson indeed agrees to modalism in his theology, then *theosis* would become an impossibility for creatures to participate in God’s life.

Burgess states that his difficulty lies in understanding Jenson’s notion of God as an event, that God’s being is a “going-on”.<sup>263</sup> Then he assesses Jenson’s notion of personhood of the trinity in terms of a spirit-body dialectic, with particular reference to the incarnation as the focus of the triune life.<sup>264</sup> Burgess also objects to the use of *persona dramatis* which could imply modalism; and with the Trinity being described as one person, he charges Jenson with Modalism.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> ST 1.III: 12.IV; 2.VI: 26.II.

<sup>261</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.I.

<sup>262</sup> Andrew Burgess, “A community of love? Jesus as the body of God and Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Thought,” *IJST* 6, no. 3 (Jul 2004): 289–300.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

In his assessment, Burgess tends to be one-sided seeing Jenson in the framework of Hegelian subject-object enslavement. This is not the overarching point of view in seeing Jenson's trinity. In fact, this dialectic struggle is just part of the process in which the Augustinian-Hegelian triad of God's self-hood should be assessed in Jenson.<sup>266</sup> Burgess ignores Jenson's triad "consciousness/ ego/ freedom" of God.<sup>267</sup> The trinitarian selfhood of God as conceived by Jenson is spelled out in this manner: the Father is consciousness who finds his "I" in the Son, and free for each other in the Spirit.<sup>268</sup> Is this then not one consciousness, which confirms Burgess' charge of modalism? However, Jenson does not say a mere consciousness, but rather a *unity* of consciousness.<sup>269</sup> The unity conceived in Jenson is of course a dialectic unity of self-consciousness. There are differentiations between the *persona* in reference from one to the other, yet without compromising or dismissing their unity – which Jenson locates in the narrative.<sup>270</sup>

As to the charge of using *persona dramatis*, Burgess missed what Jenson has clearly stated that "Father, Son, and Spirit are three identities, and the Trinity is not an identity; [...]"<sup>271</sup> Burgess has considerable difficulties in explicating the

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<sup>266</sup> See section 2.1.1.i.c.

<sup>267</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *ST* 2.V: 20.II.

<sup>271</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

internal relations of the trinity.<sup>272</sup> One example is how the trinity as a whole can be called a person.<sup>273</sup> Jenson rejects the modern Western conception of personality as an autonomous monadic self (which may fall into the danger of tritheism). Instead, the Trinity's personality that Jenson conceived is one of *community*, in which there is one that can be addressed *as* the community; that is the role of the Father.<sup>274</sup> "With the Father's role as *arche* of the deity, he is the someone who can be addressed as the community; therefore the trinity is a person."<sup>275</sup>

Another difficulty in understanding the trinitarian notion of Jenson by Burgess is regarding the role of the Father as "Origin", the Son as "Present", and the Spirit as "Future".<sup>276</sup> As we have mentioned earlier, this is partly due to Jenson's *theologoumenon* of the Nicene understanding of the trinity of the Father as the "arche". The identification of the Spirit as "Future" is not unique to Jenson since there are other eschatologist theologians in his time. What is unique in Jenson's contribution is his portrayal of the Son as "Present". Here Jenson ties the Son's role to his work of reconciliation between the Father and the Spirit;

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<sup>272</sup> Burgess, "A community of love?" 296.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>274</sup> ST 1.II: 7.III, "The Patrological Problem".

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Burgess, "A community of love?" 296.

meanwhile in the evangelical circle, we often think more in terms of *pro nobis*.<sup>277</sup> However, Jenson probes deeper in not seeing just the Son, but also the Father and the Spirit reconciled to the other identities of the Triune God.<sup>278</sup> In the classic metaphysic, the Son acts as the mediator to reconcile God the Creator and us — conceived of two ontological realms bridged by the mediator;<sup>279</sup> but in the temporal metaphysics that takes place on the same temporal plane, the reconciliation is of the past and the future.<sup>280</sup> This then guarantees the pure duration in God to be not fragmented as can be experienced by creatures with death or the vanishing of the past due to sin.

There are two additional charges made by Burgess against Jenson: 1) that with the body-spirit dialectic Jesus cannot have the Father as object,<sup>281</sup> and 2) with Jesus as the Risen one who is the very future itself, any functional distinction between the Spirit and Jesus seems trivial at the least.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Jenson, "Reconciliation in God," in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Collin Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 164. "Evangelical" here is associated more to UK theologians like John Stott or US evangelists like Billy Graham.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 160–4. Augustine's *theologoumenon* of the Spirit as *vinculum amoris* reconciles the love of the Father and the Son; Jenson sees the Son reconciles the Spirit as the whither (sole future) and the Father as the whence (sole source) in his crucifixion and resurrection; and lastly the Father reconciles the Son as the material definition (meaning) and the Spirit as the freedom of God's life because the Father is the monarch of both, and the outworking of this/these reconciliation(s) is the church as community in anticipation of the Triune God's communion.

<sup>279</sup> *ST* 1.II: 6.II.

<sup>280</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.IV, "the Son mediates the Father's originating and the Spirit's liberating, thereby *to hold open* the creatures' space in being."

<sup>281</sup> Burgess, "A community of love?" 297.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 298.



First, is it true that “Jesus only knows the Father as pure Spirit, and therefore as an enslaving, totalitarian force [?]”<sup>283</sup> In the reality of the divine discourse, the Father Speaks, the Son is the speech, and he responds to the Father in his address, and the address-response speech is enabled by the Spirit. Prayer is the inner discourse of the trinity, as overheard in John 17; the Son can address the Father as a person.<sup>284</sup> Is this enslaving? Yes, however Jenson locates the Son’s *hypostasis* precisely in that obedient relationship.<sup>285</sup> The very deity of God in Jesus is shown by his embracing abandonment and death.<sup>286</sup> Thus, Burgess is right in an incomplete manner. Because, according to Jenson, the inherent tension of the dialectic relationship between the Father and the Son is resolved by the Spirit, as “the paradigm of the intrusive third party.”<sup>287</sup> Thus, the Spirit is the agent that *liberates* the Son from only being objectified in one directional relationship and yet at the same time makes the final bond between the Father and the Son.<sup>288</sup>

The second charge by Burgess against Jenson really touched a nerve. Indeed, there is an undermining of the Spirit when it comes to keeping distinct from the risen Jesus. This is clearer in the later discussion about the Spirit’s presence in the

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 297–8.

<sup>284</sup> *ST* 1.II: 6.I.

<sup>285</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.III.

<sup>286</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.III.

<sup>287</sup> *ST* 1.II: 9.III.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. *Italic* added.

Eucharist.<sup>289</sup> What we can observe at this time is that Jenson makes himself ambiguous in his acceptance of the *filioque*, not in the Western tradition.<sup>290</sup> It is possible that Jenson is avoiding the critique of impersonal process of divine nature that was discussed earlier.

Now, Jenson states his orthodoxy that the spirit is not only the Spirit of Jesus, but also the Spirit of the Father, otherwise the spirit may be thought of as two different spirits.<sup>291</sup> Then, elsewhere Jenson identifies the triune God in this manner, “God creates by telling a tale; the triune God is one to tell, one to hear, and one to be the telling.”<sup>292</sup> We can identify the Father as the one who tells, the Son is the telling and the Spirit hears. The address-response of the Father and son is reciprocal. The Spirit conceived by Jenson is not to be seen in a passive role, such that the Spirit “just” hears: as the Son hears when the Father addresses or as

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<sup>289</sup> See section 4.2.2.ii.

<sup>290</sup> ST 1.II: 9.IV. We can even say that Jenson seems to agree with Orphanos, Eastern interpretation of the Father as the source, hence defines filioque differently: “only the Father is the source of the Spirit’s *being*, of his sheer givenness as an other than the Father or the Son, but the Spirit’s *energies*, his participation and agency in the triune life, come to him from the Father through the Son or, it can even be said, from the Father and the Son.” Then, “[t]he Spirit does not derive his being from the Son, but does derive his energy from the Son.” And learning from the Cappadocians, “the Spirit receives his existence from the Father, but lives eternally with and in the Son.” Compare with his final conclusion in VI, “the Father begets the Son and freely breathes his Spirit; the Spirit liberates the Father for the Son and the Son from and for the Father; the Son is begotten and liberated, and so reconciles the Father with the future his Spirit is.”

<sup>291</sup> ST 1.II: 9.II. In this manner, he avoids the rather similar criticism that he directs against Lossky: that the Father would be two identities in the orthodox tradition conception due to the rejection of the *filioque*. The critic is because the Father has a separate relation with the Son, and another relation with the Spirit, while identities are distinguished only by their relations.

<sup>292</sup> Jenson, “God, the Liberal Arts, and the Integrity of Texts,” in *ETC*, 214.

the Father hears when the son responds; The Spirit enlivens the Word that the Father speaks as speech, so that the Son responds as a speaker too; This liberation that the Spirit gives is an achieved mutuality of a perfect free-speaking.<sup>293</sup> In this manner the Spirit speaks as the Spirit of the Father *filioque*.

Meanwhile in the post-resurrection setting, Jenson locates the identification of Jesus in the *totus christus* as the resurrection body of Jesus. Indeed, by comprehending Jesus in his *ubiquitous* body, the functional distinction from the Spirit is found lacking. We can agree with Burgess' concluding statement that Jenson's usage of the body as "availability" has too much elasticity.

To sum up, contrary to Burgess' conjecture, Jenson is not a modalist. The concept of God as one person in three identities are acceptable within the Augustinian tradition; though it has been slightly modified with Hegelian terminologies. In addition, Jenson's triune conception inclines towards the East in Cappadocian understanding which starts from the three identities of God.

## *ii. Promise-Existence of Christ*

Jenson employs Cyrillian Chalcedonian interpretation as the encompassing principle in viewing the embodiment of Jesus in incarnation; "the fact that the universal Logos is the singular human person Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>294</sup> However,

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<sup>293</sup> ST 1.III: 13.VI..

<sup>294</sup> Colin Gunton and Robert Jenson, "The Logos Ensarkos and Reason," in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, 78–85, eds. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 78.

Jenson is critical to interpretation based on the Tome of Leo which has its starting point with the two natures of Christ.<sup>295</sup> According to Jenson, the Western church tends to follow Leo's interpretation.<sup>296</sup> This is not entirely true, especially since the *communicatio idiomatum* – which Jenson ascribes to Cyril, is not rejected by the Reformed tradition.<sup>297</sup> Our assessment should work both ways: whether those who start with the hypostatic union secure the distinction of Christ's two natures, and whether those who start with the two natures secure the one hypostasis of Christ.

a. On Logos Asarkos

Jenson follows Cyril whose "great concern was that the story told in the Gospels, [...] the *narrative* content of "Jesus is Lord"."<sup>298</sup> Cyril's interpretation of Chalcedon is "to explicate the notion of *hypostasis* as to make "one *hypostasis*" denote a plausible active protagonist of the Gospels' total narrative."<sup>299</sup>

Jenson, in his theological formulations, takes into account from theologians irrespective of their traditions; he does so without straying from the important creeds of the church. However, Jenson is not always clear, or even purposely being unclear so as to maintain the sense of mystery in theology. That is why

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<sup>295</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.II.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> Jenson, "Jesus in the Trinity," *PE* 8, no. 3 (1999): 314.

<sup>299</sup> Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?," in *Essentials of Christian Theology*, eds. Stanley J. Grenz and William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 199.

critics of Jenson may be incorrect when taking his words/sentences out the context of these historical dialogues.<sup>300</sup>

Jenson's Christology is often furiously disputed due to his rejection of the *Logos asarkos* which entails a come-into-existence of Jesus in his incarnation. *Logos asarkos* is defined by Jenson as "a *pre-existent* second identity of the trinity who was *not yet* the creature Jesus."<sup>301</sup> There are four maxims Jenson formulates in clarifying his position:

First, Jesus is the Son/ *Logos* of God by his relation to the Father. This is relatively clear as related to his understanding of the triune God as divine discourse.

Second, the boundary is drawn by the dogma of Mary as the mother of God the Son, *Theotokos*. By this, Jenson refuses to understand it as though it was only the man Jesus who was born and then united with God the Son. This birth by

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<sup>300</sup> Jenson remarks in "Once More the Logos Asarkos," *IJST* 13, no. 2 (Apr. 2011): 133, n.9, or its book form in *TRM*, 122. Cf. Oliver D. Crisp, "Robert Jenson on the pre-existence of Christ," *MT* 23, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 27–45, where Crisp attributing Jenson "crypto-Arianism". Despite Crisp clear presentation, he misses significant insights of Jenson on: the *totus Christus* element, the concept of promise (identification *by*) and the word-event of that promise (identification *with*), and the Cyrillian presupposition in a common temporal metaphysics such that the divine future birth is the condition of possibility for Christ's birth from the seed of David. Crisp's criticism is directed without him properly understanding Jenson's revisionary metaphysic of time and space in triune manner, and so he fails to see how Christ's pre-existence in Israel as "pattern of movement" can be coherent within that metaphysic. Jenson's position will be delineated in the next section 2.2.1.ii.b. Cf. refutations towards Crisp by Sang Hoon Lee, "The Preexistence and Transcendence of the Risen One in Robert Jenson's Theology," *PE* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 405–6. Crisp later rectified his criticism after Jenson's restatement in clarifying his position. Cf. Oliver D. Crisp, "Concerning the Logos asarkos: interacting with Robert W. Jenson," *SBJT* 19, no. 1 (2015): 40, "[...] Jenson's clarification of his position does have its roots in classical christology, and does avoid Arianism, [...]"

<sup>301</sup> Jenson, "Once More the Logos Asarkos," *IJST* 13, no. 2 (Apr. 2011): 130.

Mary disrupts the linear time-line or pseudo time-line as normally conceived. He remarks that the “birth of the Son eternally and his birth from Mary are not events separated on a merely linear timeline.”<sup>302</sup> In such a case, “if the one Mary bore is the eternal Son, there can be no before.”<sup>303</sup> On this, we can say, eternity is not understood by Jenson in temporal futurity sense (of something that has not happened), but rather that temporal futurity was brought forward in a *proleptic* manner that disrupts the present, thus it is eternal birth. Furthermore, drawing from the Cyrillian presupposition and coalescent metaphysic, Jenson seems to suggest that the eternal birth of the Son is the condition of possibility of Christ’s birth from Mary.

Third, it is simply nonsensical to think of the immanent trinity abstracted from Jesus’ decision to become incarnate. As such the redemptive mission due to the fall is inherent in the trinity. At this notion, Barth’s actualism is affirmed, that God’s decision is constitutive to his being. Jesus simply cannot be an abstract *logos asarkos*. Jenson, of course, modifies this actualism of God’s decision, not from “before all time” but from the future.

Fourth, there is no reason to believe in an intrinsically disembodied metaphysical entity called the *Logos*, rather than the Son.<sup>304</sup> Jenson discharges the

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<sup>302</sup> Jenson, “He Was Made Man,” 83–4.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Jenson, “Once More the Logos Asarkos,” 130–1.

false claim of him being *crypto-Arian* because the Son ever exists in the life of God; hence there indeed never was a time when the Son was not.<sup>305</sup> Also, as deduced from his formulations, his rejection of Christ's pre-existence lies whenever it is understood abstractly without the incarnated human Jesus in mind.

#### b. On Pre-Existence

How are we to conceive the pre-existence of the Son who Jesus is? Jenson founded his conception on exegesis of Romans 1:3–4, on the two natures of Christ, that Jesus is *determined* to be *the powerful Son of God* by the act of the Spirit. This is to be contrasted with the understanding of the Son's deity by divine origin, hence the locus of preference is from the eschatological perspective. Based on this perspective, the Son's subsistence is amended, not only from the Father as *arche*, but also from the Spirit as *telos*. Christ's deity should be interpreted not as *was*, but as a final *outcome*, and just *so* as eternal.<sup>306</sup>

Jenson, if we interpret him correctly, was simply applying the same eschatological movement in resurrection to incarnation, and even extended it in retrojection to cohere with the Israel of the Old Testament. This means that there is a prolepsis of the Risen Lord included within Jesus' ministry on earth; this

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<sup>305</sup> See Jenson, "Response to Watson and Hunsinger," 231.

<sup>306</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 140.

notion is biblically founded on the transfiguration. Can this be truly applied to Christ's pre-existence in the Old Testament before his incarnation as interpreted in Cyrillian Chalcedon? Yes, based on Jenson's exegesis of Ezekiel, coupled with the understanding of God's *Shekinah*, he is convinced that "the Glory's appearance as *a man* is the same as the actual man who would again appear in God's Glory on the Mount of Transfiguration."<sup>307</sup>

Thus, Jenson claims that the doctrine of pre-existence will be biblically rootless if Christ's pre-existence as attested by Scripture in his active presence in ancient Israel is not taken into account. They are as the Glory of the Lord, the Angel of the Lord, and the Word of the Lord. These are recognized as one reality; God's *Shekinah*, God as his own "dwelling" among his people, as one who is other than God yet is the same God.<sup>308</sup> Christ's presence was active and identifiable in Israel.<sup>309</sup> This "narrative pattern of Israel's created human story" Jenson calls Christ's post-existence rather than pre-existence.<sup>310</sup> However, it might be desirable to use the better term "promise-existence," instead of post-existence.<sup>311</sup>

This existence is existence in promise — a determination based on an interpretation of Romans 1:3–4; thus it is true in Israel of the Old Testament, in

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<sup>307</sup> Jenson, "Once More the Logos Asarkos," 132.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.IV.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*



Jesus on earth, and in the church of the New Testament. This promise is what Jenson termed “the narrative pattern of *being going to be* born to Mary.”<sup>312</sup> This *being going to be* accords with Barth’s insight of *logos incarnandus*, understood as God’s decision constitutive to God’s being; or God’s being is in becoming, as interpreted by Jüngel.<sup>313</sup>

The fulfillment of the promise of Christ’s incarnation is Immanuel and so this should signify the importance of Jenson’s Christology. There is only one common reality for God and us because God is in the temporal, or rather temporal time is in God’s time. However, this Immanuel Christology is not to be conceived in the pre-temporal eternal understanding, but rather in a futuristic manner as it appears in the form of promise as the gospel. Why does Jenson reject a pre-temporal eternity Christology? In a pre-temporal eternity Christology where time is conceived linearly, there is a widening gap between God in His pre-temporal eternity at the point of his decision-making or creation act and the ever departing away of the created world in time. In the traditional metaphysics this pre-temporal widening gap is not an issue due to God’s omnipresence and omnipotence exercised by his providence, whether immediate or mediate; however, the gap between Creator and creature that exists from the beginning of

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

creation will remain.<sup>314</sup> What Jenson tries to purge in the pre-temporal understanding is not so much Deism as it is Modalism, which can lead to Gnosticism.<sup>315</sup> In another possible framework of equidistant timeless/atemporal eternity to temporal time, the modalism would be intact. That is why Jenson, by making use of the Nicene's *theologoumenon*, says that God's before and after "can be plotted on no straight timeline."<sup>316</sup> His temporal view of creation can be seen as [for the lack of a better term] the walk-along Creator-creature hand-in-hand in created time from the very beginning of history. However, this necessary walk-along notion, that is Immanuel, is not sufficient; as this can fall into the interpretation of the impoverished future characteristic of Bultmann's existentialist theology.<sup>317</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to have a more consistent, thoroughgoing eschatology in this immanent view. Jenson finds this needed futuristic character in the triune God, in the locus of the Spirit as the future or goal of history for God and for us.

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<sup>314</sup> Jenson has a discussion on *theodicy* that takes along this line of thinking, Cf. *ST* 2.IV: 16.III.

<sup>315</sup> See Sang Hoon Lee's reading of Jenson's critical engagement with Barth in, "The Preexistence and Transcendence of the Risen One in Robert Jenson's Theology," *PE* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 412. Cf. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 68, "Incarnation *happened* in eternity before all time."

<sup>316</sup> "*Ipse pater non est impassibilis* (The Father Himself Is Not Impassible)," in *TRM*, 100.

<sup>317</sup> See Jenson's critics to Barth and Bultmann at *ST* 1.III: 10.II, *ST* 2.VII: 31.I.

### 2.2.2. *Drama of God*

#### *i. Crucifixion: Story of The Two Wills of Christ*

According to Jenson, what happens in temporal history constitutes to God's own being. The crucifixion and resurrection constitute God's existence as the God of the gospel. That means without the crucifixion and resurrection, or if only crucifixion that happens, even though God may still be identified as the God of Israel, yet the gospel would simply not exist.

#### *a. The Necessity of the Crucifixion*

In Jenson's metaphysics, the Cyrillian Chalcedonian formula fits better because there would be a significant change in the relation between the deity and humanity in the one hypostasis of Christ. The section of Chalcedon definition that was in dispute is: "One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged *in* Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably;"

The council of Chalcedon chose the use of "in" that fits more into Leo's interpretation instead of "from" two natures.<sup>318</sup> Jenson's further objection is that the usage of *hypostasis* has a different sense in the Nicene creed trinitarian theology and in Chalcedon's definition:

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<sup>318</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.II.

In trinitarian theology, it is a hypostasis that has “a distinguishing character” and is an agent within the total divine saving history; in Chalcedon’s decree, these features are attributed instead to the natures.<sup>319</sup>

However, Jenson was not always consistent in following Cyril; this is seen where he follows Maximus’ post-Chalcedonian interpretation of Christ’s two wills, dogmatically affirmed in the third council of Constantinople in 680–1.<sup>320</sup>

The above pretext serves as Jenson’s presuppositions to our question “whether the crucifixion is necessary?” The cross indeed creates a narrative risk in its total biblical narrative. As Jenson puts it, “the crucifixion risks God's self-identity as one God or a mutually betraying pantheon.”<sup>321</sup> Jenson suggests that to understand the crucifixion correctly, Jesus’ life (human doing and suffering) has to be seen as an event in God’s triune life.<sup>322</sup> Christ’s death on the cross is his obedient response as the son to his Father. Jesus’ obedience is understood as “real audible and visible prayer.”<sup>323</sup> Jenson directs his criticism to the traditional trinitarian model that:

the traditional asymmetry of the trinitarian relations, by which deity runs only one way, displays command as constitutive of deity, but not obedience, or in assertion but not in reception.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.III.

<sup>321</sup> *ST* 1.II: 4.II.

<sup>322</sup> *ST* 1.III: 11.IV.

<sup>323</sup> Jenson, “Praying Animal,” 126.

<sup>324</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 144.

If we connect what Jenson says, Jesus' prayer is understood as his obedience which determines his *hypostasis* as the Son. Jesus' deity in the *hypostasis* of the Son, is unique, not in his "superiority", but rather in "servitude". We cannot help to notice an ontological deficit of the Son in Jenson's theology.

Jesus' obedience is at the same event a human obedience; therein he decides to obey the Father's will for him, to suffer for his fellows.<sup>325</sup> Jesus' assent in Gethsemane was a painful human decision achieved with struggle as a true act of his humanity.<sup>326</sup> In doing so, in obedience unto death, he has willed our salvation.<sup>327</sup>

The question that comes immediately is "what role does the Son's divine nature play in the decision made by Jesus?" It is interesting to note that despite following Cyril's interpretation of Chalcedon, Jenson does not become a *monophysite*, or *monothelite*.<sup>328</sup> Rather Jenson adopts Maximus the Confessor's *dyothelitism* in Jesus, who assigns will to "nature" rather than to "person".<sup>329</sup> Jenson criticizes the positing of will in the persons of the Godhead instead of

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<sup>325</sup> Jenson, "Jesus in the Trinity," 316.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Jenson, "With No Qualifications: The Christological Maximalism of the Christian East," in *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century. Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden*, eds. Kenneth Tanner and Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 20.

<sup>329</sup> Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," in *TRM*, 89. Jenson is forced to start from two natures because dyothelitism is dogmatized at the Third Council of Constantinople in 680–681, Cf. *ST* 1.II: 8.III, n.46.

their nature. He finds this case in Jürgen Moltmann, who understands the cry of dereliction on the cross as an actual abandonment of God the Son by God the Father, a rupture of the concord between them.<sup>330</sup> So what should be proper is that Jesus' divine will is assigned to divine nature and not to divine personhood.<sup>331</sup> The Son's divine will is simply his participation in the triune life.<sup>332</sup>

What about the Son's human will then? Here is a twist in Jenson's construction, the human will of Jesus constitutes the divine will of the triune God.

Human nature and divine nature are ontologically asymmetrical. Human nature is individuated, so that according to Jesus' human nature he is one individual of the human race, who thus makes his own decisions. But the divine nature is not individuated in *this* fashion; the Son has the divine nature only by and in the mutual relations of Father, Son, and Spirit—as likewise the Father and the Spirit each have the divine nature only in these mutual relations. Therefore, precisely because will belongs to nature, the divine decision made at Gethsemane must be thought of as made not by any one divine person but only in the mutuality of the Three.<sup>333</sup>

Should the notion of divine nature be individuated, this would mean that there are three gods instead.<sup>334</sup> But, how do we comprehend the synchronizing of

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 90. Though the personhood can also be understood as one "I" as the communal we.

<sup>332</sup> Jenson, "Jesus in the Trinity," 317.

<sup>333</sup> Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," 90.

<sup>334</sup> Jenson, "The Bible and the Trinity," *PE* 11, no.3 (2002): 336.

the two wills in Jesus since there were two possible differing wills in the one person of Jesus the Son?<sup>335</sup> According to Jenson, Maximus' answer is "since Jesus and the Son are but one person, it is the very decision made by the man Jesus that constitutes the Son's concrete role in the triune decision."<sup>336</sup> Jenson rephrases this with his understanding of the Father's and Spirit's roles, "the man Jesus' human decision is the content of the triune decision — as, perhaps, the Father is its absoluteness and the Spirit its freedom."<sup>337</sup> "The human decision made in Gethsemane that *is in God* the decision between the Father and the Son in the Spirit."<sup>338</sup>

How does Jesus in his human-will decision can also be at the same time his divine-will? Can we interpret Jenson that the human will of Christ is *enhypostatic* in the divine will? According to the commonly understood *hypostatic union*: *anhypostasis* is the eternal Son only prior to the incarnation, and *enhypostasis* is the Son in which his human *hypostasis* (his soul, thus his person) is in the *hypostasis* of the divine Son (as spirit). However, this is not Jenson's point of reference; for he objects to *logos asarkos* and the "conjoining" of two natures.<sup>339</sup> Besides to locate the will in God's *hypostasis* rather than His divine nature would lead us back to

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<sup>335</sup> Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," 88.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 90. Jenson, "The Bible and the Trinity," 336–7.

<sup>337</sup> Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," 90. Jenson, "The Bible and the Trinity," 336–7 and Jenson, "An Ontology of Freedom," 168.

<sup>338</sup> Jenson, "The Bible and the Trinity," 336–7. *Italic* original.

<sup>339</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.II.

tritheism, as falsely understood by Moltmann and rejected by Maximus.<sup>340</sup>

Jenson insists on the *theotokos* doctrine to see incarnation as the eternal birth of the Son in history from the future. Within the temporal futurity understanding in which Jenson dismisses greater role is played from the past (pre-temporal eternity) aspect of God's decision, we then ask, to whose will did Jesus in his human will struggle to submit? This brings Jenson's position to be inconsistent with what he affirms of the "Lord-Master (slave) struggle" motif between the Father and Jesus. Perhaps Jenson's possible explanation is that Christ was reconciling the Father of his "past" decision with the Spirit's future decision. Yet this brings a picture of disharmonious God whose will is supposedly one in his divine nature. The dialectical struggle shows a latent incoherence in Jenson's theology.<sup>341</sup>

Nevertheless, what constitutes the being of Jesus is his human and divine obedience manifested in audible and visible prayer. The prayer that Jesus prayed is for us, led to his death. "It belongs to the individuality of this someone not to be without others; the death by which he is a singular history is precisely "for" us."<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Cf. Ian A. McFarland, "The Theology of the Will," in *The Oxford Handbooks of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford, 2015), 518.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 2.16.12. Calvin sees Christ's struggle is real in his soul. Jesus in his office as Christ is subordinated to the Father, thus we can say Christ's human will submits according to his divine nature; thus a will in submission to the Father's divine will.

<sup>342</sup> Jenson, *On Thinking the Human*, 12.



b. The Crucifixion Constitutes the Who and What of God's Life

Jenson highlights the important significance of Crucifixion and Resurrection:

The Crucifixion put it up to the Father: Would he stand to *this* alleged Son? To *this* candidate to be his own self-identifying Word? Would he be a God who, for example, hosts publicans and sinners, who justifies the ungodly? The Resurrection was the Father's Yes. We may say: the Resurrection settled that the Crucifixion's sort of God is indeed the one God; the Crucifixion settled what sort of God it is who establishes his deity by the Resurrection. Or: the Crucifixion settled *who and what* God is; the Resurrection settled *that* this God is. And just so the Crucifixion settled also who and what we are, if we are anything determinate.<sup>343</sup>

Jenson rejects the proposition that "God died" is to be abstracted from a radically trinitarian understanding of God; What he accepts is that the Son's death belongs to his relations with the Father and the Spirit.<sup>344</sup> In fact, Jenson's presupposition does not start from a pre-defined God out of which we then interpret Jesus' identity.<sup>345</sup> Rather on the contrary, it is through Jesus in the gospel that we can determine who and what God is.<sup>346</sup> Jenson's radical conclusion is that "[Christ's] death indeed belongs to the life that is God."<sup>347</sup> So, according to Jenson,

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<sup>343</sup> ST 1.III: 11.IV. *Italics* original.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>345</sup> In Reformed theology, we can actually differentiate between the knowledge of God as creator and redeemer based on general revelation and special revelation. Both reveal the same God. Indeed, Jesus brings a clearer knowledge of who God is, but the earlier understandings of who God is in creation and history of the Old Testament—thus pre-define God prior to Jesus—are not false. Rom. 1:19ff.

<sup>346</sup> ST 1.III: 10.I.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid; ST 1.I: 3.III.

crucifixion precisely as Jesus' human doing and suffering, is itself an event in God's triune life.<sup>348</sup>

As the result, though the crucifixion presents a crisis in the historical narrative, it turns out to be harmonious. The harmony of God is shown in the incarnational fact, in "the perfect obedience of a man to someone he called Father, the obedience of someone with a mother and friends and enemies and a dreadful human conclusion."<sup>349</sup> This harmony is unlike the harmony in the machine-like cosmos à la the Enlightenment, instead in the two natures of Christ entailed of his two wills.<sup>350</sup> This harmony is God's beauty as dramatic harmony.<sup>351</sup>

Is Jenson's view, by affirming that "Christ's death constitutes God's life," endorsing *theopaschitism*? Jenson rejects both views that God is passible, and God is impassible. Alternatively, his view is God is not impassible.<sup>352</sup> The reason of God's passibility lies in God himself. There can be no other external factors that cause pains, abandonment, or death in God's life. Since God's non-impassibility is a mystery-event on the cross; Jenson directs us to comprehend this event, not by resolving it externally at the conceptual level, but by inhabiting it liturgically through the sacraments.<sup>353</sup> In other words, narratively.

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<sup>348</sup> *ST* 1.III: 11.IV.

<sup>349</sup> Jenson, "Deus Est Ipsa Pulchritudo," 214.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> See "*Ipse pater non est impassibilis* (The Father Himself Is Not Impassible)," in *TRM*, 93–101.

<sup>353</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 16.III.

Simon Gathercole charges Jenson with “Arianism” in his concept of pre-existence; his criticisms are based on the Son’s freedom, which arguments can only be raised up after a better understanding of the two wills of Christ is offered.<sup>354</sup> One of the criticisms that Gathercole points out is Jenson’s failure to grasp the New Testament’s construal of the Son’s freedom in the incarnation.<sup>355</sup> It is based on Philippians 2:6–7 “from *morphe theou* to *morphe doulou*”, from pre-existent Sonship to incarnate Sonship that necessarily involves a personal act of *choice* of the Son.<sup>356</sup> However, this criticism fails to do justice to Jenson since he subscribes to Maximus’ dogmatized teaching of the Son’s will. The Son’s divine will is in his freedom – that is, the Spirit – is the same and one divine will with the Father as a mutual harmony.<sup>357</sup> Gathercole in fact stands on the same ground as Jenson. His criticism that Jesus is like every other human being which has a condition of “thrownness” is a misplaced one. There is a before and after in Christ’s incarnation according to Jenson. Christ was from his post-existence within the triune life and was manifested in Israel’s story as a narrative pattern of *being going to be* born to Mary.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Simon Gathercole, “Pre-existence, and the Freedom of the Son in Creation and Redemption: An Exposition in Dialogue with Robert Jenson,” *IJST* 7, no. 1 (Jan 2005): 38–51.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.III.

<sup>358</sup> *ST* 1.II: 8.IV. See the “Promise-Existence of Christ” above.

Now, Jenson never considers silence as reality; he affirms that “Christian’s eternity is not silence, but discourse”;<sup>359</sup> and that God’s righteousness is a spoken righteousness as a discourse, not a silent perfection.<sup>360</sup> However, Jenson fails to do justice to Jesus’ cry of dereliction account, that on the cross his prayer was met with silence (at least before the Father’s answer on the third day at the resurrection). In Revelation 8:1 there is a momentarily silence in heaven for about half an hour. So, Jenson’s thesis of divine discourse with regards to the crucifixion should be corrected. Earlier Athanasius, in *On the Incarnation of the Word* §6 – §8, has a clear answer to what has happened with Christ’s incarnation.<sup>361</sup> Athanasius believes that Jesus’ role as the Word of the Father is to maintain the Father’s consistency of character. God could not go back upon His word that man having transgressed should not die; nor can God be worthy of goodness should man turn back again into non-existence through the deceit worked by the devil. Jesus’ death on the cross resolves the dilemma that do justice to both the honoring of the Father’s word that at the same time securing our salvation. The silence treatment in Jesus’ prayer is the gospel fulfillment; one that needs to be reminded of again and again during the remembrance at Eucharist. The reason God is “silent” is found in the very word itself by

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<sup>359</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.VI.

<sup>360</sup> Jenson, “The Triunity of the Common Good,” 341.

<sup>361</sup> In *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, 39–40.

reordering it, “listen”. Thus, the Father’s answer through the Spirit on the third day.

*ii. The Risen Lord and His Ascension*

The promise-existence Christology was fulfilled in the event of the incarnation; but the unboundedly lively God has changed Christ’s existence, no longer to be seen in a historic manner, but as the risen Lord after the resurrection. Following Bultmann on 2 Corinthians 5:16, Jenson agrees that the historical event of Jesus ends with his death, and that the crucifixion determines “what and who” God is.<sup>362</sup> But *eschatological* and *historical* should not necessarily be seen as contradictory, and so the narrative of the Jesus of history should not stop at his death.<sup>363</sup> The resurrection of Jesus means that Christ is not just the content of the proclamation – as a mere object; but because he is risen, Christ speaks in his church – as subject.<sup>364</sup>

*a. The Resurrection Constitutes the God of the Gospel*

The resurrection of Jesus as Lord means that God exists, and he is one – not a mutually betraying pantheon.<sup>365</sup> If there is no resurrection, then the end is not God, but nothingness of Barth’s *das nichtige*.<sup>366</sup> Or perhaps, in a weaker form, “[i]f

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<sup>362</sup> *ST* 1.III: 10.III.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> *ST* 1.II: 4.II.

<sup>366</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.III.

Jesus is not risen, this God [of the gospel] simply is not.”<sup>367</sup> Resurrection then also means that the God of the Gospel is the same as the God of Israel. For Jenson “the resurrection is this God’s *ousia*,” the coming together of all the ontological determinants of the gospel’s God.<sup>368</sup> So, without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no gospel; and in that scenario we cannot know the kind of God even if such a God exists apart from the gospel. As nicely capped by Joseph L. Mangina about Jenson’s thinking, “the economy of salvation is not merely something the triune God does. It is God’s own life happening among us.”<sup>369</sup>

What changes does the resurrection bring to Jesus? Following Peter Brunner, Jenson conceives Jesus’ resurrection in three propositions: that the risen one is Jesus in the identity of his person; that he is neither the ghost of a dead man nor a dead man returned; that he lives in the glory of God.<sup>370</sup>

It is the third proposition that changes our understanding of Jesus and brings revision to our metaphysic of heaven. Jenson explains that living in glory means that Christ is risen into the Kingdom, into God, to be located in the triune life; as

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<sup>367</sup> Jenson, “Three Identities of One Action,” 14.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Joseph L. Mangina, “Blood on the Doorpost, Atonement and Sacrifice in the Theology of Robert Jenson,” in *The Promise of Robert W Jenson's Theology: Constructive Engagements* eds. Stephen John Wright and Chris E. W. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 177–92.

<sup>370</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.III.

such, Christ is himself the presence of God in heaven and constitutes what heaven is.<sup>371</sup>

Earlier we saw the notion of heaven has been transformed by Jenson as the transcendent future; such heaven is unlike Bultmann's or Augustine's who similarly locate the eschatological in a sheer moment without temporal extension.<sup>372</sup> This transcendent future is conceived by Jenson as two kinds: God's own future, and the future that the Lord brings to us from our own future as creatures.<sup>373</sup> Heaven is redefined as the created future's presence to God.<sup>374</sup>

This concept of heaven is closely linked, not only with respect to Jesus' resurrection, but also his ascension.<sup>375</sup> Jenson mocks the old metaphysical concept of body that is bounded by limitation and could not bear with the load of the Copernican universe.<sup>376</sup> In the past, the generally accepted concept of the universe was still Ptolemaic cosmology; hence there was not a huge scientific liability yet. Jenson's critic is a wakeup call to our non-critical presupposed notion of Kantian space; one that is aligned to Newton's science paradigm.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> *ST* 1.III: 10.II.

<sup>373</sup> Jenson, "He Was Made Man," 81–2.

<sup>374</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV.

<sup>375</sup> See Jenson, "On the Ascension," in *Loving God with our minds: the pastor as theologian*, eds. Michael Welker and Cynthia Jarvis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>376</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV. Jenson points out Calvin in particular.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*.

Jenson's revisionary metaphysics is not without its own inherent difficulty. It is laden with a kind of "spatial" problems when being transposed to temporal future transcendence. Jenson interprets most of the Son's life weighted to the future – in the Old Testament the Son was in the future as *being going to be*; and after the resurrection he returns to the future, to exist in the promise of the Eucharist in the same manner in which he pre-existed in the Old Testament.<sup>378</sup> If Jenson is consistent with his notion of the post-existence of Christ, that would mean the incarnation was the *interim* period where the Son "was" not in the future. Because from Jenson's Cyrillian interpretation, in the incarnation Jesus was *truly* present without *extra-calvinisticum*. Incarnation is the only period that he has no existence as promise – unlike the pre-incarnate and the post-resurrection/ascension period. Jenson's available option to interpret Jesus' incarnate presence in the *interim* period is either a fulfillment of heaven as realized eschatology, or to accept a kind of "temporal" *extra-calvinisticum* that keeps the eschatological promise intact (being as becoming in the Son's *being going to be* mode of existence).<sup>379</sup> At incarnation *sublation* is not a viable solution;

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<sup>378</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Sang Hon Lee also notes this elusiveness, "The Preexistence and Transcendence of the Risen One in Robert Jenson's Theology," *PE* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 409. Cf. Oliver D. Crisp, "The Resurrection of Christ," in *The Promise of Robert W Jenson's Theology: Constructive Engagements* eds. Stephen John Wright and Chris E. W. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 156–7.



because prior to resurrection, Jesus has not yet ascended to the future of the Spirit.

b. The Body of Christ

We come to the discussion about the body at the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus in his resurrection has become personally identified with the Kingdom; he has become future.<sup>380</sup> But to what kind of future in terms of body has Jesus become?

In his 2003 book-chapter, Jenson explains:

Jesus, [...] as risen can now be invoked or addressed only as an inhabitant of that future beyond death into which he is risen. Therefore, he is available to our addresses from within this present age only in the special way called *sacramental*. What we can see or touch or hear is never something that sounds or looks like Jesus; it is always some other human reading Scripture or preaching or otherwise speaking the gospel claim, or is a loaf and cup or a basin of water, or hands making the sign of a cross, or an icon of Mary with her son, or any of the church's multitude of signs of Christ's presence. But if the gospel claim of his resurrection is true, when we encounter these things, we do indeed meet the living human person Jesus.<sup>381</sup>

Jenson's manifold answers above, surprisingly, lead us to no proper body of Christ, one that is characterized with limitation as flesh and blood. The body becomes sacramental. In a way, this may be understood based on the "promise-existence Christology"; that just like Israel in the past was identified as the

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<sup>380</sup> Jenson, *God After God*, 158.

<sup>381</sup> Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?," 202.

pattern of movement of *being going to be* as promise, now at present Christ promise-existence has his body identified with the church.<sup>382</sup>

Earlier, Jenson defines resurrection as the Father's answer to the Son's prayer as *totus Christus*. And so, "[b]y the resurrection the Father proposes Jesus' person to us as that to which we may finally look forward."<sup>383</sup> Simply stated, Jesus is the object we have in knowing God,<sup>384</sup> no longer contained in the "historical Jesus", but more truly so in his resurrection. However, despite Jenson's presentation of Jesus as the embodiment of God, he fails to give a proper account on the proper resurrected body of Jesus – where did the body as flesh and bone go? (Cf. Luke 24:39)

Jenson, in his earlier article in 1990, affirms on his fourth point (II) that Jesus is risen means he must be bodily risen.<sup>385</sup> Yet the rest of the article (III-V) argues what this fourth point means from his revisionary metaphysics. In the end we are again left with the ubiquitous flesh of Christ: one that can be flesh when God intends it to be so, or elsewhere like in the eucharist. Jenson consistently expunge spatial analogy from our notion of transcendence (V). Sang Hoon Lee raises the issue of Jesus' proper body that Jenson affirms elusively in Christ' post-

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<sup>382</sup> However, Jenson mentions an eschatological detour that God has two bodies instead, the church which is predominantly gentile, and the Jews as his body according to the flesh. See *ST* 2.VII: 32.VI.

<sup>383</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 145.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> Jenson, "Toward an Understanding of "...is Risen."" *Dialog* 29 (1990): 31–36. Full treatment of this matter can be found in chapter 4.

resurrection appearances and OT theophanies.<sup>386</sup> These appearances fit rightly with Jenson's concept of Jesus' body when God intends it.<sup>387</sup> However, the constitutive eschatological character of God's embodiment does not stop at Jesus' risen body, but carries on to *totus Christus*. In other words, Jesus' resurrected body is not final, but the church as his body is. Thus, here lies Jenson's inconsistency in his commitment to his revisionary metaphysics on one side and to the scripture narrative on the other side.

Jenson proposes that based on the Pauline interpretation, the body of Christ is not only sacramentally, but also really in the eucharist and the church; In fact, Jenson defines the church as ontologically the risen Christ's human body.<sup>388</sup> We will discuss further on the Eucharist in chapter 4, and on the church as *totus Christus* in the following sub section 2.3. At present it is important to note, which Jenson himself acknowledges, that sacramental understanding is not the only Paul's interpretation regarding the body of Christ (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).<sup>389</sup> In summary, there are “three” bodies of Christ, of which—according to Jenson—the proper body has gone, but is made available *by* and *with* the church and the sacraments.

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<sup>386</sup> Sang Hoon Lee, “The Preexistence and Transcendence of the Risen one in Robert Jenson's Theology,” 401-414.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.III: 12.II. where the risen Jesus had not returned to inhabit the witnesses' time and space, but appeared in God's final future, from which he showed himself.

<sup>388</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.II.

<sup>389</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV.

### 2.2.3. Conclusion on the Role of Christ in Theosis

In earlier section, we saw in Jenson's theology that human creatures can participate in God's Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. These triad of God's *ousia* are unfolded in the narrative in which Christ's life-and-work serves as the epistemological entrance point to the Triune God. The embodiment of Jesus creates a condition of possibility of mutual address between God and us. Jesus acts as the mediator in his existence with the facts that he is the Father's word and that he is willing to be fully identified with us. Jesus' prayer for us and his Father's answer in the Spirit then brought us to participate in that lively discourse of God's communion.

By holding fast to the *hypostatic union* of Cyril, Jenson rejects abstract notion of *logos asarkos* and affirms Christ as truth embodiment in his promise-existence mode. This idiosyncratic understanding provides an almost consistent eschatological notion of Christ as *being going to be*, whether of Israel's existence in the Old Testament period, or of the church's existence as the body of Christ in the New Testament period, whose future existence is *totus Christus*. This "almost" forces Jenson to introduce a "detour" in Christ having two bodies: of the church and Israel according to the flesh within the narrative of creation as history.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> ST 2.VI: 24.II. and ST 2.VII: 32.VI.

This detour is an unexpected future that comes by, instead of an event that has its firm foundation in God's decretive will.

Nevertheless, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are crucial in that these events constitute God's life. These two events result in we knowing "who or what God is" and "that he is" as the God of the gospel. It is in Christ's death as event in God's life that we find the harmony of God's beauty in Christ's two wills; of which his human will is constitutive of God's divine will. Within Jenson's metaphysics then, we can participate in God's harmonious beauty because Jesus's death is not only for us but also in his willingness to be fully identified with us.

Then, Jenson views that Christ's resurrection have its impact towards the revision of heaven and body that suits to his temporal metaphysics. Heaven is where Christ is, and his body is located at the present of creation. Thus, even though Jesus is the embodiment of God in his incarnation, his body has undergone a transformation as sacramental "availability" in manifold forms in the church. This transformation made *theosis* possible for the church with her close identification as *totus Christus*.

The significance of Jesus' incarnated life is his obedience, which exists not only as audible but also visible prayer. In his life, prayer becomes a sacrifice for us. This prayer of Jesus is interpreted by Jenson as an *intra-divine* discourse in which we can then join. Hence, God's life is being open to the future that Jesus

has received in his resurrection, as the answer to his sacrifice. It is a life which is none other than the Father's answer to our own being in Jesus. Jesus who first of all reconciles the Father and the Spirit, then includes our existence in that reconciliation; such that we are not being in bondage to the persistence of the past but being open to the future.

Lastly, in view of Jenson's struggle towards the neo-Kantian philosophical challenges, he strikes the perfect balance that was achieved neither by Schleiermacher nor Hegel. In his view, Schleiermacher's bottom up approach of concretized Jesus of Nazareth fails to properly account the reality of incarnation or the deity of Christ; while Hegel's transcendental system of Christology fails to properly account by securing his speculation to Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>391</sup> On this matter, Jenson rests his case on Cyril's Christology that suffers no separation of identity in Christ's two natures. Furthermore, Jenson contributes by securing Christ as *totus Christus*, an indispensable ecclesiastical soteriological aspect of Christ.

### **2.3. Self: Beloved Fellow in Discourse**

In this section, Jenson's understanding of human's being when created, saved, and deified are to be explained. This anthropological discussion is not a separate

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<sup>391</sup> Jenson, *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology*, 8–9.

locus in itself, but rather it presupposes earlier discussions like the notion of person and divine discourse in the triune God and the notion of Christ's role in his identification with us. We will first see what mankind in his protological existence is, afterwards in his eschatological existence.

### **2.3.1. Protological Existence**

#### *i. Imago Dei: Praying Animal*

Jenson defines humans as *the praying animals*.<sup>392</sup> This definition is a right fit to the divine discourse reality of God. Because an address is a word-event where one person enters the reality of another; there is a character of openness in a discourse that man is involved.<sup>393</sup> Through discourse, man is being humanized, which for Jenson is no different from being *deified*.<sup>394</sup> This process, when seen within the triune temporal metaphysics, can be described that humans are created *in Christ*, and so from "God as Source" to "God as Freedom".<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Jenson, "Justification and Counseling," 112. Jenson used the term "animal" when he presented his paper at the symposium of scientific community, and it suits in Aristotlean style definition of human being. Jenson continues to use this phrase in his *ST* 2.V: 18.III; 19:II. Of course, *anima*, the root word of animal is simply one's spirit that animate the body.

<sup>393</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 145.

<sup>394</sup> Jenson, "Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman," 249.

<sup>395</sup> Jenson, "Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit," 52.

a. To Be Human is to Speak

In one of Jenson's earliest books, he says, "to be human is to speak; and to learn to speak is to learn from those who have spoken before."<sup>396</sup> Since the human is the first speaking creature, then "those who have spoken before" are none other than the triune God himself.<sup>397</sup> "To learn from those who have spoken before" is the hearing process. This is how humans *image* God, by hearing and speaking, in this order; hearing God whose life is a divine discourse, then speaking this moral and religious discourse in the same manner for God and about God.<sup>398</sup>

As *imago dei* creature, what can be said about the human soul? Jenson conceives the soul more as a great ear than a great eye.<sup>399</sup> This is interesting because image is commonly associated with seeing paradigm, but Jenson forced a hearing paradigm interpretation. He criticizes Aristotle, whose paradigmatic mode of apperception was seeing, that we are what we stare at.<sup>400</sup> Knowledge within that paradigm is associated with *theoria*, seeing; sight that objectifies the other.<sup>401</sup> It works differently in the paradigm of hearing. In hearing, we have no

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<sup>396</sup> Jenson, *A Religion Against Itself* (1967; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 21.

<sup>397</sup> *ST* 2.V: 18.IV. Jenson offers a more natural interpretation; though the first address is initiated by God, yet it was not necessarily like a voice from heaven.

<sup>398</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.II; 2.IV: 17.III, yet with a distinction: univocal in locutionary sense, but equivocal in illocutionary sense; for example in saying "creatures are", for us it means we give thanks, for God, He creates.

<sup>399</sup> Jenson, "Luther's Contemporary Theological Significance," 282.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> Jenson, "On the Renewing of the Mind: Reflections on the Calling of Christian Intellectuals," in *ETC*, 166–7.



control like we do with our eyelids, or direct our sight, but we are always surprised by what we hear.<sup>402</sup> As a result, our lives are enveloped in and by what we hear. When the mode of apperception is hearing, the relation of the soul to its objects is no longer merely cognitive, but rather a *moral* relationship.<sup>403</sup>

Humans, like any other creatures, come into existence when mentioned in the triune conversation.<sup>404</sup> To be precise, to be a creature means to be a *created word* from God.<sup>405</sup> There is a dependent relation on the Creator as primary efficient and final cause of the creature's being.<sup>406</sup> What makes humans more special than other creatures is that God speaks not only about us – indirectly, but to us – directly.<sup>407</sup> To be human, then is not just to hear the law and the gospel, but to hear them directed to us. Furthermore, it is not unidirectional speech that makes humans special. We can respond, yet “the specificity of humankind is not that we talk [but ...] to whom we talk.”<sup>408</sup> In our response we join the triune discourse.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>403</sup> Jenson, “Luther's Contemporary Theological Significance,” 282.

<sup>404</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.III; “Praying Animal,” 126.

<sup>405</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.VI.

<sup>406</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 17.III.

<sup>407</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.IV; “Praying Animal,” 127; “The Doctrine of Justification and the Practice of Counseling,” in *ETC*, 112.

<sup>408</sup> Jenson, “Justification and Counseling,” 113.

<sup>409</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.IV; “Praying Animal,” 128.

For to be spoken to is to be called upon to reply; and in our reply to God we pray.<sup>410</sup> What entails in our prayer is our believing in God.<sup>411</sup>

At this point, we ask if Jenson differentiates between those who believe in God and those who do not believe? In what sense are those who do not believe in God are also praying animals? For despite the fall, human still maintain God's image as a precarious being. We have to boldly assert that the non-believers are still praying animals, except their prayers are directed to false god(s). Thus, committing sin in idolatry.<sup>412</sup> The triune discourse is a discourse of truth, goodness and beauty that non-believers refuse to participate; instead they join the opposite, a discourse of lie, evil, and chaotic of *das nichtige*.<sup>413</sup>

Now, another important strand of our essential being as praying animals, according to Jenson, is that we are communal animals.<sup>414</sup> To pick up from the creation account, since Eve was created at a later time than Adam, this means that our communion with God takes precedence over others.<sup>415</sup> The understanding of the *Imago Dei* that defines humanity's distinctiveness is that

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<sup>410</sup> Jenson, "Justification and Counseling," 112.

<sup>411</sup> *ST* 1.I: 3.V.

<sup>412</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.V: 22.V, Jenson defines idolatry only to gods whose transcendence is the fixity of the past.

<sup>413</sup> Jenson choose to affirm universalism perspective that all are in fact on the way into Christ. Cf. *ST* 2.VII: 34.V.

<sup>414</sup> *ST* 2.V: 19.II.

<sup>415</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.V: 18.III.

man is created as God's conversational counterpart.<sup>416</sup> There is a human resemblance to God. "Because God speaks with us, we know he is personal. As we answer him, we too are personal."<sup>417</sup> So, it is not our being defined in and by the body, but rather our personhood, that determines that we are created in the image of God. However, unlike God who has his view of himself by himself in a triune way, each of us needs the help of others to have our own "self", as an object in which to find our "self".<sup>418</sup> Our humanity is a mutual work, living in the medium of address and response relationship.<sup>419</sup>

#### b. Prayer as Sacrifice

Jenson sees there are two kinds of human's future that may come from one's address to another.<sup>420</sup> The first is a state of despair that one can experience as a finite creature. Nihilism is a possible condition due to the finitude character of creatures.<sup>421</sup> The second is a state of hope that lies in Christ. Due to the otherness of the Son from the Father, our existence as an actual other than God is made possible.

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<sup>416</sup> ST 2.V: 20.I. Jenson, *A Theology in Outline: Can These Bones Live?*, transcr. and ed. Adam Eitel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68–70.

<sup>417</sup> ST 2.V: 20.I. Jenson, "How my mind has changed: Reversals," *CC* 123, no. 9 (April 2010): 30–1.

<sup>418</sup> Jenson, "Evil as Person," 141.

<sup>419</sup> Jenson, "On Becoming Man: Some Aspects," in *ETC*, 29, 31.

<sup>420</sup> Jenson, "Worship as Word and Tone," in *The Futurist Option* (New York/Paramus/Toronto: Newman Press, 1970), 177.

<sup>421</sup> Jenson, *On Thinking the Human*, 5.

However, Jenson explicates this future state of hope in a dialectic manner. Since the death of the Son constitutes the very life of God, in consequence the vanishing of being belongs to the Being that grounds all beings.<sup>422</sup> Man, then as a mortal being can find his life in Christ's death. Jenson defines living as to be remembered in the mind of God.<sup>423</sup> Man's hope of immortality is such that "the cessation of his being for his consciousness is participation in a mutual consciousness in which cessation and being each constitute the other."<sup>424</sup> This marks the *Aufhebung* in Jenson's conception of the existence of being. Our being *and* cessation of our being are participation in the triune life; and so we are dependent in life and in death.

The fact that God is a living God means that someone's death, conceived in the past, is not final. People of the past are "located in a memory, in the *distention* of a consciousness."<sup>425</sup> But since this consciousness is God's consciousness, those who are located in God's memory cannot be a set of mere objects; for God is not only alive, he is life.<sup>426</sup> This life, consciousness, or objectivity of history is

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 5; *ST* 1.III: 10.I.

<sup>423</sup> Jenson, *On Thinking the Human*, 11.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>425</sup> Jenson, "Christological Objectivity," 66.

<sup>426</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 34.VI. "God's anticipation of the saint's resurrection *is* the heavenly reality of the saint." *Italic original.*

anchored in the object of the body of Christ. God who holds the people in his memory by *addressing* them, maintains them as living subjects.<sup>427</sup>

Confronted with *Aufhebung* kind of future, man cannot help not to be a praying animal. Because prayer presupposes limitations of our being, at the same time imposes on us to transcend beyond ourselves. Through prayer, we respond by interpreting reality of the past that is alive because God addresses it and speaks about it to us.<sup>428</sup>

According to Jenson, God's image in us consists in the action of prayer by faith.<sup>429</sup> To be the image of God is to be embodied before God.<sup>430</sup> Our prayer then is not only audible, but by being embodied becomes visible. The human body then plays a significant role in prayer, as its possibility of being addressed. After all, one's body is the availability and identifiability for others as object-presence of a person.<sup>431</sup>

The importance of the body is also coupled with Jesus, whose life of obedience we earlier saw as his audible and visible prayer. Prayer then is seen as a sacrifice, ultimately understood in the embodiment of Christ. In view of this visibility of prayer, the definition of man then changes from *praying animal* to *sacrificing*

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Jenson, "Christological Objectivity," 67.

<sup>429</sup> *ST* 2.V: 18.V.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Jenson, "The Body of God's Presence," 82; "Worship as Drama," in *The Futurist Option* (New York/Paramus/Toronto: Newman Press, 1970), 162.

*animal*.<sup>432</sup> Jesus' role is indispensable in our prayer, since his sacrifice is a prayer of life-giving offered as a human person at the crucifixion and accepted with him being resurrected.<sup>433</sup> He is the reason we can address God, that Jesus permits us to join his prayer.<sup>434</sup> So, in our prayer to God, we address the Father in the Son's name, or directly to the Son; it is therefore that of human persons in the name of or to a human person.<sup>435</sup> There is a reciprocal intentions, that we intend God in our prayer as much as God intends us when he speaks.<sup>436</sup>

What about the Spirit's role? Herein lies our freedom as creatures that exist in time, we are opened in the Spirit to be construed in the pattern of God's self, to be beautiful for God and for whatever other subjects God may admit to his conversation.<sup>437</sup> In other words, through the agency of the Spirit, we are enabled to participate in God's intra-divine discourse, consists of his truth, goodness, and beauty. We participate in *love* as the final specification of our becoming the image of God.<sup>438</sup> *Amor* as a mode of Spirit is none other than the life of the triune God.<sup>439</sup> In the Father's address to us – seen as one with Christ – is an address of love that occurs in His life.

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<sup>432</sup> Jenson, "Praying Animal," 131.

<sup>433</sup> The atonement based on Isaiah 53 is understood by Jenson as a sacrifice. See *ST* 1.III: 11.III, VI.

<sup>434</sup> *ST* 1.I: 2.VI.

<sup>435</sup> Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?" 202.

<sup>436</sup> Jenson, "Justification and Counseling," 111.

<sup>437</sup> Jenson, "Beauty," in *ETC*, 54.

<sup>438</sup> *ST* 2.V: 18.VI.

<sup>439</sup> Jenson, "The Triunity of the Common Good," 343.

ii. *Salvation as Living in the Ontology of the Word*

According to Jenson, the ontology of creation is based on the word, and the same case is applied to the ontology of salvation in the gospel. Jenson has no separate chapter for the common locus doctrine of salvation in his *Systematic Theology*.

There is no doctrine of salvation abstracted from the church locus. Discussion of “justification” is placed under “*anima ecclesiastica*” in the doctrine of the church locus.<sup>440</sup> Salvation as conceived by Jenson is living in the reality of the discourse, not individually, but communally as *totus christus*, or *Israel* herself in the OT period.<sup>441</sup> A Christian soul/ *anima Christiana* is the *anima ecclesiastica*; a personal self through whom the integral community of the church expresses itself.<sup>442</sup> Here in this section we will see how Jenson conceives the doctrine of justification with its ramifications.

a. Justification as Mode of Deification

Jenson does not follow the orthodox stream of Lutheranism, which he interprets as more inclined towards Melanchthon’s understanding of righteousness in a strictly forensic manner.<sup>443</sup> Quite early in 1973, Jenson agreed that justification as a decision-type event. It affirms the *extra nos* notion that God’s decision is

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<sup>440</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.

<sup>441</sup> ST 2.V: 23.III.

<sup>442</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.I.

<sup>443</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.IV, n.33.

absolute by himself, and so it defies all conditions.<sup>444</sup> Later on, Jenson finds himself approving the Finnish Lutheran reading which sees justification as “a mode of deification.”<sup>445</sup>

How does Jenson himself understand righteousness? Righteousness is to be understood in God, not in His essence, but rather in *relational* terms.<sup>446</sup> Jenson elaborates what righteousness is,

the mutual responsibility by which a community is faithful to itself; for an individual to be righteous or just is then for him or her to be rightly placed in the community and to accept the duties and privileges of that place as opportunities of service.<sup>447</sup>

In the triune God, this righteousness is his divine *perichoresis*, “a perfect harmony in which each of the divine persons fully accepts what he is for the others.”<sup>448</sup>

Jenson argues that our notion of justification should be in a triune manner in order to reconcile different theological understandings of justification.<sup>449</sup> Without going into detail of each theological understanding nuances, it is enough to say that in Protestantism the problem issue that surfaces is the fiction-like or

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<sup>444</sup> Jenson, *Story and Promise*, 121.

<sup>445</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

<sup>446</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 4.IV, Israel’s righteousness is defined as “the vigor of the entire network of communal relations within which participants divine and human live.”

<sup>447</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.II.

<sup>448</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.IV.

<sup>449</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.VII. Jenson, “Justification as a Triune Event.”



moralism deficiency in her notion of justification without Christological union.<sup>450</sup>

Jenson proposes a triune understanding of justification in which, it is an act of the Father as an absolute beginning, an uninitiated initiative; act of the Son as the event of righteousness; and act of the Spirit as the achieving of righteousness.<sup>451</sup>

And so, justification is understood as the underived event of communal faithfulness in God as this is set free by the Spirit and is actual in the reality of the incarnate Son.<sup>452</sup>

And so it happens, in affirming justification as mode of deification, there are some who protest the legitimacy of this reading from Luther himself. According to Jenson there is just one righteousness, which Luther struggles concerning “the earthly legal righteousness” and “the heavenly gospel-righteousness”.<sup>453</sup>

Oberman helps to shed light on the tipping point of Luther’s struggle. Luther, in his medieval theological tradition, struggles to see how one who has *iustitia Christi* (the justified) can live by faith in the right way in the state of grace to meet the requirement of *iustitia Dei* (in earthly legal righteousness to meet the eternal

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<sup>450</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.IV. Other problems, due to non-triune understanding of justification, exists in these two other ways: ST 2.VI: 30.VI. the patrological problem in Paul’s sole discussion—how the Father called to bring the gentiles in without compelling them no longer to be gentiles, and ST 2.VI: 30.VII. the transformational misunderstanding which is an Augustinian concern to be solved with the doctrine of the Spirit.

<sup>451</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.VII.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid; “Justification as a Triune Event,” 427.

<sup>453</sup> Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman,” 247.

immutable Law of God)?<sup>454</sup> Luther discovers “the heart of the Gospel is that the *iustitia Christi* and the *iustitia Dei* coincide and are granted simultaneously.”<sup>455</sup> Jenson then understands correctly that these two righteousness-es are actually one, thus he says “the heavenly righteousness is [...] given us by and as the verbal sacramental presence of Christ, while [the] earthly righteousness is given by our presence to ourselves.”<sup>456</sup> In Jenson’s formulation we can sense the common temporal futurity metaphysic, that *iustitia Christi* as heavenly righteousness is *at once iustitia Dei* as earthly legal righteousness. To apprehend righteousness is to be, in *ontic* fact, shaped to it.<sup>457</sup> “That we are justified simply means that we, as the body and spouse of the Son, are included.”<sup>458</sup>

In the discussion, justification is not to be understood merely as imputation in a legal-forensic sense. In fact, Oberman does suggest that *extra nos* does not stand on the side of an imputation-justification over against a unio-justification.<sup>459</sup> Rather, *extra nos* means that justification is not based on a claim of man, on a *debitum iustitiae*.<sup>460</sup> Grace is not only by imputation but also by impartation; and both notions are still within the understanding of *extra nos*; this granted

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<sup>454</sup> Oberman, ““Iustitia Christi” and “Iustitia Dei”: Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification,” in *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 115–20.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>456</sup> Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman,” 248.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> Jenson, “Justification as a Triune Event,” 427.

<sup>459</sup> Oberman, ““Iustitia Christi” and “Iustitia Dei””, 121.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

righteousness is not one's property (which is true only of Christ) but one's possession (due to our marriage union with Christ).<sup>461</sup> Jenson also finds a similar concept from the international Catholic-Anglican dialogue: [God's] creative word *imparts what it imputes*.<sup>462</sup> By pronouncing us righteous, God also makes us righteous.<sup>463</sup>

Thus, for us as creatures to be righteous we must first of all participate in the divine discourse.<sup>464</sup> It is living by the promise of being addressed by God; the promise that creates a drastic future-openness in the responder.<sup>465</sup> The promise is *deification*, first initiated by the resurrection as its penultimate event at the *eschaton*.<sup>466</sup> In *deification*, we come to be identified *by* and *with* events in the life of God.<sup>467</sup> Jenson uses this manner of speaking to describe Jesus' narrated historical life; thus *deification* is to be Jesus-like in the strongest sense, which means to be *totus Christus*. In such a manner of being or state of blessedness we will partake of God's own deity; not as essence but understood as God's inclusive life which is relational.<sup>468</sup> *Perichoresis* too is understood in relational term, as communal

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. Cf. page 125, n.52, while property is commonly understood from Roman Civil Law, possession is understood from the imagery of marriage.

<sup>462</sup> ST 2.VI: 30.IV. *Italic* original.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> ST 1.III: 14.IV.

<sup>465</sup> ST 1.II: 4.III.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Jenson, "Theosis," *Dialog* 32, no. 2 (1993): 108.

faithfulness in God, which we participate in its liveliness through being united with Christ.<sup>469</sup> It is only in Christ that one can be “justified” or “righteous” through “an ontological identification with the Son’s inner-trinitarian obedience to the Father.”<sup>470</sup> In other words justification for us is participation in *perichoresis* by being united with Christ.

#### b. Faith as Ontological Participation

How do we come to that perfect life of righteousness when we are sinners? We are made righteous by faith. This is an *ontic* righteousness, when one hears the gospel.<sup>471</sup> Jenson holds on to Bultmann’s word-events notion in which the future comes when there is an utterance that presents it.<sup>472</sup> In this manner, hearing brings an *ontic* change. Seeing that creation itself has its protological ontology in the reality of Torah as the word, we should find no difficulty in seeing the same ontology of righteousness comes through hearing the gospel. After all, Jesus as God’s Word is both the Torah and the gospel.

There is a slogan in Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians*, *In ipsa fide Christus adest* (in faith as such Christ is present).<sup>473</sup> This slogan is understood by Mannermaa as

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Jenson, “Response to Tuomo Mannermaa, “Why Is Luther So Fascinating?”,” in *Union with Christ*, 24.

<sup>471</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

<sup>472</sup> *ST* 2.V: 23.IV.

<sup>473</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

“by faith the human person becomes God.”<sup>474</sup> Jenson defends Mannermaa’s interpretation that what Luther means by “*fides Deo in Christo formata* (faith formed by God in Christ),” is that, “[w]e have and are all that God is.”<sup>475</sup> In Luther’s polemical context, he was using this slogan within the *extra nos* understanding against the Catholic whose slogan is *fides caritate formata* (by faith the acts of love follows). Entailed is Luther’s rejection of work-righteousness.

Luther also uses an imagery of marriage in describing this ontological participation. In this imagery, faith unites the soul with Christ, as a bride with her bridegroom; and as a result Christ and the soul have everything together.<sup>476</sup> This union results in the “happy exchange” of believer’s sin and of Christ’s divine righteousness; in which the believer’s sin is “swallowed up” by Christ’s righteousness.<sup>477</sup>

But in what manner is *fides Christo formata* understood ontologically? In neo-Kantian perspective, faith is seen as volitional obedience rather than as ontological participation.<sup>478</sup> As ontological participation, Jenson describes that, in our hearkening we are shaped by what we hear.<sup>479</sup> Again the hearing paradigm is principal. Based on Luther’s concept about the soul is more of a great ear

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman,” 247.

<sup>476</sup> Jenson, “Luther’s Contemporary Theological Significance,” 283. *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Jenson with Carl E. Braaten, introduction in *Union with Christ*, ix.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

rather than a great eye, Jenson affirms that righteousness by faith is ontological.<sup>480</sup> Jenson further claims Luther himself teaches that there is “an ontological mutuality of the soul and words: the moral content of the addresses to which someone attends determines the moral quality of his or her soul.”<sup>481</sup> And “the soul of the one who clings to the word in true faith is so entirely united with it that all the virtues of the word become virtues of the soul also.”<sup>482</sup> Because morally and spiritually we *are* what we *hearken* to,<sup>483</sup> as sinners we can come to the perfect life of righteousness.

We are not entirely disagree with Jenson’s interpretation above of *ontic* change due to our hearkening of God’s word, but a more secure base for this ontic change is found scripturally in terms of worship.<sup>484</sup> For instance, Letham points to these references, Psalm 115:4–8, Romans 1:22ff where idolaters become like their worthless idols; whereas we who worship the holy Trinity, “we become like Christ and eventually will be exactly like him according to our humanity (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:1–2).”<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> See section 2.1.2.i. Man’s being, like other creatures, is not as *phenomena*, but *legomena*.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. Also in *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

<sup>484</sup> Cf. G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008).

<sup>485</sup> Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 771.

What is God's own deity that we can participate in? Jenson explains that there are two loci: Christ in his divine righteousness, and the Spirit. On the locus of Christ, the steps are: first, God is not *in re* distinct from his attributes; thus apply to Christ as well. Second, Christ is not *in re* distinct from his word; the sounding of Christ's word is his own personal advent. And third, the soul then "apprehends" by acquiring the "form" of what it hears. So, when one hears the gospel, one apprehends Christ himself which includes his divine righteousness.<sup>486</sup>

While on the locus of the Spirit, Jenson argues that the Spirit himself is his own gift to the believer.<sup>487</sup> With the Spirit as the bond of love (whether of the Trinity, or of believers with God and one another) we participate with and in Christ.<sup>488</sup> Salvation then relates to communion as our very being. God himself is the initiator of our salvation, who first reconciles himself in Christ's death and resurrection, and by doing so, reconciles us to him and to one another.<sup>489</sup>

What God accomplish in his address is not only our salvation, but also our being.<sup>490</sup> Two utterances of God, "Let there be..." in Creation as God's discourse of the Law, and "Christ is risen" as God's discourse of the Gospel, are to be seen

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<sup>486</sup> Jenson, "Response [...] on Finnish Luther research," 247. Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>488</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.IV. "with" and "in" means the risen Christ is *including* and *included in* his community as *totus Christus*.

<sup>489</sup> Jenson, "Reconciliation in God," 164.

<sup>490</sup> *ST* 2.V: 18.V.

within one dramatically coherent discourse.<sup>491</sup> As such, there is a dramatic ontological openness from nature to grace in God's deifying address towards us in our very nature.<sup>492</sup> Watson well summarizes what "Justification by Faith" means to Jenson, "[it is] to participate in the conversation; and that is the life of the Christian."<sup>493</sup> Thus, as defined earlier that the human is a praying animal, the act of faith's righteousness is also prayer.<sup>494</sup> Justification is not only unidirectional of God's judgment to us, but reciprocal in our responding to God. Despite being sinners, God judges us righteous because in *ontic* fact we and Christ make one moral subject.<sup>495</sup> Our perfect life of righteousness is our participation in God's *perichoresis*. It is a lively righteousness as prayer with and in the Son directed to the Father by the Spirit.

### 2.3.2. *Eschatological Existence*

Jenson believes the core of eschatological transformation lies in Pauline apocalyptic passage of 1 Corinthians 15:24, that God may be all in all.<sup>496</sup> The change will have some impact, both for God and for us. But first we have to

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<sup>491</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Watson, "America's Theologian," 213.

<sup>494</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.II.

<sup>495</sup> Jenson, "Response [...] on Finnish Luther research," 248–9. This trinitarian understanding of justification accords with Calvin's; one that results in the change of our epistemological view of God as Father.

<sup>496</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.I.



discuss in greater detail the “already” aspect of Christ’s resurrection in *totus Christus*.

*i. Deification*

a. As Totus Christus

Jenson sees *totus Christus* as the risen Christ *including* and *included in* his community.<sup>497</sup> According to Jenson, there are two identities of *totus Christus*: the Israel only in the Old Testament, and the church *with* the Jewish people in the New Testament.<sup>498</sup> In both periods the nature of salvation is communally conceived without compromising its personal aspect.

Jenson makes a correlative definition between Israel and the church, that the church does not *supersede* Israel.<sup>499</sup> As a community of Jews and gentiles, the church is Israel fulfilled by identification with and distinction from her Messiah, open to the eschatological ingathering of the nations.<sup>500</sup>

Jenson interprets the preexistent Israel as participating in God’s promise; “The patriarchal history tells how God was the God of Israel before there was Israel: before God created Israel by deliverance from Egypt, Israel preexisted in God’s promise that there would be Israel.”<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.III; “The End is Music,” 162; “*Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*,” 52.

<sup>498</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VII: 32.VI, “his return will terminate the separation between the church and Israel according to the flesh.”

<sup>499</sup> *ST* 1.II: 5.VII.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>501</sup> *ST* 2.IV: 15.III.

In comparison, *totus Christus* in “the church as the body of Christ” has a slightly more complex construction in Jenson’s thinking. The church can be understood as one or combination of these: an eschatological *detour* of Christ’s coming, God’s promise to be awaited, an actualized word-event reality during the sacraments. Jenson sees the church is not a direct fulfilment of the Lord’s promises to Israel, instead the church is “an event *within the event* of the new age’s advent”.<sup>502</sup> As such, the church is not a “realized eschatology”, but only “anticipated eschatology”.<sup>503</sup>

However, this does not mean that the church is not the identity in *totus Christus*. Jenson holds firmly, with regards to the promise of *theosis*, the church has its existence in anticipation to be fully identified with Christ. At present, there is still a gap in completely identifying Christ with the church, “the church is what she is, and believers in the church are what they are, only in anticipation, and so in separation from their own truth.”<sup>504</sup> The church is not the Kingdom yet, so that “[t]he church now possesses her Lord sacramentally only, that is, actually and truly but still in faith and not by sight.”<sup>505</sup> The church at present still needs to

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<sup>502</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 24.II.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>504</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 32.I.

<sup>505</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 32.VI.

be disciplined by the Lord.<sup>506</sup> As Jenson expresses in another way, “Christ now is Lord *of* the Church, rather than *as* the church.”<sup>507</sup>

Seeing the church exists in anticipation to the promise of the gospel to be *totus Christus*, Jenson seems to be incoherent with regards the Jewish community is also another identity of *totus Christus*. His argument is that the Jewish community is the community based on Torah, rather than gospel. But Torah in Jenson’s creational concept is the reality of God’s word that caused to the whole of creation into existence, and not exclusively to the Jewish people. Torah and Gospel then appear to have two senses: broader sense and restricted sense. Broader sense of Torah is used for the whole creation, and restricted sense of Torah is used for the Jewish people. Broader sense of gospel is used also for the whole creation, including the promise of all Israel will be saved, and restricted sense of gospel is secured in the life and work of the incarnated Jesus as believed and proclaimed by the church. Since Jesus is the identity of the content both of Torah and gospel, *totus Christus* can in fact only be one. It is the Jewish community who needs to be incorporated into the church, instead of the opposite. The direction of ontological openness is from nature to grace, from Torah to gospel as the final promise.

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<sup>506</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.I.

<sup>507</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.II.

Furthermore, this bifurcation of *totus Christus* of Israel (Jewish community) and the church has no warrant from its etymology. Herman Ridderbos states that *ekklesia* (church) is not a new word or a new concept in the New Testament; instead it is the translation of *kahal*, already current in the Septuagint, denoting the Old Testament people of God, the congregation of Israel.<sup>508</sup> Therefore the church is the true Israel as the new people of God, who then is the body of *totus Christus*. The church indeed supersedes Israel. Perhaps the Lutheran Law/Gospel paradigm has caused Jenson to bifurcate *totus Christus*.

The doctrine of the church as communion has important significance for Jenson because he denotes it with salvation. As he states it “believers will enter the triune life only as members of the *totus Christus*.”<sup>509</sup> There is a cosmic dimension to it. Following Edwards, Jenson sees the presence of the Son-and-his-spouse in the triune life as the *telos* of all things; “Heaven and earth were created that the Son of God might be complete in a spouse.”<sup>510</sup> *Totus Christus* is the goal of the whole creation, to be adopted into God.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Herman N. Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press, 1982), 21.

<sup>509</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.IV.

<sup>510</sup> Jenson, “The End is Music,” 167; “The Bride of Christ,” in *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl E. Braaten*, eds. Alberto L. Garcia and Susan K. Wood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>511</sup> *ST* 2.V: 22.VIII.

Jenson differentiates the church not in the same way as an *opus ad extra* as the creation because the church's future lies as *totus Christus*.<sup>512</sup> This notion can be seen as a logical interpretation drawn from the doctrine of election. Jenson states that "the one sole object of eternal election is Jesus with his people, the *totus Christus*."<sup>513</sup> The difference with Christ is that he is personally the second identity of God, while *totus Christus* is Christ with the church. Thus, Jenson attempts to suggest a subtle differentiation; still it is hard to see in what sense the church and Christ are differentiated viewed through the lens of his definition of being as becoming or as being *going to be*.

#### b. Our Identities

We need to inquire how it is possible, by being taken into God's life, we would not then become additional persons of the *perichoresis*.<sup>514</sup> Jenson rejects the possibility since, "[w]e are in God's dance only as the one Son's singular personal embodiment."<sup>515</sup> There is no fourth person in *perichoresis*; our new being in Christ is *totus christus*. This may cause confusion; does it mean one lost his identity in being recognized as *totus christus*?

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<sup>512</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 24.I.

<sup>513</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 24.III.

<sup>514</sup> Jenson, "Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit," 52; *ST* 1.III: 13.I.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.* Jenson, "The Triunity of the Common Good," 343.

Western cultural interpretation has a one to one correlation between identity and personality.<sup>516</sup> But it is not necessarily so when selfhood is interpreted in a trinitarian manner, which in God consists of consciousness, ego, and freedom.<sup>517</sup> Trinity can be seen as three persons but also *a* person at the same time; and as *a* person, God is the Father as consciousness who finds his “I” in the Son, and free each other in the Spirit.<sup>518</sup> Based on this, Jenson makes a fine distinction between person and identity. By employing Edward’s insight, Jenson sees the possibility of many identities but one *hypostasis*.<sup>519</sup> His argument is that Adam and his descendants, with reference to sin, are “one complex person”; and in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us, God treats Christ and us as a single person.<sup>520</sup> *Totus Christus* is one single person, but with many identities.

In the Kingdom we will each see ourselves as the whole rest of creation sees us, with the clear sight of God himself. We will see ourselves as Father and Son see us, as their beloved fellows.<sup>521</sup>

The church has her hope in fulfillment by inclusion in a *perichoresis* of irreducible personalities.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> Jenson, “Evil as Person,” 144.

<sup>522</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.IV.

Jenson also conceives *totus Christus* in a trinitarian manner. The Father decrees the sheer existence of any created person.<sup>523</sup> As in the intra-trinitarian selfhood, the Father has a role as sheer consciousness, sheer focus.<sup>524</sup> *Totus Christus* exists ontologically as an object as its Ego of the Father.<sup>525</sup> But this “I” – Christ and his members – identity is not static, but living; The relation is *freedom*.<sup>526</sup> Thus refers to the Spirit’s work. The “I” as the self of *totus Christus* is a communal phenomenon; that not only do believers as “I” (*totus Christus*) become the subject by whose liveliness I am what I am; but Christ as “I” becomes the subject by whose liveliness I am what I am.<sup>527</sup> Jenson attempting to explain further, write this aphorism:

In the Spirit, the Christ who is *what* I am is the Christ who is *who* I am.<sup>528</sup>

If we interpret Jenson correctly, the Spirit frees both Christ and ourselves within the unity of *totus Christus*; such that, even though as *totus Christus* we are one person with Christ, but our various identities do not vanish in this person of *totus Christus*. Our identities are not lost, but found in the church as Christ’s body – the what as our person; and at the same time Christ determines our personal identities in his person – the who as our identities.

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<sup>523</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.V.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*

Not only is our identities lie in freedom, but we will also be in love as the summary reality of all that the blessed creatures can have in God. The same Spirit is the agent of that eschatological perfection. As a result,

We will be as different from one another as the Father is different from the Son; just as such we will be perfectly united to one another by the Spirit. Indeed, in analogy of the triune identities, there will be nothing to any one of us but what she or he uniquely is from and for all the rest of us, and just so each of us will be absolutely and primally personal.<sup>529</sup>

With this being the case, in the Spirit – that is freedom and love, Jenson sees this open possibility for us to be in the *perichoresis* without becoming an additional person that disrupts the triune God.

#### *ii. Inclusion in the Triune Life*

To participate in God's own reality, humans were created and become additional hearers – and later additional speakers as well – in divine discourse. Jenson conceives *deification* as not just something that happens in the future, but as an ongoing process, being *deified*.<sup>530</sup> It is a life of anticipation that already is.<sup>531</sup> We will characterize these changes which he boldly claims will constitute, not only in our life, but in God's life as well.

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<sup>529</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.V.

<sup>530</sup> Jenson, "Theosis," in *Dialog* 32, no. 2 (1993): 108.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*



a. Reality Changes in God

The gospel is a promise of “inclusion in the triune community by virtue of union with Christ and just so in a perfected human community.”<sup>532</sup> Will there be a change or changes in God? Will that even be possible?

What Jenson sees in the final achievement of human as a counterpart of God is that we are in the *homoousia* of Jesus and his Father.<sup>533</sup> Jenson explains further that “we are counterparts of the Father as we find ourselves in the Son in whom the Father finds himself.”<sup>534</sup> Jenson’s usage of *homoousia* should not surprise us by now; since it was earlier defined based on his understanding of the Cappadocians, that *ousia* is the life of God, and not some unknown or hidden essence of God. As Jenson makes his point as well about the *koinonia* of the church, the interpretation of *ousia* as “life” is also well established from 1 John 1:3, “and indeed our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” and John 17:21–22, “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be *in us*, so that the world may believe that you have

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<sup>532</sup> ST 2.VII: 31.II.

<sup>533</sup> ST 2.V: 18.VI.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.”<sup>535</sup>

The way Jenson construes his temporal trinitarian metaphysics has already involved a real change in God in the past: in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. So, his lineaments of the changes in God at the *eschaton* should not be a real surprise to us. Jenson says each of the divine identities will arrive at new relations with the others.<sup>536</sup> Jenson’s clear description need to be quoted *in extenso*:

Christ will know himself as his people with no more reservation; he will be the head of a body that he does not need to discipline. Thus he will eternally adore God *as* the one single and exclusive person of the *totus christus*, as those whom the Father ordained for him and whom the Spirit has brought to him. The Spirit will no more bring and join the Son’s people to him, for they will be with and joined to him. Thus the Spirit will be Freedom with no burden, Freedom to play infinitely with the possibilities of love between the Father and the embodied Son. And the Father will no more *exert* power but simply rule and love and be loved.<sup>537</sup>

Jenson also speaks about the Lord’s own resurrection as the fulfillment of the church’s anticipation of possessing Christ’s risen body.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2016). Cf. ST 2.VI: 26.IV, “As we have noted before, the Johannine discourses must be interpreted either as blasphemy or as the inner converse of the Trinity apocalyptically opened to our overhearing.”

<sup>536</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.I.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

<sup>538</sup> Cf. ST 2.VII: 33.IV.

Another change is also in the “embodiment” of the final community, that “wherever the Father looks to see the Son or the Son to offer his body to the Father, or the saints to see themselves in the Son, all that is there is some nexus of their mutual communication.”<sup>539</sup> Is this body material? It is so, with the matter itself malleable to any fundamental changes in God’s intention of community.<sup>540</sup> In other words, the material body is malleable in how God intends it as the availability/ identifiability of the Son.

Nevertheless, the church is one with Christ in that “everything [Christ] is and does is present in us and there works with power, so that we are utterly deified, so that we do not have some part or aspect of God, but his entire fullness.”<sup>541</sup> Entering the triune life as members of *totus christus*, it is not only we who will enjoy what Christ enjoys, but reciprocally, Christ will enjoy whatever we enjoy.<sup>542</sup>

#### b. Reality Changes in *Totus Christus*

There are some changes to expect in *totus Christus* at the *eschaton*. The dialectic of Christ’s presence to and by the church will end, the people of God will directly

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid.

<sup>540</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.VI.

<sup>541</sup> Jenson, “Luther’s Contemporary Theological Significance,” 281.

<sup>542</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.IV.

be Christ's availability also for her members, and Christ will be directly our availability to each other.<sup>543</sup>

Jenson, following Thomas, sees *deification* and beatific vision coincide.<sup>544</sup> However, unlike Thomas who considers seeing as the paradigm of knowing, Jenson thinks that our hearing will be transcended; as such, hearing will be seeing.<sup>545</sup> This transcendence is also explained by the change in our created time, in which finitude will no longer be disrupted, rather the "blessed creatures' union with the Son will make their time congruent with the trinity's time."<sup>546</sup> There will no longer be alienating past and future which results in sight's difference from hearing.<sup>547</sup> "Caught up in the infinitely swift triune *perichoresis*, the redeemed will see what they hear. The word will present them with their futures."<sup>548</sup> However, the Creator-creature distinction remains so that we as creatures participate in a life with whose activity we cannot keep pace.<sup>549</sup>

The blessed creatures will not be passive, but rather active participants, "we will not merely follow along in the triune music and delight but be improvisers and instigators within it."<sup>550</sup> Does this contradict our participation as doubling

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<sup>543</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.II.

<sup>544</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.III.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.V.

the Son's praise in our singing a hymn or praise to the Father?<sup>551</sup> Apparently not, due to the *freedom* of the Spirit in the "I" of the *totus Christus*, as discussed earlier, our existence is as one person with many identities.<sup>552</sup>

Our communion with one another will be established by our inclusion in the communion of Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>553</sup> The church as *totus Christus* by the identification with the Son in the Spirit are brought into communion also with the Father. Thus, of the accomplishment of communion, Jenson boldly asserts:

The Father will look on us as he looks on his Son. He will know what he is as God by seeing what he has made of us; and we will know him and ourselves as the outcome of the utter joyous Freedom that he is.<sup>554</sup>

This marks the Hegelian character in Jenson's theology; that there is a greater self-consciousness of God in himself by looking on us in the end. If only Jenson receives the pre-temporal eternal perspective of God's decree, his depiction would still be acceptable; that any changes comes from God's own decision, without the creatures' influence. In the traditional perspective, there is an epistemological change in the creatures' consciousness, but not in God himself. As for God's freedom, it is equally exercised freely in his will of divine decree in eternity, albeit not from the "future".

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<sup>551</sup> *ST* 1.III: 14.V.

<sup>552</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 30.V. In the Spirit, the Christ who is *what* I am is the Christ who is *who* I am.

<sup>553</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.V.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, Jenson sees our life in God as a conversation; it is an infinite act of interpretation of all history by the love enacted as the life and death of Jesus.<sup>555</sup> It culminates as music in joyous freedom, where the meaning and melody of that conversation are one.<sup>556</sup> As he ends his *Systematic Theology* volume, “The end is music.”

### ***2.3.3. Conclusion on the Ontological Transformation of Self in Theosis***

The divine discourse reality that Jenson proposes opens the possibility of humans being included in the divine life since the beginning of creation.

As a communal being, one’s ontological transformation is made possible through others’ existence in address and response; by hearing as the paradigm of being for humans. Thus, faith by hearing is an ontological participation in the life of God, exercised in prayer. Conceived ontologically, Jenson sees an inclusive reality of the church as *totus Christus* in the triune God.

As for identities, Jenson conceives that otherness is inherent in the triune God himself; whose otherness of the same “I” of the Father is found in Jesus. This otherness of the Son from the Father is the condition of possibility for creation and redemption. Like God, the self of the human is not to be conceived individually, but rather communally without the vanishing of our identities.

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<sup>555</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 31.IV; 2.VII: 33.V; 2.VII: 34.II. Cf. *ST* 2.VII: 31.IV.

<sup>556</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 35.

Undergirded by the selfhood of the triune God in consciousness/ ego/ freedom, Jenson conceptualizes that the selfhood of humans exists in the *totus christus* as the new object of consciousness that brought changes to God himself. Selfhood conceived in this manner is not a restricted one-to-one identity with person, but rather one *hypostasis* with multiple identities as *totus Christus* with irreducible personalities.

In this research we do not discuss about Israel in depth, but focus instead on the church. But it is baffling that Jenson secures two communal identities of *totus Christus*: Israel, which maintains her identity from the OT through the NT, and the church in the NT. Thus, Christ has two bodies at present without the “true” Israel incorporated in the church as his body.<sup>557</sup> Jenson’s God of Israel is capable of undergoing constitutive changes in history, but not Israel herself.

The word-event—in which God creates our reality and we enter his, involves the body for our identification in temporal future eschatology which the church anticipates. We will join this lively righteousness, defined as the community in the faithfulness of *perichoresis* in the Son as his body.

Therefore, *theosis* fulfills the church into complete union with Christ whose identification is *totus christus*, such that we are being included in God’s triune life. This change enables one to know, love, and enjoy God in that new person,

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<sup>557</sup> Cf. Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection*, 271.

despite the hiddenness of God due to his temporal infinity or offensive availability. So, the Creator-creature distinction would remain, though often diminished in Jenson's poetical descriptions. Despite the distinction, Jenson believes that since the life will be in the spirit (thus in freedom and love) this life will also have an impact on God or Christ. There is a reciprocal relation in the life in the kingdom, not only of the church and Christ, but also between the *totus christus* and the Father, in the life of the Spirit.

Then, inferring back from section 2.1.1., in Christ's resurrection, we as creatures upon our own resurrection will know the final truth about being in ontological and epistemological manner. For Jenson, this knowing is true even for God himself.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

Jenson in his committed trinitarian approach accommodates *theosis* in his revisionary theological system.

In the first part, the triune God who creates is the one who makes narrative room which is history in his eternity or created time in His own time. Through his discourse of law and gospel, God in eternity brings creation into existence by mentioning it. The being of creation has an end due to its finitude; yet it is also



open to the future.<sup>558</sup> Jenson balances this creation's end not to be one sided in just knowing God's benefits, but also in knowing God's moral will. What lies for creatures in the triune God's life is to participate in God's "attributes" of truth, goodness and beauty.

Jenson maintains the Creator-creature distinction, though explicates differently with the fact that creation is enveloped in the Creator; it is maintained because of God's temporal transcendence in which we cannot keep up despite God's knowability, lovability and enjoyability. Creatures will be included in the *perichoresis* of, no longer just the divine discourse, but a transcended divine fugue.

In the second part, Jesus is conceived as Creator in creation. Jesus' embodiment is first true for God and so for us. This embodiment is what brings the possibility of creation, community and so of our inclusion in God's life. By rejecting the notion of the *logos asarkos*, Jenson's revisionary metaphysics deems history as real for God and for us. He also balances Jesus' deity, from the Father

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<sup>558</sup> Cf. Richard Bauckham, "The Incarnation and the Cosmic Christ," in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 38. [n.22 Gregory the Great, "Hom. in Evang. 29," in *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 227. n.23 Bonaventura, "Sermones dominicales 9.12," in *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure*, Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series 12, trans. Timothy J. Johnson, ed. Robert J. Karris (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2008), 217.] The whole of creation here can be encapsulated in human being as microcosm that share something in common with every creature—as understood by Gregory the Great. Our cosmic transfiguration as human being lies in Christ's—as developed by Bonaventura.

as *arche* with from the Spirit as *telos* in the submission unto death and the resurrection. We have our being in Christ, whose obedience unto death is his human obedience and marks his deity; a life manifested as audible and visible prayer. In Christ's bodily resurrection, death is made past and thus our fellowship is made perfect. The place where Jesus then ascended is in the future, which is the future of creatures. Jesus' being in the future then is to whom we as creatures can appeal and hope.

In the third part, human beings as created in the image of God are identified as praying animal. Though existing as a creature, we hear and speak and are thus invited to join the triune discourse. Our salvation lies in living in the ontology of the word with our souls becoming what we hearken to. Our perceiving lies in the hearing paradigm that by faith we ontologically participate in *deification*, made righteous because united with Christ in the reality of *totus Christus*. "Truth" is what we creatures will participate in by being raised, and thus included in the triune life. Partaking in the "goodness" of the law and gospel, we are now already included in our petitionary prayer, living in the reality of the future of Jesus. The blessed *visio dei* will be comprehended as hearing, and our future as God's beloved fellows will end in music by doubling the Son's praise in the surge of the Spirit. Thus, lies our participation in God's "beauty".

## CHAPTER 3: CALVIN'S NOTION OF THEOSIS

This chapter deals with Calvin's concept of *deification*.<sup>1</sup> Commenting on 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin is not unaware of the idea of deification. He says,

Let us then mark, that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us.<sup>2</sup>

His cautiousness on this topic is expressed, as Calvin immediately adds thereafter, "[b]ut the word *nature* is not here essence but quality."<sup>3</sup> Calvin clarifies this qualification, by stating that *deification* lies in the notion that "we shall be partakers of divine and blessed immortality and glory, so as to be as it were one with God as far as our capacities will allow."<sup>4</sup> So Calvin affirms a

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<sup>1</sup> For the background of *theosis*' development in the Reformed tradition, see Chapter. 1. Not all theologians agree with finding *theosis* in Calvin, like Bruce L. McCormack, "Union with Christ in Calvin's Theology: Grounds for a Divinization Theory?" in *Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary*, ed. David W. Hall (Phillipsburg: P & R 2010), 504–529; Jonathan Slater, "Salvation as participation in the humanity of the Mediator in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: a reply to Carl Mosser," *SJT* 58, no. 1 (2005): 39–58; Yang-Ho Lee, "Calvin on deification: a reply to Carl Mosser and Jonathan Slater," *SJT* 63, no. 3 (2010): 272–284; Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 172–178. While those who agree are Carl Mosser, "The greatest possible blessing," also in "An Exotic Flower? Calvin and the Patristic Doctrine of Deification," in *Reformation Faith: Exegesis and Theology in the Protestant Reformations*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), 38–56, in "Deification: A Truly Ecumenical Concept," in *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought* 30, no. 4 (2015): 8–14, in a draft "The Gospel's End and Our Highest Good: Deification in the Reformed Tradition," in *With All the Fullness of God: Deification in Christian Traditions*, ed. Jared Ortiz (Lexington: Fortress Academic, Forthcoming), in "Recovering the Reformation's Ecumenical Vision of Redemption as Deification and Beatific Vision," in *Perichoresis* (Forthcoming); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Julie Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," *IJST* 6, no. 2 (2004): 169–84.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Pet 1:4*, trans. John Owen (Bellingham: Logos, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

limitation on the creature's capacity and therefore the Creator-creature distinction in *deification*. Calvin later adds that the blessedness we, as creatures, are able to participate is conditioned by the restoration of the image of God in holiness and righteousness.<sup>5</sup> Only after restoration, then "we may at length be partakers of eternal life and glory as far as it will be necessary for our complete felicity."<sup>6</sup> The end of *deification* then as partaking in the divine nature by the elect in the restoration of the image of God is to be one with God.

The idea of being "one with God" can also be found in Calvin's new added locus to his definitive 1559 *Institutes*, at 3.25, on the final resurrection.<sup>7</sup> At section 10, on "everlasting blessedness", the notion *deification* found in 2 Peter 1:4 is further explained as not only partaking of the glory, power and righteousness of the Lord, but the Lord will give *himself* to be enjoyed by them and will somehow make them to become one with himself. Here Calvin distinguishes between "the Lord's glory, power, and righteousness" and "the Lord himself". Are we going to be one with God himself in terms of his essence or his person?

On the one hand, Calvin warns against "immoderate desire".<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, in his 1548 *commentary on Ephesians* 5:31 on the union of husband and wife, Calvin comments that, "[s]uch is the union between us and Christ, who in *some*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Cf. *Inst.* 1.15.4. Knowledge is also referred.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 133.

<sup>8</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.10 & 25.

*sort* makes us partakers of his substance.”<sup>9</sup> Purposely, by employing the ambiguous expressions “as far as... will allow”, “will somehow”, “some sort”, Calvin keeps us within his non-speculative boundary of the mystery of *deification*.

Wendel opines that Calvin was rather imprudent in his earlier expressions, like “unites in one same substance”, at least till his reading of Osiander’s writings in 1550 or 1551 about essential righteousness.<sup>10</sup> Hence it is no wonder that Calvin then was accused as Osiandrian by his Lutheran opponents.<sup>11</sup> This might be the reason why, in the *Institutes* of 1559, Calvin devoted a lengthy section in refuting Osiander’s errors *posthumously*.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1. Participation in the Triune Drama: Creator-Creature Distinction

Since *deification* comes with an ontological question, “how does man participate in the divine nature?”, we seek to know Calvin’s concept of ontological reality.

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Eph* 5:31, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010). *Italic* added.

<sup>10</sup> François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (1950; trans., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 236–7. Wendel noticed Calvin uses this expression in the *Institutes* 1545 French edition, 3.2.24, which is then retained in the 1560 edition inadvertently. Robert Letham in *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History and Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2011), 102–15, has traced the chronological appearances of “union with Christ” in Calvin’s writings. Calvin endorses this till the end, with a change after 1548, not in substance but in tone with his “*quodammodo*.” Calvin himself published the commentary on 2 Peter in 1551, thus reflecting his cautiousness or hesitancy.

<sup>11</sup> Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 56 cites David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 91 and James Weis, “Calvin versus Osiander on Justification,” *Springfielder* 29 (1965): 42–3.

<sup>12</sup> James Weis, “Calvin Versus Osiander On Justification,” in *ACC* 5: 43.

As noted by various Calvin scholars, Calvin tends to skip the questions *whether* God is (*an sit Deus?*) or *what* (*quid*) God is; he only discusses *how* (*qualis*) God is.<sup>13</sup> Yet, due to his dispute with Servetus on the trinity, Calvin has to describe what the Triune God is in terms of his simple and yet incomprehensible essence.<sup>14</sup> Calvin's metaphysical presupposition needs to be mapped out in order to understand the Creator-creature distinction.

Divine accommodation, fondly expressed by Calvin as a mirror, is the main principle in Calvin's theology.<sup>15</sup> Upon this principle, God is seen adapting Himself or accommodating himself to human capacity in His revelation.<sup>16</sup> Implied by this principle is the infinite ontological difference between God and man.<sup>17</sup> Huijgen constructs a dynamic concentric-circles model to simplify the various accommodations, which basically encompass everything else other than God.<sup>18</sup> This dynamic model in the epistemological universe is useful to grasp Calvin's Trinitarian metaphysical reality which act as a map to apprehend the

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<sup>13</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 295. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, WBBW 5 (1932; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 147. Cf. *Inst.* 1.5.9. Calvin opts to contemplate God more in his works than his essence.

<sup>14</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.

<sup>15</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*. Cornelis van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth On Knowing God, A Diptych*, trans. Donald Mader (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005). Cf. William F. Keesecker, "John Calvin's Mirror," *TT* 17, no. 3 (Oct. 1960): 288–89, in which Calvin identifies as "mirror": the universe, all creatures, human race, man made in the image of God, the history of the Hebrew people, the history of Moses, the Word, the Law, Christ in our election, the sacraments, and Christ's resurrection for our resurrection.

<sup>16</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 12. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 42, quoted by Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 305–316.

reality in God.<sup>19</sup> At the outer layer of the concentric circles lies the universal aspects of revelation which is pictured in visual terms,<sup>20</sup> then moving inward is the Scripture which applies to the sense of hearing,<sup>21</sup> at the inner circle lies the knowledge of Christ,<sup>22</sup> and right at the core is God himself who dwells in inaccessible light.<sup>23</sup>

A transposition needs to be done from this epistemological concentric-circles model to construct a cosmic ontological-spherical model, based on the reality of “word and spirit”.<sup>24</sup> While the epistemological concentric model is dynamic in its conception, an ontological-spherical model seems to command a more hierarchical and stable model.<sup>25</sup> However, considering the factor of sin, thus the fall of man and the earlier disruption of the fallen angels, this apparent stable ontology was corrected to be more dynamically conceived. God is located at the

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Edward A. Dowey, “The Structure of Calvin's Thought as Influenced by the Two-fold Knowledge of God,” in *CEGC*, 138, who identifies Calvin's theological universe as a universe of knowing.

<sup>20</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 306.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 36. Epistemology and Ontology have a close connection in man as made in the image of God. “If man does not truly know himself until he knows God truly, and until in that knowing of God he becomes a true man, then it is only from the standpoint of renewed man face to face with God in Christ that we may understand the significance of the fact that man is made in the image of God.”

<sup>25</sup> Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory, Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 22, noted that “[e]xcept in his rejection of the Dionysian scheme of angelic natures, we do not even find any explicit rejection of a hierarchically ordered universe.” But Schreiner sees in Calvin it is “not [so much of] a hierarchy but the stability, regularity, and continuity of creation.”

center and at the highest position of heaven – the point located transcendentally beyond the sphere,<sup>26</sup> – with everything else falling into place on its own layer: the world with its various creatures is at the lowest level, humans are at the highest among the creatures on the earthly sphere or visible realm, while angels are still higher than human.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the metaphysical reality of Calvin is multi-layered; a combination of concentric-circles epistemological model and the hierarchical-spheres ontological model. This model looks similar to the Ptolemaic model of the universe, but Calvin lived in such a time; neither was he known as an early adopter of the Copernican model of the universe.<sup>28</sup>

### ***3.1.1. Reality in the Triune God***

Calvin is more of an economic-trinity theologian. However, to have a basis of comparison and so to assess Jenson’s conception of reality as divine discourse, Calvin’s conception of the *ad-intra* Triune reality is needed. What is his view about God’s *ousia*? Does he affirm *perichoresis* in it? What about *autotheos*, that each *hypostasis* possesses the whole *ousia*? In addition, what does Calvin mean by

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<sup>26</sup> Calvin, “Preface” in *Commentaries to the Prophet Jeremiah and Lamentations*, follows the common mode of speaking in Scripture, “whatever is beyond the world [is] heaven.”

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Inst.* 1.11.3.

<sup>28</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 22, n. 112. Cf. Calvin in “Argument,” *Comm. Gen.*, trans. John King (Bellingham: Logos, 2010).



“Word and Spirit” as God’s very essence?<sup>29</sup> Drawing from the literary deposit of Calvin’s work and from various interpretations by Calvin scholars<sup>30</sup> should give us a glimpse of the reality in the Triune God. Starting from the ontological or metaphysical does not seem to be the approach of Calvin,<sup>31</sup> however this is the approach that we must take on the discussion of *theosis*.

*i. Perichoresis: Hypostasis in Ousia*

Surprisingly, there is scarce discussion about *perichoresis* in Calvin. There are two rather opposite views of it. The first is held by Thomas F. Torrance who argues that *perichoresis* can be inferred in Calvin; Calvin has a similar account to Gregory of Nazianzen in his doctrine of the trinity, even though the term itself is not used explicitly by Calvin.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the opposite is held by John McClean who disagrees because *perichoresis* as a term or idea has no obvious use in Calvin;

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<sup>29</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.16. Other inferences of God’s essence are: “spiritualis” (*Inst.* 1.13.1), “infinite and incomprehensible” (*Inst.* 1.13.3 & 4), noted by Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 126, also Arie Baars, “The Trinity,” trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *CH*, 245; “Everlasting” (Exegesis Psalm 90:2 and 102:24–25) and “goodness” as noted by Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 154. Though Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15 notes of “goodness” and “mercy” (Psalm 77:9), and “ready to hear and answer prayer” more as the nature of God that are linked to his essence; on p. 11, Helm also sees “Faithfulness” is part of God’s essence; Helm notes these in *Calvin, A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bodmin: MPG Books, T&T Clark, 2008), 39, “majesty, authority, glory of God, cannot be separated from God’s very essence.”

<sup>30</sup> See Anthony N. S. Lane, “Guide to Recent Calvin Literature,” *VE* 17 (1987): 35–47, or for a more recent guide in *CH*.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. Raitt, “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” in *CEGC*, 286.

<sup>32</sup> T. F. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Gregory of Nazianzen and John Calvin,” in *Calvin Studies V*, John H. Leith (1990), 13, or repub. *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

though McClean does not exclude the possibility, in his view Calvin holds to the Western interpretation in his doctrine of the trinity.

a. T. F. Torrance on Perichoresis in Calvin

What is the account that Torrance finds in Calvin that has some similarity to Gregory of Nazianzen? Torrance argues that it is based on Calvin's ordering of the Spirit in the Trinitarian relations.

For nothing excludes the view that the whole essence of God is spiritual, in which are comprehended Father, Son, and Spirit. This is made plain from Scripture. For as we there hear God called Spirit, so also do we hear the Holy Spirit, seeing that the Spirit is a hypostasis of the whole essence, spoken of as of God and from God.<sup>33</sup>

Here Torrance sees that the Spirit is considered the constitutive internal relation of the Godhead as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

Torrance also seeks to find Calvin's understanding of God's *ousia*. According to him, *ousia* is expressed by Calvin in the term *in solidum*.<sup>35</sup> Torrance finds that "each of the three divine persons *in solidum* is God, and the being of God is totally and *in solidum* common to the divine persons, such that with respect to their being there is no inequality between the one and the other."<sup>36</sup> The whole being of God is "the indivisible consubstantial union of the Father, the Son, and

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<sup>33</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.20.

<sup>34</sup> Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity," 13.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. Cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 255.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the Holy Spirit.”<sup>37</sup> Torrance sees God’s *ousia* as understood by Calvin “as self-existent being considered in its internal relations (*in se*), and [God’s] *hypostasis* as subsistent being considered in its objective otherness (*ad alios*).”<sup>38</sup>

Torrance sees in Gregory of Nazianzen that “the concept of the *homooousios* carries with it the concept of the coinherence of the three divine Persons in the one identical Being of God.”<sup>39</sup> Torrance then argues based on his view of Gregory that Calvin, who affirms *homooousios*, must also conceive the idea of coinherence, that is, *perichoresis*.<sup>40</sup> This, however, need not be the case for Calvin as we will see later. Torrance himself is aware that Calvin “did not use the explicit language of *perichoresis* or its Latin equivalent (*circumincessio*),” yet he opines that “Calvin’s account of the manifold of mutually coexisting Persons, or of real hypostatic relations subsisting within the one indivisible Being of the Godhead is very similar to that of Gregory of Nazianzen.”<sup>41</sup>

#### b. John McClean on Perichoresis in Calvin

John McClean, in a different study which does not specifically seek to address *perichoresis* in Calvin, seems to have an opposite mind regarding *perichoresis* or

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., cites Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 18.42; 22.4; *Ep.* 101.6. In Gregory *perichoretic* is defined “in which the Divine Persons mutually contain and interpenetrate one another while completely retaining their incommunicable differences as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” This Cappadocian understanding of Trinity in Calvin is also noted by Bray, cited by Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 50.

<sup>41</sup> Torrance, “The Holy Trinity,” 13.

God's *ousia*.<sup>42</sup> McClean opposing Butin's and Billings' claims that "Calvin has a doctrine of *theosis* grounded in a perichoretic union."<sup>43</sup> He thinks it is unfounded, or at best was full of flaws.<sup>44</sup> McClean, seeing Calvin's view as more in accordance with the Western tradition of the trinity instead of the Eastern, affirms that Calvin's view of the persons of the trinity is *autotheotic*.<sup>45</sup> McClean also notes the missing terms like *perichoresis*, *co-inherence*, and *circumincession* in Calvin.<sup>46</sup>

McClean points out that Calvin discusses the unity of God, not arising from their mutual indwelling, but from their sharing of "a single essence".<sup>47</sup> Calvin many times maintains that God has a simple essence, even though it is incomprehensible; thus, McClean makes a fair representation that Calvin's view is more towards the understanding of the trinity in its Western interpretation. However, McClean makes a crucial mistake since Calvin does not say God's essence is single, but simple. Seeking the occasion of "one essence" occurring in the *Institutes*, it is only on one occasion that Calvin says God's essence is single,

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<sup>42</sup> John McClean, "Perichoresis, Theosis and Union with Christ in the Thought of John Calvin," *RTR* 68, no. 2 (Aug. 2009): 130–41.

<sup>43</sup> Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 64, and Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 161 n.34.

<sup>44</sup> McClean, "Perichoresis," 141, cf. 133.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. See *Inst.* 1.13.16, "in God's essence reside three persons in whom one God is known."

when this is attributed to the name of God.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, simple may not necessarily imply the single; Calvin prefers to call it the unity of essence, or the whole essence, rather than the single essence.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in an earlier section Calvin clarifies this, “when we hear *one*, we ought to understand *unity of substance*,”<sup>50</sup> or even as “integral perfection.”<sup>51</sup> Calvin affirms that God is one and not many; it is in this particular sense of “oneness” that Calvin makes the statement “Word and Spirit are nothing else than the very essence of God.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, this discussion is located in the section of the *Institutes* about God’s oneness, in which what follows after his statement about essence is about the rejection of the Arians.<sup>53</sup>

McClean notes that Calvin, in his *commentary* on John 17:20–23, seeks to differentiate Christ’s unity as Mediator with the Father from the unity of the divine persons as the Eternal Son.<sup>54</sup> By inspecting Calvin’s commentary on the key passages in the gospel of John in 14:10, 13, 17, 20, 23, and 17:21, 23, McClean correctly identifies this differentiation. For instance, Calvin dismisses the notion

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<sup>48</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.5.

<sup>51</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.2. Cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 243, makes the same mistake in translating one essence as “numerically one” instead of “integral perfection”.

<sup>52</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.16. Cf. Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Calvin and Calvinism*, 228.

<sup>53</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.16. Huijgen helps to highlight that this section 16 subtitle is on unity, and also about the rejection of Arianism in his comments.

<sup>54</sup> McClean, “Perichoresis,” 136.

that in John 14:10 “Jesus in the Father, and the Father in Jesus” refers to Christ’s divine essence; instead Calvin says that it refers to Christ’s power.<sup>55</sup> Warfield misunderstands Calvin here, he introduces a *perichoretic* interpretation into Calvin by saying, “The Father is *totus* in the Son, and the Son *totus* in the Father.”<sup>56</sup> McClean is right in simply observing the fact that “though the idea of *perichoresis* can’t be excluded in Calvin, yet he makes no obvious use of the term or the idea.”<sup>57</sup>

### c. Conclusion on Perichoresis in Calvin

Torrance and McClean both affirm that Calvin does not use the term *perichoresis*, but their conclusions are opposite. For Torrance, due to the similarity with Gregory of Nazianzen’s conception of *perichoresis*, Calvin’s trinity is seen as a sort of *perichoresis*.<sup>58</sup> McClean, on the other hand, criticizes Torrance for giving too little evidence to support his claim, hence he refuses to affirm Torrance’s conclusion about Calvin. Since the reason is unknown why Calvin does not use *perichoresis* terminology in his writings, restraining ourselves in affirming it seems a wiser position. Instead, we should look to the *autotheos* notion, one that Calvin clearly affirms.

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<sup>55</sup> Calvin, *Comm. John* 14:10, trans. William Pringle (1847) (Bellingham: Logos, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> See Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 229.

<sup>57</sup> McClean, “Perichoresis,” 135.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Paul Helm, *Calvin, A Guide for the Perplexed*, 52.

ii. *Autotheos: Ousia in Hypostasis*

a. The Equality and Diversity of the Autotheos Trinity

Calvin seeks to maintain the orthodox doctrine of the trinity by keeping these propositions as necessary, that “[the] unity of essence is retained and a reasoned order is kept, [...] yet takes nothing away from the deity of the Son and the Spirit.”<sup>59</sup> Can these be maintained in *autotheos*?

*Autotheos* means not only that the *hypostases* of the trinity resides in God’s essence but also in each *hypostasis* the whole essence of God is contained.<sup>60</sup> In the first phrase, Calvin affirms the Western tradition *theologoumenon* that “[i]n God’s essence reside three persons in whom one God is known.”<sup>61</sup> And thus “God” can refer to the Son and the Spirit as to the Father.<sup>62</sup> The second phrase is also expressed by Calvin “that three are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet there is not more than one God.”<sup>63</sup> Thus Calvin proceeds by affirming the deity of the Son and the Spirit,<sup>64</sup> and then the relationship of the Triune God.<sup>65</sup> So this term, *autotheos*, serves to ward off the composite nature of the trinity; without the

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<sup>59</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.20.

<sup>60</sup> See Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 233, for the initiated designation of *autotheos* by Valentinus Gentilis in his dispute towards Calvin (1558, 1561); 237 also charged by Jean Chaponneau (Capunculus) and Jean Courtois (Cortesijs), Neuchâtel Pastors who pronounced Calvin a heretic for saying, “Christ, as He is God, is *a se ipso*.”

<sup>61</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.16.

<sup>62</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.6.

<sup>63</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.7–13, then 14–15.

<sup>65</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.19–20.

notion of *autotheos*, there would be three persons who each partially represent God's essence.<sup>66</sup>

Calvin writes "unchangeable, the Word abides everlastingly one and the same with God, and is God himself."<sup>67</sup> Calvin is affirming the deity of the Word here, and earlier he says that the "Word" resides with God, and to the Word is attributed "a solid and abiding essence, " and "something uniquely His own."<sup>68</sup> Calvin took this *autotheos* notion of the Son from Augustine, "when we speak simply of the Son without regard to the Father, we well and properly declare him to be of himself; and for this reason we call him the sole beginning."<sup>69</sup> Noting the relation of the Son with respect to the Father, Calvin then asserts that the Father is "the beginning of the Son."<sup>70</sup> So here lies Calvin's understanding of *autotheos* in the Son, as the sole beginning in his being, and originated by the Father in his person/ subsistence.

With regards to the *autotheos* of the Spirit, Calvin affirms the Western tradition that "[the Spirit] resides hypostatically in God."<sup>71</sup> Then Calvin interprets John

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<sup>66</sup> Thanks to Huijgen in helping to formulate this conclusion. Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 242, n.472, follows Barrs interpretation that with the Father as the *essentiator* of the Son, as the *unica essentia*; this means the Son received the Father's essence in a derivative sense. But this would place the Son in subordinated position to the Father.

<sup>67</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 237–239 remarks that Calvin employs Paul's expression "in him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead" to support the idea that Christ is God *a se ipso*.

<sup>69</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.19.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.14.



4:24 in the sense that Christ calls God in his entirety “Spirit”.<sup>72</sup> What this means is that “[t]he whole essence of God is spiritual, in which are comprehended Father, Son, and Spirit.”<sup>73</sup> Calvin’s understanding of the *autotheos* in the Spirit is described in this way,

For as we there [in the scripture] hear God called spirit, so also do we hear the Holy Spirit, seeing that the Spirit is a hypostasis of the whole essence, spoken of as of God and from God.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the Spirit can be spoken of *hypostatically* and also *essentially*.

Hypostatically in such a way that the Spirit resides in one essence of God; essentially in a way that the Spirit is a *hypostasis* of the whole essence. As also noted by Ferguson, “He proceeds personally from both the Father and the Son within the internal union and communion of the Trinity.”<sup>75</sup> So, similar to the Son, the person of the Spirit comes from the other persons – the Father and the Son – but the Spirit’s deity is not derived. “Thus, the essence is without principium; but the principium of the Person is God Himself.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.20.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, “Calvin and Christian Experience: The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian,” in *Calvin: Theologian and Reformer*, eds. Joel R. Beeke and Garry J. Wells (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010), 94.

<sup>76</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.25.

b. Characterization of Calvin's *Autotheos* in the Trinity

There is an asymmetry here in terms of the order of the *autotheos* character in the Spirit from the Son. Calvin follows the *Filioque* western tradition that the same Spirit is from both the Father and the Son,<sup>77</sup> even when the Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son;<sup>78</sup> while the Son in his person is only originated by the Father.

According to Warfield, Calvin was just re-expressing *homoousios* or consubstantiality in terms of *autotheos*. This would place Calvin in line with the Nicene tradition.<sup>79</sup> But Calvin does not subscribe to the understanding of “eternal generation”.<sup>80</sup> In Nicene, the eternal generation is formulated in this manner,

not as something which has occurred once for all at some point of time in the past – however far back in the past – but as something which is always occurring, a perpetual movement of the divine essence from the first Person to the second, always complete, never completed.<sup>81</sup>

Calvin says that “it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that three persons have subsisted in God from eternity.”<sup>82</sup> According to Calvin, in eternity there is no before nor after.<sup>83</sup> So the son has his self-existence,

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<sup>77</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.18.

<sup>78</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.17.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 4.8.16, affirms the consubstantiality of the Son in the Nicene Creed.

<sup>80</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 247 ff. Baars notes the same objection “The Trinity,” 245, 248, Calvin preferred to understand “eternal generation” simply as a mystery.

<sup>81</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 247.

<sup>82</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.29.

<sup>83</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.18.

and not “necessary existence” from the Father; the same notion is also true of the Spirit.<sup>84</sup>

With such a conception of the “eternal”, Calvin’s *autotheos* in *trinity* is useful to safeguard in resisting heresies like Servetus’, who refuses to acknowledge the Word and Spirit as God, and only considers these as modes of revelation of the Father.<sup>85</sup> Warfield fears the eternal generation (and eternal procession) can be understood in the “strict Nicenist” subordinationist Arian interpretation like Samuel Clarke, which may make the Son and Spirit have a necessary existence; thus logically makes them creatures of the Father’s power, if not of his will.<sup>86</sup> Thus Calvin’s *autotheos* has a better expression to safeguard the deity of the Son without any element of subordinationism in it.

A rather similar conclusion is taken – albeit expressed differently – by Paul Helm, when he asks “how does Calvin conceive the relation between the persons of the Trinity: necessary or voluntary?”<sup>87</sup> Helm concludes that neither answer is the whole truth. It cannot be voluntary, since the act of begetting is an essential feature of the Father’s person; nor can it be involuntary, thus to ensure no

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<sup>84</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 271 ff.

<sup>85</sup> Arnold Huijgen, “The Challenge of Heresy: Servetus, Stancaro, and Castellio,” in *John Calvin in Context*, ed. R. Ward Holder (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 269–72.

<sup>87</sup> See Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 55–7.

imposing of will of one person on the others.<sup>88</sup> The relation is essential, best represented as a relationship of love.<sup>89</sup>

Calvin's trinity thus can be described as *autotheos* trinity. Torrance makes his summary statement which describes *autotheos*: "[t]he total Being (*tota essentia*) and the total nature (*tota natura*) of the one God are in each Person."<sup>90</sup>

### c. The Unity of Autotheos Trinity

Is *perichoresis* not needed to avoid the seemingly tritheism in *autotheos* trinity?

After all, *autotheos* and *perichoresis* are not mutually exclusive terms when properly understood; because each of these can be wrongfully understood as necessary or voluntary, or properly understood as essential — as love.

Each Triune person's aseity is affirmed as *autotheos*. Since each *hypostasis* has the whole essence of God in himself, it is not only the Triune God is *a se*, but each *hypostasis* also *a se* in himself. *Perichoresis* does not contradict the trinity when the *aseity* of God is affirmed in each person of the trinity. The problem that appears in the question is how do we understand the three *a se* Triune persons as "integral perfection"?<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Torrance, "The Holy Trinity," 13. Cf. Arnold Huijgen, "Divine Accommodation and the Reality of Human Knowledge of God: The Example of Calvin's Commentary on the Moses Theophany (Exodus 33–34)," in *CSS*, 161–172, for distinctions between the essence and nature of God.

<sup>91</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.2.

According to Warfield Calvin faces no dilemma when pointing out the distinction of the persons, it “in no way impedes the absolutely simple unity of God [...] since [...] the whole nature is in each hypostasis.”<sup>92</sup> But Warfield uses the foreign *perichoresis* interpretation in his reading of Calvin’s commentary on John 14:10.

At first, Calvin does not seem to solve this dilemma. In *Inst.* 1.13.16; he simply accepts what is affirmed in Scripture of one faith, one baptism, of one God in three persons, in whose simple essence consists the mutuality of Word and Spirit. The answer however lies in the understanding of *autotheos* of the Spirit. That God is both Spirit in his person and essence; and so, God as Spirit can be spoken of in the *hypostasis* which encompasses the whole essence, or in the essence which encompasses the Triune *hypostases*. Thus, *autotheos* understanding of trinity, in particular of the Spirit, already secures the unity of God.

In this sub-section we see how Calvin shows the *autotheos* character of the Triune persons describes who God is “prior to” or “beyond” his work *ad-extra*. This “quality of essence” is what guards the distinction between God in himself and the creatures. The creature cannot be consubstantial with the Father; thus, creatures are not God. In other words, it is “consubstantiality” what makes each *hypostasis* of God as God in himself.

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<sup>92</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 291.

In the notion of *autotheos*, Calvin affirms several things. First the equality of the Father, the Son and the Spirit due to the *autotheos* of each without reference to the others; and second, the diversity of Triune persons by affirming the asymmetry between the *autotheos* of the Son and the Spirit. With *autotheos*, Calvin can affirm the *principium* of person – the Father as the *principium* of the Son, and the Spirit from the Father *filioque* – without falling into the possible error of subordinationism; and third, the unity of God is affirmed in the *autotheos* of the Spirit in particular.

Thus, the Triune God is orthodoxly conceived in terms of the “unity, equality and diversity”.<sup>93</sup> Calvin might have conceived the relation in the Triune God as *perichoresis*, however it is not necessary in his *autotheos* Trinity conception. Calvin prefers a more static view of eternity rather than a dynamic one.

### ***3.1.2. Reality of Creation: Theater of God’s Glory***

#### *i. The Dramatis Personae of God as Creator and Redeemer*

##### **a. Setting the Stage**

God is accommodating himself to us, because “the being of God is greater and more majestic than he has revealed to us.”<sup>94</sup> Still there is one consistent reality

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<sup>93</sup> These characters are coined by Tsung-I Hwang, “Liberating the Repressed Form of Self in Post-Traditional Ru-Influenced Chinese: A Theoretical Study of the Responses of Tu Weiming and Jürgen Moltmann” (PhD diss., Middlesex University, 2018), 233, eprints.mdx.ac.uk. Hwang draws from Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983, 1990), 337.

<sup>94</sup> Baars, “Trinity,” 255.

about God, that despite the fundamental distinction between God in himself and as he is revealed to us, “God is in himself (*in se*) Trinitarian, as he is Trinitarian toward us (*quoad nos*).”<sup>95</sup>

The first act of the Triune God is God’s act of creation *ex nihilo*, and so the beginning of this world. This contingent creation is not a cosmos devoid of meanings. For Calvin, the cosmos is the theater of God’s glory,<sup>96</sup> and the scripture is the spectacle by which to see this world.<sup>97</sup> In this theater, God is the main actor. His role is understood as *persona*.<sup>98</sup> In the theatrical term role is the idea of the *dramatis personae*.<sup>99</sup> Other roles come after the first act of creation in this theater; each role is assigned by God on this world’s stage. These roles are conceived by Calvin to have a hierarchical order; in this manner, right after God: angels, humans, and other creatures. In the scripture we also recognize the whole story has three acts: creation, fall, and redemption, which aims to an end. Within this story God sets himself two distinct roles, as the Creator and the redeemer — Calvin’s *duplex cognitio Dei*.

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<sup>95</sup> Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 11.

<sup>96</sup> *Inst.* 1.6.2.

<sup>97</sup> *Inst.* 1.6.1.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 281. Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186 also notes Calvin’s commitment to classical Latin has an influence on his use of *persona*, “primarily on one’s activity within the surrounding economy, and then, only secondarily, on one’s status as a substantial self or personage who fills this role.”

<sup>99</sup> Cornelis van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective. A Few Remarks,” in *CSS*, 250 mentions that Christ’s role in the threefold office as “prophet, priest, and king” fulfills what has appeared in the history of the Old Testament between God and his people.

To know God as Creator and redeemer is to know who God is *for us*, in what he wills toward us.<sup>100</sup> Within this boundary, the available knowledge of reality for creatures does not lie prior to creation; since man is unable to comprehend both “the eternity of God’s existence and the infinity of his glory.”<sup>101</sup> According to Calvin the furthest insight we are allowed to observe is to know that “his will is the rule of all wisdom, [and] we ought to be contented with that alone.”<sup>102</sup>

God did not end his role as Creator when creation was completed, but rather, God carries on by preserving the world he created. God, in his providence, establishes the order of creation.<sup>103</sup> God’s role did also not end when humans had fallen into sin; while carrying the work of preservation, God took up in addition the work of restoration as the redeemer in his new role.<sup>104</sup> Preservation and restoration are displayed in Calvin’s reflection of providence as the overarching work of God as the Creator and predestination as the overarching work of God as the redeemer.

#### b. God the Creator and Redeemer: Father and Spirit

Calvin, in line with the western tradition, affirms that *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*. He believes that

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<sup>100</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.6.

<sup>101</sup> Calvin, “Argument,” *Comm. Gen.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 22. See *Inst.* 1.14.1, 7–8, 10–14.

<sup>104</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 5.



God's acts are differentiated in a Trinitarian manner from the very beginning; that is to say, what God does is to be resolved into the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which these three cannot be identified with one another without qualification.<sup>105</sup>

The differentiation is formulated by Calvin as follows:

to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity.<sup>106</sup>

The above unfolding of God's acts requires a further explication in a Trinitarian manner. In his act of creation, as the Creator, God takes up the role of a Father towards us. "God's fatherly love toward mankind [is shown] in that he did not create Adam until he had lavished upon the universe all manner of good things."<sup>107</sup> Eschatologically, Calvin sees God's paternal love towards us ends in our uniting with Christ to the Father, in which, even though Christ is the loved object (John 15:9) yet it is not for his own private advantage.<sup>108</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the fall has not affected God's role. He does not abandon this world, in fact "God the Father continued to be stressed as the source of all good and the Son as the Mediator."<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, man has

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<sup>105</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 45. Cf. Arie Baars, "'Opera Trinitatis Ad Extra Sunt Indivisa'" in the Theology of John Calvin," in *CSLI*, 131–41.

<sup>106</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.18.

<sup>107</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.2. Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 1:26.

<sup>108</sup> Calvin, *Comm. John* 15:9.

<sup>109</sup> Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 248.

his knowledge of God turned upside down such that he only sees God as a judge, instead of a Father. However, these two pictures of God are not necessarily contradictory; as Warfield explains, God in Calvin's conception is recognized as Sovereign Father, as "Lord and Father".<sup>110</sup> Thus, despite the fall, the Father continues to be the Father who not only shows his paternal solicitude, for example by sending manna when Israel was in the desert,<sup>111</sup> but even more so to the greater extent when God restores relationship with his rebellious creatures by sending his own Son, the real manna (John 6:32ff). Restoration in redemption will be brought to an end in which God adopts us as his children by grace.

With regard to the Son's role as Creator and redeemer, this will be treated more fully in section 3.2. This may seem to be a disjunction in our discussion, yet Calvin himself distinguishes between the *autotheos* eternal Son of God and Christ as *personae* or the *logos ensarkos* in history. Thus, our separate treatment of Christ is perfectly permissible. It is enough to say at this point that Calvin conceives the Son in the two-act role of Creator and redeemer in his office as the Mediator.

Then does the Spirit also has a two-act role as the Creator and the redeemer? The work of the Spirit is commonly interpreted as *Spiritus Redemptor* in applying

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<sup>110</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 176.

<sup>111</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Exod 32:1*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 330. Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Matt 5:45*, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 306.

the redeeming work of Christ, personally and communally, discussed by Calvin in the *Institutes* book 3 and 4. However, as Harink pointed out, despite Calvin's dispersed and unsystematic discussions of the broader work of the Spirit, the recognition of *Spiritus Creator* is implicit in Calvin's teachings.<sup>112</sup> Thus, there are not only the broader issues of the fatherhood of God and broader mediator of Christ that Calvin conceives, the Spirit's work is also understood broadly in "all spheres of creation, culture and society, beyond the realm of the church and individual Christians."<sup>113</sup> Calvin's identification of the distinct roles of the Spirit as Creator and redeemer can be seen in his two separate paragraphs in *Inst.* 1.13.14, the spirit is the life-transfusing power in creation and redemption. His divine care in creation is shown "in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement."<sup>114</sup> It is by means of the Spirit that the Father carries out his paternal solicitude towards his creation.

In fact, the Spirit is not just identified as the Spirit of the Father. As referred to by Willis, based on Krusche's study, that in Calvin the Spirit's role in creation and redemption is strengthened by the doctrine of the *Filioque*.<sup>115</sup> It can be stated

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<sup>112</sup> Douglas Karel Harink, "Spirit in the World in the Theology of John Calvin: A Contribution to a Theology of Religion and Culture," *Didaskalia* (Otterburne, Man.) 9, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 62.

<sup>113</sup> See more in Harink, "Spirit in the World," 61–81.

<sup>114</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.14.

<sup>115</sup> Edward David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: the Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 3. See Werner Krusche, *Das Wirken de Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 128–9.

that “[a]s the Spirit of the Eternal Son as redeemer, the Spirit is regenerator, and as the Spirit of the Eternal Son as creative Word, the Spirit is Creator.”<sup>116</sup> Krusche thinks that Calvin does not appropriate the two manners of the Spirit’s working—in the universe and order of nature, and in the renewal of fallen nature—to a difference between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ but rather to the Spirit of the Eternal *Sermo* and the Spirit of the Mediator.<sup>117</sup> “Christ, whether as Eternal Word or as Mediator in the flesh, was never separated from his Spirit.”<sup>118</sup>

Calvin conceives the world in its earliest, most primitive form to subsist in God as to be sustained by the Spirit, which without his providential work would speedily dissolve and vanish.<sup>119</sup> The work of the Spirit manifests itself even more in redemption as “the author of regeneration” who by his very own energy will impart to us an incorruptible life, future immortality more excellent than any present growth.<sup>120</sup>

As to the work of the Spirit in the life of believers and the unregenerate, Calvin thinks that the Spirit works as the Spirit of sanctification in the life of believers, but exercises his lordship by compelling the unregenerate to obedience

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 84, refers to Krusche, *Das Wirken de Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin*, 127ff.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 1:2.

<sup>120</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.14.

in correlation with the Word as the Law.<sup>121</sup> This reading from Harink seems to be contrasting and tensional. A more dynamic and less tensional reciprocity between believers and non-believers in Calvin is drawn by Huijgen. According to Huijgen, the dynamic act role of the Spirit is illumination or, in a more poetical description by Van der Kooi, “insight into the wealth and coherence of the truth of salvation.”<sup>122</sup> Acting out this role, the Spirit draws us to more inner circles in the concentric model to a fuller revelation of God’s accommodation. The broadness of the Spirit’s operation and of Christ’s mediatorship have no delimiting effect on the elect only.<sup>123</sup>

#### c. Accommodation in History and Its Limitations

This history is God’s theatrical stage in which “God as the great Orator accommodates himself to various times and places.”<sup>124</sup> As the great Orator, God acts in his speech, which properly understood is the integral reality of word and spirit.

History is a continuation of God’s historical plan, and appealing to John 12:31, it will end in the final judgment which none other than the final restoration of

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<sup>121</sup> Harink, “Spirit in the World,” 67, 71.

<sup>122</sup> Huijgen, “Dynamics of illumination,” in *Divine Accommodation*, 313. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 437.

<sup>123</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 313.

<sup>124</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 48 sees this accommodation act of God as the key to understand the Old Testament.

order to the world initiated by Christ himself through his death.<sup>125</sup> Calvin says that “God is [not just] the architect of the world, but through the whole chain of the history he shows how admirable is His power, His wisdom, His goodness, and especially His tender solicitude for the human race.”<sup>126</sup> God’s attributes are not abstractly conceived by Calvin but rather “functioning” within the roles that God takes, mainly as Creator and redeemer, which also includes other secondary roles such as sustainer, governor, judge.<sup>127</sup>

The relation of God, seen in his role as the Creator and redeemer, towards his created world, can be described in the principle of *totus non totum*. This principle is proper in Calvin’s Christological discourse, nevertheless it can be applied in accordance to the doctrine of creation. Noted by Paul Helm, this principle is clearly defined by Francis Turretin as follows: *totus* denotes a person in the concrete, but *totum* refers to a nature in the abstract.<sup>128</sup> Therefore in creation, God is *totus* in the way the Triune persons are fully involved and active in the world, from its early conception in creation till its consummation, and yet *non totum* since God is incomprehensible to creatures and manifested only “in a manner” form, that is in his accommodation. This principle can also be consistently

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<sup>125</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 108–9. See Calvin, *Comm. John* 12:31.

<sup>126</sup> Calvin, “Argument,” *Comm. Gen.*

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 166. “God [...] sustains this world by His immense *power*, governs it by His *wisdom*, preserves it by His *goodness*, rules over the human race especially by His *righteousness* and *justice*, bears with it in His *mercy*, defends it by His *protection*.”

<sup>128</sup> Quoted by Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 298–300.

applied both to the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the lives of believers and on the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, Calvin develops the *duplex cognitio Dei* as the Creator and the redeemer Triunely, of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. There is no division of the work of God among the persons of the trinity, but each person's distinct contribution can be identified. The Father in his providence and predestination, the Son to be shown later as the Mediator, and the Spirit as *Spiritus Creator* and *Spiritus Redemptor*; this work is a unity in his act of creation and redemption.

## ii. *The Roles of Creatures in History*

### a. On the Natural World

God's act of creation encompassed both visible and invisible realms: angels as incorporeal beings in the invisible realm,<sup>130</sup> the world with its creatures in the visible realm, and humans who are in both realms.<sup>131</sup> Comprehended in Calvin's theology, each creature is interconnected and does not stand apart in isolation.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> On the locus of Spirit, the *totus non totum* differentiation by Turretin based on person and nature is not applicable; because the person and the nature of the Spirit is in unity in *autotheos* understanding. Thus, in receiving the person of the Spirit who indwells in us, we are being sanctified by partaking the same divine nature of him.

<sup>130</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.4. Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Heb* 1:14, considers the spirits are eminent and superior to corporeal being.

<sup>131</sup> Wendel, *Origins and Development*, 173, see Calvin, *Inst.* 1.15.2.

<sup>132</sup> Henri Blocher, "Calvin's Theological Anthropology," in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 73, n.31, "Calvin never denied secondary causality. [...] God worked immediately and mediately in nature and history. [...]"

They have roles and can be in either tensional or harmonious relation to one another.

Nature is related to God, man, and even angels. God can be found in the natural order since he has accommodated himself to us.<sup>133</sup> The whole world which God irradiates by his splendor is the garment of him who is hidden, and thus appears in a manner visible to us.<sup>134</sup> It is important to remember that the one who stands at the center of this theater is God, and not human, despite a human being appointed to be the head of this creation.<sup>135</sup> While God's unfolding work is to be seen at its clearest in Christ's life for our salvation,<sup>136</sup> the grace of God towards his creatures, however, is not obscured from the beginning of creation's account.

God is to be seen in this world. As Calvin says "God [...] clothes himself, so to speak, with the image of the world, in which he would present himself to our contemplation."<sup>137</sup> Mankind is to behold the invisible God through the visible creation. Therefore Calvin's summons is to "let the world become our school if we desire rightly to know God."<sup>138</sup> As what Calvin says in the *Institutes*, "let us not be ashamed to take pious delight in the works of God open and manifest in

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<sup>133</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 107. Cf. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 101.

<sup>134</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Ps.* 104:1, trans. James Anderson (Bellingham: Logos, 2010).

<sup>135</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 120.

<sup>136</sup> *Inst.* 3.3.9.

<sup>137</sup> Calvin, "Argument," *Comm. Gen.*, 60.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*



this most beautiful theater.”<sup>139</sup> In this created world as God’s theater, man’s first role is as a spectator.<sup>140</sup> But this role is not possible without man being a listener of God’s word.<sup>141</sup> And as a listener, man’s role is to be a student of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>142</sup> Thereafter man plays another role as an adorer or lover of God.<sup>143</sup> Man’s role in God’s theater is to grow as he lives in the reality of “word and spirit”, as he is drawn closer to the inner circle or the highest sphere. As a lover, this loving aspect is to be shown in obedience as the result of man’s knowledge of God as “Lord and Father”, the sovereign Father.<sup>144</sup> In fact, how can we not praise God, realizing our created existence, we descend within ourselves only to find Him who “everywhere diffuses, sustains, animates and quickens all things in heaven and in earth, ... transfusing His own vigor into all things, breathes into them being, life and motion.”<sup>145</sup>

However, mankind fell, and this brought a radical change. Calvin says that due to Adam’s fall, humanity “brought into confusion the perfect order of nature, the bondage to which the creatures have been subjected because of man’s

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<sup>139</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.20.

<sup>140</sup> *Inst.* 1.6.2.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* Calvin’s expression is “prick up his ears”. Listening has a nuance of giving more attention than of hearing in general, thus a “listener”.

<sup>142</sup> van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 101. See *Inst.* 1.6.2.

<sup>143</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.22.

<sup>144</sup> Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 175.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 161. See *Inst.* 1.13.14.

sin is heavy and grievous to them.”<sup>146</sup> The existence of the world as natural order and the lot of the creatures are bound closely with man. As Quistorp remarks, the creatures became the “victims of mortality”.<sup>147</sup> Quistorp, citing Calvin in 2 Peter 3:10, wrote that “the creatures of God are in themselves unspoil. But by our guilt we drag them down into the misery of mortality”<sup>148</sup> This brings forth the necessity of redemption that reconciles man and nature. What is the reality of the fallen world? As Van der Kooi concludes, in Calvin, “outside of the Scripture and outside of Christ the world is alternatively a spectacle of retribution and obscure injustice, and a theatre of tender and wonderful care.”<sup>149</sup>

As a result, the natural order too seeks redemption, with the natural longing for the undamaged condition.<sup>150</sup> Despite the fact that the world has undergone a fall in man, yet this very world is not and will not be abandoned by God. Instead it will undergo a renovation of its original material (substance) in the end.<sup>151</sup> Calvin interprets 2 Peter 3:10 to mean a purging by fire to the purpose that heaven and earth may correspond with the kingdom of Christ.<sup>152</sup> In the end, the

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<sup>146</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.2.

<sup>147</sup> Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (repr. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 185.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 442.

<sup>150</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.2.

<sup>151</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 98, cites Calvin, *Comm. 2 Pet 3:10; Psalm 102:26*.

<sup>152</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Pet 3:10*.

revelatory function of nature will be reestablished in the final redemption.<sup>153</sup>

Interpreted from Romans 8:21, this reestablishment is a participation of nature by being set free and obtaining *the freedom of the glory* of the children of God. This reciprocal interrelation of nature and man in the end will be reestablished as it was in the beginning in man's relationship with God. Quistorp remarks that this interrelatedness was taught by Calvin; that "man's eternal relation to God is the foundation of his eternal relation to the world: The perfect enjoyment of the creatures corresponds to the perfect vision of God; we can enjoy the former only in God."<sup>154</sup> The destiny of the created world is also bound to the original purpose of man's creation, "the final purpose of the eternal consummation of the cosmos together with that of the church is that there may be universal praise to God. (Revelation 5:13)."<sup>155</sup>

#### b. On Angels

Do angels have a role in the drama of creation? It may still be somewhat irrelevant in the post-enlightened world to believe in and discuss the existence of angels. But this is indispensable in scripture, and Calvin's theology. Even though the discussion of angels is not as extensive as during the medieval period, yet this remains an important element in Calvin's theology. Without this section on

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<sup>153</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 97.

<sup>154</sup> Quistorp, *the Last Things*, 186.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. citing Calvin, *Inst.* 3.5.8.

angels, we will fail to comprehend Calvin's disputation with Osiander in the matter of the Image of God, the cause of Christ's incarnation, Christ's broad mediatorship, and the last transformation of man.

Angels too have their own role in the natural world – since there is no creature that is truly independent and exists solitarily, without influencing nor being influenced by others. Angels' roles can be seen even in the very last fruit of Calvin's lectures on Ezekiel in 1565. Schreiner notes of Calvin's commentary on Ezekiel 1:24, that angels play an active role such that "Heaven and earth are full of angelic motion."<sup>156</sup> Calvin also emphasizes that when angels act and do service, they never act independently, but "God presides over them and governs their actions."<sup>157</sup> Thus the providence of God in "natural law" is not done by "dumb" creation, but animated by the angels as spiritual beings. "God transfuses his influence through the angels, so that not even a sparrow falls to the earth without his foresight, as Christ says, (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6.)"<sup>158</sup> But this does not mean that God is dependent on the angels for God can "disregard them and carries out his own work through his will alone."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 47, see Calvin, *Ezekiel* 1:24, trans. Thomas Myers (Bellingham: Logos, 2010).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 50. See Calvin, *Ezekiel* 1:22.

<sup>158</sup> Calvin, *Ezekiel* 1:21.

<sup>159</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 50, cites *Inst.* 1.14.11.

As presented in the bible, angels are not seen as having the main role in this drama of redemption or reconciliation, of which the triune God is the source or initiator.<sup>160</sup> This drama is God's act of love so that an exchange happened between Christ and man, who were cursed.<sup>161</sup> In this drama, there are two supporting roles that angels play, the passive and the active role.

Passively, angels are the spectators with great admiration for the drama of redemption. Calvin only mentions in passing that "all the heavenly host are keeping watch for [man's] safety"<sup>162</sup> Angels look intently because they know only "in part", not knowing the means of human redemption before the incarnation.<sup>163</sup>

Angels also play a more active role in history. Here, history must be expanded in our understanding of the cosmos. It is then properly understood as seeing how the invisible realm affects the visible realm; So Calvin says history is "[the] arena in which God and his angels do battle against Satan and his forces."<sup>164</sup> Mankind appears on the stage in the midst of invisible cosmic warfare; and the warfare has been brought to the level of the visible realm when man was

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<sup>160</sup> Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 251.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.7. Or as Wendel, *Origins and Development*, 172, translates it, "all the police of heaven are watching over our salvation and ready to help us..."

<sup>163</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 51, taking from Calvin, *Comm. 1 Tim.* 3:16.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 47. Cf. Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 248.

tempted and fell into sin. The world, however, is God's world, despite God's enemies.

There are two active roles of angels in this history. The first are the reprobate angels who abode not in the truth,<sup>165</sup> and plot to ruin Christ's kingdom.<sup>166</sup> The devil and the whole cohort, in Calvin's final conclusion are

completely restrained by God's hand as by a bridle, so that they are unable either to hatch any plot against us or, having hatched it, to make preparations or, if they have fully planned it, to stir a finger toward carrying it out, except so far as he has permitted, indeed commanded.<sup>167</sup>

The second are the elect angels.<sup>168</sup> In the Old Testament, the Law was given by the hand of the angels. (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19).<sup>169</sup> We are "defended by their guard" (Luke 4:10–11), they "rejoice over our salvation" (Luke 15:10), "they marvel at the manifold grace of God in the church", and "they are under Christ the Head".<sup>170</sup> Angels are used by God to comfort our weaknesses.<sup>171</sup> In addition, the care and protection of the church are placed by God into the hands of the angels who themselves are under the rule of Christ as mediator whose

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<sup>165</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Jude* 6, also *Inst.* 1.14.16.

<sup>166</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.15.

<sup>167</sup> *Inst.* 1.17.11.

<sup>168</sup> Calvin refers to the elect angels, as spoken by Paul in 1 Timothy 5:21, three times in *Inst.* 1.14.9; 1.14.16; and 3.23.4.

<sup>169</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.9.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.11.

intercession brings the ministration of angels to effectiveness.<sup>172</sup> Despite the active role of the elect angels, Calvin warns that we should direct our trust only to God since God does not make the angels ministers of his power and goodness to share his glory with them.<sup>173</sup> In fact, because angels are created, Calvin sees the purity of angels are still vile when compared to the righteousness of God.<sup>174</sup>

There is another role for angels, that is, as spectators, though this may seem out of place in the present discussion, yet it is necessary to be done in order to complete the overall view of the created world as a theater. Calvin says that “the church is for them [the angels] a theater in which they marvel at the varied and manifold wisdom of God.”<sup>175</sup> The church then has this interesting role that angels marvel at it. According to Schreiner, Calvin’s “discussions about angels reflect those themes central to his doctrine of providence. Angels testify to God’s presence in and care for the world, particularly the defense of the church.”<sup>176</sup>

In Calvin’s ontological sphere, God is fully involved with his created world. The world is a created order that God establishes, he rules and presides directly at every level from the highest to the lowest rank. He also employs the use of the

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<sup>172</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.12. Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 39, 47. In *Inst.* 2.15.3, Calvin attributes the protection of the church to Christ in his kingly office.

<sup>173</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.12.

<sup>174</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 51. Cf. Calvin’s interpretation in Colossians 1:20 on Job 4:18 about that purity of angels.

<sup>175</sup> *Inst.* 3.20.23.

<sup>176</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 52.

higher rank creatures to govern and protect, and so have dominion over the lower rank. Each order has an interrelated relation with the others, but ultimately all orders have to submit to God and his will. The natural world's destiny is bound to man, matter will retain their substances but will be restored together with the church. The church herself is observed and defended by the angels, who themselves in their actions are directed by God. Ultimately Christ as the *dramatis personae* of God is the one who in the act of redemption reconciles all things and brings *shalom* to all relations among creatures and God.

### ***3.1.3. Conclusion: Calvin's Criterion in Theological Principle***

Calvin articulates God the creator more in terms of economic Trinity. The created world is conceived as a stage for theatrical drama in which each *hypostasis* of the Triune God is taking the role of Creator and Redeemer.

In our probing of Calvin's immanent Trinity, it is seen that *autotheos* best expresses the triune God, without necessarily rejecting *perichoresis* relation despite its absence of usage in writing. *Autotheos* as Calvin's re-expression of *consubstantiality* with the Father is the qualification that makes a distinction between who God is in himself and all other creatures.

As the Creator, God is the source, life and power that we as creatures live, move and exist in. God is *totus* in his person in the created world, but *non totum* in his nature. Nothing is hidden from God; nothing escapes his paternal solicitude and ordering. Thus, the economic triune God is gracious and merciful,



though immanently the same triune God is incomprehensible and unknown in his deity.

God establishes order in the interrelatedness of creatures, both visible and invisible. There is an order of dominion – governing from the higher to the lower – with the final submission solely to God. This interrelatedness is played out in history as God’s theater with God himself interacting with the creatures whom are also appointed and given roles, of which humans are the spectator, listener, student and adorer of God; and later on the church, as the elect, united to Christ, becomes a spectacular performance, which the angels marvel at.

In the transposed ontological ordering of concentric circles model, God is seen at the very center of the circles, a transcendent place that is far above from even the angels, the closest among all the creatures. For *theosis* to be made possible, the great chasm between the holy God and the fallen human creature has to be mediated. This role of mediator can only be bore by one who is both divine and human in his natures.

### **3.2. The Role of Christ as the Mediator**

We have identified in Calvin the fact that the Triune God *ad-intra* is understood in *autotheos*. In this section, we will see how the *autotheos* Son appears in this theater of creation with his two acts role as the Creator and the redeemer, just like the Father and the Spirit. At the same time there lies the dissimilarities of the Son from the Father and the Spirit. While the Son who appears in this role is the

same person, but these two perceptions of the eternal Son and the incarnate Word do not “coincide perfectly”.<sup>177</sup> As a result, Calvin makes distinctions within the eternal Son of God, *Logos* in the pre-incarnate and incarnate stages, and implied in the understanding of Christ as the mediator.

A study on “Calvin’s Use of Persona” by J. Raitt elaborates the distinctions that Calvin conceived. Raitt sees that Calvin takes the word *hypostasis* from the epistle to the Hebrews to express the reality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so that in one God there are three *hypostases*.<sup>178</sup> He also finds that in Calvin, *office* and *person* are closely paired more than *person* and *hypostasis*.<sup>179</sup> A distinction is also made between Christ and *Logos*, in which Calvin prefers to use the word *person* to refer to Christ the mediator; and uses either *Logos* [*Parolle, Sermo*] or the eternal Son of God to refer to the second person of the divinity.<sup>180</sup> Huijgen also sees the significance of this term *persona* in Calvin; its use is to signify that Christ is the “standard” by which humans can truly know God, the “mirror in which God essentially reveals Himself.”<sup>181</sup> Christ bridges the gap between God and man, as Van der Kooi emphasizes, “incarnation is the extreme

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<sup>177</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in A Mirror*, 45.

<sup>178</sup> Raitt, “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” 275.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 280, 285.

<sup>181</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 287

point of accommodation.”<sup>182</sup> Thus, Calvin conceives Jesus Christ the mediator in his two natures as *Deus manifestatus in carne*.<sup>183</sup>

What Raitt has successfully managed to draw is the distinction in Calvin’s thought about the Son in the immanent trinity and the economic trinity. But Raitt did not make a further distinction between Calvin’s Christ in his pre-incarnate stage and his incarnate stage. This, then, minimizes Calvin’s significant understanding of Christ’s role in creation and providence.

In making a distinction of terms between “the Son” and “Christ”, we may ask “whether the Son in the immanent trinity is the same as the one in the economic Trinity?” Calvin suggests that both are the same identity in his commentary on John 1:14,

When he tells us that *the Speech was made flesh*, we clearly infer from this the unity of his Person; for it is impossible that he who is now a man could be any other than he who was always the true God, since it is said that that God *was made* man. On the other hand, since he distinctly gives to the man Christ the name of *the Speech*, it follows that Christ, when he became man, did not cease to be what he formerly was, and that no change took place in that eternal essence of God which was clothed with *flesh*.<sup>184</sup>

On this comment, Raitt expressed his confusion about Calvin’s referring the Speech that assumes flesh as the “eternal essence of God”, and not “the person of

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<sup>182</sup> Cornelis van der Kooi, “Christology,” trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *CH*, 258.

<sup>183</sup> Raitt, “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” 284.

<sup>184</sup> William Pringle translates using “the Speech.” See further discussion in section 3.2.1.i.a.

the Word”.<sup>185</sup> However, the notion of *autotheos* should clear the confusion. Calvin implies that the *hypostasis* of the Son is *consubstantial* with the Father; thus, self-exists in the same integral perfection of essence. Therefore, the *Speech* can be identified as the eternal essence of God. That the “eternal essence of God was clothed with flesh” shows that the Son as *Speech* – in the immanent trinity, and the Son as Christ incarnate – in the economic trinity, are of the same identity.

Another pair of Christological terms that needs to be clarified are *logos asarkos* and *logos ensarkos*. Even though this pair is not Calvin’s proper terminologies, nevertheless they exist in his thought which is characterized by the notions of the *extra-calvinisticum* and *communicatio idiomatum*. The differentiation lies in that the *logos asarkos* has only one divine nature, whereas the *logos ensarkos* has acquired an additional human nature.

The eternal Son with regard to his “economical office” bearing as Christ is *logos asarkos* that acts as mediator in creation.<sup>186</sup> In the incarnation, *logos ensarkos* acts as mediator in creation *and* mediator in redemption. *Logos asarkos* refers to the eternal son in his capacity as the mediator in creation only; meanwhile *logos ensarkos* refers to the *hypostatic union* Jesus Christ, as the eternal son and the mediator of both creation and redemption.

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<sup>185</sup> Raft, “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” 279.

<sup>186</sup> “Office” is a provisional term and may not be the best term here; for it may be confused with Christ’s threefold office as prophet, priest, and king.

However, there is a difference in understanding *logos ensarkos* between the Reformed and the Lutheran traditions. While the Reformed tradition, *logos ensarkos* is understood *extra carnem*, the Lutheran tradition refuses to acknowledge it. Instead, the Lutheran tradition insists that Christ is truly limited and localized during the incarnation prior to his resurrection. This *extra carnem* is misunderstood by the Lutheran tradition and often attributes Calvin and the reformed tradition to be too close to the Nestorian heresy.<sup>187</sup>

The distinction above is important especially in the modern discussion of Christology, also of Jenson's view. As noted by Van der Kooi, Barth has dismissed the notion of *logos asarkos* and derives all knowledge of God only from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the *logos ensarkos*.<sup>188</sup> Due to easily mistaken usage of the *logos asarkos*, Bruce McCormack proposes to use *logos incarnandus*, the word that is going to incarnate.<sup>189</sup> Van der Kooi agrees with this proposal by

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<sup>187</sup> See later discussion of 1 Cor. 15:24 to appreciate the nuance in Calvin, and section 5.3.3 for the refutation of this false charge.

<sup>188</sup> Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 247. Huijgen shares his comments that "if only Barth derived only *all knowledge* from God's revelation in Christ. He goes further to state that the eternal *logos* is the *logos ensarkos*. So, this is not merely an epistemological statement, but an ontological one. This comes with the risk of collapsing time into eternity (the Hegelian fault), and therefore Bruce McCormack tries to adjust this by the *logos incarnandus*."

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. Bruce McCormack, "Grace and being: the role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology," in *CCKB*. 103. There is a trace of Calvin himself teaching *logos incarnandus* (absent of the term) in his *Comm. 1 Cor* 10:4, "This reception of it [the flesh and blood of Christ] was the secret work of the Holy Spirit, who wrought in them in such a manner, that Christ's flesh, though not yet created, was made efficacious in them."

remarking “that every statement about the work of the *logos extra-carnem* should be bound to the *logos incarnatus* [the word that incarnates].”<sup>190</sup>

We may ask whether preference to the *logos incarnandus* usage will be too limiting in its non-speculative function. In Calvin’s thought, there is a place for the *logos asarkos* as he strongly affirms and defends the divinity of Christ as the mediator. According to Calvin, the divinity of Christ is incomprehensible, just like when God’s essence is being discussed.<sup>191</sup> Calvin tends to be *apophatic* about *logos asarkos*.

Historically, in relation to Christ's two natures, Calvin was fighting on two fronts to defend Christ’s mediatorship. Against Stancaro, Calvin defends Christ’s divinity in his mediatorship; then, against Osiander, Calvin defends the importance of Christ’s human nature as mediator.<sup>192</sup> We will discuss Calvin understandings of Christ’s two mediatorships as Creator and redeemer, and also of Christ’s two natures in his mediatorship.

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 206, Calvin, *Comm. John* 14:10, “Christ, so far as regards his hidden Divinity, is not better known to us than *the Father*.” Also, in *Inst.* 3.11.12, interpreting Paul about Colossians 2:3, “What he had with the Father he revealed to us [...] not to the essence of the Son of God but to our use, and rightly fits Christ’s human nature.”

<sup>192</sup> While Calvin included his disputation with Osiander in the *Institutes*, his disputes with Stancaro were not included. Tylenka has published two replies of Calvin in “Christ the Mediator,” and “Controversy on Christ the Mediator”.

### 3.2.1. Christ in the Drama of Creation

#### i. Logos Asarkos is the Eternal Son of God

##### a. The Eternal Son

In the *Institutes* 1.2.1, Calvin writes that,

in the fashioning of the universe as in the general teaching of Scripture *the Lord* shows himself to be simply the Creator. Then in the face of Christ [cf. 2 Cor. 4:6] he shows himself the Redeemer.

In the title of “the Lord”, Calvin sees that the eternal son of God, together with the Father and the Spirit, is the Creator; while “Christ” is to be emphatically seen within his redemptive purpose. Before showing himself as the redeemer, the Logos is first of all seen as the Creator.

The eternal Son is introduced as the Logos in the prologue of John’s gospel. To render ὁ λόγος, Calvin prefers the Latin translation of *sermo* – the Speech rather than *verbum* – the Word.<sup>193</sup> Calvin’s preference for using *sermo* provides us with better insight into his understanding of the integral reality of the “Word and Spirit”. This is because the spirit can also be understood as spiration from the Greek word *pneuma* or Hebrew *ruach*. In the act of speaking, words come out as speech that has its existence due to empowerment by breath. In consequence, speech can never be divorced from the empowerment of the spirit. In a written form, the word exists independently of the Spirit; however, in its production, it is

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<sup>193</sup> See Calvin, *Comm. John*.

originated from the spirit; but “speech” in auricular form can only exist in the spirit. This insight sheds light on the strong Reformed tradition of the mutual bond of the scripture with the Spirit as its author. Calvin also explains that the letter – the scripture understood as the law apart from Christ – kills, but the Spirit gives life.<sup>194</sup> When the scripture teaches us that man does not live by bread alone but by the words that come from the mouth of God, we are taught that man lives in this reality of the “word and spirit”.<sup>195</sup>

The *sermo* is also seen as to subsist in God.<sup>196</sup> The *sermo*, as the eternal wisdom and will of God, is revealed when God created the world.<sup>197</sup> The change comes due to creation, but there is no change to the *sermo* (immutable in his essence). Prior to creation God had the *sermo* concealed with himself.<sup>198</sup> The *sermo* subsists in God that he exists *within*, and then upon the act of creation appears *without*.<sup>199</sup>

What roles does the *sermo* take in creation? The eternal son of God as the Creator is the source of *life*, and as the sustainer of the creation, he administers his *life*-giving power.<sup>200</sup> In his commentary Calvin links these two roles with the

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<sup>194</sup> *Inst.* 1.9.3. The Hebrew language has letter and breathing marks elements, where the breathing marks are normally missing. In a way this represents the Spirit who is invisible, and yet has its indelible mark, such that without the Spirit, the letter is lifeless or even “kills” (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:6).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Deut.* 8:3. The “word” is explained extensively by Calvin as the Spirit of God, as the secret power of God, God’s inspiration, and the animating principle (*vigor*).

<sup>196</sup> See Calvin, *Comm. John* 1:1.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *Inst.* 1.13.17 refers to John 17:5.

<sup>199</sup> See Calvin, *Comm. John* 1:1.

<sup>200</sup> See Calvin, *Comm. John* 1:4.



creatures' subsistence in God, taken from Acts 17:28 that "in him we are, and move, and live."<sup>201</sup>

Thus, the *sermo* in his integral perfection with the Spirit subsists in God and takes up the role of Creator and Sustainer, as the source and life-giving power of the created world. All creatures live in the reality of "word and spirit" from creation.

b. The *Logos Extra Carnem* Identification

Cornelis van der Kooi, in speaking of Calvin's Christology at the stage of creation, seeks to connect it closely to the stage of redemption. He writes that, "[t]he eternal Son already *extra carnem* protects, gives life, guides his children and unites them to the Father."<sup>202</sup> Taking into account Calvin's understanding of the Father's providential work in his paternal solicitude, this uniting role of the Son fits well within the creational stage of this drama. Calvin indeed thinks that "the proper function of the mediator is to unite us to God."<sup>203</sup> The mediatorial work of the eternal Son of God that was carried out since the creation began has the same purpose as at the stage of redemption.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 249.

<sup>203</sup> Tylenda, "Controversy on Christ the Mediator," 148. This notion appears in Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro who rejects that Christ's divinity is necessary as the mediator.

<sup>204</sup> Also see Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 44.

As the mediator in creation, Christ is also conceived as the sustainer of the creation. Van der Kooi notes in Calvin that as the sustainer, “Christ is the fountain of life.”<sup>205</sup> Fountain is Calvin’s favorite image of the incarnate Christ, in which his flesh acts as the opening of that life as from a deep and hidden spring. Furthermore, Van der Kooi adds that “[t]he eternal Son, is the source and initiator of the drama of the reconciliation.”<sup>206</sup> This means that out of his own will the eternal Son chose to become Christ who appeared in the stage of history, that is voluntarily out of love and not out of necessity.<sup>207</sup> The *logos asarkos* who lowers himself by taking up the role as Christ the mediator in creation is the eternal Son of God.

*ii. Logos Asarkos as The Mediator in Creation*

*a. The Necessity of The Mediator in Creation*

Earlier we saw Calvin’s understanding of the Father and the Spirit in their two acts role as the Creator and Redeemer. The previous section has briefly mentioned Christ as the mediator in creation. We are going to elaborate as to why this role is necessary.

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<sup>205</sup> Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 249.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>207</sup> See the discussion in Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 250.

Calvin states that “Christ [as] *God manifested in the flesh*, [...] discharged [...] the office of Mediator from the beginning of the world.”<sup>208</sup> This explains Calvin’s view of Christ in his broad Mediatorship, *extra carnem*.<sup>209</sup> This broad mediatorship of Christ is founded in his divine nature.

Why does Calvin insist on Christ’s divinity as an aspect of his being a mediator? This broad mediatorship of Christ has structural significance in Calvin’s thinking about the relationship of God to the world. First, it helps to bridge the ontological gap between God and creatures; that is why mediation as accommodation is necessary in the first place. To address this necessity, Calvin states that even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a mediator.<sup>210</sup> Secondly, in bridging the ontological gap, the *Logos asarkos* relates to the entire creation, not only with mankind in the visible realm, but also with the angels in the invisible realm. Calvin also states of the supremacy of Christ over angels as their mediator, that “not only is Christ to be preferred before all angels but that he is the author of all good things that they have [Col. 1:16, 20].”<sup>211</sup> The angels would

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<sup>208</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Matt.* 1:23, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 106. cited by Raitt, “Calvin’s Use of Persona,” 281.

<sup>209</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in A Mirror*, 43–4. Also, Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 245.

<sup>210</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.1. Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 245.

<sup>211</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.10.

be without any head if Christ is not the mediator in his sustaining role.

Therefore, Christ's mediatorial role as the Creator is necessary; even though creation itself was never a necessity for God in the first place.

Calvin's thought is intriguing because he goes further in seeing the significance of Christ's broad mediatorship. The broad mediation of Christ is not only in matters of sustaining the creation, but also in reconciling all things. This is seen in Calvin's interpretation of Colossians 1:20 (*and through him [Christ] to reconcile all things unto himself all things, whether things on earth or in heaven.*) that Christ's death acts as a means of peacemaking for the elect angels so that they may wholly cleave to God. According to Calvin, the greatest purity in angels is vileness when brought into comparison with the righteousness of God.<sup>212</sup> There is not, on the part of angels, so much of righteousness as would suffice for their being fully joined with God.<sup>213</sup> Christ's soteriological function as the mediator *in carne* has a wider impact because of Christ's broader mediatorship, as the mediator of creation.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Col.* 1:20.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Calvin did not reject the view that Christ incarnate is for our salvation, as can be seen later in his dispute with Osiander.

## b. Apophatism of Christ's Divinity

Calvin had a dispute with Francesco Stancaro, who taught that Christ as mediator only takes place in his humanity. Stancaro thinks so because Christ is the one who intercedes and prays for us.<sup>215</sup> Since one who prays is necessarily lower than the one whom he prays to, therefore Christ is the mediator only in his humanity. However, Calvin states that from the beginning of creation Christ already acts as the mediator; “for he always was the head of the church, had primacy over the angels, and was the firstborn of every creature.”<sup>216</sup> The exercise of Christ's office as mediator by his grace caused both angels and men united to God, so that they would remain uncorrupted.<sup>217</sup> Therefore, Calvin affirms the divinity of Christ's mediatorship is necessary, because through it the angels are supported to remain uncorrupted.

Stancaro was not satisfied and further insisted that Christ would be less than the Father. To which issue Calvin answers, “[a]s long as Christ sustains the role of mediator, he does not hesitate to submit himself to the Father.”<sup>218</sup> But Calvin emphasizes that this is only in the present dispensation. Whereas on the last day “the Son will hand over his kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), [...] then [...] the splendor of the glory of God the Father will be instantly visible to us, the

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<sup>215</sup> Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator," 5.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 12. See Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:27.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 15.

glory which now appears in Christ, his living image.”<sup>219</sup> Thus even Christ now, despite his submission, already displays the glory of God mediated in his office, but it will be greater when Christ returns to his own glory.

The answer Calvin had given was not satisfying to Stancaro, who later accused Calvin of being an Arian. Thus, Calvin wrote his second reply to prove that the divinity of the Son is not inferior to that of the Father which had been clearly written in his *commentaries* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and John 14:16.<sup>220</sup> From the *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 11:3,

God, then, occupies the *first* place: Christ holds the *second* place. How so? Inasmuch as he has in our flesh made himself subject to the Father, for, apart from this, being of one essence with the Father, he is his equal. Let us, therefore, bear it in mind, that this is spoken of Christ as mediator.

And the *commentary* on John 14:16,

... for in so far as Christ is our Mediator and Intercessor, he obtains from *the Father* the grace of the Spirit, but in so far as he is God, he bestows that grace from himself.

On top of these, Calvin advised Stancaro to refer to a passage from Calvin’s own *Institutes* in 2.14.<sup>221</sup> The following from Calvin’s particular section is rather intriguing. In the second paragraph of the *Institutes* 2.14.2 on the “divinity and humanity in their relation to each other”, Calvin lists attributes of Christ’s

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>220</sup> Tylenda, "Controversy on Christ the Mediator," 138.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 150.

humanity, then similarly he lists attributes of Christ's divinity. On Christ's humanity:

But he is called "the servant of the Father" [Isa. 42:1, and other passages]; he is said to have "increased in age and wisdom ... with God and men" [Luke 2:52], and not to "seek his own glory" [John 8:50]; "not to know the Last Day" [Mark 13:32; cf. Matt. 24:36]; not to "speak by himself" [John 14:10], and not to "do his own will" [John 6:38 p.]; he is said to have been "seen and handled" [Luke 24:39].

And on Christ's divinity, Calvin writes that,

he cannot increase in anything, and does all things for his own sake; nothing is hidden from him; he does all things according to the decision of his will and can be neither seen nor handled.<sup>222</sup>

Calvin has a great concern to maintain the Creator-creature distinction even in Christ's two natures; the *finitum non capax infiniti* as his successors would formulate it.<sup>223</sup> What obviously can be seen is the contrast between the two attributes in that same paragraph. While Calvin provides biblical references when listing Christ's human attributes, he does not provide even one reference on Christ's divinity. Calvin was *apophatic* in listing Christ's divine attributes, negating what is true in Christ's humanity. This *apophatism* was then carried on by Calvin when interpreting references of the attributes of both natures. Of

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<sup>222</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.2

<sup>223</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 253–4 notes that the notion does not occur in Calvin's works themselves and can be used to be misinterpreted as Nestorian tendencies in Calvin and Calvinistic theology.

course, the *apophatism* was there employed to safeguard the mixing of divinity and humanity in Christ. To be fair, Calvin then explains these references with the *communicatio idiomatum*.<sup>224</sup>

But the charge still remains, being *apophatic*, Calvin causes us to wonder whether Christ, in his divinity, is the same as Christ in his humanity. It seems hard to dismiss the often-heard charge against Calvin that a different person of the *Logos asarkos* always seems to be lurking in the background. Calvin clearly understands the problem, that is why he sets the order in the next section 2.14.3 as “the unity of the person of the mediator.” Calvin here repeats his first reply to Stancaro concerning Christ who will deliver the Kingdom to his God and Father. So, it seems that what appears to be a problem raised by Stancaro was not even considered a problem by Calvin. For Calvin it is enough to affirm Chalcedon’s definition (451) of the unity of person in Christ, and then to equally condemn Nestorius and Eutyches.<sup>225</sup> This standpoint of Calvin is affirmed due to his non-speculative tendency. As pointed out by Edmondson, “for Calvin there is no purpose to the knowledge of who Christ is apart from what he does.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. Ibid., 253, Calvin conceives *communication idiomatum* in concreto—that is through person, rather than in *abstracto*—of two natures. Thus, *genus idiomaticum* and *apotelesmaticum*, instead of *maiestaticum* or *tapeinoticum*.

<sup>225</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.4. Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 204, notes Wendel’s remarks that “Calvin evinces far more concern in the *Institutes* for the distinction of natures than he does for the equally Chalcedonian concern for their unity.”

<sup>226</sup> Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 185.



### 3.2.2. Christ in the Drama of Redemption

Christ plays a significant role in the drama of redemption. He incarnates, according to the Father's will, to be put to death on the cross for our sins.

Mankind has lost his role due to the fall; humans run away from God's presence and no longer will to be God's spectator and adorer. To recover this role of man and to reconcile man with God, the mediator in creation becomes the mediator in redemption by taking up human nature in the union of his *hypostasis*.

#### i. Logos Ensarkos as The Divine-Human Mediator

Calvin does not reject Cyrillian emphases on the *hypostatic union* of Christ, including the notion of *theotokos*.<sup>227</sup> But he warns against and condemns the danger of commingling natures of Eutychus' heresy that destroys either nature.<sup>228</sup> He equally condemns the Nestorian heresy that pulls the natures apart.

#### a. The Contingency of Logos Ensarkos

What does Calvin believe of Christ's mediatorship as the redeemer, is it necessary or contingent?

In the *Institutes* 2.12.5 Calvin disputes Osiander's view regarding the necessity of Christ becoming man to fulfill the office of the Mediator. Christ's

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<sup>227</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.4. Cf. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 248.

<sup>228</sup> A position that Luther seems fail to hold. Cf. Richard Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Reformation Christological Debates* (New York: Oxford, 2019), c.66–7, since 1528 there is a shifted understanding in Luther who first believes the *ubiquity* or bodily omnipresence of Jesus is only at the exaltation, which then includes Christ's earthly life.

mediatorship as redeemer is contingent and incidental due to sin. It is an addition with the purpose of removing and forgiving sins by appeasing the Father on our behalf. Osiander, on the other hand, thinks that incarnation had to occur for God to show his love necessarily, but not contingently. Calvin does not dismiss the necessity of God's love of being revealed, but he insists that Christ's love must not be disjoined from God's decree. This act of Christ's partaking of our flesh cannot be disjoined from him becoming our redeemer. Calvin indicates that God's love through the incarnated Christ is to be found in the lofty mystery of predestination.<sup>229</sup>

As Calvin discusses predestination, his position moves dialectically to the necessary position. Calvin seems to struggle in locating predestination in his work.<sup>230</sup> Is the locus of predestination in the work of God as Creator or God as redeemer? Torrance sees predestination as a primary factor in Calvin's doctrine of God, thus sin itself is a corollary of the doctrine of grace.<sup>231</sup> In this case Christ

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<sup>229</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.5.

<sup>230</sup> Battles makes a note in "Providence" section, *Inst.* 1.16.1, "In editions 1539–1554, Calvin treated the topics of providence and predestination in the same chapter. In the final edition they are widely separated, providence being set here in the context of the knowledge of God the Creator, while predestination is postponed to 3.21–24, where it comes within the general treatment of the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit." Cf. Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 135, 183 who argues for a more consistent ordering of Calvin's Institutes based on a Pauline *ordo*: the original order of sin, law, grace, Old and New Testaments, predestination.

<sup>231</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 83, "The doctrine of depravity is properly a corollary of the doctrine of grace, an inference from the Gospel of a new creation." Cf. Hans Boersma, "Accommodation and Vision: John Calvin on Face-to-Face Vision of God," in *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 265–6.

is necessary as *logos ensarkos*. As pointed out by Eberhard Busch, Calvin, in his commentary on 1 Peter 1:20, infers the necessity of Christ as redeemer: “[God] had ordained [Christ] in his eternal council for the salvation of the world. [...] it was not a new or a sudden thing as to God that Christ appeared as a Saviour.” We have noted before, as pointed out by Van der Kooi, that the triune God is the source or initiator of this drama of redemption or reconciliation.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, in this framework, it is better to formulate *logos incarnandus* to maintain the contingency and necessity views of sin simultaneously.<sup>233</sup>

It appears that what is considered necessary for Osiander does not carry the same weight for Calvin. Osiander thinks what is considered as necessity is to secure the truthfulness of God’s love towards sinful man. He believes that Christ is the pattern in which man is created in the image of God by the inpouring of God’s essence, and after the fall, for man to be righteous he has to be renewed in the same image by the inpouring of Christ’s essence.<sup>234</sup> In addition to the issue of inpouring, Osiander has ignored the fact that the angels also bear the image of God; he thinks that since Christ became man, man then has the image of God,

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<sup>232</sup> Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective”, 251.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 239, “So, not only is the incarnation the high point [the *infralapsarian* position] of the pedagogical development of God’s covenant, it also is the foundation of that covenant [the *supralapsarian* position].”

<sup>234</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.5.

and so is higher than the angels. The restoration that Osiander perceives in man bears no impact whatsoever on the human-angels relationship.

Calvin rejects Osiander's concept of inpouring since God's essence is simple. The notion that "Christ as the pattern in which man is created" is also dismissed by Calvin since this would place Christ as the first Adam and not the Last Adam. Then, regarding angels, according to Calvin there is going to be a reconciliation between angels and man who will be united under Christ as their head. What is at stake here is the supremacy of Christ in all things, as the first of all creation and as the first from the dead, as the head of angels and of men. Calvin strives for consistency in his viewpoint, as is shown in his interpretation of Colossians 1:20, he insists that the elect angels too are vile (ref. Job 4:18) and they too need the grace of Christ as their peace-maker with God. The elect angels are not beyond the risk of falling had they not been confirmed by the grace of Christ through the blood shed on the cross.

But by holding to this position, Calvin is prone to make two mistakes. First, that angels are prone to fall by simply being creatures. This view seems to depict an imperfect account of creation. However, Calvin's intention is to show the dependency of creatures on the Triune God; and therefore the need of the mediator even in the very act of creation.

Second, Christ's incarnation is made necessary for angels, and not contingent as in the case for man due to sin. Calvin may have failed in recognizing the other

possible interpretation left undeveloped in his commentary; that is, the reconciliation of angels and men. This reconciliation of Christ is necessary for the elect angels due to the man's fall into sin which is contingent. The elect angels are officials who execute God's justice towards men; without the reconciling act of Christ, the angels, as God's ministers who bear the sword, would be merciless towards men who all have sinned.<sup>235</sup> Christ's reconciliation brings the elect angels and elect humans under the one headship of Christ the incarnate, and will bring these two parties to a new body in the end.

From the above discussions of Calvin's concept of the *logos ensarkos*, we can draw a few conclusions. Despite his emphasis on the contingency of the *Logos ensarkos* due to sin, contra Osiander, Calvin is not consistent in his position. He also shifts to the necessity of the *logos ensarkos* in view of predestination and the reconciliation of angels with mankind. However, these two reasons are still related to sin, thus making Calvin's position concerning the *logos ensarkos* a dialectical one. Therefore, the *logos ensarkos* plays a role in *deification*, despite its being contingent. In a hypothetical case where there be no sin nor the fall, Christ in his role as the mediator in creation would still make *deification* possible by uniting us with the Father.

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<sup>235</sup> In the OT is obvious with various references to angels bearing sword. In the NT, this can be inferred in Jesus' saying in Gethsemane "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:52–53).

In Calvin's dialectic struggle, we can appreciate that he seeks to portray faithfully what the scripture presents to us. Predestination indeed is the decreative will of God, while at the same time a mystery that was hidden and revealed only after finding its fulfillment in Christ. Sin is a mystery that one cannot comprehend, of which Calvin himself acknowledges his ignorance.<sup>236</sup> The mystery of sin baffling us both with the contingency and the necessity of Christ as *logos ensarkos* which each finds its proper time within history.

#### b. Functional Christology in the Threefold Office

The issue of contingency seems to recede into the background when placed in the framework of history as the theater of God in two acts. What appears as the climax in the drama results in a shift in Calvin's Christology, as identified by Oberman, "from a natures-Christology to an office-Christology, converging towards a Mediator-theology."<sup>237</sup> The underlying *theosis* discussion found its importance in this threefold office of Christ. Van der Kooi has summarized the importance of this functional Christology:

God rules his people through the offices of priest, king and prophet. [...] by viewing the life and work of Jesus Christ through the prism of these offices, [...] the life of Jesus is not a historical incident. His coming fits completely within the drama of the

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<sup>236</sup> John Calvin and Hendry H. Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism: A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1856), 112–113.

<sup>237</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 253.

history of the covenant, which God has initiated and which will complete with the consummation of the world.<sup>238</sup>

Christ is the one who acts – playing the role of a three-fold office, as *dramatis personae* of priest, king, and prophet in the history of God and his people.<sup>239</sup> Van der Kooi identified these as key moments of Christ in the drama of redemption: “The earthly life, death, resurrection, the ascension of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit by Christ.”<sup>240</sup>

How does Christ function in each fold of his role? In his prophetic office, Christ is the herald and witness of the Father’s grace.<sup>241</sup> Christ as the prophet brought an end to all prophecies, and in him the whole immensity of heavenly benefits can be grasped by faith.<sup>242</sup> Calvin notes that the anointing Christ received is not only for himself so that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for his whole body empowered by the Spirit to continue preaching the gospel.<sup>243</sup>

The kingship of Christ is identified by Calvin as spiritual in nature.<sup>244</sup> Christ exercises this office as the eternal protector and defender of his church.<sup>245</sup> The

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<sup>238</sup> Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 249–50.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>241</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.2.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.3.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

ruling of Christ over his church as mediator is through word and spirit.<sup>246</sup> Calvin views the kingly office of Christ in the warfare which will end in the King's triumph, in which the church participates.<sup>247</sup> The church is to participate in the present struggle against the devil, sin, and death, clothed with Christ's righteousness and being lavished with his gifts.<sup>248</sup> In this present administration (*Regnum Christi*), due to our weaknesses, Christ governs us to lead us little by little to a firm union with God.<sup>249</sup> In the upcoming administration (*Regnum Dei*) Christ will deliver the kingdom to his God and Father.<sup>250</sup>

The priesthood of Christ, as presented in the epistle to the Hebrews, is unique and can only belong to Christ alone.<sup>251</sup> Christ became the priest after the order of Melchizedek by God's solemn oath.<sup>252</sup> Christ reconciles us to God through his priestly work of expiation and intercession.<sup>253</sup> Calvin also identifies the church as Christ's companions in this great office, as priests *in him*, thus doing a work that can only be identified as his work due to our defilement.<sup>254</sup> As priests, we offer

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<sup>246</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 238. Oberman too notes the distinction in Christ's broad mediator, which however he mentions as the Son of God instead of *logos asarkos*. "Yet, as the Son of God, he had already ruled the world from the beginning of creation as the *"aeterna sapientia Dei, per quam reges regnant."*"

<sup>247</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.4.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.5.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.6.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.6, also 3.20.18.

<sup>254</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.6.



ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary bringing the sacrifices of prayers and praise before God.<sup>255</sup>

In each fold of the office, Calvin immediately draws a close connection between office-Christology and Pentecost-laden office-ecclesiology. The church has a role not dissimilar to Christ due to the same anointing by the same Spirit.<sup>256</sup> The roles in the old testament period are fulfilled and realized in the new testament period, first in Christ, then in the church as his body.

Christ's role in his office as mediator must be seen as the climax in the drama that God acts with his people. In Edmondson's understanding of Calvin, Christ does not simply occupy the office of Mediator but fulfills or embodies this office.<sup>257</sup> Edmondson says that Christ plays the role of a man, "Christ did not merely take on the role of a man; he assumed a human nature and actually became that role. This *persona* was his functionally, but also substantially."<sup>258</sup> Calvin's Christology is conceived by Edmondson as a brotherhood Christology, that we are adopted by the Father.<sup>259</sup> However Edmondson presents a one-sided view of Calvin's union with Christ when he denigrates the mystical – or the

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.1–6. cited by Van der Kooi, "Calvin's Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective," 253.

<sup>257</sup> Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 189.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 119.

pneumatological understanding of union; thus interpreting it not metaphysically, but only socially.<sup>260</sup>

With functional Christology, righteous sinners can find their roles in Christ and to be like Christ; by the anointing of the Spirit we are united with Christ as one body. We are then able to abide in him and follow him. The church is given the possibility and ability to carry out the role that Christ embodied in this theater of God's glory. Muller thinks that Calvin takes the emphasis on Christology "from below" within the economy of revelation.<sup>261</sup> In such a case, as the anointed ones – united to and equipped by Christ through his Spirit – the reality of our union with God that starts in the present administration can have its identification in the function of our threefold office.

Christ's divinity plays a significant role in his threefold office. As presented by Calvin in his answer to Stancaro, Christ exercises this office in the Spirit, therefore, in his divinity. Christ is the prophet who governed the prophets when he was not yet clothed in the flesh,<sup>262</sup> he is as the priest since it is simply not possible if Christ was not pre-ordained by the Father's decree to take on human

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 141, n.84, Edmondson admits that Calvin speaks on this matter (that is of Christ offered himself to us in love, then we accept that offer and grasp him by faith) in a multiplicity of ways, and it is possible to read Calvin's various discussions of our *koinonia* with Christ in more mystical, essentially participatory terms.

<sup>261</sup> Richard A. Muller, "Christ in the Eschaton: Calvin and Moltmann on the Duration of the Munus Regium," *HTR* 74, no. 1 (Jan. 1981): 35.

<sup>262</sup> Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator," 14. Thus as *logos asarkos*.

form to atone for sin and afterward to enter into the heavenly sanctuary,<sup>263</sup> and he is as the King who has the supreme majesty before which every knee should bend in heaven and on earth, and who has the power of supreme judgment.<sup>264</sup> Herein lies our difference from Christ, despite our union and identification with him.

### c. The Necessity of the Logos Ensarkos

Osiander has downplayed the necessity of the *Logos Ensarkos* with his view of essential righteousness. Calvin strongly disputes this and addresses it in the section on *justification* in the *Institutes*. Despite its location in book 3, the focus is on the necessity of the human nature of Christ as the mediator. How does Calvin understand what Christ's righteousness is? And whether this righteousness of Christ is different from the righteousness of God?

First, what is Osiander's understanding seen from Calvin's account? Osiander believes what Calvin also affirms that "Christ is one with us, and we, in turn, with him."<sup>265</sup> Osiander also believes, though differently interpreted by Calvin, that "Christ is himself our righteousness" yet not in terms of Christ "expiating sins as Priest, appeased the Father on our behalf, but as [...] the eternal God and

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>265</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

life.”<sup>266</sup> Another key verse Osiander uses to confirm his position is “Jehovah will be our righteousness (Jeremiah 51:10).” What Osiander subscribed to was only Christ’s divine nature. Nonetheless, Calvin uses the *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ and the peculiarity of Christ in his office or subordinated form to explain the meaning of this verse.<sup>267</sup> From his understanding of essential righteousness, Osiander carries on with the “essential indwelling of Christ in us” with the result of the gross mixing of God with us in this present state. On this, Calvin disagrees not in reference to the matter itself, but in the timing of the future heavenly life as promised in 2 Peter 1:4 and 1 John 3:2.<sup>268</sup> In the end, Osiander believes that Christ’s righteousness is essential righteousness, in which this righteousness is both God himself and the goodness or holiness or integrity of God.<sup>269</sup>

In his response, Calvin begins from his non-speculative standpoint to anything outside the scriptures, that “righteousness [...] acquired for us by Christ’s obedience and sacrificial death.”<sup>270</sup> Thus Calvin refers to Christ’s human righteousness.

Second, Calvin does not disagree with the notion of “it is not only Christ, but the Father and the Holy Spirit dwell in us too,” but he objects to the manner in

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<sup>266</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.6.

<sup>267</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.8.

<sup>268</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.10.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

which Osiander has perversely twisted it. The manner should be “the Father and Spirit are in Christ, and even as the fullness of deity dwells in him [Col. 2:9], so in him we possess the whole of deity.”<sup>271</sup> So Calvin affirms that Christ as the mediator becomes the means by which the Triune God dwells in us.

Third, Calvin objects to Osiander’s emphasis on the sole importance of Christ’s essence and his dismissal of the Spirit in the Triune work. Calvin says, “God [...] makes us part of himself. [...] through the power of the Holy Spirit that we grow together with Christ, and he becomes our Head and we his members.”<sup>272</sup>

Fourth, as mentioned above, the righteousness of Christ comes through his office as Priest on our behalf.<sup>273</sup>

Fifth, Calvin understands faith in an instrumental manner for receiving righteousness, unlike Osiander who defined it ontologically “Faith is Christ”.<sup>274</sup>

Sixth, Calvin refutes Osiander’s proposition that only the divinity of Christ that matters for our righteousness; this proposition “will not be peculiar to Christ but common with the Father and the Spirit.” Rather, Calvin quotes Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:30, “Christ was made righteousness by God”, and so it is peculiar

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.6. See more of “Christ as our righteousness” in Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor* 1:30, as *erga nos*, by faith, and participating in Christ’s life, which results in justification and sanctification.

<sup>274</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.7.

to Christ as the Mediator, to be distinguished from the Father and the Spirit.<sup>275</sup> Christ is understood as God manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16), thus these two references, “with his blood God purchased the church for himself” (Acts 20:28), and that “Jehovah our righteousness” should refer to Christ as the offspring of David, who took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), was obedient to the Father (Philippians 2:8), and not according to his divine nature but in accordance with the dispensation enjoined upon him.<sup>276</sup> Calvin claims that the *Logos ensarkos* is necessary to accommodate our weaknesses — as a “lower remedy” in this dispensation.<sup>277</sup>

Seventh, Calvin clearly affirms that Christ’s righteousness in human nature is supported by his divine nature. The source of righteousness, like a fountain, can be found in the flesh of Christ alone,<sup>278</sup> while the deep and secret wellspring of it is in Christ’s divinity.<sup>279</sup> Calvin introduces this righteousness not as “essential righteousness”, rather as “eternal righteousness” of the eternal God.<sup>280</sup> This eternal righteousness is then understood as a “fellowship of righteousness with

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<sup>275</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.8.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.* Muller, “Christ in the Eschaton,” 36, notes this also in Calvin, *Comm. Phil* 2:7 that Christ as *logos ensarkos* is necessary to conceal his divinity due to the weakness of our flesh. Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 249, agrees that “due to the human nature Jesus Christ is able to draw the elected ones to the Father.” In fact, it is not only to the Father, but also to Christ himself as God. On this, Calvin, *Inst.* 3.2.1, quotes Augustine on the goal of faith, “as God he is the destination to which we move; as man, the path by which we go. Both are found in Christ alone.”

<sup>278</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9.

<sup>279</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9 & 12.

<sup>280</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9.

[Christ]”, that we benefit only from the mystical union in which Christ dwells in our hearts, that we are engrafted into his body to make us one with him.<sup>281</sup> Two further distinctions in Calvin’s position are his Trinitarian treatment of God’s dwelling in us and its timing due to its eschatological character.<sup>282</sup>

Finally, righteousness for us, including life, is in Christ’s death and resurrection.<sup>283</sup> Even though Christ’s divinity is the secret wellspring of this righteousness, and his obedience in the flesh that let this righteousness flow out, Calvin still refuses to say that Christ is righteousness for us according to his divine nature.<sup>284</sup>

We need to clearly depict Calvin’s thought about the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Christ, and the eternal righteousness. First, the righteousness of Christ is considered the righteousness of God, translated as the righteousness that is approved of God.<sup>285</sup> Second, this righteousness of Christ is righteousness in his human nature, not divine nature.<sup>286</sup> So Calvin was actually aware of the danger of the fountain imagery, a possible mixture of the divine righteousness and our human nature. Calvin defends his view that we receive

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<sup>281</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.10.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* Calvin interprets the promise to “become partakers” in its subjunctive aorist tense in 2 Pet. 1:4 with the *nondum* reference of 1 John 3:2.

<sup>283</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.12.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9.

<sup>286</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.12.

the righteousness that resides in Christ's flesh, yet not him as mere man, but rather in the person of the Mediator, Christ as God and man, God manifested in the flesh.<sup>287</sup>

Third, in saying that righteousness comes in the person, instead of Christ's human nature, Calvin introduces the new term "eternal righteousness of eternal God." Clearly, Calvin tries to distinguish his position from Osiander's by using this new term. Does it make any sense to speak of eternal righteousness instead of essential righteousness? This is Calvin's way to maintain the divine and human distinction. Is it not enough to speak of Christ's human righteousness? Apparently, this is related to Calvin's view of Christ who will cease in his mediatorship and his view of our partaking of God's nature in the future state.<sup>288</sup> The righteousness of Christ is received now by faith, while eternal righteousness will be the fruit of that very faith; this knowledge in part will pass away and we will see God as he is – face to face, no longer in a mirror dimly. The righteousness of Christ is accommodated in his flesh, peculiar only to Christ and not common with the Father and the Spirit;<sup>289</sup> meanwhile the eternal

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<sup>287</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.9, 12.

<sup>288</sup> See section 3.2.2.ii.

<sup>289</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.8.



righteousness is of God himself when the weakness of the flesh is removed.<sup>290</sup>

Eternal righteousness is Calvin's way of differentiating himself from Osiander with his teaching of essential righteousness. By employing eternal righteousness, Calvin is on the brink of explaining the mystery of how mankind can be said to partake of God's nature, but not God's essence, and so mankind can be deified in a kind/ quality, but remains in the same substance of his body.<sup>291</sup>

It is hard to conceive further in detail any other differences between the essential righteousness of God proposed by Osiander and the eternal righteousness of the eternal God proposed by Calvin. But part of the reason for Calvin introducing this kind of righteousness is because Calvin seeks to honor the scripture in 2 Peter 1:4 and 1 John 3:2, though he often purposely makes himself vague to secure the unknown eternity by *quodammodo* terminology.

From the discussion on the necessity of the *Logos ensarkos*, it is clear that partaking of God's nature is affirmed by Calvin. Contrary to Osiander's "essential righteousness", in Calvin, the eternal righteousness of the eternal God is understood as fellowship of righteousness in union with Christ. This partaking is understood in a Trinitarian manner, through Christ's work as mediator in his

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<sup>290</sup> Calvin is ambiguous in the meaning of Christ's flesh in his sentence. Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, 167–71 thinks Calvin speaks of Christ's human nature will recede ontologically, while Muller, *Christ in the Eschaton*, 37 thinks Calvin speaks epistemologically, that "human nature [...] simply no longer impedes perception."

<sup>291</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 2 Pet. 1:4*.

two natures, and to be fulfilled in the *eschaton*. Christ as *Logos ensarkos* has come to draw us to the Father and himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our mystical union with Christ, thus we become sharers in the gifts he has endowed by the Spirit.

*ii. A Return to Logos Asarkos (?)*

The idea of the *Logos ensarkos* is important to Calvin, to the extent that he defends the humanity of Christ as Mediator against Osiander *posthumous*. However, does Calvin put a greater emphasis on the *Logos asarkos* of Christ in the *eschaton*? We will focus on the following quotation,

We shall see God as he is, Christ, having then discharged the office of Mediator, will cease to be the ambassador of his Father, and will be satisfied with that glory which he enjoyed before the creation of the world.<sup>292</sup>

*a. The Escalating Display of Christ's Divinity*

Calvin understands the exaltation of Christ is to display his power and glory, through which his divinity is clearly revealed to us. According to Calvin it is important to behold Christ's glory for the restoration of our image; he quotes Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 by "beholding Christ's glory, we are being transformed into his very image ... as through the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.3.

<sup>293</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.6.

As the *logos ensarkos*, Christ's divinity is concealed due to our weaknesses. It was in the event of the *resurrection* that Christ displayed his heavenly power and was declared the Son of God; that power is the clear mirror of his divinity.<sup>294</sup> This revelation of Christ's divinity is progressively clearer: his power and energy were diffused and spread beyond all bounds of heaven and earth in his *ascension*; he was then invested with lordship over heaven and earth and thus to preside at the heavenly judgment seat in his *session* of being seated at the Father's right hand; and he will appear with the ineffable majesty of his kingdom, with the glow of immortality, with the boundless power of divinity, with a guard of angels at his return for the *last judgment*.<sup>295</sup>

Throughout these stages, Calvin maintains that Christ keeps his glorified body, which is now raised up above all the heavens, and will return in the same visible form in which he was seen to ascend.<sup>296</sup> Calvin also maintains the distinction of Christ's divine and human nature; thus presently we have Christ in his divinity according to the presence of the majesty, but in his humanity he is absent physically.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> *Inst.* 2.16.13.

<sup>295</sup> *Inst.* 2.16.13, 14, 15, 17.

<sup>296</sup> *Inst.* 2.16.14, 17. According to Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 41 "Calvin [does not] situate heaven on the utmost edge of the universe and in that way postulates it as a localizable place." However, 42 "[...] this renewed body and blood of Christ [...] is localized "above", in heaven, and this is the guarantee and eschatological goal of our renewal."

<sup>297</sup> *Inst.* 2.16.14.

What about the thereafter? Here lies the promise, and simultaneously the difficulty in Calvin's thought. In 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, Christ is to deliver the kingdom to the Father so that God will be all in all. Calvin interprets this act as being Christ who has completed his subordinated work as the mediator and thereafter ceases to be the ambassador of his father in this office.<sup>298</sup> The promise is then that we will be partakers in his heavenly glory, the *Visio Dei*.<sup>299</sup> The difficulty occurs in comprehending thereafter Christ having discharged his mediatorship.

#### b. Christ Discharged His Office

According to Calvin, there are two different administrations, presently by Christ due to our weaknesses, and finally in the perfect glory by God himself who is to be the sole head of the church.<sup>300</sup> Calvin says that “[...] at present Christ stands in our midst, to lead us gradually to a firm union with God.”<sup>301</sup> Christ's purpose as the mediator is to make us one with God the Father,

Let us therefore learn to behold Christ humbled in the flesh, so that he may conduct us to the fountain of a blessed immortality; for he was not appointed to be our guide, merely to raise us to the sphere of the moon or of the sun, but to make us one with God the Father.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.3.

<sup>299</sup> see Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 3:2. The *Visio Dei* discussion takes place at 3.3.2.ii.a. section.

<sup>300</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.5.

<sup>301</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.5. Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:27.

<sup>302</sup> Calvin, *Comm. John* 14:28.

When our union with God the Father is realized, Christ in his humanity will no longer be our head, but transferred to his glorious divinity, and so God himself who receives it from Christ “in a manner”.<sup>303</sup>

Should we consider the ceasing of Christ as the ambassador of his Father as the highest felicity, eternal blessedness, or on the contrary, as conflicting thoughts in Calvin? Because with Christ as our mediator, we have already received the benefits from him, and we know God as Triune in this present administration. In the future administration, when we are in a firm union with God, we will also know the same Triune God as we know him here. The difference, according to Calvin, is that we will know him fully, “the veil being then removed, we shall openly behold God reigning in his majesty, and Christ’s humanity will then no longer be interposed to keep us back from a closer view of God.”<sup>304</sup>

There is a problem, however, that we encounter in 1 Corinthians 15:27; how do we make sense of Calvin’s view that in the end the humanity of Christ will no longer be interposed? In the *eschaton*, Calvin makes the human mediator in Christ contingent; although the incarnation is rightly said to be contingent in the first place due to sin. But is it not true that the hypostatic union unites the two natures of Christ intact forever? Therefore, the question is “what will happen to

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<sup>303</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:27.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

our union with Christ when he ceases to be our mediator in his human nature?”

Furthermore, it seems that Calvin does not only stop at Christ’s ceasing his mediatorship as redeemer; he also seems to assert that Christ, in his broad mediatorship, ceases. This is reflected in his commentary,

there will be then an end put to angelic principalities in heaven, and to ministries and superiorities in the Church, that God may exercise his power and dominion by himself alone, and not by the hands of men or angels.<sup>305</sup>

Calvin affirms that the angels will continue to exist and retain their distinction, and so too the righteous. Yet, Calvin teaches that all who have power and dominion, like humans, and angels, will cease possessing that power at Christ’s delivery of the kingdom to the Father. It seems that Christ is included in the cessation when “God exercises his power and dominion by himself alone.”

How can Calvin be consistent in his view that Christ will discharge his mediatorship to become again the *logos asarkos*, and yet still affirm the existence of angels and the glorious righteous and the created world as a new heaven and new earth? Surely the ontological gap of the “all in all” between Creator and creature should still remain despite Christ's cessation and our deification? It cannot be the case that the order of this world collapses into the reality of the *immanent trinity*, due to the Triune *autotheos* and our inability as creatures to be

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<sup>305</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor. 15:24*. Cf. Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 110–1, Quistorp, *the Last Things*, 165–171.

consubstantial with God. This distinction cannot be wiped out, therefore there will always be a need for some kind of accommodation due to the non-consubstantiality of the creature with God the Father.

### c. Removing the Veil

The problem of the *Logos Asarkos* is discussed in depth by Richard Muller in *Christ in the Eschaton: Calvin and Moltmann on the Duration of the Munus Regium*.<sup>306</sup>

There Muller counter argues Quistorp's reading which is used by Moltmann, that Christ's human nature "recedes into the background" following the Judgment.<sup>307</sup> The point disputed is what does Calvin refer to regarding "the veil" in the following statement:

Thus then Christ will be *subjected to the Father*, because the veil being then removed, we shall openly behold God reigning in his majesty, and Christ's humanity will then no longer be interposed to keep us back from a closer view of God.<sup>308</sup>

On Christ transferring his rule to the Godhead, Muller sees this not in an ontological sense but in an epistemological sense. Muller analogically applies this from the case of the resurrection, that the body passes from corruptible corporeality to incorruptible corporeality.<sup>309</sup> This transference within Kingdoms is the final phase of exaltation of Christ in which Christ's humanity will be

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<sup>306</sup> *HTR* 74, no. 1 (Jan. 1981): 31–51.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, n.3. Quistorp, *the Last Things*, 167–71; cf. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 287–88, n. 127, 129, 135.

<sup>308</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:27.

<sup>309</sup> Muller, "Christ in the Eschaton," 36.

glorified and his divinity disclosed.<sup>310</sup> So Muller’s epistemological interpretation is that the “human nature [of Christ] does not pass away – it simply no longer impedes perception.”<sup>311</sup> As the result, corporeality is retained for the sake of the faithful; while there remains a loose end which Muller interprets as an application of *communicatio idiomatum* for a consistent ontology.<sup>312</sup> Yet, Muller still affirms the tension, “[w]hen the epistemological incapacity caused by sin is overcome, the ontological incapacity remains.”<sup>313</sup>

Apart from his epistemological solution, Muller sees that “Calvin implies no actual transfer of power, but only an alteration of its mode of administration.”<sup>314</sup> Here Muller picks up from Calvin that “the conclusion of Christ’s early mediation, *tunc perfunctus Mediatoris officio*, speaks literally not of the *termination* of the office (*munus*) but of the *perfecting* of the mediatorial work (*officium*).”<sup>315</sup> This solution depends greatly on the *extra-calvinisticum*,

Christ’s rule itself is not altered by changes in the economy: he exercises his kingly power preeminently in his death even if he manifests it more clearly in his resurrection and enters it still more plainly on his ascension.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 36–7.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 41. Muller earlier affirms that this part in Calvin is a series of loose ends, and this aligns to Herman Bauke’s description of Calvin’s mind as *complexio oppositorum*, 33, n.12. Herman Bauke, *Das Problem der Theologie Calvins* (Leipzig Hinrichs, 1922), 16–19.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 45. n.55, *Inst.* 2.15.1, 2.14.3.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 46. n. 57, see the *commentaries* on *Luke* 23: 42–43 (*Opera*, 45. 774–76); *Gal.* 1:1 (*opera*, 50. 169); *John* 20:17 (*Opera*, 47. 434–35); and Jansen, *Calvin’s Doctrine*, 86–87, citing these and other texts.



Muller further explains,

[there is] no alteration of the union of natures in Christ's person, but rather an alteration of the relation of believers to God and therefore to Christ: because the separation between God and man which necessitated the office of mediation has now in Christ been overcome, and because believers are now "in Christ" as his body, his human nature no longer stands in an intermediate position.<sup>317</sup>

Muller notes that in Calvin the ontological distinction remains, yet by no means does it create a rigid separation. The key to this, according to Muller, is what Oberman observes of Calvin's Christological insight, "*infinitum capax finiti*."<sup>318</sup> Calvin seeks to maintain the true human nature (*caro vera*) of Christ, thus *infinitum capax finiti*.

When Christ's "soteriological task [is] accomplished, [...] Christ, as Son, also participates in his equality with the Father."<sup>319</sup> So, in the way proposed by Muller, the humanity of Christ will be glorified and no longer impedes perception. The veil, according to Muller, "is not so much Christ's humanity as our infirmity."<sup>320</sup> Muller thinks that Calvin purposely makes himself vague, by employing *quodammodo*; and so the idea that we would no longer need "the mediacy of Christ" since our weaknesses will have been removed is in fact a

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 50. n 76. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 250–5.

<sup>319</sup> Muller, *Christ in the Eschaton*, 51.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 47.

change from mediate to immediate rule.<sup>321</sup> On where Christ's humanity will stand or how it functions in relation to the faithful in the *eschaton*, Calvin simply does not state it here.<sup>322</sup>

### 3.2.3. Conclusion: Calvin's Criterion in Christological Principle

Christ as the mediator in his threefold office restores man lost role in the drama of redemption through union with him. Calvin's functional Christology maintains the Chalcedonian definition of Christ in his two natures, unmixed and unseparated. Calvin's complex view of Christ differentiates the unconfused Creator-creature distinction: as the eternal Son of God before the creation, as *logos asarkos* the mediator in creation, and as *logos ensarkos* the mediator in redemption. By establishing the mediator in both creation and redemption, Calvin has brought the pre-figured notion of *logos incarnandus* that stresses the necessity of *logos ensarkos*, without losing the significance of *logos asarkos* that at the same time implies the contingency of *logos ensarkos*.

The two natures of Christ are carefully distinguished by Calvin with the *communicatio idiomatum* to present the unity of the person in Christ. Calvin's view on *logos ensarkos* is not straight forward as he affirms both the contingency

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 48. Cf. Augustine, *The Trinity, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill and John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 1.10.20, affirms that Christ's two-natures will remain, "[s]o inasmuch as he is God he will jointly with the Father have us as subjects; inasmuch as he is priest he will jointly with us be subject to him."

of it because of sin and the issue of angels, and the necessity of it in detailed arguments against Osiander. However, incarnation is important because the flesh of Christ acts as the opening of the hidden spring of Christ's righteousness in his divine nature.

In conceiving the end, Calvin sees that Christ would cease to be the ambassador of the Father. By then we will be glorified such that the *Visio Dei* is made possible and we are one with God the Father. Calvin, however, does not speak clearly of Christ's humanity in the *eschaton*; hence his idea results in two possible interpretations of his position.

The human righteousness of Christ is not discussed of its possible *ontic* change to the elects. Instead Calvin emphasizes more on functional Christology here on earth. Whereas in the thereafter, what Calvin emphasizes in our union with Christ in God's eternal righteousness is a fellowship with the triune God which is made possible due to our weaknesses being removed. What matters is there should be no mixing of essences.

### **3.3. Story of A Pilgrim**

Humans exist in subsistence in God, to live before him — *Coram Deo*. Living in God's theater, Calvin conceives a believer's life as a pilgrimage.<sup>323</sup> We face an

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<sup>323</sup> One that Calvin himself lived and experienced, and not as an abstraction. See earlier section 1.3.2.iii.

uphill journey with two main dangers of being weary, either to reverse our course or desert our post.<sup>324</sup> As a pilgrim, we live in the realm of already and not yet.<sup>325</sup> Presently, on this earthly pilgrimage, we already know the sole and perfect happiness of union with God, and this happiness is increasing daily until the full fruition that shall satisfy us.<sup>326</sup> The promise is eternal life, conceived in union with God, which will come with the final appearance of Christ.<sup>327</sup>

### 3.3.1. *Human Subsistence in God*

Mankind is never created to be independent; our subsistence is founded upon Christ.<sup>328</sup> This is undoubtedly true for believers, in creation and also in our spiritual existence, into which we are born again by the grace of God.<sup>329</sup>

Calvin interprets the tree of life in the garden of Eden as “a visible testimony to the declaration, that *in God we are, and live, and move.*”<sup>330</sup> Man’s life is not an intrinsic good but proceeds from God.<sup>331</sup> As Calvin says in his commentary on 1

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<sup>324</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.1.

<sup>325</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.1–2.

<sup>326</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.2, also 3.18.3. Cf. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 95 identify this terminology of progress “*profectus*” which can be found in Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, as eschatological growth in Christ. There is however a sense that this *profectus* may not be the same as Gregory of Nyssa’s *epektasis*. It is more static than dynamic, “[t]hat our blessedness is always in progress up to that day which shall *conclude and terminate* all progress, and that thus the glory of the elect, and complete consummation of hope, look forward to that day for their fulfillment.” *Italic added*. But we can understand it as Augustine’s *finis*, not as consummation (read: end) but perfection.

<sup>327</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.2.

<sup>328</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 1:30.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 2:9.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

Timothy 6:16, “we and all the creatures do not, strictly speaking, live, but only borrow life from Him.”<sup>332</sup> Humans then are dependent on God. Furthermore, referring to John’s gospel prologue, the life of all things was included in the Word, especially the life of men which is conjoined with reason and intelligence.<sup>333</sup> Our existence is a manifestation of living in the reality of the “Word” and so also of the “spirit”.<sup>334</sup>

In Calvin’s anthropological thought, the lowliness of the human condition is seen as the cause of total dependence.<sup>335</sup> This total dependence is precarious in nature.<sup>336</sup> As “prayer” comes from the word *preces*, Blocher infers that the ontological truth of humanity is prayer.<sup>337</sup> This finding coheres with Calvin’s depiction of man in the stage of redemption, where prayer is the chief exercise of faith.<sup>338</sup> So, there is a continuity in mankind from the stage of creation to redemption, to be a prayer-creature due to our total dependence and subsistence on God.

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<sup>332</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Tim.* 6:16.

<sup>333</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 2:9.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Deut.* 8:3.

<sup>335</sup> Blocher, “Calvin’s Theological Anthropology,” 70–2.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, n. 25.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>338</sup> *Inst.* 3.20.1–52.

i. *On the Image of God*

a. Created as a Mirror of Divine Righteousness

Osiander teaches that man is created after the image of God in which Christ is the prototype.<sup>339</sup> Not only Calvin disproves this, he teaches that the image of God has been destroyed in us due to the fall and we can only know what it had originally been from its restoration obtained through Christ.<sup>340</sup> This makes Calvin's position seemingly just slightly different from Osiander, since both locate it in Christ. However, the difference is greater by any other measure: Calvin believes the human essence is *creatio ex nihilo*, and not due to the outpouring of Christ's substance.<sup>341</sup> God's essence cannot be derived nor torn asunder since his essence is simple.<sup>342</sup> By rejecting Osiander's teaching of "inpouring", and by affirming the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo*, Calvin holds firm to the Creator-creature distinction in God's act of creation of human beings. Man was never consubstantial with God; that privilege is only available to the Son and the Spirit with respect to the Father.

Referring to Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24 as to what lies in the image of God after renewal, Calvin claims that the chief part of the image of God in man

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<sup>339</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.3–5.

<sup>340</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 1:26, also *Inst.* 1.15.4.

<sup>341</sup> The other extreme of non-essentialist view of human soul is also rejected by Calvin.

<sup>342</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.5.

consists of “righteousness and true holiness”.<sup>343</sup> The seat of this image is in the soul, that though immortal it is yet an essence created out of nothing.<sup>344</sup> In the soul, something divine has been engraved upon it.<sup>345</sup> Created and renewed in the image of God, man’s role is to bear the image of God, to “reflect, like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God.”<sup>346</sup> Adam was created to reflect, as a mirror, the divine righteousness.<sup>347</sup> From this we can infer that the image of God in man should not only be understood ontologically, but also relationally or dynamically.<sup>348</sup> The created man is to live before the presence of God, by reflecting and bearing his image.

Having the reflection of the original righteousness, God has implanted man with two senses, *sensus divinitatis* and *sensus conscientia*. With these two *sensus*, mankind can never be without the realization of God’s presence; in *sensus divinitatis* man perceives God’s majesty inwardly and in *sensus conscientia* man is

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<sup>343</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.12. Cf. *Inst.* 1.15.4. Knowledge is also referred.

<sup>344</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.2, 5.

<sup>345</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.5.

<sup>346</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Col.* 3:10.

<sup>347</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Eph.* 4:24.

<sup>348</sup> Jason van Vliet, *Children of God: The Imago Dei in John Calvin and His Context* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 253–68, criticizes “relational response of gratitude as essential” of T. F. Torrance, and “eschatological participation of Christ’s human nature as essential” of S. Y. Shih interpretations in Calvin’s view of God’s image in man. Yet, Vliet’s own interpretation takes a familial understanding of the image which is relational too. He first views the substantial image in the communicable attributes of God as *similitudo Dei*, but later connects the *filius Dei* as *imago Dei*. It is eschatological too as adoption, but not a *theosis*.

being summoned before God's court.<sup>349</sup> These two *sensus*, then, are what substantiate the image of God in man that put him in relationship with God.

Calvin uses an image of light in referring to man's state prior to degeneration and corruption into darkness, "light was originally bestowed on men."<sup>350</sup> This life is in the *speech* of God (John 1:4). How righteous was man with his original light, especially in comparison to God who is in inaccessible light? Recognizing Calvin's conception of the great righteousness gap even between God and his angels, mankind's blamelessness would still be in too low a condition; this light would still be too dim to be considered righteousness on any scale. So mankind, who lives in the reality of the 'word' prior to the fall, constantly needs to live in humility and gratitude.<sup>351</sup> Adam was merely a mirror that reflects God's divine righteousness.

#### b. The Need of Righteousness due to the Fall

Due to the two *sensus* mentioned earlier, to be an atheist is an impossible existence. What is possible for man is to be an anti-theist in the fallen state, further identified as anti-Christ. Eberhard Busch identifies a threefold form of sin—a contradiction of Christ's office as prophet, priest, and king—of unbelief

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<sup>349</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 71–75.

<sup>350</sup> Calvin, *Comm. John* 1:5.

<sup>351</sup> Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 13 identifies gratitude to original creation, and humility to miserable condition. This is an undoubted mark in Calvin, but referring to Calvin's interpretation about the elect angels, the humility is also expected in man's pre-fall state.



(*Inst.* 2.1.4), the decision to act as self-satisfied (*Inst.* 2.1.2), and *superbia*, arrogance, a scorning of the sovereignty of God.<sup>352</sup>

Calvin makes a direct connection between man's holiness and righteousness to the Law; the first aspect related to worship is holiness, the second aspect bearing reference to men is righteousness.<sup>353</sup> Having ruined and lost this image after the fall, the giving of God's law should be seen as gracious, despite man's inability to fulfill it. There is the image of God in the law. Wallace sums up Calvin's positive view of the law that "to live a life ordered according to the image of God is to live according to the law of God."<sup>354</sup> God accommodates Himself, knowing our weakness and our capacity, by giving us in the Law an image of His incomprehensible and hidden justice.<sup>355</sup> Wallace notices that Calvin asserts the existence of "double justice in God" – the justice which is manifested in the Law, and the hidden justice in the eternal being of God which exceeds all the capacities of men.<sup>356</sup> Through the Law, man reflects his deformity and recognizes his need of God's righteousness.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Eberhard Busch, "God and Humanity," trans. Judith J. Guder, in *CH*, 231.

<sup>353</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Eph.* 4:24.

<sup>354</sup> Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of The Christian Life* (1952; repr., Tyler: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1982), 112.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.6.

The fall causes a total corruption on the soul's faculties: a darkened and blinded mind, and a corrupted will that are unable to love nor obey God.<sup>358</sup> Contrary to Pighius, Calvin believes that man is bound in his will so that man sins voluntarily and necessarily.<sup>359</sup> This means that "human sins of necessity, but without compulsion."<sup>360</sup> The only one who truly had and yet had misused his free will — *liberium arbitrium* — was Adam.<sup>361</sup> What is left after the fall is not a deprivation of will, but soundness of will.<sup>362</sup> It becomes impossible for man to be justified apart from faith. In the fallen state, redemption that happens in man is *sola gratia*: from conversion, renewal of the heart and perseverance to the end.<sup>363</sup> The only true freedom lies in willing obedience to righteousness, and this will can only be effective by God's work of grace in us.<sup>364</sup>

Despite the fall, the general providence of God is shown towards all mankind. God knows the need of righteousness for the fallen man to continually live before him. The giving of the law, according to Calvin, was not for mankind to obtain righteousness by his own works, but rather to lead one to Christ.<sup>365</sup> The need of righteousness can only be fulfilled through faith. This faith

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<sup>358</sup> Anthony N. S. Lane, "Anthropology," in *CH*, 282.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>360</sup> *Inst.* 2.3.5.

<sup>361</sup> Lane, "Anthropology," 276.

<sup>362</sup> *Inst.* 2.3.5.

<sup>363</sup> Lane, "Anthropology," 282–88.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>365</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.

acknowledges the nothingness in man; yet the elect are called to take heart — have faith, as Calvin says, that we are hidden in the heart of God, “Father of mercies” (2 Corinthians 1:3), the “Father of [us] the miserable”.<sup>366</sup>

c. Justification by Faith: The Gift of Righteousness

Calvin sees the soul is restored to order by the work of Christ; it reestablishes the soul’s original rectitude and integrity, of reason and will.<sup>367</sup> Prior to this restoration, man was weak and incapable of carrying out the work of righteousness demanded in the Law. Thus, justification is apart from the works. Man can only be made righteous through imputation as a gift in the gospel.<sup>368</sup> Calvin conceives the gospel as the fulfillment of the Law’s promise; it gives substance to the shadows of the Law.<sup>369</sup>

The Gospel lies in having Christ as our righteousness, in the wonderful exchange. What does “Christ as our righteousness” mean? That in us there is nothing but sin.<sup>370</sup> We are on his account acceptable to God due to two things, the expiation of our sins due to Christ’s death, and imputation of Christ’s obedience which results in gracious acceptance.<sup>371</sup> This righteousness of Christ is understood as human righteousness, through the means of Christ’s flesh. It is

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<sup>366</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.25.

<sup>367</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 101, cites Calvin, *Comm. Col.* 3:10.

<sup>368</sup> *Inst.* 2.9.4.

<sup>369</sup> *Inst.* 2.9.4.

<sup>370</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 1:30.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

grasped by faith.<sup>372</sup> So justification by faith means that we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God.<sup>373</sup> Calvin links justification directly to Christ's righteousness. Calvin adds that faith is a participation in Christ's righteousness not only in justification but also in his sanctification.<sup>374</sup>

Calvin, like other reformers in his time, firmly defended the notion of justification by faith *extra nos*.<sup>375</sup> Meanwhile, the soteriological concern of Athanasius on the importance of the *deity of Christ* in incarnation is expressed in Calvin's own *theologoumenon* in *Institutes* 2.14.5. These notions are not in conflict; but should be seen as complementing the imputation with the impartation of Christ in his incarnation. To repeat some of the *theologoumenon*: "and men, [...] become God's sons by free adoption because Christ is the Son of God by nature."; on the *totus christus*: "they could not actually be sons of God unless their adoption was founded upon the Head." And the soteriological concern of Athanasius: "Yet Christ had to be above them [angels who are called "sons of

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., *Inst.* 3.16.1.

<sup>373</sup> *Inst.* 3.16.1.

<sup>374</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.6; 3.16.1.

<sup>375</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.

God”] in rank in order to reconcile them to the Father. [...] applying it also to mankind.”<sup>376</sup>

We have seen how Calvin is different from Osiander on the matter of justification. As reformers, both Calvin and Osiander are on one side in their agreement, against the Roman Catholic teaching, that justification is freely given and not because of works. However, by no means does this diminish the importance of their differences since Calvin deals with the topic in an extensive manner in 3.11.5–12, before refuting the Roman Catholic teaching on “Justification by works” in 3.11.13–20.

Osiander has taught justification through infusion or transfusion of Christ’s essence so that humans can be one with Christ and considered righteous for Christ’s sake. Calvin agrees on the propositions, but not in the same manner. Osiander tears apart God’s simple essence and seems unaware, or completely ignores the reality of the Spirit. Calvin clearly emphasizes our union with Christ is by the secret power of Christ’s spirit. There is no mixing of God or Christ’s divine essence with us; Christ as the channel is kept firm as the principle for human’s possessing the whole deity, or for the triune persons to dwell in man.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> One may say that it is more of familial adoption as sons of God instead of *deification*. However, taken from Jenson’s perspective, this inclusion into the communion of the triune God is already substantial. Thus, we can say it is an impartation of Christ, especially within the *totus Christus* or union with Christ perspective.

<sup>377</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

Calvin goes further in saying that our justification does not lie in the human nature of Christ only, but also in his righteousness which is to be completely offered in his person.<sup>378</sup> What Calvin mentions is consonant with his writing in the earlier section, “[t]hat we are ingrafted into Christ’s body, that he dwells in us and so we are made participants not only in all his benefits but *also in himself*.”<sup>379</sup> So, Calvin does not conceive our union with Christ abstractly in his nature, but in his person by the secret power of the Spirit. So, while justification is *extra nos*, yet seen in the larger perspective of the restoration of the image of God, Calvin sees this restoration being done by God [the spirit] who works *in us* without rendering us consubstantial with God.<sup>380</sup>

As discussed earlier concerning eternal righteousness, we can infer that our restoration will not be a return to the mirror of God’s divine righteousness in original creation neither as becoming the mirror of God’s image found in the law which also contains God’s accommodated justice; but will be like Christ, who is the exact image of God, in whose resurrected flesh is displayed the heavenly power as the clear mirror of his divinity (also implies his righteousness). It is Christ, then, who will elevate us to a higher level, to the eternal righteousness of the eternal God. This is the elevation of the so called *quasi deificari*, to live in the

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.24. *italic* added.

<sup>380</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.5.

righteousness of the Word and Spirit. It is living the eternal life, the knowledge of true God and Jesus Christ (Cf. John 17:3). We will participate in that mysterious, non-accommodated nature, yet differentiated from God's divine/essential righteousness.

Even though in our discussion of restoration after the fall is rather one sided and that it settles the guilt issue (thus the justification that restores righteousness), Calvin also addresses the shame issue in which Christ is addressed as our clothing.<sup>381</sup> This figure will be more significant in the discussion of the resurrection of the body; that after the deliverance from the prison of the body, the new quality (better nature) of the resurrected body will serve as our garment.<sup>382</sup> Christ's renewing work in us after his image is related to his Spirit who renewed and quickened us such that our flesh will be a participant in the glory of God.<sup>383</sup>

## *ii. Our Union with Christ*

### *a. Spiritual Union with Christ*

How do we understand the relation between justification and union with Christ?

Calvin makes himself incredibly clear in understanding the relation. Due to our

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<sup>381</sup> Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 92.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 93, n.3 Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:49, 53.

<sup>383</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:50.

union with Christ, we then receive our justification and sanctification.<sup>384</sup> Calvin has held to this notion of union with Christ since the earliest edition of the *Institutes* in 1536; and this notion continues to appear and develop over time till his 1561 theological treatise opposing Tileman Heshusius.<sup>385</sup>

So, Calvin presents the doctrine of justification under the tenet of union with Christ. Bruce McCormack, like Calvin, is a staunch defender of forensic justification, *extra nos*;<sup>386</sup> yet he introduces an unnatural reading of Calvin's soteriology. Instead of union with Christ as the overarching scheme, McCormack chooses to make justification as the overarching principle.<sup>387</sup> Part of the reason why McCormack does so is due to his misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit's work that unites Christ with us.<sup>388</sup> Towards the end of his article McCormack writes that "the work of the Spirit [...is] a kind of divine surgery."<sup>389</sup> McCormack also refuses any "in us" interpretation and agrees with Wilhelm Niesel that

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<sup>384</sup> *Inst.* 3.16.1; 3.11.8 of Justification as the result of our union in him; 3.11.10, sharers of gifts that Christ has been endowed; 3.11.23, our righteousness is in Christ, and when we are partakers in Christ.

<sup>385</sup> Letham, *Union with Christ*, 102–15, notes Calvin endorses "union with Christ" with a change after 1548, not in substance but in tone with his "*quodammodo*."

<sup>386</sup> See Bruce L. McCormack, "What's at Stake in Current Debates Over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West," in *Justification, What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, eds. Mark Husbards and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove: IVP; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 81–117.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 101 ff, McCormack thinks Calvin's approach is problematic.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 101 also 111, where he asks, "it would be difficult to understand, [...], why the Holy Spirit would be needed as the bond joining us to Christ[?]"

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.



Calvin's motive in doing so is due to the Catholic polemic which accuses the Protestant doctrine of justification of being a "legal fiction".<sup>390</sup>

This "in us" is entirely different from the teaching of justification by works. Calvin does not teach sanctification in terms of the old life that has to conform to God's law. Calvin suggests that the life of God in humans exists in three kinds: the animal life (Acts 17:28, Psalm 104:30), the human life (Job 10:12), and the supernatural life; which when we live the supernatural life, God governs us by His Spirit.<sup>391</sup> By the work of regeneration in us there is a new life quickened by the Spirit's power, a *vital* life that we are renewed in our image, in both righteousness and holiness.<sup>392</sup> As Calvin says, the spirit of sanctification "is [...] the root and seed of heavenly life in us."<sup>393</sup> So, "in us" should be understood in the spiritual sense, and not merely in an ethical sense; a new life in itself instead of merely divine surgery.<sup>394</sup> McCormack has been struggling to understand what this spiritual in nature means, and he cannot comprehend this mystery.<sup>395</sup> But his way of despiritualizing it, due to our human incapacity to comprehend what is spiritual by nature, is not a viable solution. Therefore, McCormack thinks that

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 102–3.

<sup>391</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Eph.* 4:18, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 291.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> *Inst.* 3.1.2.

<sup>394</sup> McCormack, "What's at Stake?", 112, 116.

<sup>395</sup> Bruce L. McCormack, "For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition," *GOTR* 43, no. 1–4 (1998): 299.

the spiritual character of the union could “act as an effective barrier for Calvin against the idea of an “essential union”.”<sup>396</sup>

Calvin’s way of addressing a mystery is to respect it as a mystery. However, Calvin addresses our union with Christ not by simply saying that it is a spiritual bond, rather he locates this mystery in partaking of God’s nature in the future.<sup>397</sup> Therefore, in the *duplex gratia*, justification and sanctification, in our union with Christ, now exists the reality of “not yet and already” in us, and not simply the “not yet”. We are still sinners, justified *extra nos*, and at the same time we are saints sanctified in our new life.

This non-understood work of the Spirit leads McCormack to despiritualize the horticultural/organic images in the NT as simply metaphors that witness to intimacy.<sup>398</sup> In Calvin the reality of “word and spirit” is not separable, our life united with Christ is the very life in the Spirit. It appears McCormack deviates from his own position in earlier years where he affirmed the reality of living in the “not yet and already”.<sup>399</sup> Our union with Christ is indeed the Spirit’s work to “flow [Christ’s life] into us directly”, and yet at the same time our sanctification,

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid. Referring to *Inst.* 3.11.10. McCormack, “Union with Christ in Calvin’s Theology,” 520 restates this “*as a hedge against* the [Osiandrian] idea of a “mixture of substances”.”

<sup>397</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.10.

<sup>398</sup> McCormack, “What’s at Stake?” 111.

<sup>399</sup> Cf. McCormack, “For Us and Our Salvation,” 310–1.

a struggle of mortification of sin and vivification of the Spirit.<sup>400</sup> As such, we should not understand union with Christ merely as unity of wills.<sup>401</sup>

McCormack, despite his unsympathetic reading of *theosis* in Calvin, seems to agree with Jenson's participation in God "in the event of the Word which God simply is."<sup>402</sup> As we saw earlier, in Jenson "participation" is *theosis* due to the common reality shared by the Creator and the creatures. Calvin's more comprehensive articulation of reality in "word and Spirit" surely captures Jenson's notion of participation, though Calvin has more nuance articulations to it.

Should our union with Christ be seen only in terms of adoption? McCormack does not believe in the participation in God's life in the divine essence and takes the position of salvation as participating in the created life.<sup>403</sup> What is this *created* life? He interprets the gifts of the Spirit—everlasting glory and everlasting

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid. McCormack, "What's at Stake?", 112.

<sup>401</sup> McCormack, "What's at Stake?", 115. Cf. Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, 11, 105 too sees Calvin's concept of union with Christ: a union of will, as the only alternative to the essential one. Tamburello employs Gerson's understanding of mystical theology says, "[...] when our spirit clings to God through the most intimate love it is one spirit with Him through conformity of will (1 Corinthians 6:17)."

<sup>402</sup> McCormack, "Union with Christ in Calvin's Theology," 504–529. Bruce L. McCormack, "In Memoriam: Robert Jenson (1930–2017)," *IJST* 20, no.1 (Jan. 2018):7. Earlier McCormack in "Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question," *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge Zur Gotteslehre*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004: 347–374 already stated his view, but there he deals with Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel's views, which are rather beyond the scope of this chapter's discussion about Calvin.

<sup>403</sup> McCormack, "Union with Christ in Calvin's Theology," 505. This is ironic since what the scripture clearly promises is eternal life.

blessedness – in the *Institutes* 3.18.2 as created.<sup>404</sup> He thinks that Calvin’s views about adoption does not result in the participation in an inter-Trinitarian relation, but rather “adopted into the relation of the Mediator (that is, the God-*human*) to his Father.”<sup>405</sup> This participation is in the benefits of the human work of Christ.<sup>406</sup>

McCormack has limited the understanding of adoption and participation; he has dismissed Calvin’s notion of Christ giving “his own self” and charges Calvin with transgression of his own principle for doing so.<sup>407</sup> Now, it is true that Calvin says we can only benefit from Christ through his flesh; in fact, the incarnation of Christ to be the redeemer mediator is *pro nobis*. However, being adopted does not only mean that we participate in the relation of the Mediator to his Father; but it also means the accomplishment of the sole purpose of Christ being the mediator, as Creator and redeemer, who will unite us with God the Father.<sup>408</sup> Then again, it is true that we do not participate in the inner-Trinitarian relation as the result of adoption, but adopted as the result of our participation in Christ. This, however, is just one relation of us with the Father through Christ as our mediator. There exists also a relation with the Spirit who sanctifies us, which

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 519, n. 34.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 521. Cf. *Inst.* 3.25.10.

<sup>408</sup> Van der Kooi, “Calvin’s Christology from a Contemporary Systematic Perspective,” 249. Cf. Calvin, *Comm. John* 14:28.

relation come as one of *duplex gratia* through Christ's work of reconciliation. This reality is described by Calvin as the fellowship of righteousness in our union with Christ. Thus, our union is with the Triune God. Mosser describes the threefold union with the triune God of Calvin's union thusly, "Christ is the channel and bond of unity with the Father; the indwelling Spirit is the channel and bond of unity with the Son."<sup>409</sup>

The fact that Calvin mentions God giving his own self (for example, *Inst.* 3.25.10) should be understood that salvation is not only a gift, but the gift of God himself: the Son by the Father, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son, in *totus non totum* sense — since we are finite and *non capax infinitum*.

As for participation, it is quite clear that the role of the Spirit cannot be diminished in our communion with God. These records are clear reflections of Calvin about living in the reality of the "word and spirit".<sup>410</sup> This simple essence of God cannot be separated one from the other; that apart from the Spirit's powerful work in us, the flesh of Christ is useless. Our lives, participating in

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<sup>409</sup> See Mosser's draft, "The Gospel's End," 18. Inferred from John Calvin, *The Gospel according to St John 11–21 and The First Epistle of John*, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 130, and *Inst.* 3.1.1. Mosser sees Calvin's thought about union with Christ is similar to Pseudo-Dionysius whom he criticized, along with Sadoleto, in his polemic, and it is also found in his earlier writings like *Psychopannychia*, *Treaties Against the Anabaptists*, earlier 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, first 1538 *Catechism*. In general, this correlative principle can be found in early church Fathers like Origen and Athanasius, that through the Spirit we know the Son and through the Son the Father. Cf. Martien Parmentier, *St. Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* reprinted from *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* vol. 58 (1976), 59 (1977) and 60 (1978), page 48, n.23 (*De Principiis*, 1, 3, 4), page 59.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 3.11.10, on being "one with Christ" in which the notion that Christ indwells in our hearts is inseparable with the notion of "our minds become intent upon the Spirit" in *Inst.* 3.1.3.

God's life, is to live in the reality of "word and Spirit", to be united with Christ, in which we will participate in his eternal righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit. This "union with God" is spiritual, and not simply a "union of wills".<sup>411</sup> This union is union with the "Word and Spirit", hence as Calvin says, "union with God".

McCormack thinks Calvin understands union with Christ in terms of participation in the humanity of Christ. Though McCormack says this in terms of Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, yet the same principle applies. What Christ did in his death and resurrection will only be external, thus what McCormack thinks and approves; But Calvin adds, they will be useless unless these are made internally in us by the power of the Spirit. The spirit works by regenerating us so that we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ; and this work of regeneration is the work "in us" manifested in two ways according to Calvin, the mortification of flesh/sin and the vivification of the Spirit. In this twofold process, we then participate in Christ's death and resurrection which can only happen in him as the *logos ensarkos*. Is this not participation in Christ's humanity then? This is participation in the Spirit of Christ, thus participation in Christ the mediator himself, thus participation in the whole work of Christ himself as mediator/ redeemer who is empowered by the

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<sup>411</sup> Cf. Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, 105.

same spirit and that is now given to us after the resurrection – thus making the opening of the previously deep and hidden wellspring, the fountain image that Calvin uses, and so enables us to participate in the mortification of sin and the vivification of the spirit in our lives. Resurrection, as vivification of Christ’s flesh, is what offered to us for our salvation.

#### b. Social Interpretation of Union with Christ

The social understanding of union is not totally absent in Calvin. Mosser identifies this, as does Edmondson, as a brotherhood Christology, which leads to our enjoying the benefits of adoption;<sup>412</sup> This is an aspect that cannot be removed from Calvin’s multifaceted soteriology. However, the social concept of union will only support the idea of union with Christ in his humanity, and not his person.

The reluctance of Reformed scholars in endorsing the *deification* of Christ’s humanity, as pointed out by Mosser, is due to their resistance to the Lutheran *genus maiestaticum* of *Communicatio idiomatum*.<sup>413</sup> This teaching of Calvin serves to safeguard the mixing of the two different natures of Christ, and should be properly attributed to the person who acts between the two natures. The social understanding of union must be interpreted in escalation; that what Christ achieves and gives is not just the restoration of a limited human nature, but

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<sup>412</sup> Mosser’s draft, “The Gospel’s End,” 19. Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 118–120.

<sup>413</sup> Mosser’s draft, “The Gospel’s End,” 22–3.

brings it to perfection and elevation through restoration until eventually the redeemed become partakers of the eternal righteousness of the eternal God. Calvin moves beyond a mere partaker in Christ's human nature to partakers in the person of Christ himself.

There are two concerns when discussing union with Christ: the first is on the possibility of the confusion of natures, the second is on the losing of identity as the result of the union.

On the first concern, Calvin makes a distinction between union – *unio* and unity – *unitas* in Christ. The first is applied to the two natures of Christ, and the second to the Person alone.<sup>414</sup> What is true of *unio* for Christ, is also true for us; when we speak about our union with God, there is no mixing nor blending of natures. The divine-human relation can be described as *unio* but of God himself in his divine persons as *unitas*.<sup>415</sup> So even though we are united with Christ through the Spirit, who is also the same agent that unites the Father and the Son, yet there is a qualitative difference in which our union with Christ is *unio*, but the union of the Father and the Son is *unitas* in *autotheos* manner.

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<sup>414</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Jer. and Lam.*, xx.

<sup>415</sup> Also noted by McClean, "Perichoresis," 137, n. 30 who cited Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 64–65, which refers back to Calvin's commentary on Jeremiah. Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutherworth Press, 1956), 226 writes that we are united with Christ but not fused with Him. The Holy Spirit guides us and preserves us as an integral personality. The fellowship with the divine which He procures is real fellowship and not fusion.



The glorified nature of humans would still be a created nature perfected by grace. While the glorified human nature of Christ as the last Adam, as the life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45) is wholly identifiable with the Spirit referred to as the spirit of Christ (Romans 8:10, 11). Calvin remarks that we too “have the *life-giving Spirit* of Christ poured out upon us by the grace of regeneration.”<sup>416</sup> The Spirit Christ has procured for us, is *life*.<sup>417</sup> We are then participating as pneumatological beings in Christ, without being consubstantial with God.

On the second concern of losing our identity, Calvin describes our union with Christ in which Christ is our head and we are his body consisting of many members.<sup>418</sup> Christ as our head means that it is from him that we as his body receive all benefits.<sup>419</sup> There is a principle of unity of life within the unified head-body image. But as members of the body the differences remain, not only from the head with the body, but also among members of the same body. Our union, according to Calvin, is not only with Christ as the head, but also with other members including the dead saints, “we are in fellowship with the holy patriarchs who, although dead, cultivate the same godliness as we, so that we cannot be members of Christ unless we unite ourselves with them.”<sup>420</sup> The

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<sup>416</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:45.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>418</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.5.

<sup>419</sup> *Inst.* 3.1.3.

<sup>420</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.6.

identities of the dead saints do not disappear in the *interim*, how much more will it be in the *eschaton* with the resurrection of the body.

### 3.3.2. *Eternal Blessedness*

Muller mentions as a historical fact that Calvin added the new locus on the final resurrection in his 1559 edition of the *Institutes*.<sup>421</sup> As to why this is so, we can only guess. But by locating it at the last chapter of book 3, Calvin spurs the believers' assurance by this not insignificant hope.<sup>422</sup>

#### *i. Theosis Characterization*

We will see later in Calvin's thought on blessedness whether there are stages in it. First, of course, is the belief that human beings will be resurrected bodily. The final resurrection occupies a major place in Calvin's thought, since "the final resurrection" is given a full treatment in section 25 of book 3. Calvin also sees the blessedness of man in becoming like angels. We shall try to probe more deeply into whether Calvin conceives *quasi deificari* in terms of the final resurrection and becoming like angels.

#### a. Resurrection of the Body

What will our restoration be like, a return to be the mirror of the divine righteousness, or perfected and elevated to a better state?

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<sup>421</sup> Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 133.

<sup>422</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.8.

In this life the elects struggle with the remnants of their flesh.<sup>423</sup> So deliverance from sin comes with death and full perfection awaits the last day and the resurrection of our bodies.<sup>424</sup> Calvin placed his primary emphasis on the soul as the seat of the image of God in man. However, in the *Institutes* 3.25, Calvin has another concern in his high view of the present body. Calvin emphasizes the continuity of the resurrection, that is, the sameness of the bodies with which we are now clothed.<sup>425</sup> Calvin says, “as to substance we shall be raised again in the same flesh we now bear, but that the quality will be different.”<sup>426</sup> This view is consistent with Calvin’s view regarding the future of nature in the cosmos.

Calvin prioritizes epistemology rather than ontology; this plays a part in seeing resurrection as eternal blessedness. In this sense the final resurrection is penultimate, prior to the last judgment of Christ which brings in the separation of the heirs of eternal life and eternal death. Despite having the same resurrection, for the elect it is blessedness, but for the reprobate is terror. Calvin differentiates it in this way, “one will be a resurrection of judgment, the other of life (John 5:29).”<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Lane, “Anthropology,” 286.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>425</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.7. Cited by Schreiner, *Theater of God’s Glory*, 100.

<sup>426</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.8.

<sup>427</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.9.

Afterwards, the elect will behold God face to face; he will reveal to us his glory.<sup>428</sup> At present, our mental capacity is incapable of measuring the height of the mystery of being with God, and so Calvin directs us to be assured by knowing eternal life and individual rewards from our individual labors.<sup>429</sup> The reprobates lot is different; even though they will also be resurrected they will be cut off from all fellowship with God and find no rest from their own unhappy consciences.<sup>430</sup> The final resurrection can be seen as the last gracious act of God the Creator towards his rebellious creatures before the final judgment of Christ. Using theater imagery, the reprobates participate in the final resurrection, they exist not only in their immortal souls but also in their bodies, yet unto them are given no role; their script comes to an end and the curtain is lowered. The happiness of the elect lies in an elevated role – epistemologically, “with the veil being then removed [...] and Christ’s humanity will then no longer be interposed to keep us back from a closer view of God.”<sup>431</sup>

#### b. Perfection and Elevation of the Elect

In the layered cosmological model, Calvin seems to assert the notion of man’s perfection consisting in our becoming like angels.<sup>432</sup> Because angels too were

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<sup>428</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.10.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.12.

<sup>431</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:27. See Muller, “Christ in the Eschaton,” 31–51.

<sup>432</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.3.

created according to God's image,<sup>433</sup> and unlike humanity, they continually enjoy the direct vision of God,<sup>434</sup> and in angels "the brightness of divine glory shines forth much more richly."<sup>435</sup> Furthermore, Calvin sees men as renewed after the image of God only if men consort with the angels.<sup>436</sup> By doing so, men and angels cleave together under one head.<sup>437</sup> We will then take on the form of angels,<sup>438</sup> by "putting off mortal flesh."<sup>439</sup> In this state, when received into heaven, lies man's final happiness.<sup>440</sup>

The above view in which the body seems rather secondary is a corollary due to Calvin's view of the humanity of Christ in the *eschaton*.<sup>441</sup> This has been observed as well by Quistorp and Boersma.<sup>442</sup> This seeming inconsistency in Calvin's view of Christ in the *eschaton* results in an inconsistent view regarding the body of mankind, which in the one hand Calvin fully affirmed in *Institutes* 3.25, and on the other hand as though the body will not be significant at all in his view related to the angels.

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<sup>433</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.3; 4.1.4.

<sup>434</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.6.

<sup>435</sup> *Inst.* 1.14.5.

<sup>436</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.6.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> *Inst.* 4.1.4.

<sup>440</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.6.

<sup>441</sup> See earlier section on 3.2.2.ii.

<sup>442</sup> Quistorp, *the Last Things*, 171, 175. Boersma, "Accommodation and Vision," 277–8.

Calvin however tries to follow Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 which speaks of both Christ's handing over the kingdom (v.24–28), and also of the resurrection of the body. Calvin introduces this unnecessary tension by interpreting Christ transferring the kingdom in a manner from his humanity to his glorious divinity.<sup>443</sup>

What is the best way to interpret Calvin, then, regarding the existence of the body in the *eschaton*? Calvin does not mean that there will be no body at all. Rather, the corruptness, the mortality of the body will be removed in order to participate in the incorruptible, immortal, and eternal. In this interpretation, the flesh and blood cannot participate in the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50).

The statements about angels should be balanced with Calvin's commentary on Matthew 22:30, published in 1555. There Calvin affirms that the children of God will not be like the angels in all respects. Rather the believers' resemblance lies in the belief "that they can no longer die, and therefore there will be no propagation of their species, as on earth."<sup>444</sup> We can then express Calvin's view of man's blessedness towards likeness with the angels as depending on at least three things. First, freedom from the frailty of life in which there is no death; second, procreation is no longer necessary; and third, enjoying the *visio Dei*. An

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<sup>443</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:24.

<sup>444</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Matt.* 22:30.

important remark by Calvin that was inferred earlier is that angels never act independently in their service to God.<sup>445</sup> Coupled with the view that Christ as the mediator in creation, the angels existence is never independent from God nor Christ as their head. This means that with man becoming like angels, our blessedness can still be considered as union with Christ in his divinity; Christ as God is the head of all in the coming *eschaton*.

So, according to Calvin, what does becoming like angels mean with respect to our body? Calvin asserts that our body in the final resurrection will be the same in substance, but different in quality.<sup>446</sup> The quality is more excellent, described by Calvin as transformed from *animation* (anima body) to *inspiration* (quickened by the Spirit). As what 1 Corinthians 15:44 says, “It is sown a natural body (σῶμα ψυχικόν); it is raised a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν).” We will no longer be only a living soul like the first Adam, but also “have the life-giving Spirit of Christ poured out upon us by the grace of regeneration.”<sup>447</sup> This is the heavenly nature of Christ to which we shall be conformed, in body and soul.<sup>448</sup> The nature is characterized by Calvin as to be beautified with incorruption and invested

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<sup>445</sup> Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 50. See Calvin, *Ezekiel* 1:22.

<sup>446</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:38–39, 44, 47.

<sup>447</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:45. Calvin already explains what a spiritual life means in his early work, *Psychopannychia*, that the soul is free from impurities through mortification of the flesh which is identified with the quickening of the Spirit. That the soul will no longer be “imprisoned” by the body, in the sense that the soul in its relation is no longer subjected to the tyranny of the flesh. The relation we sense is a harmony.

<sup>448</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:49.

with glory.<sup>449</sup> In Philippians 3:20–21, Paul uses different terminologies but the same intended meaning, “...our lowly body (τῆς ταπεινώσεως τὸ σῶμα) to be like [Jesus] glorious body (τῆς δόξης τῷ σώματι), ...”

So, what Calvin says about our blessedness as being in the “form of angels” and “putting off mortal flesh” is a transformation of our body-and-soul to Christ himself in his transformation resurrected body, as life-giving Spirit in his *hypostatic union* or life-giving flesh in his human nature. Christ’s human nature is endowed with new qualities of celestial glory, invigorated with spiritual life.<sup>450</sup> Our body-and-soul are to be beautified and glorified like Christ.<sup>451</sup>

In the context of criticism of Roman practice, Calvin makes a further distinction between dead saints and angels.<sup>452</sup> The angels, and not the saints, are assigned the tasks “of looking after our salvation (Heb. 1:14), to whom was assigned the task of guarding us in all our ways (Ps. 91:11), who surround us (Ps. 34:7), who warn us and cheer us, who stand watch for us.”<sup>453</sup>

What about the glorified saints? According to Mosser,

The appropriateness of angels being designated gods due to their reflection of the divine glory combined with statements about believers’ glorification leads to the

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<sup>449</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 15:53.

<sup>450</sup> John Calvin, *Second Defence of the Pious and Orthodox Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556) in *ToTS*, 280.

<sup>451</sup> Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, mentions that Christ is our clothing/ garment. This is another *extra nos* understanding that complement the *unio/inhabitatio Christi*.

<sup>452</sup> *Inst.* 3.20.23.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*



conclusion that glorified believers can appropriately be designated gods. Further, believers are in union with God and share not only his glory but his power, life and love. It follows that they could be referred to *as gods in an even stronger sense* than when the term is applied to angels.<sup>454</sup>

Mosser suggests that believers would be higher in the hierarchy than the angels. Calvin would qualify this as seen in his *commentary* on 1 Corinthians 6:3 “on judging angels”, though this is applied only to the apostate angels. With the elect angels, however, believers will have a reconciled relationship before cleaving wholly to God as the sole head in the upcoming administration.

But why do the elect angels need to be reconciled? In the discussion on the contingency of the *logos ensarkos* (3.2.2.i.a.) we observe that Calvin sees even the pure angels as vile in comparison with God’s righteousness. Calvin says that angels “could not continually enjoy the direct vision of God unless they were like him.”<sup>455</sup> At present, the sinless angels regulate themselves according to the expression of that righteousness in the Law, hence there is a need to be reconciled before their acceptance to eternal righteousness, which dwells ineffably in the being of God.<sup>456</sup> As such, there is a reordering of creation on various levels at the end of time.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing,” 52. *Italic* added.

<sup>455</sup> *Inst.* 2.12.6.

<sup>456</sup> Cf. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of The Christian Life*, 113.

<sup>457</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Comm. John* 12:31, Schreiner, *Theater of God’s Glory*, 109, this reordering will be the result of Christ’s last judgment. Schreiner uses the term final restoration of order to the world.

Is Calvin's discourse on the *eschaton* comprised of two steps or is it just one simultaneous event; whether resurrection then followed by judgment, or is resurrection itself already an immediate judgment on the wicked and life of the elect? When discussing 1 Corinthians 15 on resurrection, Calvin clearly states that it bears no relation to the wicked whatsoever. So, it seems to be one step for the elects. However, for the wicked, it is clear that Calvin teaches two steps, of resurrection and judgment.<sup>458</sup>

When we turn to what Christ himself will do, the answer then appears. Christ will do two separate acts; the final resurrection at his second coming and the last judgment before his delivery of the kingdom to the Father. So, if Christ's coming will do two distinct and yet adjacent acts, and the wicked will have to undergo two events, then by corollary the conclusion is that the elect will also undergo two-stages in the end. The elect will be raised to life, and the judgment will not determine the elects' final end, instead the elects' reward in terms of degrees of glory. There will not be a change in substance of the elect but instead in the degree of glory. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the judgment becomes the key moment that separates these into two stages.

Therefore, since our final blessedness is to be with the Lord, to be resurrected in our bodies is penultimate. It is only after the last judgment when Christ

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<sup>458</sup> Cf. Acts 24:15. Calvin in *Comm. Acts* 24:15 refers to John 5:29, "those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

discharges his last act of mediatorship that we will then be totally renewed in our body and soul, by putting off our “mortal” flesh, the corruptible body is renewed – beautified with incorruption and invested with glory, in order to receive and participate in the eternal fellowship of righteousness in the Triune God. This is the ontological blessedness in *theosis*.<sup>459</sup>

*ii. Home at Last!*

a. The Visio Dei: Living in the reality of God’s Light

Can man really participate in God’s glory? Does not God dwell in inaccessible light whom no one has ever seen, nor can see (1 Timothy 6:16). Commenting on this verse, Calvin sees that God is concealed from us, not because God is obscured as though he is hidden in darkness, but because of our weaknesses in our vision and understanding.<sup>460</sup> Calvin attributes this weakness also to our mortal flesh; even though at present by faith we enter into the light of God, “we know in part, and we see as by a mirror, and in a riddle (1 Corinthians 13:9–12).”<sup>461</sup> Calvin understands the tensions of 1 Timothy 6:16 with 1 John 3:2 (*Then shall we see him as he is, because we shall be like him.*) He concludes that we cannot

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<sup>459</sup> Calvin follows Augustine in his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, thus this ontological quote from Augustine, *The Trinity*, 81 is not a misplacement, “[t]hose who believe [...] will be considered worthy of being brought from faith to sight, that is to the vision to which he brings us when he is said to *hand over the kingdom to God and the Father* (1 Cor. 15:24).” And again, “it is not as we are, however, that God loves us, but as we are going to be.”

<sup>460</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Tim.* 6:16.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*

see God in this nature; only when we are renewed, and like God, that it would be granted to us to see him.<sup>462</sup> This happens when God opens up the entrance to us by his grace.<sup>463</sup> Calvin seems to imply that *finitum capax infiniti* here. It is an elevated *finitum*, glorified *finitum*, but nevertheless it is still *finitum*. So, is it possible?

Still for Calvin, *deification* – to be made like God – is the necessity before our eternal blessedness, enjoying the direct vision of the Godhead.<sup>464</sup> This *deification* lies in our being made partakers in heavenly glory.<sup>465</sup> On that last day, Calvin says, “the splendor of the glory of God the Father will be instantly visible to us, the glory which now appears in Christ, his living image.”<sup>466</sup>

Huijgen raises a note of concern over Calvin’s vagueness regarding this future unaccommodated vision of God. Is the ultimate vision of God the ultimate goal of faith, or is the removal of corporeal hindrances?<sup>467</sup> Calvin seems to affirm both; that we find in him “the ontological subordination of the corporeal” – that is the *finitum non capax infiniti* and “the reality of faith” that leads to the contrary.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid. Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Exod.* 33:20 also stated the same manner by referring to 1 John 3:2.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.3.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator: A Response to the Polish Brethren to Refute Stancaro’s Error,” trans. Tylenda, “Christ the Mediator,” in *ACC* 5: 172.

<sup>467</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 256.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

Calvin regards this as a mystery, this *totus non totum* principle is here to stay for now; whether it will carry on after the end is no longer a concern of time but eternity. Nevertheless, Calvin speaks clearer of this mystery.

There is a differentiation of “time” in Calvin, that eternal life is what belongs to the children of God and this is far different from the current fading life.<sup>469</sup> We are already the *children of God*, even though not yet the *children of the resurrection*.<sup>470</sup> We shall be like Christ with some difference between the head and the members.<sup>471</sup> Does Calvin teach about our becoming like Christ in his glorified human nature? Yes, in “that what has in order preceded in Christ, shall at length be completed in us.”<sup>472</sup> Calvin qualifies this further, “except then we be stripped of all the corruption of the flesh, we shall not be able to behold God face to face.”<sup>473</sup>

By the resurrection, we become like Christ in his resurrected body as our mediator. Yet once “Christ completed all his mediatorship role and return to the glory he is satisfied with which he enjoyed before the creation of the world”, unless the elect is renewed from *animation/soul-body* to *inspiration/spirit-body*,

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<sup>469</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 3:2.

<sup>470</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Matt.* 22:30, *Comm. Col.* 3:3–4.

<sup>471</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 3:2.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, observes a gradual clearer, fuller vision: from OT saints, NT saints, through the sacraments, and in Christ the Mediator, then upon death in the postmortem vision of God until finally in a full vision openly face to face in mutuality. This final vision, according to Calvin, is a new and ineffable manner of seeing of God, though not affirming God’s essence, but “as he is” (1 John 3:2).

we will not see Christ as God in his naked glory, thus the vision of God.<sup>474</sup> To see God in his divine glory does not compromise the Creator-creature distinction, for, as Calvin says, “yet the perfection of glory will not be so great in us, that our seeing will enable us to comprehend all that God is; for the distance between us and him will be even then very great.”<sup>475</sup> This is the epistemological blessedness in *theosis*, to see God as he is, not by comprehension but in increasing apprehension of Christ in his naked glory.

#### b. Trinitarian Blessedness

Apart from the ontological and epistemological blessedness in partaking of God’s nature, *deification* is often seen in another way. Calvin also sees it in terms of relation with the Triune God.

Mankind, at the very beginning of his creation, was created in relation to the Triune persons; to know God in the “broad” categories of Fatherhood, as Creator, the Son, in his “broad” mediatorship as Creator, and the Spirit, in his “broad” work as Creator in all spheres. Mankind subsists in God and lives in total dependence on God.

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid., granted that the vision of Christ in his glory at the last judgment will also be seen by the wicked. The loss vision of Christ as the Mediator can be described as hell; this is in addition to the condemnation of Christ’s judgment and the unrest in their consciences. So, the ruin of God’s image in *sensus conscientia* remains, but only to condemn the reprobates. Cf. *Inst.* 3.25.16., *Psychopannychia*. Cf. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 81.

<sup>475</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 3:2. Cf. Calvin in his earlier work, *Psychopannychia*, still understand it in a more static manner, the “ascending upwards” of the man’s spirit as “subsisting and retaining immortality.”

Justification should be seen in the context of our relationship with the Triune God; a significantly simple and yet often ignored fact. Calvin infers this at the very beginning of the section (*Inst.* 3.11.1) wherein he discusses justification:

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's Spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.<sup>476</sup>

*Duplex gratia* is often seen as justification and sanctification;<sup>477</sup> Calvin means more than these, *duplex gratia* also implies our relationship with the Father and the Spirit. That Christ, in his reconciling work, brings to us this double grace: a relation with the Father who justifies us, and a relation with the Spirit who sanctifies us. The underlying reason "why justification and sanctification cannot be separated one from the other" rests in the fact that the Triune God is one. The separate roles of the Triune God in the work of redemption are found in this manner: The Father justified, the Son reconciled, and the Spirit sanctified.

Is not justification a legal fiction? Calvin's insight shows that the final test of knowing this is in the experiential way of knowing; faith as expressed and exercised in our prayer. It is our confidence in Christ of God's benevolence to be a creature *coram Deo*. As Calvin closes his section on *justification*, he writes, "[...]

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<sup>476</sup> *Inst.* 3.11.1.

<sup>477</sup> For instance, by Helm, *Calvin, A Guide for the Perplexed*, 95.

in order that we may appear before God's face unto salvation we must smell sweetly with his odor, and our vices must be covered and buried by his perfection."<sup>478</sup> Justification in Christ results in an epistemological change in our personal knowledge of God; prior to reconciliation, having the *sensus divinitatis* and *sensus conscientia* we see God as a judge, but with Christ's death and resurrection, in faith, God is now our gracious Father. We now live by faith, but we shall see him as he is.

In the forthcoming administration, God will be the head instead of Christ (or to be precise, including Christ who is the eternal Son). It is true that in Christ we already know the Father, but Christ himself will bring us to the fullness of becoming children of God in the end. We will be united with God in this sense. Is this union understood relationally? Yes, at the same time it is understood ontologically as well because we shall see God when we become the children of resurrection. What about the Holy Spirit? The spirit is the bond that unites us with the Triune God; he has dwelt in the life of believers, regenerates us, making us partakers of Christ in his death and resurrection, in the mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit. Without the Spirit all the benefits from Christ as our head in the present administration, and from God as our head in the upcoming administration, will be useless, for he binds us to God and works

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<sup>478</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.23.



internally in us. We have received faith as his work, and we shall receive the fruits of that faith.<sup>479</sup> Having entered into the Kingdom of God through hope at present, we will truly be partakers of eternal life.<sup>480</sup> The spirit will bring us to an escalating illumination of our blessed life.

In the face of Christ, we know God the redeemer is the same Triune God the Creator. The future blessedness will carry forward this knowledge of the Triune God. So the future blessedness is Trinitarian; that we will be revealed as children of God, adopted by the Father; to receive eternal life and righteousness from the Son; and continually to be endowed by the Spirit, giving us all the benefits from the Father and the Son, and of course from the Spirit himself. What lies in this Trinitarian blessedness is no longer union with Christ, but union with the Triune God. Living *Coram Deo* we become the children – in the Son, with the Spirit of the Son – of him who is our one and only, Triune Deifier.

### ***3.3.3. Conclusion: Calvin's Criterion in Deified Self***

Calvin rejects Osiander's essential creation of human that leads to his essential redemption view; one of mixing essences between God and human. Instead, Calvin sees man is in relation with God in his two *sensus*, living as a mirror of divine righteousness. The redemption, due to the fall of man, restores the

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<sup>479</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 77, Book I, Chapter 3, also mentions our seeing God, contemplation as the reward of faith.

<sup>480</sup> *Inst.* 3.15.5.

righteousness that is bestowed upon man as *extra nos* in our justification. But justification leads to a greater righteousness in the *eschaton*, described by Calvin as eternal righteousness. This fellowship of righteousness is made possible due to the incarnation of the Son; one that Calvin sees as the soteriological concern that affirms *theosis*.

Calvin's notion on *theosis* has two steps: bodily resurrection followed by the judgment. *Theosis* comes as the result of the judgment, and can be seen in three manners: ontologically, epistemologically and relationally. Ontologically, as pneumatological being (σῶμα πνευματικόν), we participate in God's eternal righteousness by being beautified and invested with incorruptibility and glory in our body-and-soul. Epistemologically, when we are no longer inhibited by our infirmities, we are to see God as he is; the one whom we now know in the face of Christ. Relationally, we will live *coram Deo*, having fellowship with the Triune God.

The third criterion that we can derive from Calvin, is to firmly maintain the non-mixing of essences between God and human in the *eschaton*. We will not, nor can we be *homoousios* in our being like the Triune God. In God's economy, it is by the Spirit that we are united to Christ, and it is by Christ that we are united to God. It is a reality of a *unio* instead of *unitas* in *totus non totum*. It is comprehended trinitarianly; the gift of God that we receive is God himself, the Son (from the Father) and the Spirit (from the Father and the Son). Then, in our

being united with Christ, we have the Father in our renewed relation due to justification by faith *extra nos*, and the Spirit whose dwelling *in nobis* sanctifies us in holiness. We will live in the escalated reality of Word and Spirit, as we already are now, in an accommodated way.

### 3.4. Conclusion

*Theosis* is understood by Calvin as a necessity due to the embedded ontological and soteriological gaps in order to accomplish the *telos* in our union with God. As such, *theosis* cannot be severed from Christ mediation in his two acts role in creation and in redemption. The end of *theosis* which is conceived as *visio Dei/unio Dei* lies in three aspects: epistemological, ontological, and relational-eschatological.

Calvin has a multilayered cosmology in which the Creator is clearly distinct from the creatures in a hierarchical order. Despite this cosmology, Calvin does not fall into *deism*, but insists that our present life cannot be severed from God even in its basic form (Acts 17:28); and so too in the eternal life.

In the creation, man knows God as triune: the Father, the eternal Son who is the mediator as *logos asarkos/incarnandus* and *Spiritus Creator*. In redemption, man again knows God as triune in the gracious mediatorship of Christ as *logos ensarkos*. Calvin's Christology faithfully maintains the two natures of Christ in

the *extra* understanding from incarnation to ascension; thus maintaining that our future blessedness will be the same lot as Christ in his beautified human nature.

Created to be God's mirror of his divine righteousness, mankind live in the reality of word and spirit which relates him/her to God, embedded in the two senses of *sensus divinitatis* and *sensus conscientia*. The fall requires the necessity of righteousness to be restored, which comes as a gift grasped by faith in Christ's incarnated work of his death and resurrection. Calvin does not only endorse Christ's human righteousness but also his eternal righteousness, which is granted at the *eschaton* as fellowship of righteousness. This blessedness comes after a couple of stages: the resurrection of the body and the last judgment. In the body that has been beautified with incorruption and invested with glory we shall then see God (in Christ) as he is. However, despite Calvin's view of a more static—that is restful—eternity, this is not a static blessedness, but participation in Christ.

## CHAPTER 4: A COMPARISON OF VIEWS IN THE SUPPER

In the previous chapters we have seen how the notion of *theosis* or *union with God* is conceived by both Jenson and Calvin. We are now to assess how this idea surfaces in both theologians' notion of the Supper, whether what they believe correspond to their practice. After highlighting these features in both Jenson and Calvin, we will systematically compare their views.

We begin with Calvin's concept of the Supper in order to have a better understanding of this matter due to its historical development, especially since the Supper discourse has changed considerably from a more polemical subject in the Reformation period to a more ecumenical subject at the present time.

### 4.1. Calvin: The Supper as Sacred Union with God

Calvin defines a sacrament as “an outward attestation of the divine benevolence towards us, which, by a visible sign, figures spiritual grace, to seal the promise of God on our hearts, and thereby confirm their truth to us.”<sup>1</sup> This “spiritual grace” and yet-to-be-fulfilled “promise” can be closely described as *theosis*, which captures its epistemological and eschatological characters. It is no wonder that Calvin also describes the Supper as “the pledge of sacred union with God”.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 83–4.

<sup>2</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.33.

question that follows is whether the ontological character of *theosis* is also captured or shown in Calvin's understanding of the Supper.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in this section, we will investigate "how Calvin conceives union or communion in the Supper." This is a reformulation of the heart of the matter that Calvin himself tries to answer: "in what way Christ can give us his body and blood for meat and drink?"<sup>4</sup> We shall look primarily, though not exclusively, at Calvin's reply to Heshusius as his last treatise on the Supper which shows his developed mature theological position within the context of the Swiss-German Reformation debate.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***4.1.1. Epistemological View of the Supper***

Calvin understands the Supper epistemologically, as a divine accommodation. The imagery of a mirror appears in the Supper, and the sacraments in general.<sup>6</sup> Therein the Supper consists of the visible sign and the reality being signified. The

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<sup>3</sup> van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 189, "the Supper" is Calvin's preferential term, though he acknowledges that Augustine's terms of "Eucharist" or "sacrament of the body" are also suitable. Cf. *Inst.* 4.17.28.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine Concerning the True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, in order to Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561) in *ToTS*, 516.

<sup>5</sup> Wim Janse, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," *Perichoresis* 10, no.2 (2012): 155, observes the historical development of Calvin's eucharistic theology, from "Zwinglianizing" to "Lutheranizing", then return to "renewed spiritualizing" with the latest position a return to "pro-Luther". As for Calvin's treatises against Westphal, these have been incorporated in the *Institutes* 1559 edition, 4.17.20–34 (n.67) according to McNeill as noted by Thomas J. Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching* (New York: AMS Press, 1995), 218, n.10.

<sup>6</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 11:24. *Inst.* 4.14.3, 6. John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord in Which is Shown Its True Institution, Benefit, and Utility* (1540, art.8) in *ToTS*, 168. Cf. Wim Janse, "The Sacraments," trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *CH*, 347. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 204.

reality itself is not restricted to the Supper, nevertheless the Supper exhibits this reality as a visible sign.

*i. Perpetual Union*

The supper exhibits the *res* of communion, which Calvin understands as a perpetual union. This *res* is understood by Calvin as fellowship with Christ in being “one with him, as he and the Father are one”.<sup>7</sup> Calvin holds to the perpetual reality such that the communion is not strictly linked to the sacrament.<sup>8</sup> The sacrament in general functions as a sort of appendix to the gospel.<sup>9</sup> The supper however still enjoys a significantly high assessment by Calvin.<sup>10</sup> Clearly a sacrament is never without a preceding promise/Word of God.<sup>11</sup>

First, the Supper serves the same function as the gospel, that is, to communicate Christ to us. Both refer to the one perpetual sacrifice that Christ performed – there is no repetition of a sacrifice during the administration of the Supper.<sup>12</sup> The sacrifice was done once by Christ’s death on the cross, but is

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<sup>7</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 520.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.3.

<sup>10</sup> Cornelis van der Kooi pointed out the difference.

<sup>11</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.3. referred by Henri Blocher, “Calvin on the Lord’s Supper: Revisiting an Intriguing Diversity Part 1,” *WThJ* 76, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 72.

<sup>12</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 90.

sufficient for our salvation, thus it is perpetual; on our part, there is nothing required except to enjoy the Supper.<sup>13</sup>

Then, as the living bread, Christ nourishes our souls through the gospel; it is communicated to the end that “we are one with him as he is one with the Father, &c.”<sup>14</sup> The sacrament then relates to the perpetual union in that which it “reminds us that Christ was made the bread of life, which we continually eat.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the notion of social communion, Calvin sees this communion as not only a fellowship with an indivisible bond, but a growing communion that leads to Christ’s growth into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us.<sup>16</sup> This communion, contra Heshusius, is not a momentary communion, but a perpetual union.<sup>17</sup>

Third, the supper comes into effect – like the gospel – with the requirement of faith. Drawing from Hilary, Calvin defends the idea that the perpetual union with Christ is the effect of faith.<sup>18</sup> The Supper is meat indeed and drink indeed through both the declaration of the Lord and our faith; when received and taken, the supper causes us to be in Christ and Christ to be in us.<sup>19</sup> It is the second factor

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. In his *Catechism*, Calvin refers to: 1 Corinthians 1:6; Ephesians 5:30; John 6:51; John 17:21.

<sup>15</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.5.

<sup>16</sup> *Inst.* 3.2.24

<sup>17</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 520.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 539–40. Hilary of Poitiers, “*On the Trinity*,” in *NPNF* 2.9a, book 8.13–17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



of faith which separates Calvin's view from the Lutherans' concerning *manducatio impiorum*.<sup>20</sup>

Calvin describes this perpetual union in a triune manner, so as to be both perfect/ natural and spiritual.<sup>21</sup> Qualified by Christ's two natures and the *extra* interpretation, Christ advancing us to unity with the Father which leads to this perfect/ natural unity. There is a certain degree and order of completing the union.<sup>22</sup> Hilary presents: "[j]ust because, while he is in the Father by the nature of his divinity, we are in him by his corporeal nativity, and he, on the other hand, is in us by the mystery of the sacraments."<sup>23</sup> Calvin rephrases it: "while, we remaining in him, he remained in the Father, and remaining in the Father, remained in us."<sup>24</sup> Calvin did not explain this passage in a clear manner, but we might try to understand what he says as a chronological process and understand it through the lens of the *extra calvinisticum*.

The first quotation from Hilary states that our natural unity is conceived in a kind of "chronological" manner: the first unity is the unity of the Son in the

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<sup>20</sup> The *Confessio Augustana Variata* which Calvin subscribes, can still be interpreted based on his view. The translation of article 10 by Wim Janse, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," 145, "Regarding the Lord's Supper it is taught that *with* bread and wine the body and blood of Christ are truly *represented-and-given* to the eaters at the Supper of the Lord."

<sup>21</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 540.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 539–40. Cf. Hilary, "On the Trinity," book 8.13–17. A kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 540.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Father in their *ousia*; the second unity is the unity we have in Christ due to his incarnation, taking on our human nature; thus “we are in him”; we also have unity with Christ, thus “he is in us” by receiving him in the sacrament. These three steps show the unity due to Christ’s hypostatic union.

In Calvin’s rephrasing: Christ in his human nature makes us remain in him, but he is, in his *extra* divine nature, in the Father. Then, Christ in his divine nature expresses his remaining in the Father, but he is in his *extra* (or a better phrase *infinitum capax finiti*) human nature in us. Calvin then understands our union with God in the Supper in a Christological manner — through his hypostatic union, in two natures.

It is difficult to discern whether there are parts of Hilary’s teaching that Calvin disagrees with and thus left out by him, for example, the notion of “the union of glory (8.12)”.<sup>25</sup> However, perhaps Calvin left that part aside because he seeks to draw only relevant teachings related to the sacrament in order to show the truthfulness of Jesus’ words, “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. (John 6.56).”<sup>26</sup> To affirm perpetual union, Calvin summarizes using Hilary’s words: “the life of Christ abides in us, because we are one with him.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 95 nevertheless see in Calvin that believers will be partakers of the divine glory since the elect will reign with God and glory in Him.

<sup>26</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 540.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

In describing perpetual union as spiritual in character, Calvin takes his cue from Irenaeus: “we are the members of Christ, and united to his flesh because of his Spirit dwelling in us.”<sup>28</sup> Van der Kooi adds an important remark for the reason the spiritual understanding of the union shows that the supper means so much to Calvin despite the *extra Coenae usum* (participate outside the sacrament),

The entrance to salvation is embedded in the material, in the world of the senses. The Spirit is not in opposition to the material, the external, but dwells in it, uses it and stimulates man from all sides to permit himself to be taken along.<sup>29</sup>

In his Commentary on I Corinthians 11:24, Calvin refers to the fact that Christ dwells in us: “when he dwells in us – when he is one with us – when we are *members of his flesh*, (Ephesians 5:30) – when, in fine, we are incorporated with him (so to speak) into one life and substance.”<sup>30</sup> We can note Calvin’s cautious remark in affirming the one life and substance that it is not without the qualifier “so to speak”. This can be interpreted as Calvin’s hesitancy to confirm what is still a mystery now, thus he creates some vagueness.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 540. Cf. *Inst.* 4.14.9. quoted by Wim Janse, “The Sacraments,” trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *CH*, 348. In pages 351-2, Janse categorizes Calvin’s view of the Supper as *pneumatological* instead of spiritual which is prone to be misunderstood as a spiritualist like Zwingli.

<sup>29</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 199.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, *Comm. I Cor.* 11:24, trans. John Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 379. *Italic* is original.

<sup>31</sup> The notion of non-scriptural term “substance” in Calvin is prone to be problematic as seen by D. Willis, “Calvin’s Use of Substantia,” in *CEGC*, 289–301.

So, Calvin's notion of perpetual union is trinitarian, which respects the Creator-creature distinction drawn from his committed Christological insight of hypostatic union with the *extra* of the two natures; this union with the Father through the Son without allowing any disavowance of the Son from the Spirit.

*ii. Exhibitio*

The purpose of the Supper, according to Calvin, is to attest that God exhibits himself to us by nourishing our souls.<sup>32</sup> The sacraments, which also includes those of the old testament, offer promises of God which exhibit Christ.<sup>33</sup>

"Exhibit" is first to be understood in the paradigm of Calvin's divine accommodation, that it is coupled with its "hidden" implication.<sup>34</sup> Christ exhibits the Father who is invisible. The supper as sacrament then exhibits Christ, who himself exhibits the Father. Explained in Calvin's catechism, the sacrament exhibits a view of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly manner.<sup>35</sup> It bears its pedagogical character in it, "the Supper was instituted by Christ in order that by the communication of his body and blood, he might teach and assure us that our souls are being trained in the hope of eternal life."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 86.

<sup>33</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.20.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 240 about the visibility of the invisible God, refers to Calvin *Comm. 2 Cor.* 4:4, of the Father who is invisible yet exhibits himself by his Son, and makes himself in a manner visible.

<sup>35</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 84.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Then, there is a gradual change in the exhibition of Christ. Compared with what the saints in the Old Testament received, the communion of Christ exhibited now is fuller and more abundant, and likewise substantial.<sup>37</sup>

Third, in the Supper there is a continuity that distinguishes God himself from creation to redemption. As wonderfully formulated by Huijgen, “[e]very piece of bread in the world testifies to God, but in the Lord’s Supper, it is the way God more strongly exhibits Himself.”<sup>38</sup> Related to one of the transcendentals, this is “the truth” in which God makes us participate in his being knowable. We can then heartily agree with what Davis says of Calvin’s theology, “part of the eucharistic gift is knowledge [of God’s gracious action in Christ].”<sup>39</sup>

Fourth, the supper is like the gospel in that it offers the same grace, yet in the Supper, the saints “have more ample certainty, and fuller enjoyment.”<sup>40</sup> Still under the perpetual paradigm, Calvin sees that there are two kinds of giving to believers, “the same body which Christ once offered for salvation, he offers everyday as spiritual food.”<sup>41</sup> The bread, then, is the exhibitiv sign to the essential and corporeal body.<sup>42</sup> Calvin is bold enough to say that “the flesh and

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<sup>37</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 533.

<sup>38</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 312, derives this from Janse, “Calvin’s Eucharistic Theology,” 38; Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God*, 213–217.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God*, 215.

<sup>40</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.10), 169.

<sup>41</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 529.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

blood of Christ are substantially offered and exhibited to us in the supper, ” which of course he interprets in a pneumatological mode.<sup>43</sup>

Now, Calvin strongly affirms the role of faith in the epistemological understanding of the supper as exhibit. Calvin accepts Augustine’s notion about the twofold eating that one can receive the virtue of the sacrament, or of receiving only a visible sacrament.<sup>44</sup> Calvin rejects the *manducatio impiorum* of the supper though he does not reject its being offered. He says “God does not stop the rain falling from heaven, although rocks and stones do not receive the moisture of the rain.”<sup>45</sup> As Steinmetz summarizes, “Christ is truly offered whether faith is present or absent, but Christ is truly received only when faith is present.”<sup>46</sup>

To remind the believers that they can fail to see the exhibit of Christ, Calvin calls them to look up, and not to bind their eyes to the elements on the table. He shows this by some examples such as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus whose eyes were held even when Christ sat familiarly at the same table; Then from Stephen who was not at the Supper, yet was given sight to penetrate the heavens and beheld the glory of God.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in order for believers to obtain or

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 521–2.

<sup>45</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.24.

<sup>46</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.33–34. David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32.

<sup>47</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 515.

enjoy the reality of the signs, our minds must be raised to heaven where Christ is, and not to seek him in the earthly elements of bread and wine.<sup>48</sup>

Calvin does not follow the Zwinglian view of the correlation of eating and faith, “to eat Christ is faith”, but rather, “the eating is the effect and fruit of faith rather than faith itself.”<sup>49</sup> Thus faith does not only enable us to see Christ exhibited in the Supper, but also to eat Christ, that he may become ours and may dwell in us.<sup>50</sup> The role of faith does not undermine the supper. Calvin in his *Commentary* Genesis 28:17 attributes the sacraments in general as the gate of heaven, while the preaching of the gospel is called the kingdom of heaven, because through them we are admitted into the presence of God.<sup>51</sup> The supper then acts as a portal of faith through which the Spirit lifts us up to Christ. Jesus Christ—as the only source of life for humans—is truly given and administered in the word and the Supper.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 91. Cf. *Inst.* 4.17.18.

<sup>49</sup> Calvin, *Comm. John* 6:35, trans. William Pringle (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 250. Cf. *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 283.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, as quoted by Ronald N. Gleason, “Calvin and Bavinck on the Lord’s Supper,” *WThJ* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 295.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Gen.* 28:17, cited by A. J. Ollerton, “Quasi Deificari: Deification in the Theology of John Calvin,” *WThJ* 73 (2011): 252–3.

<sup>52</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art. 4, 11), 166, 169.

Thus, Calvin dialectically shows the truth on both sides, of the objectively true presence of Christ exhibited in the Supper, and the subjective distinction which can take place even outside the sacrament.<sup>53</sup>

#### ***4.1.2. Ontological View of the Supper***

Calvin's ontological view of *theosis* asserts that we participate in God's eternal righteousness by being beautified and invested with incorruptibility and glory in our body-and-soul. Does Calvin express this along the same lines in his view of the Supper?

##### *i. Life-giving Flesh*

Calvin believes in an integral communion of Christ which makes us partakers not only of His spirit, but also His flesh and blood.<sup>54</sup> In the catechism Calvin even uses the expression "partakers of his substance".<sup>55</sup> Wallace understands Calvin correctly when he notes that our union with Christ is "not only in His Spirit and His divine nature that are mediated to us but also His humanity [...] centered in

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<sup>53</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 534, "John the Baptist was never admitted to the Supper, and yet surely this did not prevent him from possessing Christ." Cf. Calvin, *Comm. John* 6:53. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 209.

<sup>54</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.7.

<sup>55</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 91. Cf. Calvin, *Best Method of Obtaining Concord, Provided The Truth Be Sought Without Contention* in *ToTS*, 578, "For certainly the reality and substance of the sacrament is not only the application of the benefits of Christ, but Christ himself with his death and resurrection." quoted by Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God*, 215–6, as the gift of the Eucharist as Christ himself.



His earthly body [...]”<sup>56</sup> Calvin too expresses this in his *commentary* on Romans 1:3, that “two things are to be sought for in Christ, that we may find salvation in Him: His divinity and His humanity.”<sup>57</sup> This is the reason why Calvin teaches that Christ is the substance of the Supper.<sup>58</sup> This view then is more ontological than just an “exhibit”, which is epistemological.

Therefore Calvin was furious at Heshusius who accused him of being “the Energist, [as] one who holds that the virtue of Christ’s body only, and not the body itself, is in the Supper.”<sup>59</sup> Calvin sees that “in the Supper our souls are nourished by the real body of Christ, which was crucified for us.”<sup>60</sup> He then argues affirmatively that “spiritual life is transferred into us from the substance of his body.”<sup>61</sup> This body of Christ is described by Calvin as life-giving flesh.<sup>62</sup> Christ in his divine nature is already described as the life-giving Word of the Father, the spring and source of life.<sup>63</sup> This life, and also his power and righteousness, which are contained in his divinity is then communicated to us by

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<sup>56</sup> Ronald Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 200. The following question in the catechism deals with the issue of Christ’s body in heaven, see *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 91.

<sup>57</sup> Cites by Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 200.

<sup>58</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.11. Also in *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.11), 169.

<sup>59</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 501.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* Calvin also use a more substantial word, “transfuse the vivifying vigour of [Christ’s] flesh” See *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 286.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.7–10.

<sup>63</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.7.

His humanity.<sup>64</sup> Wallace aptly summarizes Calvin's position that "[w]here the humanity of Christ is, there is the divinity; but apart from the humanity we cannot communicate with the divinity."<sup>65</sup>

What kind of humanity does Christ have? The flesh that Christ took is our flesh, and that flesh is poured out with power in order that it might flow into us.<sup>66</sup> In his reply to Heshusius, we find Calvin's way of expressing Cyril's *communicatio idiomatum*:

For when the life-giving Son of God dwelt in the flesh, and was in whole, so to speak, united to the ineffable whole by the mode of union, *he* made the flesh itself vivifying, and hence this flesh gives life to those who partake of it. <sup>67</sup>

In the above expression, Calvin rejects adoptionism/ Nestorianism Christology; it is "the person" of Christ himself who made his flesh vivifying due to his hypostatic union in his divine nature which in himself is life-giving.

As explained in 1 Corinthians 11:24, the body that Calvin means is the very body in which Christ suffered and rose again.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless the body is not the same in terms of the quality; it is not the body that was subject to mortality, rather that now has been endowed with immortality, thus life-giving, pervaded

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<sup>64</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 1:3, trans. John Owen (Bellingham: Logos, 2010), 44.

<sup>65</sup> Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 200.

<sup>66</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.8.

<sup>67</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 541. *Italic* is added. Cf. Mosser, "An Exotic Flower?", 54.

<sup>68</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 11:24.

with the fullness of life to be transmitted to us.<sup>69</sup> This is the farthest reach that Calvin attributes to Christ's flesh while still retaining its nature, not in terms of the *ubiquity* of Christ's flesh, but of immortality – along with power, righteousness and life – endowed to it.<sup>70</sup>

The signification, matter, and effect of the Supper is that we may grow into one body with him, and also feel his power in partaking of all his benefits.<sup>71</sup> However, Calvin maintains the Creator-creature distinction such that there is no mixture, or transfusion of Christ's flesh with our soul, despite the substance of the same flesh breathing life into our souls or pouring forth his very life into us.<sup>72</sup> The same understanding is repeated here; “spiritual life is infused into us from the substance of the flesh of Christ,” and that “we are substantially fed on the flesh and blood of Christ.”<sup>73</sup> The means is through the incomprehensible agency of the Spirit, thus discarding the possibility of “local intermingling”.<sup>74</sup> It is not possible for Calvin to explain any further than to declare that this matter is a heavenly mystery.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.9. Cf. *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 513.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 551.

<sup>71</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.11.

<sup>72</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.32.

<sup>73</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 502.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.31–33.

With regards to the view of the body, Calvin firmly holds with Acts 3:21 that Christ's body is in heaven. This implies that the humanity or body of Christ which he took on earth has not changed its nature although it has been exalted to heaven and withdrawn from mortal condition.<sup>76</sup> That is why Calvin understands the Supper event not as a descent of Christ – thus not to detract Christ from his heavenly glory, but an ascent of believers in the power of the Spirit.<sup>77</sup> As Calvin explains to Westphal, “Christ dwelling in us raises us to himself, and transfuses the life-giving vigour of his flesh into us [...]”<sup>78</sup>

It is to be noted however, that heaven should be understood in Calvin's theology as a term of accommodation. Calvin simply follows Augustine on this matter,

Shall we therefore, someone will say, assign to Christ a definite region of heaven? But I reply with Augustine that this is a very prying and superfluous question; for us it is enough to believe that he is in heaven.<sup>79</sup>

As to the concept of the right hand of God, Calvin does not reductively interpret it as a place, but the power which the Father bestowed upon Christ to administer the government of heaven and earth.<sup>80</sup> “For seeing that the right hand

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<sup>76</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.41), 187.

<sup>77</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.18, 19, 31.

<sup>78</sup> *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 279.

<sup>79</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.26, n.92, “Augustine holds unequivocally that “an earthly body was taken up into heaven”; but it is “vain curiosity” to ask where. Augustine, *Faith and the Creed* vi.13 (MPL 40.188; tr. LCC VI. 360).

<sup>80</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 558.

of God fills heaven and earth, it follows, that the kingdom and also the virtue of Christ are everywhere diffused.”<sup>81</sup> Van der Kooi notes that Calvin does not situate heaven on the utmost edge of the universe and thus postulate it as a localizable place; Calvin is well aware of the sense of the word “heaven” in many Bible verses.<sup>82</sup> This notion of heaven should serve as our reminder of the exaltation of the glory of God that exceeds any human capacity for understanding.<sup>83</sup> Thus heaven is to be comprehended as an accommodation.<sup>84</sup>

This reality of the Supper is epistemological, as we are being lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds.<sup>85</sup> However, the mystery itself is beyond the epistemological, it is ontological and that means that it is

the true and substantial partaking of the body and blood of the Lord, [...] understood [as] not to receive it solely by imagination or understanding of mind, but to enjoy the thing itself as nourishment of eternal life.<sup>86</sup>

Calvin, in a graphical description to refute Heshusius, says that to receive

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 49, quotes Calvin’s *Comm. Amos* 9.6. “While God is not contained in any place, it is sometimes said as an accommodation to man’s understanding that God is above the heavens.” Cf. Paul E. Rorem, “The *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549): Did Calvin Compromise?” in *CSSP*, 89. See article 25 of *Consensus Tigurinus*: “[...] Christ is to be sought in heaven [...]. Although philosophically speaking there is no place above the skies, yet as the body of Christ bears the nature and mode of a human body, it is finite and is contained in heaven *as it were in place*; [...]”. *Italic added*.

<sup>85</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.18.

<sup>86</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.19.

by faith, the thing necessary is not that he should come down to earth but that we should climb up to heaven, or rather, the blood of Christ must remain in heaven, in order that believers may share it among themselves.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, Calvin asserts a substantial communion, and only discards a local presence and the figment of an immensity of the flesh.<sup>88</sup> Davis notes what substantial communion means is that not just the body but its energy of the Spirit that feeds the Christian; this clearly refers to Calvin's non-separation view of the spirit to the understanding of the body as substantial.<sup>89</sup>

Now, to Westphal, Calvin says the unity "of one body" is *koinonia*, thus both the bread and the blood signify to be one body of Christ; "[t]he fellowship which we have with the blood of Christ when he ingrafts us altogether into his body, that he may live in us and we in him".<sup>90</sup> In this manner, we can say that Calvin sees that the relational aspect is substantial too. Davis notes that Calvin even uses the term "substantial fellowship", understood as the fellowship between Christ as the head and his members.<sup>91</sup>

Now, this way of understanding may find objection among those who interpret Calvin in a more Zwinglian way. However, the above teaching is clear, as can be seen in the exposition of the *Consensus Tigurinus*,

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<sup>87</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 529.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God*, 205.

<sup>90</sup> Calvin, *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 270–1.

<sup>91</sup> Again, this is interpreted in the sense of "word and spirit". Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God*, 207, refers to Calvin, *The Best Method of Obtaining Concord*, in *Selected Works* 2:577; OC 9:521.

the spiritual mode of communion is such that we enjoy Christ in reality. [...]the flesh of Christ gives us life, inasmuch as Christ by it instils spiritual life into our souls, and that it is also eaten by us when by faith we grow up into one body with Christ, that he being ours imparts to us all that is his.<sup>92</sup>

We can also find discussion of the “life-giving flesh” in article 19, “in the Supper Christ communicates himself to us [...]” and article 23, “[...] we draw life from the flesh once offered in sacrifice and the blood shed in expiation.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, Calvin’s view finds its expression, albeit not fully in the *Consensus Tigurinus*, since he has to compromise with Bullinger to achieve consensus.<sup>94</sup>

Oberman carefully observes that Calvin’s later/last position is clearly closer to the Lutheran view, “[t]he demarcation line between the objective act of God and the subjective act of faith runs between *manducatio* and *inhabitatio*, not between *exhibition* and *reception* as the younger Calvin,[...]”<sup>95</sup> Contra to Janse’s broad portrayal of Calvin in this period as “renewed spiritualizing”, in *Consensus* article 16, Oberman notes Calvin’s distinct use of *sacramentum* with *res sacramenti*, that all receive the first, but only the *fideles* receive the *res*.<sup>96</sup> Thus, we can safely

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<sup>92</sup> *Mutual Consent in Regard to the Sacraments Between the Ministers of the Church of Zürich and John Calvin, Minister of The Church of Geneva* (1554) in *ToTS*, 240.

<sup>93</sup> *Mutual Consent in Regard to the Sacraments* (1554), 218–9.

<sup>94</sup> Rorem, “Did Calvin Compromise?” 86–9, Calvin omits his phrases: “exhibiting”, “instruments”, “through the sacrament”; while Bullinger, who sees the supper more as testimony of God’s grace, accepts the “implement” in substitute of “instrument” which is understood by Calvin as means of grace.

<sup>95</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 242–3. Cf. Calvin, *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 287.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

conclude that even when Calvin compromised on terminology for the sake of the *consensus*, yet he never left his substantial view of the Supper.

A rather important note is the sweeping change between Calvin's context and ours. Whereas presently the idea of union with the divine essence is suspiciously seen, Calvin on the other hand, liberally writes,

I do not restrict this union to the *divine essence*, but affirm that it belongs to the flesh and blood, inasmuch as it was not simply said, My Spirit, but, My flesh is meat indeed; nor was it simply said, My Divinity, but, My blood is drink indeed.<sup>97</sup>

The "divine essence" here is to be understood in *autotheos* of the Son, that the *hypostasis* of the Son has the whole divine essence/ *ousia* of God. Calvin affirms that it is not enough to interpret communion of flesh and blood merely "by virtue of fraternal fellowship, but [...] that our flesh which [Christ] assumed is vivifying by becoming the material of spiritual life to us."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, Calvin underlines again and again this ontological notion which he conceives pneumatologically of our union with Christ in the Supper; it is in this manner that Calvin maintains the Creator-creature distinction by not mixing substances.

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<sup>97</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 507. *Italics* added.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* in 541, Calvin agrees with Cyril that by eating the supper, "the body of Christ gives life to us, and by our participation in it leads us back to incorruption."



ii. *The Reality of Word and Spirit*

There is nothing much to be argued in Calvin's theology regarding the indispensable role of the word in explaining the sign.<sup>99</sup> Rather the more significant contribution of Calvin to the Supper discourse—even pervasive in his whole theology—is his understanding of the Spirit's work.<sup>100</sup> At the very beginning of book three of the *Institutes*, Calvin states that our union with Christ is due to the secret energy or work of the Spirit. There he refers back to 1.13.14–15 about “the eternal deity and essence of the Spirit” which is the Spirit's work in creation, thus he linked our enjoying “Christ and all his benefits” (according to the title of book three “The way in which we receive the grace of Christ: What benefits come to us from it, and what effects follow”) as the Spirit's work, not just as redemption of the creation but of the eternal inheritance (3.1.2).

What is then the reality of the Spirit? It, simply stated, is that without the Spirit's work, the ministry of the Word, thus also of the sacrament, would be utterly useless and unprofitable.<sup>101</sup> In fact, the aforementioned Christ's life-giving flesh, while properly understood by Calvin as *communication idiomatum*,

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<sup>99</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.4. Cf. 4.17.39.

<sup>100</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.7–13.

<sup>101</sup> Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 234, discuss a more nuanced relation of hearing—of the word, and seeing—of the sacrament.

cannot be separated from the agency of the Spirit.<sup>102</sup> Calvin again finds support in Cyril,

In the twenty-fourth chapter [of Cyril's third book] he distinctly maintains, that the flesh of Christ is made vivifying by the agency of the Spirit, so that Christ is in us because the Spirit of God dwells in us.<sup>103</sup>

So, through the Spirit, the reality for believers is not merely God with us/*Immanuel*, but also God in us; it is not only Christ *extra nos*, but also Christ *in nobis*.<sup>104</sup>

The Spirit enables us to participate in the body of Christ despite its absence in respect of place.<sup>105</sup> It is not only the virtue of Christ which is everywhere diffused in his bodily present understanding;<sup>106</sup> but that the Spirit also presents – thus the presence of the divine essence – both his virtue and his essence by a visible symbol.<sup>107</sup> It is in this mysterious manner that the body of Christ is given to us as food through the secret energy of the Spirit.<sup>108</sup> As a result, in the very same incomprehensible energy, we are connected with Christ as his members mysteriously.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 541.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *Inst.* 4.17.12.

<sup>104</sup> Gleason, "Calvin and Bavinck on the Lord's Supper", 294, referring to *Inst.* 3.2.16; 3.2.24; 3.2.39. I. John Hesselink, "Pneumatology," in *CH*, 305, citing van't Spijker, "'Extra Nos and in Nobis' by Calvin," in *Calvin and the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1989), 44.

<sup>105</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 510, 517.

<sup>106</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 49.

<sup>107</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 509.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 501–2.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

For Calvin, spiritual eating means the actual partaking of Christ.<sup>110</sup> Objections arise stating that since it is spiritual, it is not real or carnal. Calvin, in fact, dismisses the realism or essential misunderstanding of mixing substances by tirelessly emphasizing that the union is accomplished by the secret and miraculous agency of his Spirit, for whom it is not difficult to unite things otherwise disjoined by space.<sup>111</sup> Thus, Calvin differentiates that “the sacraments are mere servants, but the power to work rests with the Spirit, [...]”<sup>112</sup> Janse provides a clearer understanding on how spiritual means in Calvin. Spirit is not to be understood in contrast to flesh as “contra-physicality” and “contra-carnality” as in Erasmian understanding, but rather refer to “the Holy Spirit, God’s *Pneuma*, which is not outside creation, but is part of it.”<sup>113</sup> Thus a close link between creation and redemption in a Triune scheme is assumed in Calvin’s theology of Eucharist.

Calvin also employs “metonymy” to show that what is being spoken is not without meaning; that the body of Christ is referred to the bread should be interpreted in the same manner as Christ being the rock from which spiritual drink sprang forth for the Israelites.<sup>114</sup> But on top of that, to relate the life-giving

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<sup>110</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.33. Cf. David Willis, “Calvin’s Use of Substantia,” in *CEGC*, 290, points out Calvin’s high priority to articulate the nature of Christ’s presence is seen in his usage term of “substance”.

<sup>111</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 91.

<sup>112</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.9.

<sup>113</sup> Janse, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” 150.

<sup>114</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.21.

flesh with the reality of the Spirit, Calvin employs the metaphor of the sun and the fountain. The beam of the sun casts its substance, thus the radiance of Christ's Spirit imparts to us Christ's flesh and blood.<sup>115</sup> However, this metaphor would surely fit better to the descent of Christ, instead of the ascent of the believers. Meanwhile, for the fountain, the Spirit is like a channel (4.17.12) in which Christ's flesh acts like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life which springs forth from the Godhead into itself.<sup>116</sup> This life-flowing manner then fills the church as the body of Christ to its fullness (Ephesians 1:23), which is simply a great mystery (Ephesians 5:32).<sup>117</sup> Thus, the life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into us by the Spirit.<sup>118</sup> In our communion with Christ, the secret power of the Holy Spirit can join into one – not merely bring together – things that are separated by distance.<sup>119</sup> But there is no mixing.<sup>120</sup>

Calvin's view then can be restated thusly: that the whole Christ is truly present in the sacraments; and through his substantial body or flesh, Christ offers life through his Spirit that makes the sacraments effectual. In the sacrament then, believers not only experience the general reality of Word and Spirit which

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<sup>115</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.12.

<sup>116</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.9. In *Comm. John* 6:51. Cf. Thomas J. Davis, *This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 166.

<sup>117</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.9.

<sup>118</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 11:24.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 138. Cf. Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutherworth Press, 1956), 223.

<sup>120</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 11:24.

encompasses the whole of creation; but more specifically the reality of the incarnate Word and the resurrection-power of the Spirit, which is the eternal inheritance. As implied in *Inst.* 3.1.2. Christ, endowed with the Holy Spirit, came “to separate us from the world [natural life] and to gather us unto the hope of the eternal inheritance [heavenly life].” Therefore, it is worthy of acceptance when we say that the gift of the Supper is spiritual, thus means ontological; this gift transforms us ontologically in an eschatological manner to bear within us as has been done in Christ’s flesh. What God promise in our communion with Him through the sacrament is a an “elevated” reality than the reality of word and spirit in Creation; We participate in the ascended reality of the incarnated word in Christ’s life-giving flesh, inseparable from the resurrecting power of the Spirit.

#### ***4.1.3. Eschatological View of the Supper***

##### *i. Totus non Totum*

There are three kinds of limitations in receiving Christ: the historical period, Christ’s two natures, and our receiving capacity.

First, there is a gradual progress in the exhibition of Christ in the sacraments. In the ancient sacraments, that is the Rock was Christ, “Christ was connected to them, not locally, or by a natural nor substantial union, but sacramentally.”<sup>121</sup> While at present, where Christ is now presented more fully, the eating is

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<sup>121</sup> Calvin, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 10:4.

substantial; Christ feeds us with his flesh, from which we derive life.<sup>122</sup> The differentiation of these two periods (the pre-incarnation period, and the post-resurrection period) are due to Christ's complete work of incarnation in between these two periods. The aforementioned two periods are marked by the same absence of Christ's flesh, yet result in a progressive substantial change in the sacraments.

Second, Calvin also considers the Creator-creature distinction in Christ's two natures, from which the *totus sed non totum* notion appears; "Although the whole of Christ is everywhere, still the whole of that which is in him is not everywhere."<sup>123</sup> Calvin explains thus, "since the whole Christ is everywhere, our Mediator is ever present with his own people," thus the perpetual communion, "and in the Supper reveals himself in a special way, yet in such a way that the whole Christ is present, but not in his wholeness."<sup>124</sup> Christ is present in his divine nature, yet not in his humanity. Calvin clearly rejects the *ubiquity* of Christ's flesh. Christ the Mediator has chosen heaven as the abode of his human nature until he appears for judgment.<sup>125</sup> Christ in his body is absent in respect of place, but we can enjoy a spiritual participation in it.<sup>126</sup> "In respect of the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. As quoted by Henri Blocher, "Calvin on the Lord's Supper: Revisiting an Intriguing Diversity Part 2." *WThJ* 76, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 427. Also in *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 524.

<sup>123</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.30, n.8, from Peter Lombard.

<sup>124</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.30. *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 557–8.

<sup>125</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 515.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 510, 551.

presence of his majesty, we have Christ always; in respect of the presence of his flesh it was truly said, Me ye have not always.”<sup>127</sup>

Third, in his *Catechism*, Calvin mentions that the Supper is a means to confirm and increase the communion that the believers have with Christ; we do not receive Christ entirely, but in part only.<sup>128</sup> In this limitation, contrast to the one before, it is not of Christ being given, rather of the believers’ capacity in receiving. Calvin mentions this in his reply to Heshusius, “God is never seen as he is, but gives manifest signs of his presence adapted to the capacity of believers.”<sup>129</sup> This is another variation of Calvin’s theological principle of the Creator-creature distinction, the *finitum non capax infiniti*.<sup>130</sup> And in his *Short Treatise* Calvin says that “in this mortal life, Jesus Christ is never communicated in such a way as to satiate our souls, but wills to be our constant nourishment.”<sup>131</sup> Therein lies the reason of Calvin’s insistence for the Supper being celebrated frequently.<sup>132</sup>

We can conclude that in Calvin’s view there is a continual progress in receiving the gift of the supper. It is eschatologically driven. To what end does

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 562.

<sup>128</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 90.

<sup>129</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 509.

<sup>130</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.21. The idea is there, though the words are not; see Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21, n.35.

<sup>131</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.32), 182.

<sup>132</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.44.

the Supper lead? In partaking of Christ, as the only food for our soul, we may repeatedly gather strength until we shall have reached heavenly immortality.<sup>133</sup> The supper instills hope of the resurrection of the body as a kind of pledge.<sup>134</sup>

The eschatological gift of the Supper is such that we will have the same glorious body that Christ has (Philippians 3:20–21).<sup>135</sup> It is not an invisible and infinite body – the *ubiquity* of Christ’s flesh, but rather the same glorious body in our own flesh in heaven.<sup>136</sup> In the supper then lies the same promise that is offered in the gospel. Faith will be rewarded as sight, in which Christ is the object of both.<sup>137</sup> It is at the *eschaton* that the epistemological gift and the ontological gift of the Supper will be fully received.<sup>138</sup> Meanwhile, on earth, we are not left without blessings.

#### *ii. Fruits and Benefits of Christ’s Body*

Second, but not less important, are the blessings. Calvin thinks the sacrament is needful in general due to the weakness in human nature as not wholly spiritual like the angels.<sup>139</sup> This gives an ontological rather than soteriological reason

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<sup>133</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.1.

<sup>134</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 92–3.

<sup>135</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.29.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Inst.* 3.25.1. Cf. 1 Peter 1:8–9.

<sup>138</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.29. Thus the account of Stephen’s vision and the disciples on the way to Emmaus. See section 4.1.1.ii.

<sup>139</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 84. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 250–1, notes the inconsistency in Calvin’s view of weakness in corporeality as it tends to disrupt the understanding of accommodation in terms of grace.



underlying the purpose of the sacrament. In view of this, once *deification* is done, the sacrament would have run its course and bears no significance in the *eschaton*. Truly this would be the case because we would then enjoy the *res* of the Supper (fellowship with Christ) immediately, thus the *signum* can be left behind.

In the Supper Christ, by his power, applies the fruit of his passion and communicates his blessings to us.<sup>140</sup> Calvin never teaches the Supper as an offering or sacrifice, since in it we only receive and enjoy.<sup>141</sup> What Calvin emphasizes is Christ's perpetual sacrifice in terms of its effects and fruits, and thus not a new and independent repetition of Christ's sacrifice.<sup>142</sup>

These benefits are conferred through the Holy Spirit, who makes us partakers in Christ.<sup>143</sup> In receiving Christ then we receive, not only our life, but also our only righteousness, and salvation.<sup>144</sup> The benefits are not only limited to those three, for Calvin also lists – most likely in a complementary manner – redemption, sanctification, and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives to us.<sup>145</sup> In a more specific manner, Calvin mentions three results: by the sacrifice of Christ's death we are cleansed of sins, by Christ's blood we are washed, and

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<sup>140</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 507. *Inst.* 4.17.11.

<sup>141</sup> *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545), 90.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 529.

<sup>143</sup> *Inst.* 4.14.9.

<sup>144</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.23), 176.

<sup>145</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.11. Cf. 4.14.17.

by Christ's resurrection we are raised to a hope of heavenly life.<sup>146</sup> When the Spirit operates inwardly and his virtue is conjoined with the sacraments, these will prove a good means and aid to make us grow and advance in holiness of life, and especially in charity.<sup>147</sup> This means that Calvin, unlike Luther, does not polemically reject the *fides caritate formata*.

The fruits are too numerous to be mentioned fully, thus Calvin gives some examples: we may be confirmed in faith, exercised in confession, or aroused to duty.<sup>148</sup> Observing the supper – as Calvin says eating of the flesh of Christ – “is necessary in order that we may derive profit from its having been crucified.”<sup>149</sup>

The eschatological gift of the Supper results in holiness and love. As Calvin says in *Institutes* book 3, our union with Christ has holiness as its bond, but it is not by virtue of our holiness; instead by first cleaving unto him, we are infused with his holiness.<sup>150</sup> Again, there is no sanctification apart from communion with Christ.<sup>151</sup> It is a fitting conclusion to this section to quote from Calvin in the *Confession of Faith*, art. 31, that the end of the Supper is “to maintain us in the heavenly life till such time as we shall have attained to the perfection of it.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.33.

<sup>147</sup> *Short Treatise on the Supper* (1540, art.19), 174.

<sup>148</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.39.

<sup>149</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 562.

<sup>150</sup> *Inst.* 3.6.2.

<sup>151</sup> *Inst.* 3.14.4.

<sup>152</sup> John Calvin, *Confession of Faith in name of the Reformed Churches of France* (1562), in *ToTS*, 157.

## 4.2. Jenson: As Christ's embodiment in the Communion

In retrospect, Calvin contributes to a discussion of the Supper by “demythologizing” the notions of the transubstantiation and consubstantiation of the elements in the Supper. Jenson himself demythologizes metaphysical understandings of heaven and body due to his revisionary temporal metaphysics.<sup>153</sup>

The question that we seek to answer in this section is “how is the Supper conceived with respect to Jenson’s view of *theosis*?” We will do this in three parts: in terms of the reality of the divine discourse, in terms of Christ’s presence, and in terms of the church as *Totus Christus*.

### 4.2.1. A Divine Discourse Reality

As we have seen earlier in chapter two, the reality is conceived by Jenson as the divine discourse that opens to the future. Then how does Jenson conceive the reality of this divine discourse in the Supper that is real for God and for the church? Will there be any sacramental understanding left within Jenson’s temporal universe?

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<sup>153</sup> See *ST* 1.III: 12.IV where Jenson defends his temporal “unified” universe and rejects the three-stories pre-Copernican cosmology, due to no plausible accommodation for the risen Christ’s body in a homogenous Copernican universe.

*i. Its Content as Law and Gospel*

In his 2010 preface to *Visible Words*, Jenson says that there is one principle in explicating the fundamental notion about sacraments: “sacraments are actions to which the word of God comes and that the word is law that anchors us in the past and gospel that promises the future.”<sup>154</sup> In fact, Jenson’s explication on his view of the supper revolves around this statement. Unlike Calvin, who only links the sacrament to the gospel, Jenson sees the law is there as well. This is consistent with his view of the word, as the content of divine discourse, consisting of law and gospel. Jenson accepts Augustine’s definitive statement about sacraments as “visible words”, that “God’s word is a word with a bath or a meal or a gesture.”<sup>155</sup>

According to Jenson, the law is conceived in the sacraments because Jesus commands us to conduct the sacraments; thus it imposes obligations on the hearers.<sup>156</sup> However, the same sacraments also give us the gospel, that is God’s promise in which God becomes the one who assumes the obligation.<sup>157</sup> The

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<sup>154</sup> Robert Jenson, *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 2010).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Cf. Augustine, *John* 80.3 (*PL*, 35:1840; *NPNF*, 7:344), as quoted by Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 786.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

gospel is not only a verbal communication, but it also has its non-verbal aspect of communication; this means the gospel event must have its sacramental aspect.<sup>158</sup>

As mentioned in chapter two, this divine discourse is first of all the intra-Triune discourse of Jesus and his Father in the Spirit. Then, when we are commanded and included, this discourse envelops us. The discourse then carries the sacramental situation in which the discourse is real between Jesus who is also human and God the Father; then it becomes the converse of God and the congregation, as *totus christus*.<sup>159</sup> It is real in the sense that God can address us and we too can address God.<sup>160</sup> The content of the sacramental observation is “Jesus is risen”, placed in the narrative of Israel and the one Israelite, with its import in the final promise.<sup>161</sup> The sacramental, then, in Jenson’s understanding is to import the promise of the future into the present.

The relation of Gospel and sacraments are so closely related that “there can be no gospel without sacraments, yet neither are the sacraments an addition to the proclamation; they are the acting-out side of the proclamation, without which the proclamation itself does not occur.”<sup>162</sup> This indispensable character of the

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 5; also, p. 10, “[a]t the simplest level all forms of communication that are more than verbal, even if this is only the physical presence of the preacher and the sheer sound of his voice, or the appearance of marks on paper.”

<sup>159</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 28.III.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Robert Jenson, “Worship as Drama” in *The Futurist Option* (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 164.

sacraments is further affirmed by the repeatable instituted form; in this manner a normally audible communication becomes a visible sacrament.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to this, Jenson highlights a medieval theological maxim that there is no real distinction between God and his attributes; from which it can be deduced that God is his own word, and therefore what we “have” as we hear that Word is God himself.<sup>164</sup> This is then equally true of the Supper, as sacrament.

*ii. Anamnesis and Epiclesis*

Referring back to the 2010 preface, “sacraments are actions to which the word of God comes and that the word is law that anchors us in the past and gospel that promises the future.” The sacraments place us in a continuum of past and future temporality in our relation to God. The past and future orientation that Jenson describes as the law that anchors and the gospel that promises are captured in the terms *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*.

*Anamnesis* or remembering is an act to observe the command “Do this for my remembrance”.<sup>165</sup> It is a re-presentation, meaning “the making effective in the present of an event of the past.”<sup>166</sup> Jenson conceives this remembering as similar

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<sup>163</sup> Visible Words, 7, 11.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Jenson, "Luther's Contemporary Theological Significance," in *CCML*, 284.

<sup>165</sup> The word εἰς in 1 Cor. 11:24 normally translated as “in”, but Jenson translates it as “for” instead.

<sup>166</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II

to the Passover celebration which makes the Exodus present in the life of Israel.<sup>167</sup> *Anamnesis* then is a narrative remembrance of Jesus' past life at the present Supper.<sup>168</sup> This narrative is to be embodied, that is, dramatically performed, by acting-out.<sup>169</sup> When we perform this drama, we are being *anamnetic* which Jenson defines as "present reality created by a word of God that simultaneously evokes a past event and opens its future, to make it live in the present."<sup>170</sup> As *anamnetic* beings, we are shaped and encountered by the Triune God. *Anamnesis* refers to the past, that is the historical objectivity of Jesus. But Jesus is risen, thus his presence is different from the words of others; Jesus' word is a word of final promise.<sup>171</sup>

Drawing similarities to the structure of the Jewish meal, Jenson sees the doxology in the Supper as a narrative remembrance that "terminates in *invocation* of the fulfilment of the promises contained in [it]."<sup>172</sup> In this act, "the remembering of God's acts becomes a *reminding* of God about God's promises."<sup>173</sup> So, it is not we who are reminded, but God is. This is encapsulated in a prayer like this, "Remember, O God, the sacrifice of our Lord, and quickly

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> *Visible Words*, 72.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>170</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>171</sup> *Visible Words*, 53.

<sup>172</sup> Robert Jenson, "The Means of Grace, Part Two: The Sacraments," in *CD*, 338.

<sup>173</sup> "The Sacraments," in *CD*, 338, Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 28.II

bring the salvation for which he died.”<sup>174</sup> When God answers this prayer of remembrance, his answer “creates” just like his other addresses.<sup>175</sup> “But since in this instance the creative address is response to a reminder, it creates the present tense of a past event.”<sup>176</sup> In other words, it is a word-event based on the past to remind God of a promise that ensures His faithfulness to the last future (that is defined as eternity). There is a sense of eschatological intrusion into a sheer moment, as Bultmann posits, but not without temporal extension (if Jenson does not keep the promise part).

The result of this word-event is that the church exists as the Father’s answer as *anamnetic* being, like the resurrection of Jesus is the father’s answer to the Son’s cry; and so the church is formed and identified as the resurrected body of Jesus. The present exists due to the past event of Jesus’ life.

Concerning, then, the spirit: *Epiclesis* is understood as “an invocation of the Spirit to sanctify the gifts and the congregation.”<sup>177</sup> Jenson agrees with the Orthodox interpretation, quoting Archbishop Kirill that “[...] *anamnesis* is *essentially inseparable from epiclesis*. The Holy Spirit in the Eucharist actualizes what Christ has performed.”<sup>178</sup> Jenson also quotes Metropolitan Emilianos

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<sup>174</sup> *Visible Words*, 73.

<sup>175</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> “The Sacraments,” in *CD*, 340. Cf. *Visible Words*, 59.

<sup>178</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.VI, n. 74, Archbishop Kirill, “Significance and Status of BEM,” 85. *Italic* original.



Timiadis, that “[t]he Triune God...becomes...one with us, one body. This oneness is seen during the Epiclesis, the Eucharist being the climax of such communion.”<sup>179</sup>

The discourse in the Spirit means that we find the discourse not only as the narrative of the past that creates the present, but also as a promise of the eschatological future.<sup>180</sup> And so *anamnesis* cannot be separated from *epiclesis*, which means that the past identifies the future; the remembered Jesus is the presence of the coming one.<sup>181</sup> The narrated past is “re-presented” in the church by the power of the promise that the narration simultaneously is.<sup>182</sup> But is this “*anamnesis* and *epiclesis*” for real? In other words, how does Jenson characterize the future? He thinks this would need a redefinition of place or heaven by Jesus instead of a pre-defined heaven which Jesus enters.<sup>183</sup>

The character of the divine discourse is not one directional as to humans only; we too can address God the Father by reminding him of his promise (the gospel which assumes God’s obligation). It is during the sacrament, that humans defined as praying animals can now participate actively in the divine discourse.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., n. 75, Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, “God’s Immutability and Communicability,” *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 22.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 28.III.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> See 4.2.2. section for this discussion.

#### 4.2.2. *Christ's Presence*

In this second part, we are to explore Jenson's understanding of Christ's presence in the Supper, both with regards to his body and his Spirit.

##### *i. The Body of Christ*

In the discussion of the sacrament, there is a distinction made between *signum* and *res*. As commonly understood, "Signs" are things "available to sense" that point to something other than themselves, a "something", *res*, that needs signifying just because it is not thus available.<sup>184</sup> Jenson agrees with Thomas Aquinas that in the case of the bread and cup, the *res* is "the mystical body" of Christ, the Kingdom's fellowship of Christ and his saints, insofar as this is anticipated in the church's communion.<sup>185</sup> So, the body and blood of Christ is considered not as *res*, but rather as middle reality (*signum et res*), while the final or ultimate *res* is our communion with God and with one another.<sup>186</sup> In this manner, the church too is sacramental, thus broadening the scope of discussion previously limited in the Eucharistic presence.

In Jenson we observe there are three identifications when referring to the body of Christ: the proper body of Christ, then the church, and the elements (bread and cup/wine) as the body of Christ. These identifications, though they are

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<sup>184</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.I.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* Also in Hans Schwarz and Robert W. Jenson, "The Means of Grace," in *CD*, 358.

distinct, but are less so in Jenson. On the proper body of Christ, the idea undergoes some demythologizing interpretations due to Jenson's revision of metaphysics from spatial to temporal. Jenson demythologizes heaven into the transcendent future.<sup>187</sup> Appealing to Luther and Johannes Brenz, Jenson believes that the conception of a quasi-local heaven to contain Christ's proper body is simply abolished.<sup>188</sup> God's presence, which is omnipresence (and so of Christ at God's right hand), is understood in three senses: absence in dimensionally defined place; omnipresence as a person in a place as subject; and present sacramentally as availability as intendable and addressable there.<sup>189</sup> Therefore, the "physicality" notion of Christ's "body" has been purged; the body is redefined phenomenologically, "whatever makes a person available to and intendable by other people *is* that person's body."<sup>190</sup> There is no substance of being, instead being is becoming as word-event.

So, what is the manner of Christ's bodily presence in the Supper? Jenson holds that the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is not beyond the great mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>191</sup> Employing *communication idiomatum genus maiestaticum*, Jenson holds strongly to the unity of Jesus in his deity and

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<sup>187</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV. Cf. *ST* 2.V: 21.III, "Heaven is the presence in creation of earth's final future."

<sup>188</sup> "The Sacraments," in *CD*, 359.

<sup>189</sup> Jenson, "The Means of Grace," 359.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Jenson, "The Church and the Sacraments," 209.

<sup>191</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV.

humanity such that “where the deity of the Son is, there must be Jesus’ humanity, unabridged as soul and body.”<sup>192</sup> Christ, who is in God’s place, presents himself only by ontological context: “[he] is one way present in his Word, he is otherwise present at all points in created space, he is otherwise present in the hearts of believers, and so on.”<sup>193</sup> Why is this so? Because God *is* his own place, thus there *are* no plural created locations for God himself.<sup>194</sup> So in the Eucharist, Christ can be present in the bread and wine in one way, and in the gathering of the church in another way.<sup>195</sup> Christ’s body then is *ubiquitous*, not in extension or diffusion in space, but by being elevated beyond all locations.<sup>196</sup>

Regarding the church as the bodily presence of Christ, Jenson picks up from John of Damascus that the participants of the sacrament may be said to be co-embodiments of Christ.<sup>197</sup> Being co-embodiments of Christ in the Eucharist means there is a reciprocal act of receiving. Jenson elaborates in this manner, “we receive one another with Christ and Christ with one another; we at once receive Christ and the church in which we receive him.”<sup>198</sup> As the co-embodiment of Christ, the church also becomes the universal sacrament of salvation.<sup>199</sup> Its

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Jenson, “The Means of Grace,” 359.

<sup>196</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV.

<sup>197</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.I, John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, iv.13.

<sup>198</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>199</sup> Jenson, “The Church and the Sacraments,” 210.

“mystery” lies in the fact that there is an intimate union with God and the unity of all humanity.<sup>200</sup> The church as the body of Christ then serves two purposes, first that the world can find Christ in the church around his sacraments, and second that Christ can confront the world through his church.<sup>201</sup>

How can the bread and wine also be the bodily presence of Christ? Jenson demythologizes the unhealthy attention of the Reformation’s dispute by focusing not on the bread and wine as substances, but rather on the *mandate* to participate in “a specified ritual *use* of bread and a cup of wine.”<sup>202</sup> Jenson does affirm that the bread and cup are the contingent embodiment of Christ.<sup>203</sup> This is necessary, since a sacrament is visible words, the bread and cup become the gospel’s visible proclamation.<sup>204</sup> He then applies Brenz’s interpretation of “communication *constitutive* of reality” to sacrament in which the bread and cup are not only as signs (effective symbols of Christ’s body), but also as *res* (simply Christ’s body itself).<sup>205</sup>

Jenson sees these three identifications of “the body of Christ” as inseparable based on Paul’s usage in 1 Corinthians. The body of Christ can refer to both the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid. “Sacrament” is the latin/Vulgate translation of the greek “mysterion” in the bible.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Jenson, “The Sacraments,” in *CD*, 339, 349.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 360.

Eucharist's loaf and cup, and the church assembled around them.<sup>206</sup> From 1 Corinthians 10:16 the bread refers to the body of Christ, and from verse 17 the church also refers to the body of Christ.<sup>207</sup> So, the bodily presence of Christ as the bread and cup and as the community are not separable.<sup>208</sup> The church is no longer the co-embodiment of Christ, nor the bread and cup contingent embodiment of Christ, but both are the bodily presence of Christ. Thus, Jenson says, the Son is able to turn to the church and Eucharist in his self-identification in the same manner that the Father turns to the Son for his self-identification.<sup>209</sup>

In Jenson's thinking, we can relate these three identifications of the bodily presence of Christ with heaven: "if the space occupied by the sacramental elements is heaven, then the space the elements define around themselves is the gate of heaven; "<sup>210</sup> then the space or life of the church as communal gathering around the sacraments is also heaven;<sup>211</sup> these both are true because heaven as Christ's presence is defined as being where God takes space in his creation to be

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<sup>206</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV

<sup>207</sup> *Visible Words*, 86.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. *ST* 2.VI: 26.I.

<sup>209</sup> Robert Jenson, "The Body of God's Presence: A Trinitarian Theory," in *Creation, Christ and culture: studies in honour of T.F. Torrance*, ed. by Richard W.A. McKinney (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 90, cited by Jason M. Curtis, "Trinity, Time, and Sacrament: Christ's Eucharistic Presence in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson," *JCTR* 10 (2005): 32.

<sup>210</sup> Robert Jenson, "You Wonder Where The Body Went," in *ETC*, 222.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Jenson, "On the Ascension," 337. Heaven is defined as wherever Christ is when the Father works through him on creatures. The ascension of Christ then is defined as an event within creation. Jenson also asserts that Luther's definition of the church as "the Gate of Heaven" based on his understanding of Jacob's words in their sacramental sense. It is the place where the word is spoken and the sacraments ministered. Heaven then is what we enter as we live in the church.

present to the whole of it.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, drawing upon Luther, Jenson affirms the connection, that “the opening of heaven and the presence of Christ in the church are not different events.”<sup>213</sup>

Now, Jenson insists that “the present risen Christ is not a disembodied *pure spirit*,[...].”<sup>214</sup> But in his remarks, he insists that “[Christ] is spirit and body among us, is itself a vital promise of the gospel.”<sup>215</sup> Without the embodiment of Christ, Christ would be just a disembodied spirit (a charge to the Calvinist’s who assert that the body is received in heaven) thus Jenson argues that the gospel is not heard.<sup>216</sup> But as we have seen earlier, Calvin has rejected this false charge by showing that Christ is truly offered but not received without faith.

From the discussion of the body, we can’t find how the promise of the future in the word-event is characterized by Jenson except in the actualization of that promise as heaven, that is when the church and the elements become the embodiment of Jesus. Jenson affirms a thorough-going eschatology much devoid

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<sup>212</sup> *ST* 1.III: 12.IV. Cf. *Visible Words*, 49–50. The fact that Jesus is in heaven, that is the “right hand of God,” makes Jenson draw the conclusion that the where-about and when of Jesus is due to God knowing and/or intends him to be. In fact, due to Christ being an object, his presence can also be intended by Christians, in preaching the gospel and the Supper. This is in concord with the greater reality that the Triune God intends this reality to happen, that is it is in accordance with the written word of God.

<sup>213</sup> Jenson, “Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman,” 248.

<sup>214</sup> Jenson, “The Means of Grace,” 349.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

of any temporal extension. Viewed from the transcendental metaphysics, the future is already in the present of becoming; it is really a *specious* present.

*ii. The Spirit of Christ*

It is generally accepted that the specific eucharistic presence is “through” the word and “in” the power of the Spirit.<sup>217</sup> But what is the Spirit’s role in the Eucharist?

Communion of the church is a communion animated by the Spirit.<sup>218</sup> Related to *epiclesis*, the Spirit brings the reality of the risen Christ. Now, Jenson is aware that in Reformed theology’s view “the Spirit uses the elements to gain access to the assembled persons and create faith [...].”<sup>219</sup> Earlier in conceiving salvation ontologically, Jenson affirmed that faith by hearing is ontological participation;<sup>220</sup> thus this element of faith, though not so much referred to by Jenson, is a welcome corrective to the lack of it in the Lutheran tradition of the Eucharist. Jenson gives credit to the Reformed understanding of faith as true and necessary.<sup>221</sup> Thus, he affirms that the Spirit enlivens the assembled church and rests upon the eucharistic elements so that Christ’s embodiment in the church is

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<sup>217</sup> Robert Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 28.

<sup>218</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.VI.

<sup>219</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>220</sup> See section 2.3.1.ii.b.

<sup>221</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.



not a corpse, but the presence of the risen Christ.<sup>222</sup> This is the same position that Jenson earlier affirmed, that the role of the Spirit is to free the elements and the community gathered around them from their merely historical reality if they are to be the body of the risen and coming One.<sup>223</sup> The present aliveness of Jesus is the sacramental reality of the Spirit.<sup>224</sup>

Now Jenson affirms that Jesus ascended to heaven redefined as the future, but the presence of Jesus in heaven has also been redefined. Creation is defined as the place that God makes for creatures which is inwardly adjacent to God; while God himself is his own place in immediate sense.<sup>225</sup> In the same way, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus never really leaves this creation which is inwardly adjacent to God, but Jesus' presence constitutes what heaven is. Jesus transcends the creational space as the risen one, and is constitutive of God's transcendence of it.<sup>226</sup> The unified common reality of temporal cosmology is explained by Jenson in this manner,

His [Jesus] total self is located in God and in creation, and in either only because also within the other; within creation he is located in heaven and on earth, and in either only as within the other. [...]. Christ, as the second identity of God, is at the right

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.VI.

<sup>224</sup> *Visible Words*, 55.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>226</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

hand of the Father and just so can find his Ego in a community of earthly creatures and have that community as his body.<sup>227</sup>

So, Jesus ascended to the future which is heaven in creation. This is again a thoroughgoing eschatology, a collapsing of the temporal future into the present. Can Jesus be located? Jenson's answer is circular, "we are to locate the divine-human Christ where he directs us to find him, where he has "defined" his presence."<sup>228</sup> So Christ is in the future – which is in creation – but at the same time also in the present because of the word-event.

When reality is defined in the above manner, we wonder "where the Spirit went?", and whether there is any role at all for the Spirit. Thus, it is not baffling that Jenson eventually considers Jesus' presence only as the Spirit, and lacks in the distinction between Jesus and the Spirit. Below is an excerpt:

[...] Jesus is present – if at all – as the ultimately *coming one*, that his reality among us is the reality of the present communication of the last future, the promissory present granting of what will not be until the end. His presence is, [...] spirit; since he has died, he can only be present in the spirit that blows from the *last* future, the Spirit that God is. Where Jesus is, if he is anywhere, there is the "Holy" Spirit.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. We may remind Jenson of Jesus' saying, also addressed by Calvin to Heshusius: "[...] in respect of the presence of his flesh it was truly said, Me ye have not always."

<sup>229</sup> Cf. *Visible Words*, 53.

From the Reformed or even Western church's perspective, Jenson's position can be critically corrected by the *filioque*.<sup>230</sup> Jenson objects to the Western understanding of *filioque* that guarantees the Son's origin in deity with the Father. In fact his position is closer to the Greek Orthodox described in this manner, "[t]he Spirit does not derive his being from the Son, but does derive his energy from the Son."<sup>231</sup> This lack of distinctions of the Spirit's *persona* makes Jenson's understanding of the Supper tend to be a realized eschatology. Thus downplaying the role of the Spirit. We cannot find the characterization of the future in *epiclesis*.<sup>232</sup>

Jenson is aware of this thoroughgoing eschatological "tension", which he reluctantly affirms in order to escape the realized and thus non-temporal eschatology (devoid of temporal extension).<sup>233</sup> Thus he says that the presence of the Spirit makes one who participates in the Supper realizes that there remains an eschatological tension, between what was and what is at last to come; this eschatological tension is the Spirit.<sup>234</sup> Thus in the meantime, the Spirit acts as the

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<sup>230</sup> Cf. Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 230, quoted by Curtis, "Trinity, Time, and Sacrament", 37, n.14, "the presence of Christ is not *as* but *through* the Spirit, who is the mediator of both Christ's presence and his (eschatological) otherness."

<sup>231</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 9.IV.

<sup>232</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.I-II, on chapter "the great transformation," Jenson characterizes the *eschaton* by showing the purging of sin in a triune manner. But the characterization of the body is veiled behind the term *totus christus*.

<sup>233</sup> *Visible Words*, 55–6.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 56; "Christ as culture 2: Christ as art," *IJST* 6, no. 1 (Jan. 2004): 69–76.

power of the future to break the present open.<sup>235</sup> It is possible for the Spirit to do this because he is the Creator Spirit, a presence that will bring to a conclusion; in fact he is one who is the future as his very being.<sup>236</sup>

Jenson relaxes the tension by identifying the Spirit as the spirit of the Lord Christ—free from death and all hindrances to love—thus has the freedom to grant us freedom, which is the same freedom as the gift of the Spirit.<sup>237</sup> Then, on a more positive note, the Eucharist's gift the Spirit bestows in a realized eschatology is personal community, as the divine life itself as a community of persons.<sup>238</sup> However, we are still left with the abstraction of the Spirit regarding the future that should somehow contrast with the present.

In conclusion, despite Jenson's reluctance to the entailed eschatological tension, the Spirit plays an important enlivening role in the Supper. Without whom the church is not the body of Christ, and there is no real communion with the risen Christ. The presence of the risen Christ however is understood in the *ubiquitous* manner, of which his risen to the future lies in creation due to it being inwardly adjacent to God. Therefore, any distinction between the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit as the third person of the trinity is diminished. Jenson seems to express similarly to Bultmann's existential word-event in his construal of

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<sup>235</sup> *Visible Words*, 54.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>238</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.VI.

*epiclesis*. As the result, there is a downplay of a truly future eschatological element in the Supper. Clearly, we sense an incoherency here between Jenson's earlier presentations of the not-yet *promise* of the Kingdom and the communion as the *res*.

#### **4.2.3. *Totus Christus Reality***

On this third part, we ponder in what way the church herself as the embodiment of Christ, who performs the *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*, realizes the life she is in.

##### *i. Totus non Totum Communion*

Jenson believes the church exists "to remember Jesus' death, to proclaim his resurrection, and to await his coming."<sup>239</sup> But Jenson does not substantiate what Christ's coming will be in a bodily sense, in fact his eucharist understanding seems to substantiate Christ being more in the present church. The church lives a life of communion or *koinonia*.<sup>240</sup> This communion is grounded in and derived from the communion of the Triune God – or as Jenson prefers to say – the *life* of God, that is *perichoresis*.<sup>241</sup> "[As] the life of the Father and the Son in and by their Spirit, [God] is in himself a *communion*, and so has room for others to share his

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<sup>239</sup> ST 2.VI: 24.V.

<sup>240</sup> The communion here is a term used by Jenson to explain the intra-trinitarian life, thus should be differentiated from Calvin's understanding of the Supper as communion. Cf. ST 2.VI: 26.IV, "koinonia".

<sup>241</sup> "The Church and the Sacraments," in CCCD, 216.

life, if he so chooses.”<sup>242</sup> The communion that the church lives within the communion of the Triune God is what constitutes *theosis*.<sup>243</sup>

The church as the body of the Son in the triune community, exists to be taken into that community.<sup>244</sup> It is in the Johannine discourse that we apocalyptically overhear the inner conversation of the trinity, not without a purpose, that we may be one as the Father and Jesus are one (John 17:21–22).<sup>245</sup> Jenson heartily agrees with Cardinal Willebrands that “the church becomes a sacrament of the trinitarian *koinonia*. She finds her origin, her model, and her goal in the triune mystery.”<sup>246</sup> Thus the communion that the church has/is must be a *perichoretic* communion with each other.<sup>247</sup> This is best expressed in the Supper as communion between the church(es).

The church’s *koinonia* has its center upon the eucharist, both Christologically and pneumatologically.<sup>248</sup> Jenson says that “[b]aptism initiates into the *communio* that is the church; the Supper is that *communio*.”<sup>249</sup> However, as there are so many local churches, would there not be many communions instead of just one communion? This brought us to the eschatological tension of the one communion

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 217. Jenson normally uses “communion,” but in this book-chapter he uses community instead.

<sup>245</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> “The Church and the Sacraments,” in *CCCD*, 221.

among many “bodies of Christ”. The church is “short of the kingdom, [thus] one communion of God cannot meet as one body, and yet the fact remains that she is one body or she is nothing.”<sup>250</sup> In other words, this may be called the *totus non totum* of a local or visible church.

The Supper communion at present is a communion in anticipation which embodies the gospel-narrative, and not merely a past-tense narrative which is representation (a carried out of the sacrament as the law commands).<sup>251</sup> “To be brought into the fellowship of the supper is to anticipate belonging to the fellowship of the kingdom.”<sup>252</sup> The church exists in anticipation to be included in the triune communion.<sup>253</sup> It is the reality of “all in all” of the trinity’s embrace. But with the church in his acts becoming an *anamnetic* being, exists in his real reminding of the Father and invoking the Spirit, does the church have a real hope in his anticipation? Perhaps it is an antinomy of hope that has been realized in love; which Jenson describes in this manner: “when love comes, hope comes with it. So instead of ceases, the fulfillment of hope is in this case its own beginning, and thus forever.”<sup>254</sup> If this is the case, then despite the existing tension of the

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<sup>250</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.VI. Cf. “The Church and the Sacraments,” in CCCD, 216.

<sup>251</sup> *Visible Words*, 79.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>254</sup> ST 2.VII: 31.VI.

present and the future, it can only be a false dilemma. One truly lives God's life in the church's communion.

In the Christological locus, the promise-existence of Christ now appears as *totus christus* in the present church whose being is in anticipation. At the *koinonia* the risen Christ and his Father who now live in their Spirit will become the mutual love in which believers will limitlessly find one another.<sup>255</sup> This great goal of *koinonia*, for which the Son works and to which the Spirit draws us, is the Father's Kingdom.<sup>256</sup> There at the *eschaton*, the fellowship will assemble face to face.<sup>257</sup> By being a communion in anticipation and sacrament, the church is then called the gate of heaven.<sup>258</sup> The church is the present availability of the Kingdom, *totus non totum*. The kingdom is not conceived by Jenson merely spiritually; in fact the very existence of the sacrament as communion for the very intention of the saints to others and God would remain intact in the Kingdom.<sup>259</sup> There is a great continuity of the sacraments to the *eschaton* in Jenson's construal due to the antinomy of hope.

To correlate with the eschatological tension that we discussed earlier, we affirm the fact that the difference of "the body" between the present community

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.VI.

<sup>257</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.V.

<sup>258</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.IV.

<sup>259</sup> ST 2.VII: 34.II.



and the anticipated eschatological community lies only in terms of ecumenical “quantity”.<sup>260</sup> Jenson undermines the manner of the church as community as *signum* since the church is already a *res* at present as Christ’s body.

*ii. Sacrifice as Embodied Prayer*

Committed to his ecumenicity, Jenson seeks to bridge the eucharistic gap of the Roman Catholics and Protestants on their views in terms of sacrifice. The common starting point lies in the understanding of prayer. The death of Christ is interpreted by Jenson as a sacrifice, which is prayer with objects and gestures; it is the giving-over of oneself out of love.<sup>261</sup> The eucharist then is closely connected to Christ’s sacrifice.

What Christ does, the church participates in. Like the Son, the church hears the Father’s address too, who then participates in the priestly prayer and performs a sacrificial service; that is a perpetual prayer and praise, with the Son and in the Spirit, to the Father.<sup>262</sup> The Eucharist in its *anamnetic* aspect is understood by Jenson as an act of “sacramental sacrifice”.<sup>263</sup> In fact, the great

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<sup>260</sup> ST 2.VII: 32.VI, also Jenson, "Toward a Christian Theology of Israel," *PE* 9, no.1 (2000), 43–56, where he sees the eschatological community as a unity of the risen Christ: the church and Israel according to the flesh. Jenson’s idiosyncrasy conceives two peoples of God when the covenant has been renewed in Christ. His view is embedded in a dialectical process of history, with the notion that Jesus as the *Logos* is both the Law and the Gospel, where the Jews are considered as a community of the Law and the church as a community of the Gospel. It seems the Melanchthonian-Lutheran Law/Gospel dichotomy takes the principal, missing the correcting factor of the third use of the Law.

<sup>261</sup> ST 1.III: 11.VI.

<sup>262</sup> ST 2.VI: 26.VI.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. ST 2:218. Cf. *Unbaptized God*, 35.

high-priestly intercession of Christ before the Father is understood by Jenson as “of *Totus Christus*, of Christ with and as his Body of the saints, and neither of Christ *without* his saints nor of Christ *plus* his saints.”<sup>264</sup> Jenson connects the present with the past in this manner, “the eucharistic sacrifice is the sacramental presence of the sacrifice on the cross.”<sup>265</sup> Meanwhile in the present reality the risen Christ offers himself and his church, the *totus christus*, to the Father.<sup>266</sup> And this offering anticipates his eschatological self-offering, when he will bring the church and all creation to the Father that God may be “all in all”.<sup>267</sup> Therefore, according to Jenson, our participation in Christ’s priesthood is a middle reality, a simultaneous *signum et res*.<sup>268</sup> By saying it is both *signum et res*, Jenson has again sublated what should be kept distinct.

Jenson’s close connection to the Roman Catholic’s view find its common point in the church’s sacrificial offer of thanksgiving.

When the church in the Spirit offers thanksgiving to the Father for the Son and embodies this prayer as the bread and cup that are Christ’s sacrificed body, she is one with Christ in his self-giving and so indeed herself offers Christ.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> *Unbaptized God*, 43.

<sup>265</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.V.

<sup>266</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.I. Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 28.V.

<sup>269</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.V.

Siding with the Reformation, Jenson affirms that Calvary – the sacrifice of the cross – is not repeatable and the mass/ Eucharist can add nothing to it; and siding with the council of Trent, Jenson accepts the sacramental concept in Eucharist, “Christ at the Last Supper *left* to his church a sacrifice by which the sacrifice done on the cross should be *represented*.”<sup>270</sup>

However, Jenson also thinks that the Supper is a sacrifice truly, not only sacramentally. Because the purpose of the supper, with its presence as body and blood, is for the congregation’s eating and drinking.<sup>271</sup> Jenson’s thinking is in opposite to Calvin who endorses a spiritual eating. His insight however can be taken in a general sense; Jenson argues that to eat we must kill, in order to give life; while to eat without a prayer is blasphemy, but with God joining the act, the meal is a sacrifice.<sup>272</sup>

Then, Jenson highlights the bi-directional character in a sacrifice: “In sacrifices that include a meal, the life of the sacrificed living thing binds the god and his worshipers, its death being at once a return of life to the god and a gift of life to those who eat.”<sup>273</sup> In this bi-directional character, the fourth gospel’s farewell discourse in the context of Jesus’ return to the Father fits nicely to complement the supper account in the synoptic gospels. So, Christ unites the church to

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<sup>270</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.III.

<sup>271</sup> *Unbaptized God*, 28.

<sup>272</sup> *Visible Words*, 63.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

himself precisely in his sacrificial self-giving act to us and to the Father.<sup>274</sup> It is not just in solidarity or unity as *totus christus*, but the church really lives as *anamnetic* being from the sacrifice of Jesus, and also as the result of Jesus' prayer that found its answer in the Father's "Yes", and thus come to its present existence from the past event into her anticipation being of the future promise.<sup>275</sup>

In the end, Jenson sees the Eucharist simply as thanksgiving, which comprises: remembering, sacrificing and thanksgiving.<sup>276</sup> Thanksgiving is not only prayer nor proclamation, but encompasses both.<sup>277</sup> In our praise to God, there is a *remembering* of God's past acts, and equally an *invocation* of his future and final acts; So, thanksgiving has three essential components: doxology, recitation of saving history, and eschatological invocation.<sup>278</sup> By doing so, the congregation shares the very triune life of God.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.V.

<sup>275</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II.

<sup>276</sup> "The Sacraments," in *CD*, 349.

<sup>277</sup> *Visible Words*, 68.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 33.

### 4.3. Comparative Assessment

Having seen how both Calvin and Jenson articulate the hope of *theosis* in the Supper, we will now assess their views—in particular Jenson’s with his revised metaphysic, then compare the different characterizations of their views.

#### 4.3.1. *God’s Intended Speech*

In Calvin’s understanding, God’s intention is meant to exhibit himself in Christ through the elements. However, Jenson says the sacramental objects become the body of God because God intends himself in the sacrament.<sup>280</sup> Jenson correlates the concept “body” as visible and “spirit” as audible in a dialectical manner as co-existence.<sup>281</sup> They co-exist in this manner, Spirit is the transcending of self whose interior reality is the word as self-consciousness of one’s own body.<sup>282</sup> Since God as unity of consciousness intends himself and thus transcends himself, his intention in the elements of the supper then becomes his object.<sup>283</sup>

This way of understanding the Supper was refuted by Calvin in the past. In the example of the OT sacrament, Paul’s “the rock was Christ” does not mean Christ is “really” that rock but rather Christ is to be understood as the rock “sacramentally”. God’s speech then is understood as divine accommodation

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<sup>280</sup> *Visible Words*, 38.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 34, 35.

speech, and not as word-event speech. There is indeed an identification of the *signum* as “metonymy”, but not identification as *res* itself; Jenson however, following Thomas, addresses it as a middle reality, *signum et res*. This understanding which shows the closeness of *transubstantiation* and *consubstantiation*, is equally rejected in *Consensus Tigurinus* article 24, “For we judge it no less absurd to situate Christ under the bread or to join him with the bread than to transubstantiate the bread into his body.”<sup>284</sup> However, this does not mean Calvin disbelieves the word-event happens, as in the case of creation; rather Calvin’s divine accommodation speech is word-event in the virtue of the spirit; it serves as a pledge.

It also appears to be the difference between these two theologians. In Calvin, the paradigm of seeing in the supper is not undermined, in fact it holds up to the consistency in the layered cosmology to exhibit what is hidden. In Calvin’s paradigm of seeing, our union with God pneumatologically is not to be separated from *visio Dei* of Christ sacramentally. In Jenson, the paradigm of hearing is the main principle, while the seeing in the embodiment exists as its subsequent correlation.

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<sup>284</sup> Jenson, “The Means of Grace,” 356. “Consensus Tigurinus 1549, trans. Torrance Kirby,” in *RefRR* 18, no.1 (Mar. 2016): 40.

#### 4.3.2. *The Faith of Anamnetic being*

The notion of *Anamnetic* being has a strong Augustinian concept of time as *distentio animi*. Jenson reformulates time into *distentio dramatis* that lies in the supreme conscious life – God, not finite creatures. Here, in the eucharistic notion, Jenson reformulates the undergirded Augustinian understanding of present (that past is the past of present which lies in memory, and future as the future of present which lies in hope), as *anamnetic* being. It is not an abstract ritual of *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*, but Jenson connects these to Jesus’s life in the past (who is being re-presented as evocative remembrance) and to Jesus in/ of the future as the Spirit (who brings the promised fulfillment) by invoking/ reminding of the Father. In conducting the ritual of the sacrament, then, prayer is presented by “praying animals” who become *anamnetic* beings of the present in *distentio dramatis* to remind God of his promise in the future. Thus, the church becomes God’s counterpart and the two can reciprocally intend each other.

Jenson seems unable to fully attribute the conducting of the supper as an act of faith, which he sees in the Reformed faith as a more subjective element (granted it is the work of the Spirit). However, the two Reformation traditions are not as far distant as it may seem. In *Consensus Tigurinus*, article 19, there is a phrase that is not dissimilar to the Finnish Lutheran reading of Luther’s slogan “*In ipsa fide Christus adest*”:

... Yet *faith is not without Christ*, but inasmuch as faith is confirmed and increased by the sacraments, the gifts of God are indeed confirmed in us, and thus Christ in a certain manner increases within us, and we in him.<sup>285</sup>

Apart from the relation of faith and Christ, the consonant Lutheran understanding of gift (*donum*) is also represented there,<sup>286</sup> but the overall construction is marked with Calvin's own cautious and ambiguous word "*quodammodo*". Thus, the article shows that despite the critique of the Lutheran view of the supper (*Consensus Tigurinus* article 24), there is a much closer common view to the *deification* concept in the Supper among the three bulwarks of the Reformation: Wittenberg—Luther, Geneva—Calvin, and Zürich—Bullinger.

The sacrament acts as the means to increase the faith of the believer. But its administration is already an act of faith. This is seen in the notion of *memoria futuri* in *Lumen Fidei* where faith is seen in the present act of remembering the past about the promise of the future.<sup>287</sup> In a quote from Augustine: "Man is faithful when he believes in God and his promises; God is faithful when he

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<sup>285</sup> "Consensus Tigurinus, 1549, trans. Torrance Kirby," 39. Or in its book form, *Consensus Tigurinus: Heinrich Bullinger und Johannes Calvin über das Abendmahl*, eds. Emidio Campi and Ruedi Reich (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 263. *Italic* is added.

<sup>286</sup> Or perhaps the Augustinian tradition, Wim Janse, "The Sacraments," trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *CH*, 351, "the Lord's Supper is a divine gift and not merely the remembrance of a gift."

<sup>287</sup> Francis, "Lumen Fidei," *Encyclical Letter* (2013), art.9, [www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html) (accessed Mar. 31, 2020).



grants to man what he has promised.”<sup>288</sup> The faith means both God’s fidelity and man’s faith/ belief. In Jenson’s theology this is not necessarily out of place, since the acting out is based on the command of God, and obedience to that command is the response to hearing God’s word in the act of prayer/ sacrifice; it is faith as ontological participation. In Reformed theology the administration of the sacraments is the second mark of the true church, thus it has to be an act of faith. In addition, Calvin’s view of the subjective interpretation of faith does not contradict the objectiveness of faith on God’s side at the supper.

#### ***4.3.3. The Res of the Supper: Totus non Totum***

In his earlier writing, Jenson has interpreted the mystical body of Christ as the communion of the saints. The proper-body of Christ is not identified but is made identical (in Jenson’s term as “the whole object-reality” or “ontic identification”) with the church as community.<sup>289</sup> This strong identification is noted by Nicol as the *ecclesial hypostasis* of Christ.<sup>290</sup> Thus, Jenson says,

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., art. 10, cites Augustine in *Psal.* 32, II, s. I, 9: *PL* 36, 284.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. *Visible Words*, 46. *ST* 1.III: 12.IV.

<sup>290</sup> Nicol, *Exodus and Resurrection*, 258. Nicol interprets in Jenson this as an eschatological union (between Christ, Church and Judaism) which will be the second identity of the Trinity. See Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *PE* 2, no. 3 (1993): 303, quotes Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV/3, 867, The mystery of the church is “the identity of her being with that of Jesus Christ.” In view of the church’s relation with God, Jenson embraces Luther’s terminology *Larva Dei*/ mask of God in his *dramatis personae*. See Jenson, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 30:20–26, p.239. Cf. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 149.

[w]hen we pray, we properly look right at each other. When we gather, we gather around the bread and cup. When we mediate, it is on the gifts of the water. When we seek Christ's peace, it is in the kiss of a fellow believer.<sup>291</sup>

Jenson dissipates the *res* of the sacrament into communion with each other.

However, in his later article, Jenson has retained the mystery of the sacrament.

There he agrees with Thomas Aquinas in conceiving the *res* as “the mystical body of Christ”, in which we are sanctified through union with Christ and with his members.<sup>292</sup> Jenson still retains his earlier thought, taking his cue from Luther; “what the Supper bestows is ‘the fellowship of all the saints ... This fellowship consists in this, that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints are shared.’”<sup>293</sup> And so Jenson says “the communion [...] is first God's communion with us and just and only so our communion with each other.”<sup>294</sup>

Jenson sees the present communion as an anticipation of the final communion.<sup>295</sup> Thus, any present local gathering around the sacrament is *totus non totum*. For Calvin, the *totus sed non totum* lies in Christ at the supper, thus his life-giving flesh can only be partially received by the church though in an increasing manner. But according to Jenson, it is the opposite case; Christ is

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<sup>291</sup> *Visible Words*, 46.

<sup>292</sup> “The Church and the Sacraments,” in *CCCD*, 222, n.28, cites Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3.q.73.a1; q.79.a5. Cf. “The Sacraments,” in *CD*, 344.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 222, n.29, cites Martin Luther, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ*, *WA* 2:743. Cf. “The Sacraments,” in *CD*, 344.

<sup>294</sup> “The Church and the Sacraments,” in *CCCD*, 222.

<sup>295</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 26.IV.

wholly present but the church itself as *non totum* as the body of Christ. But what is the final communion that the church anticipates? It is the “all in all” of reality, to be included in the triune communion.<sup>296</sup>

There is present in Jenson’s concept an exhortation to ecumenicity/catholicity, but we sense the lack of the escalating eschatological sense when the church as present communion has been identified with the whole Christ.<sup>297</sup> It appears that Jenson has sublated Christ and the church into *totus christus* at and during the event of the sacrament. Can there be an urgency or longing expectation to the second coming of Christ, especially since his ascension (heaven) is already in the present creation? The sacrament has that tinted failure to maintain its promise aspect.

The church as communion is not missing in Calvin’s thought. It exists in his articulation of “brotherly love”.<sup>298</sup> He even seeks to work this out by confessional agreement with the Lutheran and Swiss reformation church, but as history shows, gaining just the fellowship of the Swiss brethren, but bickering resulted with the Lutherans. In Calvin’s theology, with the Reformation of the church as the background, the church cannot be the *res* of the communion, due to the

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<sup>296</sup> *ST* 2.VI: 28.II; *ST* 2.VII: 31.II; *Visible Words*, 39.

<sup>297</sup> Peter Kline, “Participation in God and the nature of Christian Community: Robert Jenson and Eberhard Jüngel,” *IJST* 12, no. 1 (Jan 2011): 58, has the same criticism, “The Church simply *is* the End.” As he explained further in n.108, “to be is to anticipate a future. And since the church is Christ’s body, what the church anticipates by anticipating the End is *itself*.”

<sup>298</sup> *Inst.* 4.17.38.

*corpus permixtum* of the visible church.<sup>299</sup> The *res* of the communion is “Christ himself” in the whole person: in his crucified and glorified body, and all his works.<sup>300</sup> The church partakes in that one body in a growing completion to the extent Christ offers his in our capacity.

The growth and increase of the church as the society of the godly is not absent in Calvin but not necessarily linked to the Supper. Torrance pointed out that the *Regnum Christi* is understood in an “already and not yet” manner by Calvin; in terms of Christ and His gospel the kingdom is complete, but in terms of the society of the godly, it still grows in increasing manner historically.<sup>301</sup> The end of the church is to be *societas divinae gloriae*.<sup>302</sup>

So again, the differences in conceiving metaphysical reality brings different understandings towards the *res* of the supper. In Jenson, it is more of a word-event that God brings to realization and makes the church *totus non totum* sacramental *res* as the embodiment of the *totus christus*. While in Calvin, the *res* is the body of Christ at the highest ontological layer which is offered in the *signum* to bring the union closer. The church simply participates in that *res totus non*

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<sup>299</sup> Cf. *Inst.* 4.1.2.

<sup>300</sup> Emidio Campi, "The Consensus Tigurinus: Origins, Assessment, and Impact," in *RefRR* 18, no.1 (Mar. 2016): 8.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 115.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 116, n. 7, Calvin, *Comm. Acts* 1:3.

*totum*. Brotherly love communion is the fruit of Christ's work in his body made effectual by the agency of the Spirit.

#### **4.3.4. *The Body of Christ and the Spirit***

The Supper discourse has its gordian knot at the issue of the ascension. On the one hand, there is Calvin with his non-negotiable Acts 3:21, and on the other is Jenson with the Lutheran addition of *genus maiestaticum* in *communicatio idiomatum* that results in the *ubiquitous* body of Christ. However, Calvin has articulated his answer to Heshusius regarding our union with God by employing both Cyrillian *communicatio idiomatum* along with Leo's emphasis on the two natures.<sup>303</sup> Therefore, the virtuous glorified body of Christ is in clear distinction from being identified with the Spirit.

Jenson's idiosyncratic concept of ascension is criticized by Burgess, where it can be described that:

Jesus' ascension into heaven is therefore His ascension into church and sacraments, and his bodily presence both with the Father and to the world is as these realities. Ascension is really about the withdrawal of Jesus' availability according to the manner of the resurrection appearances, so that He can be made available in these other forms.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Section 4.1.1.i, and 4.1.2.i.

<sup>304</sup> Andrew Burgess, "Chapter 8, Robert Jenson: Trinity, Ascension, And Ecclesiology," in *The Ascension in Karl Barth* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 173.

It is not incorrect to apply Burgess' analysis to state that Jesus' absence due to the ascension is missing in Jenson's.<sup>305</sup> If we compare the two, Christ's absence, according to Calvin, is due to the body being kept in heaven, but according to Jenson because the body is transformed to be present in other forms. Then on the presence of Christ's absence, according to Calvin this is due to the Spirit; but according to Jenson there is no absence of Christ because the *ubiquitous* body of Christ is omnipresent. Unless perhaps when the church is not assembled to conduct communion, then it becomes the absence of the omnipresent. This paradoxical statement is precisely the heart in Lutheran's soteriological view of presence.<sup>306</sup> That God's presence should be understood as *pro nobis*, otherwise God's omnipresent is basically hidden from us. This view then necessarily coheres to Jenson's teaching that "God is an event". The body of Christ as the embodiment of God then is an event; and this event is the reality brought by the Spirit, yet undistinguished from the risen Christ.

What is lacking in the Lutheran theology because it is impossible for the church to be continuously gathered as communion is not an issue in Reformed theology due to the spiritual nature of communion that is perpetual.

From the reformed perspective, the collapse of eternity into temporality, of heaven from spatial to temporal has contradicted the scripture's portrayal of

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<sup>305</sup> Cf. Burgess, "Robert Jenson," *Ascension in Karl Barth*, 187.

<sup>306</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 33.

Jesus as the one who is absent bodily due to his ascension. Jenson's argument for the gospel however lies in its contingency, not to be seen as an ontological deficit.<sup>307</sup> He then emphasizes the bodily presence of Christ by and with the church and the sacrament. The Reformed can only object with no tangible flesh and blood of Christ's own body. Kline observes this irony,

the disappearance of the singularity of Jesus in favour of a ubiquitous church is due to the fact that, despite the deepest intentions, the history of Jesus is not what is most determinative for Jenson's doctrine of God.<sup>308</sup>

The ontological deficit of the Son is shown to be the result of Jenson's correction towards the past interpretation of pneumatological deficit. Then again,

the concrete, singular existence of Jesus of Nazareth as the outgoing movement of God is sublated into a more basic depth in God — the communion of the church.<sup>309</sup>

Now, to restate Calvin's pneumatological understanding of the supper. Through the powerful work of the Spirit, we are made partakers of Christ's life-giving flesh which is now in heaven. This life-giving flesh is the same incarnated, crucified, and resurrected flesh which Christ himself made vivifying, being united to the ineffable whole by the mode of union.<sup>310</sup> The union is natural in the

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<sup>307</sup> Jenson, "A Reply (1999)," in *TRM*, 3.

<sup>308</sup> Kline, "Robert Jenson and Eberhard Jüngel," 59.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> In fact the vivifying of Christ's flesh is not only the work of Christ and the Spirit, but also of the Father. Cf. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 94 quotes C.R. 34, p.191, or *Psychopannychia*, trans. Henry Beveridge, (1851).

Father due to Christ's *homoousios*, and in us by his incarnation; thus the *totus* Christ in his *hypostatic* union is offered in the sacrament, yet we receive him *non totum* due to his *extra* qualities. Obviously, Calvin achieves the brevity, but the present author hopes to make the point even more clearly.<sup>311</sup>

In the sacrament Jenson does not conceive the presence of Christ in his lordship, but sees his divine lordship as the "complete submission" to be identified with us, thus his presence can be found in the elements that can be pushed around.<sup>312</sup> This has a different nuance with Calvin whose accent firmly holds to Christ's Lordship, and so his presence in the elements, which then inhabit us, are due to the virtue of the Spirit.

Can we agree with Jenson, who claims that his interpretation is a Christological interpretation, while Calvin's is pneumatological interpretation?<sup>313</sup> Not quite, because Jenson holds to the opposite understanding of lordship. At best his view is much closer to kenotic Christology rather than to Luther's.<sup>314</sup> In Calvin, the spirit is identified as the Son's spirit; and coupled with the view of familial meal by the Father, Calvin's view is more trinitarian and soteriological.<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, Calvin objects to the notion of Christ being

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<sup>311</sup> "while, we remaining in him, he remained in the Father, and remaining in the Father, remained in us."

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Jenson, *Visible Words*, 37.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Carl E. Braaten, "The Person of Jesus Christ," in *CD*, 510. More discussion in 5.1.2.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 203.



separated from his spirit. Jenson, like Heshusius, believes that Christ can be present in/ with his creatures in many ontological contexts. Calvin can still accept this position, viewed in the broad mediatorship of Christ and *Creator spiritus* notion. But in the Supper, this is totally unacceptable; Calvin asserts his axiom, that Christ, considered as the living bread and the victim immolated on the cross, cannot enter any human body which is devoid of his Spirit.<sup>316</sup>

Thus, we can say that Jenson conceives the Supper more as a Christological phenomenon, meanwhile Calvin tirelessly explains it as a pneumatological reality due to his polemical context. Calvin is in a better place as a faithful defender of the *filioque*. Calvin says the power of the Spirit is able to bridge the separating distance between Christ's body in heaven and ours on earth, even to the extent that we are bound and joined together in union with Christ. Meanwhile, Jenson, who also acknowledges the Spirit's role in the Supper by *epiclesis*, fails to make a proper distinction between the Spirit and Christ. The "ecclesial hypostasis" of Christ in Jenson has imperiled the significant role of the Spirit. Thus we come to the irreconcilable of these two positions.

#### ***4.3.5. The Core of the Problem: Aufhebung***

The supper as a means of grace has its hidden promise revealed to us. For Calvin, that future expectation is the present spiritual reality of our growing

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<sup>316</sup> *To Dissipate the Mists of Tileman Heshusius* (1561), 527.

union with Christ in our ascent in the Supper. For Jenson, the expectation lies in waiting in anticipation of the future that is carried forward to the present as the body of Christ.<sup>317</sup> Or is it? Though the terminology of *prolepsis* is only being used once, it seems to fit to the eschatological emphasis Jenson has in his theology. But Jenson is no ordinary hope-eschatology theologian. *Prolepsis* is under the arch-rule of *Aufhebung*.

When we revisit the previous issues, the eradication of transcendent “heaven” so that the transcendent Jesus exists in his undistinguished presence as “spirit”, whose presence was transformed from body into the availability of presence of the *ecclesial hypostasis*; these issues have their locus in Jenson’s view of the end, that is *Aufhebung*.<sup>318</sup> Jenson appears to solve these issues in his answer of the gospel as God’s promise of the future, which can be seen in a thoroughgoing eschatological manner. The reality which is described is beyond divisions and the incompleteness of time.<sup>319</sup> But this is a camouflage of *Aufhebung*. Jenson was not critical enough of Hegel. The dialectic logic of Hegel embraces all elements of the truth that appears only to be seen as false oppositions; these then to be left behind (*Aufheben*) at the end. It becomes difficult also to pinpoint Jenson’s position, since he affirms and refutes what are opposites at the same time. In the

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<sup>317</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 8.IV.

<sup>318</sup> See section 1.3.1.iii. of *Aufhebung* as Hegel’s term.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Jenson, *Visible Words*, 48.

transcendent, eschatological reality, everything that was passed on the way is relativized.

An example of this is shown in Jenson's understanding of the *totus christus*, as the individual Christ, the *totus Christus* is sinless; as the community related to the one Christ, the *totus Christus* is sinful. God as the Christ of the community is "the chief of sinners"; as the one before whom the *totus Christus* stands, he is the righteous judge of sin.<sup>320</sup>

And again, see how he tries to differentiate between the Son and the rest of us:

Were I, within the eschatologically perfected *totus Christus*, to say "I am God," the first person singular would remove me from the union, so that the sentence would be false. It would be after all be the "old man" talking, the person not yet one with Christ and so still implicated in the communities of domination. But Christ has no old man; and if we can imagine him within the triune-human community saying "I am God," it would be a simple and human observation of fact.<sup>321</sup>

Such is the manner of *Aufhebung* where the false opposites of the past are sublated such that each retains its character/ identities in the new state of the *eschaton* as "coming-to-be" and "ceasing-to-be" between the identities.

It is indicative that this inherent *Aufhebung* is inherited from Luther himself with his well-known remark *simul justus et peccator*; that he can even give his extreme advice, which would be unthinkable in Calvin's theology, to "sin

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<sup>320</sup> ST 1.II: 5.V.

<sup>321</sup> ST 2.VII: 33.II.

boldly”.<sup>322</sup> That trace is found in Hegel, who describes himself a Lutheran, as he shares a similar trait in his philosophy.<sup>323</sup>

Nicholas Adams observes that *aufheben* in Hegel’s logic is possible due to false oppositions; these are distinct but in relation, thus he terms Hegel’s logic as a Chalcedonian logic.<sup>324</sup> Stephen John Wright employs this Chalcedonian logic, then defends the fact that Jenson has not been treated as a Hegelian enough by his critics.<sup>325</sup> In a similar constructive critique, David Bruner proposes a stronger dose of Hegel’s theory of recognition in Jenson’s pneumatology.<sup>326</sup> But Jenson’s Chalcedonian Christ fails to make a distinction between the two natures; in such a case *Aufhebung* in Jenson has to be interpreted as the erasure of differences.<sup>327</sup> Jenson’s Cyrillian, without the Leonine, interpretation of a Chalcedonian Christ has erased the distinct natures which are at the same time ubiquitous and kenotic.

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<sup>322</sup> Independently, Zizioulas and Torrance too see Luther as dialectical. Cf. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 242–3. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 142.

<sup>323</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, 102. Cf. Schwarz, *Theology in A Global Context*, 19–20, notes of Hegel following Martin Luther’s dialectic of the finite and the infinite and a coincidence of opposites in Luther’s famous Christmas hymn. “The infinite being, filling the immeasurability of space, exists at the same time in a definite space, as it is said, for instance, in the verse: “He whom all heavens’ heaven ne’er contained/Lies now in Mary’s womb.”” [G. W. F. Hegel, *Fragment of a System*, trans. Richard Kroner, in *Early Theological Writings*, 315. Cf. Martin Luther’s hymn “Gelobet seist du, Jesus Christ,” stanza 3.”]

<sup>324</sup> Nicholas Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>325</sup> Stephen John Wright, “Restlessly Thinking Relation: Robert Jenson’s Theological Uses of Hegel” in *Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 140–161.

<sup>326</sup> David Bruner, “Jenson, Hegel and the Spirit of Recognition,” in *IJST* 21, no. 3 (29 Jul 2019): 314–335.

<sup>327</sup> Contra Wright, “Robert Jenson’s Theological Uses of Hegel,” 153.

Jenson creates confusion with his ambiguity in distinction which can be avoided by employing adjectives like “identical” and “identifiable”. For example, the three identifications in referring to the body of Christ: the proper body of Christ is identical with the body of Christ; the church as the body of Christ is in an identifiable sense, not identical (so as *signum*, not *res*); while the bread and cup as the sacramental body of Christ are not identical (also as *signum*, not *res*). But Jenson wants to strongly affirm the real presence of Christ’s body as *totus christus*, thus his employing the terms “whole object-reality” or “ontic identification” which creates confusion.

The root cause of Jenson’s problem such that a thoroughgoing eschatology in his view of the sacrament appears is due to his redefinition of the resurrection body of Jesus.<sup>328</sup> He bereaves the eschatological paradigm for the real characterization of the future that the church anticipates, that is the real resurrection body just like Christ has received. Jenson confirms our reading in his statement that “the *totus Christus* needs nothing more to be embodied than full congruence with the eternal *perichoresis* of the triune life.”<sup>329</sup> If Jesus has no

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<sup>328</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 26.III, “When the Eucharist is celebrated, Christ’s promises of the Kingdom and of his presence in it are in fact fulfilled: even though the Kingdom is still future so long as we are not risen, each celebration is already a wedding feast.”

<sup>329</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 33.IV. Cf *ST* 2.VII: 33.VI, matter is malleable as what God’s intends.

real resurrection body, what kind of resurrection should the church expect at the *eschaton*?<sup>330</sup>

#### 4.4. Conclusion

Both Calvin and Jenson have a high view of the Supper in our communion with God and each hold on to their metaphysics presupposition that fits their own theological construction.

The three aspects of *theosis* in the sacrament are coherently presented in Calvin: in the epistemological aspect as exhibition, in the ontological aspect as participating in the life-giving flesh of Christ thus growing in closer union through the spirit, and in the eschatological aspect as receiving the benefits of Christ's work and himself in *totus non totum* manner.

Jenson's eschatological understanding appears inconsistent in his Eucharistic view. As *anamnetic* beings, the epistemological-ontological-eschatological aspect of the praying animal's being as *ens est surgere* has been brought to its full realization at present as Christ's *ecclesial hypostasis*. This has imperiled which at first was the endearing expectation of *totus christus* at the *eschaton*.

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<sup>330</sup> Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 145, independently has similar conclusion in his assessment towards Lutheran eschatology in celebrating the Lord's Supper, "the hope of the resurrection would be *destroyed*."

Jenson's rigorous method in history to the sublated end has costed: the missing proper body of Christ and his identity in distinction from the Spirit; the eschatological transcendentalism of the church as *totus non totum* communion. Jenson seems to endorse a truly lived God's life, realized in love that brought along the antinomy of hope in what is supposedly the "not-yet" side of this *aeon*. Though there should be an expectation to be included in the *perichoresis* of the Triune communion, this too has been *Versöhnung* (*Aufhebung*) at the point of sacrament.

The communion in Calvin is a pneumatological reality by our ascending to heaven to be united with and thus participate in Christ's human bodily substance. We will be life-giving spirit due to our partaking of Christ's life-giving flesh. For Jenson, heaven is transposed to an actual event in temporal reality with the community as the available body of Christ. In Calvin's supper, we have an increasing substantial communion as noted in the different stages within the progress of history. But in Jenson's this progress in communion is conceived ecumenically, as to be embodied in a greater openness that leads to the unity of the church. The truth of the matter is: our communion is a progress towards that union, not that union itself. In Calvin the progress has a vertical accent, while in Jenson a horizontal one.

In conclusion, Calvin's view of the supper as sacrament is trinitarian in that it respects the Chalcedonian definition of Christology in the hypostatic union of the

two natures, is spiritual in nature such that it does not undermine the role of the Spirit, and has a clear expectation of *theosis* as union with God in epistemological, ontological and eschatological aspects. Jenson's view is a temporal trinitarian that sees the church as Christ's body, not only sacramentally but really becomes the gate of heaven; that is an intrusion of the future manifests in the here and now as *signum et res* of the triune communion. While the supper maybe a parting subject in our discussion, nonetheless it should be celebrated frequently in brotherly love as Christ's body towards our union with Christ as our head.



## CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION

In this chapter, we are conducting a systematic theological assessment to evaluate Jenson's concept of *theosis* using criteria derived from Calvin's theology as our theoretical framework. The three criteria are: (i) the Creator-creature distinction in rejecting the notion of transfusing God's essence into man, (ii) the emphasis on Christ's human nature as the locus of God's righteousness in his mediatory role, (iii) the pneumatological transformation of self in the mystical union with Christ.

### 5.1. First Criterion: The Creator-creature Distinction

In this section, we first assess Jenson's conception of his presupposed metaphysics, which is reconstructed from his revisionary Triune God conception in temporal futurity accent. Then we assess Jenson's reconstructed notion of God's *ousia* based on his view of the Cappadocians' understanding. Lastly, we also assess Jenson's notion of the immanent trinity. In all of these assessments, we also critically engage with Calvin's own conceptions.

#### 5.1.1. On Metaphysics Based on Nicene Trinity

In Jenson's temporal triune metaphysics, *theosis* is corollary possible. The notion of triune God is fundamental to Jenson's reconstructed metaphysics, which opens up a possibility of mutual interactions between Creator and his creatures.

Jenson identifies the triune God as the determinants of all the poles in temporal reality: the Father as the whence, the Son as the specious present, and the Spirit as the whither. As such, in this temporal framework, God is not only active in history, but history itself is encapsulated within God's temporal infinite reality. Furthermore, history is not just a means of God's self-revelation but is constitutive to God's dialectical selfhood of being as Triune. We will return to God's dialectical selfhood in Jenson. But first, spatial in temporality as spatial narrative is made possible due to the dialectical interaction of the Triune God seen in his discourse. The triune discourse is the encompassing reality of God who is "roomy" due to the differentiation of the Father and the Son. Founded on this reality, creation comes into existence in the spatial narrative of God's life as a discourse.

As for Calvin, we may think he inherits the traditional Platonic metaphysics, and therefore was not critical enough in his presupposed metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> In defending Calvin, Torrance pointed out that notions such as "the body is a prison of the soul" is a reference to Pauline expression of the body of death as found in Romans 8:10; then "lifting up of our heads above everything earthly" can be referred from Psalm 73:17 of Asaph's entering God's sanctuary and gazing upon

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<sup>1</sup> The *extra Calvinisticum* notion surely does not squarely fit Calvin into the Platonic metaphysics. Cf. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 31, who sees that Reformed *theologoumenon* of the Ascension rejects the receptacle notion of space without losing dimensional character of Christ's human body.

the end (truth).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in Calvin's metaphysics, eternity *ad intra* is conceived in a more static manner, which has no before nor after in it. The *ad extra* reality is more dynamic. The reality of creation is accommodated yet escalates progressively to reach the *telos* of history in the triune God himself as the "all in all" reality. Therefore, despite his Platonic leaning, Calvin's metaphysics is not deistic. Rather it is open for creatures' participation in the economic Trinity from the very beginning of creation.<sup>3</sup>

Jenson has shown how his revisionary metaphysics is constructed, not as an adoption of existing Hellenistic metaphysics, nor to conceive it as an absolute independent entity apart from God. Rather, his scriptural pointed metaphysics is dependent on and defined by the Triune God's relational being as discourse.

Now, Jenson seeks to maintain that dialectical tensions are constitutive to God's life; not only of the Father-Son relationship, but also between each identity of the triune God who are then reconciled by the other of the two.<sup>4</sup> Jenson purposely maintains these tensions to avoid the possibility of a modalistic interpretation of God's self-hood. Therefore, for God to be personal, each identity of the triune God is active in a consciousness-dialectic struggle, as social *persona*. Jenson rejects the unknown *ousia* as being; thus each identity is not

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<sup>2</sup> Torrance, *Kingdom and Church*, 92, 140. Cf. *Inst.* 3.9.6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Comm. John* 1:4. Just like Augustine. Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 102, n.17.

<sup>4</sup> See section 2.2.1.i.b, n. 551.

*autotheos*/ *a se* who is sufficient in his *hypostasis*. Despite Jenson's referral to Nazianzus writing, he doesn't employ Nazianzus' *autotheos* notion.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the inner Triune God's struggle is made prominent in the "I-Thou" relationship. This relational discourse is characterized by its openness; where one is being addressed by the other, who then enters this struggle as one consciousness with another consciousness. The nature of God's being then is in becoming or relational.

Jenson could actually show how God reconciles himself triunely;<sup>6</sup> but he is willing to give up this "neat geometry" in his commitment to the life revealed in scripture's narrative.<sup>7</sup> He chooses to follow just one type of struggle from Hegel (the obvious one in the scripture narrative) of subject-object/ Lord-Master struggle: the Father as the immediate consciousness and the Son as the ego/ object of consciousness. Meanwhile the Spirit holds the role in reconciling (*Aufhebung* in *Versöhnung* sense) the Father and the Son.

Due to this accent of futurity (*Aufhebung* by the Spirit), Jenson fails to maintain a faithful scriptural account of the Spirit as *being sent* by the Father and the Son. This account can only appear in a subordinate manner in the divine economy. While Jenson insists that the Son's deity is to be located in his "subordinate" role,

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<sup>5</sup> See 2.1.1.i.c, n. 322. Cf. *ST* 1.II: 6.III, n.114

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jenson, "Reconciliation in God," 160–6.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 9.VI.

but the Lordship of the Spirit does not appear possible through the same subordination in divine economy.

The Son as “Master” can be understood in Calvin, who maintains the two natures of Christ distinct. Calvin makes a distinction between the eternal Son and “Christ as an office” that the Son takes this official role as both Creator and Redeemer. As such, the eternal Son in his office *as* Christ is always subordinate. The Son in his divine nature is always LORD, but in his human nature Christ becomes master (*adonai*/ Lord). The Lord-master struggle then is seen to be internal in the Son’s life himself (in his two wills) and not as the intra-Trinitarian struggle. In Calvin, the overcoming of the Son has vivified his human flesh, which in his *hypostatic union* brought to ascend, reign and bear the Lordship of the Son; that all along has never slipped from his *extra* divine nature.

Now, upon consideration of the Nicene trinity, Jenson seems to have an advantage in his concept of God’s time as analogous. There is a certain before and after with regards to the Father’s eternal act of begetting the Son; though it can’t be plotted on a linear timeline. As such, Jenson’s triune concept is more dynamic or lively. Jenson complements the notion of the Father as *arche* in the triune with his notion of the Spirit as *telos*. Since the metaphysical reality is conceived as temporal, this dynamic is true both in the triune God and in his created world.

Calvin, on the other hand, considers this eternal act of begetting foolish to imagine due to the three persons having subsisted in God from eternity. This is due to Calvin's notion of *autotheos*, which affirms that the Son and the Spirit, each like the Father has the whole *ousia* in their respective *hypostasis*. Therefore, in Calvin, the absence of *perichoresis* seems to imply that it bears no real significance whatsoever in the state of static eternity. In Calvin, the Creator-creature distinction is properly secured with the static eternity (*ad intra*) and the dynamic temporality (*ad extra*); the gap between these can be bridged with God's act of divine accommodation which has reached its climax in Christ as the mediator in redemption. We should note, however, that in Calvin's thought, static eternity is not a negative notion. For the saints, it is a blessed state of *post-mortem* rest from the toil and war occurring in this world; a peaceful *post-mortem* vision as described in *Psychopannychia*.

How is the Creator-creature distinction maintained in Jenson's theological construction? Jenson finds his support in Gregory of Nyssa's *epektasis* by locating the transcendence not in a spatial sense but in temporal sense. Infinity as such is God's activity in his freedom that creatures in temporal activity cannot keep up with. In this way, Jenson purges the vestiges of modalism of two disjunctive realities while at the same time subscribing to the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility.

In a typical Lutheran interpretation, Jenson's theology fits perfectly with the paradoxical interpretation of God who is both hidden and revealed in his self-manifestation. In Calvin, however, as affirmed by Muller, the incomprehensibility of God is maintained by divine accommodation, which is gracious as he reveals to us what is necessary for our salvation, and hides from us the awesomeness and incomprehensibility of His majesty.<sup>8</sup>

The incomprehensibility of God is the reason why the identity of Christ does not perfectly coincide in Calvin. This can be figured in Christ's kingly office. As Oberman notes of Christ's divine nature "[...], the eternal Son of God manipulates the kingdom of Satan as part of his hidden and incomprehensible reign."<sup>9</sup> Christ's *duplex regnum* means that he rules over the church and outside the church (*etiam extra ecclesiam*); He is mediator of creation as *logos asarkos* in his divine nature, and mediator of redemption as *logos ensarkos* in his two natures.<sup>10</sup>

With regards to Jenson's radical revision metaphysics that reject any divine extra-temporal reality, a point of objection is raised, "how can the reduction of the divine reality into an aspect of time (the future) be accepted by the Reformed criteria?" The author believes that Jenson has not reduced the divine reality, but rather Jenson believes the future as personal, conceived as the Spirit. This is a

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<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Muller, "The Foundation of Calvin's Theology: Scripture as Revealing God's Word," *DDSR* 44 (1979): 20.

<sup>9</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 239.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 238–9.

welcome correction to our pre-critical metaphysics that consider time as one of "the conditions of possibility" instead of founding it on the triune God. The Spirit is the future for us and also for God himself.

We see that in Calvin's theology, he arranged the locus of election/ predestination close to the locus of eschatology/ postdestination (see sec. 1.3.2.iv). This arrangement provides a room for development in Calvin's theology; not only to view our salvation protologically as pretemporal eternity perspective, but also eschatologically within our present existence (or specious present in Jenson's term) as we are orientedly drawn by praying for that future to come.<sup>11</sup> Jenson's revisionary of temporal future carries no possible conflict for it to be rejected in the Reformed temporal notion.

In his metaphysics Jenson can maintain the Creator-creature distinction. However, what is at stake, derived from Calvin's *autotheos* theology, is the *homoousios* quality which determines the Son, and the Spirit, each *hypostasis* is equal to the Father, that in which no creatures can participate. While in Calvin this condition seems to make *theosis* an impossibility, for Jenson is the contrary with the imbalance of the Son's lordship deficiency.

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<sup>11</sup> See 1.3.2.iv of Calvin's *1545 Catechism*, petition on the Lord's Prayer that connects the coming of the kingdom with the doctrine of election. Cf. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 301. Jenson's criticism to Calvinistic teaching, or Barth in particular, of election as an event much in the protological past and little in the eschatological future tense, is a hindsight.



### 5.1.2. On Triune Ousia

Jenson understands *ousia* differently than the mutual consensus tradition, both of the Western and the Eastern Orthodox traditions. While *ousia* is commonly understood as incomprehensible divine essence, Jenson argues it should be understood through the Cappadocian Fathers' point of view as mutual inclusive *life*. Within the framework of history Jenson points God's *ousia* at the event of Jesus' resurrection. Furthermore, Jenson claims that upon our resurrection, we (though as creatures) are to be in the *homoousia* of Jesus and his Father. It is inseparable with the notion of *totus Christus* as Jesus' body; which leads Jenson to argue that our resurrection then is Jesus own resurrection. And since Jesus' resurrection in the first place determines him to be the Son of God by the Spirit, ours then are in the *homoousia*/ the same life of Jesus.

Calvin is a firm defender of God's simplicity in his essence; this is clearly seen in him opposing Osiander who teaches the inpouring of Christ's essence for man to be righteous. The essence of Christ is understood as God's incomprehensible-yet-simple essence. Calvin articulates further by stating that "Word and Spirit are nothing else than the very essence of God."<sup>12</sup> Under the sub-heading "oneness", Calvin defends the idea that this essence of God is simple. Contained in the

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<sup>12</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.16.

statement, Calvin reveals the incomprehensibility of God's essence is to be found in Word and Spirit.

Does Calvin speak of the "Word" as the Son, and the "Spirit" as the Holy Spirit, in *hypostasis* sense? If it is so, we find no difficulties in aligning him with the view of the simple essence of God due to the unity of the Triune God. But Calvin seems to refer to the reality in God himself as "Word and Spirit". The "Spirit" as reality in God is explained clearly by Calvin in that the whole essence of God is spiritual.<sup>13</sup> Then what about the "Word"? In Calvin's defense of the eternity of the Word prior to creation, he writes, "[t]he Word, conceived beyond the beginning of time by God, has perpetually resided with him."<sup>14</sup> This clearly refers to the Son as the Word. However, when Calvin continues his argument, Calvin refers to the word as the reality in God. There he rejects the view that the Word began for the first time at the beginning when God opened his holy mouth in the creation of the universe. Referring to Servetus,

For they say the Word for the first time began to be when God opened his holy mouth in the creation of the universe. But they are too reckless in inventing a sort of innovation in God's substance.<sup>15</sup>

Thus "word and spirit" are reality in God in eternity, prior to the starting point of time in creation. This "word and spirit" are not composite but rather an

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<sup>13</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.20.

<sup>14</sup> *Inst.* 1.13.8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

integral perfection of God's unity. In comparison, there is a similarity of Jenson's view of divine discourse with Calvin's on divine simple essence: the intra-divine discourse is God's simple essence.

Now, seeing the *ousia* as God's simple essence, Calvin has a better view by strictly warning against the separation of the Word and the Spirit. Jenson locates the *ousia* of God almost exclusively in the resurrection of Jesus by the Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Based on his exegesis of Romans 1:3–4, in the resurrection, the Son is determined to be the powerful Son of God by the act of the Spirit. Thus, from the eschatological ontology, Jenson's Jesus is a helpless God-man in his *hypostasis*.

Jenson has an ontologically deficient view of the Son. Unlike the Father which can be seen as the source of history, and the Spirit as the *telos* of history, the Son plays a subordinate role as the reconciliation of history in his relation to the Father and to the Spirit. There is an absence of the Son's Lordship in himself. This inkling is also reinforced by the view that the Son's divinity is defined in his total submission to the Father, to be fully identified with the creature even unto *sheol*. It appears that Jenson holds to the underlying *genus tapeinoticum* or kenotic Christology.<sup>17</sup> Jenson would reply that "Christ's death constitutes God's life"<sup>18</sup> and in the resurrection, which shows that God exists, Jesus is "determined" to be

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<sup>16</sup> Jenson, "Three Identities of One Action," 14.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Braaten, "The Person of Jesus Christ," 510, criticizes kenotic Christology, "where is the *vere deus* in Christ?"

<sup>18</sup> *ST* 1.III: 13.V.

“the powerful Son of God” by the act of the Spirit. However, these views do not make Christ in any way further from being subordinated by the Spirit. The ontology of the Son as the eternal Son is not only seen from his protological origin but more so from his eschatological origin of the Spirit; since Christ’s pre-existence, interpreted as post-existence, is *being going to be*. The Son’s life is inexhaustible as *the Spirit* rests on the Son.<sup>19</sup> Jenson also disrupts the protological origin of the Son by stating that “the *antecedence* of the deity in and into which the Son is begotten is the Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> This is an allusion to the Lordship of the Spirit, but at the expense of an ontological deficit of the Son.<sup>21</sup> Jenson can argue that the infinity of God is the Spirit. Nevertheless, just like the protological understanding of the Son begotten by the Father may carry the danger of subordinationism stripped from the Son’s *autotheos*, the reverse ontology of the Son from an eschatological perspective too carries the same subordination charge. As such the *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* in the resurrection cannot be true in Jenson’s triune God. The resurrection has its locus on the Spirit, but not in the Son himself; the Spirit is active, but not the Son. The Father is LORD as *arche*, the Spirit is LORD as *telos*, but the Son’s Lordship is derived from both.

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<sup>19</sup> ST 1.III: 13.IV.

<sup>20</sup> ST 1.II: 8.IV.

<sup>21</sup> Jenson, “A Reply (1999),” 3, explains his revised metaphysic, “[...] my systematic theology urges that the metaphysics that construes being as perdurance, and contingency as an ontological deficit, is antithetical to the gospel.”

Have we done enough justice to Jenson, who locates the deity of the Son in his submission to the Father instead of his Lordship as commonly accepted? In the *theologoumena* of past theological systems, whether the Western church or the Eastern Orthodox church, the Spirit seems to be undermined. Jenson calls it a pneumatological deficit. So, Jenson locates the supremacy or Lordship in the Spirit, shifted from the Father (as the Eastern) or the Father and the Son (as the Western).<sup>22</sup> Jenson's contribution of affirming the Lordship of the Spirit is a point well taken. However, our criticism is to ask why can't Jenson accept the notion that the mission of the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, constitutes the Spirit's deity;<sup>23</sup> in the same manner that he sees the Son's submission in accomplishing his mission as his deity? The answer again is due to the underlying Hegelian historical structure which views the "Lord and Master" struggle in the Father and the Son, only to be sublated in the Spirit. Jenson's solution to the problem by shifting its locus simply moves the same problem along with it. Later, we will see that there should not be a pneumatological deficit nor the son's ontological deficit when rightly interpreted.

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<sup>22</sup> See section 2.1.1.i.b. for the earlier discussion. Jenson does not seem to be consistent for he also defines God's divine nature exists in the mutual relations of the three *hypostases*. Cf. Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," 90. Unlike Calvin's *autotheos* understanding of the Trinity where each *hypostasis* has the divine *ousia* wholly.

<sup>23</sup> ST 1.II: 9.VI. The terminology "proceeds" is missing in Jenson's final formulation of the Triune relations in *The Pneumatological Problem*: "the Father begets the Son and freely breathes his Spirit; the Spirit liberates the Father for the Son and the Son from and for the Father; the Son is begotten and liberated, and so reconciles the Father with the future his Spirit is."

Now, returning to the resurrection issue. In Calvin's theology, Christ's resurrection of the flesh can be understood as being vivified; an out-working by all three *hypostases* of the Triune God. The role of the Father is shown in *Psychopannychia*, "And though as God he had life in Himself, yet when He assumed human nature, He received from the Father the gift of having life in himself in that nature also." The role of the Son finds its expression in Cyril's *communicatio idiomatum* in Calvin's reply to Heshusius, "For when the life-giving Son of God dwelt in the flesh, and was in whole, so to speak, by the mode of union, *he* made the flesh itself vivifying, and hence this flesh gives life to those who partake of it." The role of the Spirit also finds its support from Cyril, in the same treatise, "In the twenty-fourth chapter [of Cyril's third book] he distinctly maintains, that the flesh of Christ is made vivifying by the agency of the Spirit, so that Christ is in us because the Spirit of God dwells in us." The *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* then is affirmed by Calvin. Resurrection is the work of God the Father in his simple essence as Word and Spirit: from the Father, through the Son on himself, in the Spirit.

We return to Jenson's point regarding the impact of the resurrection upon creatures. Upon being resurrected, are humans in the *homoousia* of Jesus and his Father? Calvin's articulation of *homoousia* is different from Jenson, it is to be used exclusively of God. Yet Calvin will affirm the reality of the "*sermo* and *ruach*" in the Kingdom, which is not only true in the gospel preaching, but also in the

power of the Spirit by uniting believers to Christ's life-giving (of the same word-incarnated) flesh. This eternal inheritance is already offered as a pneumatological reality in the sacrament of the Supper as the reality of the incarnated Word *and* the resurrection-power of the Spirit. Therefore, *deification* can be seen as an elevation of life in God that progresses until its completion in our union with God; when "God truly live in us, and we enjoy his life, when he governs us by his Spirit."<sup>24</sup> Or since in the *eschaton* the epistemological is coincidental with the ontological — where the *visio dei* is union with God — *theosis* too can be conceived in concentric-circles model where one is being drawn nearer to the inner circle of the same reality of word and spirit.<sup>25</sup> The resurrection of creatures in the kingdom is living in the reality of concentric circles that ever draws inward, yet with the *finitum non capax infiniti* intact.

Earlier we saw Calvin had a difficulty with accepting the Nicene Creed's notion of the eternal generation of the Son. Jenson has kept the balance from becoming a too one-sided ontology drawn only from the protological perspective by introducing the ontology of the Son from the eschatological perspective. How do we see the eternal generation of the Son by the Father as necessary, without falling into subordinationism? Is there an ontological deficit of the Son in the

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<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *Comm. Eph.* 4:18.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Huijgen, "Dynamics of illumination," in *Divine Accommodation*, 313. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 274 links seeing the essence of God with deifying union with God.

classic Nicene formulation? If eternal generation is necessary, this makes the Son a creature of the Father's power or his will.<sup>26</sup> That the Spirit has a role in that generation is not an obvious direct solution in Calvin's theology despite his "word and spirit" as God's essence. However, Augustine has earlier solved this false dilemma by saying that the eternal generation of the Son by the Father is done *willingly*, without denying that God is God by his *nature*. Augustine identifies "willingly" to the Holy Spirit, thus the nature of God as love.<sup>27</sup> The eternal generation of the Son is done by the Father willingly in the Spirit. To employ Jenson's *theologoumenon*, the Spirit indeed frees the Son from the Father and the Father from the Son. In this manner, Calvin's theology, in fact Western theology, never condones the subordination of the Spirit. The Spirit does not only proceed from the Father and the Son, but the Spirit himself is *autotheos* in the eternal generation of the Son; the Spirit is the personal will of love. What happens in *ad intra* find its similar bearing in the resurrection as *ad extra*.

The triune God is LORD, only if we retain the view that there is not before nor after in eternity. The Son is eternally generated by the Father *in* the Spirit, and

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<sup>26</sup> See discussion on 3.1.1.ii.b. We don't discuss whether the generation happens "naturally" (that might imply the Son seems to exist from an impersonal principle) due to Calvin's *autotheos* of the Son. Generation only applies to the Son's *hypostasis*, his existence in relation.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine of Hippo, "On the Trinity," *NPNF* 1.3, 15.20.38, page 220.



the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.<sup>28</sup> Thus, there is no pneumatological deficit nor the Son's ontological deficit.

### ***5.1.3. On the Immanent Trinity***

Jenson modifies Rahner's maxim "the economic Trinity is the immanent trinity, and vice versa" with his view that the immanent trinity is the *eschatological* economic trinity. By modifying Rahner's maxim, Jenson maintains the priority of the immanent trinity from the economic trinity without falling into the charge of modalism that may lurk behind in the layered metaphysical universe. In Calvin's time, the seeming difference between the immanent trinity and the economic trinity was not a concern. It can be acceptably resolved by the act of faith of human creatures; trusting that God in his gracious divine accommodation, hides from us his awesome and incomprehensible divine majesty.

In Calvin's theology, God as immanent trinity is hidden and incomprehensible. However, in the economic trinity, the triune *hypostases* (as the Father, the Son acting as the Mediator, and the Spirit) are the same in their self-revealing at creation, redemption and consummation stages. Epistemologically, the notion of the economic trinity is then conceived in an *anagogical* (upward-

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.II: 9.II (The Pneumatological Problem) Jenson's discussion on *filioque*. Due to his insistence of some kind of before and after, Jenson has chosen a counter-position relation of origin from the common Western doctrine of *filioque*; not the Spirit from the Son, but rather the Son from the Spirit. This issue of origin is proven to be a false dilemma when conceived in Calvin's metaphysic of static eternity.

leading) manner with the *sursum* and *nondum* aspects of divine accommodation that brings us closer to a “substantial” knowledge *totus non totum* of God in Christ seen in the sacramental use of the Supper.<sup>29</sup>

Can we truly know the economic trinity God as the immanent trinity? Based on Calvin’s commentary on 1 Timothy 6:16 and 1 John 3:2, the “all in all” reality of the Father’s administration will bring this epistemological change in seeing Christ in his glory; that we too will see the splendor of the glory of God the Father which now appears in Christ as God’s living image. Still, no matter how high we will be lifted up by grace, as much as it is possible, the simplicity of the divine essence will always be inapproachable due to the infinite distance despite our drawing nearer to him in the reality of “word and spirit”. We should say, in spite of Calvin’s static view of eternity, our eternal life will not be a mere static but alludes closer to Gregory of Nyssa’s notion of *epektasis*.

In Jenson’s solution, the Creator-creature distinction will still be maintained in the *eschaton* with the change from the previously incomprehensible divine essence in the layered metaphysics to the unboundedly lively future of and by the Spirit in the temporal metaphysics. Jenson’s approach then is viable though we can raise a similar point that nothing is changed in terms of human

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<sup>29</sup> See section 4.1.3.i. Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 297–315, who sees the knowledge more in terms of assurance, and familial knowledge. Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 11 uses the term “anagogical” to describe participation in the supernatural, divine life.

limitations, that faith is still required in trusting in the yet-to-be-known God in the *eschaton*, whether spatially or temporally. Thus, *theosis* continues to exist as present hope despite the metaphysical presuppositions one can have.

In this criterion, Jenson has overcome the concern that we took from Calvin regarding possible mixing of essential righteousness in *theosis*. Within Jenson's common metaphysics of Creator and creatures, the creatures can indeed live in God's life (*ousia*) while the Creator is still being distinct in his transcendent future.

## **5.2. Second Criterion: Christ's Mediatorial Role**

In the previous discussion, the triune God is the filler identity in Jenson's identifying the *theos* in *theology*. In Christological discussion, it is the *logos* that holds the epistemological priority in identifying the Triune God as *theos*. Similar to Jenson's concern of the identity gap between immanent trinity and economic trinity, he seeks to secure the son's identity to leave no gap between his pre-incarnation and incarnation period. True to his Lutheran tradition, Jenson finds no issue with the Son's identity due to the Cyrillian interpretation that strongly

emphasis on the *hypostatic union* rather than the two natures. Jenson also agrees with the *communicatio idiomatum genus maiestaticum* of Christ's two natures.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, it is acceptable for Calvin that the eternal Son of God does not coincide perfectly with the *logos* (*asarkos* and *ensarkos*) in his office as the mediator in creation and redemption. Calvin's fond imagery is the fountain where Christ's divinity is a deep and hidden spring that channels out through his human body. In this manner, the Reformed position holds firmly to the principle of the Creator-creature distinction, even in the mysterious work of the Son's incarnation. This distinction then acts as the boundary marker to what extent humans can be deified.

Using Calvin's criterion on the instrumental role of Christ's human nature in bringing righteousness needed for redemption, we shall now evaluate Jenson's notion on Christ's mediatorial role. We shall assess Jenson's post-existence or promise-existence Christology with its *totus christus* corollary, then his concept of Christ's body, and the issue of righteousness in redemption that is drawn from Christ's human nature.

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<sup>30</sup> This *genus* however tends to diminish instead of keeping distinct Christ's two natures. Cf. Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 44.

### 5.2.1. Post-existence Christology

The promise-existence Christology is a notion that presupposes on a common temporal metaphysics. The being of Christ is being in communication. This is so because God is an event, and his discourse is a word-event, that when God communicates, something happens. The discourse that God speaks opens the future that secures the final being of Christ. Jenson takes into account the full weight of Christ's pre-existence, not abstractly as an unknown entity or personality on the eternal plane but concretely by anchoring it in the OT passages as narrative *being going to be*. This being of Christ is called by Jenson as post-existence instead.

However, while the OT account of Christ' pre/post-existence is secured, this post-existence way of thinking imperils the reality of the incarnation in the NT. Because the incarnated body of Jesus, which is supposedly seen as the fulfillment of the promise-existence, cannot be considered perfect prior to his resurrection. The body needs to undergo further transformation as *being going to be*, no longer to be in *carne*. As such, Jesus' resurrection has been interpreted as his return to the future, stripped of his proper body, to return in the mode of promise-existence as *being going to be* as *totus Christus*. In view of Jesus' body, this creates a disjuncture as to why Jesus must return to the *being going to be* mode of existence if he has fulfilled that promise. Furthermore, what guarantees that *totus Christus* is the final end of *being going to be* mode of existence?

The notion of Jesus' return to "the future" is sublated based on two understandings: that God is his own space, qualified with Jesus himself as the "specious present"; and that the future Jesus returns to is the creature's future which lies within God's own future. The creatures' future is specifically identified as the space between the Father and his right hand where Jesus is. With the reinterpretation of heaven based on Jesus' resurrection metaphysics, we wonder whether heaven as "transcendent future" is located in the future (the spirit or Jesus himself or the sublated unity of Jesus and the Spirit without any distinction) or at the very present of creation where the church at certain times could act as the gate of heaven when the sacraments are being administered?

The temporal metaphysics that Jenson has revised somehow need to be recategorized at two levels: the future of God and of creatures. This is so despite the fact that the creatures' lot is still in Christ. This re-leveling undoing Jenson's earlier revisionary in metaphysics. Jenson may argue that in his metaphysics the reality is truly one as temporal; one that ends up in the Spirit as the future of both God and creatures. Or, again, a future where Christ's and our existence in the *eschaton* will be as *totus Christus*. But then, we are left to wonder: on the one hand affirming one's secured existence as *totus Christus* (one level of reality), and also affirming the transcendent future where God's being as temporal infinity happens with the creatures being left in a separate existence due to our inability to keep up with Christ himself as God (two levels of reality). On the positive

note, this assessment would ambiguously meet the Creator-creature distinction at the *eschaton*, despite our ignorance about Jesus' sublated existence in his body.

Now, Jenson consistently rejects the autonomous individual view of humanity and only accepts a communal view of selfhood. With Jesus, as the ego, being the object of the Father's consciousness as the subject, we wonder if Jenson's conception of Jesus has any genuine human self-consciousness that also transcends himself, distinct from the Father? We can argue that our fallen autonomous humanity is an abstracted humanity when its definition is not secured in Jesus'. But, in what sense can we say Jesus is one of us, if he has no human self-consciousness in himself and only exists as an ego/ "I" as the object of God's consciousness? Can Jesus be one of us and be Lord over us? Jenson in purging any substantial understanding of person, considers it as a sinful element in understanding human being in one's own self-consciousness.<sup>31</sup> This would contradict John 17:3 portrait of Jesus who addresses himself subjectively; that he is a subject who has his transcendent consciousness towards himself as object in his human body. Jesus indeed has an independent immediate self-consciousness as human, despite his *kenotic* existence as Christ, and poured out life *pro nobis*.

Consequently, would not Jenson's position reject the two wills of Christ, which he consently affirms of Maximus?<sup>32</sup> If Jesus is not one of us, due to him

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<sup>31</sup> See *The Triune Identity*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.V: 18.V; *ST* 1.II: 8.III.

having no immediate self-consciousness as subject—either during the incarnation period or at the *eschaton*—then what kind of conscious being will we become in our *deified* humanity? The picture is different in Calvin, who affirms that during the particular time of history in which Christ’s struggled in his soul, he was able to submit his human will in order to will according to his divine nature.<sup>33</sup> In this manner, Jesus’ humanity in his body-and-soul wherein his will-consciousness is, is indispensable in Calvin’s theology. And so is our future humanity in Christ.

Now, we return to Christ’s pre-existence discussion. There is a similar line of thought in Calvin with Jenson that both do not understand “pre-existence” abstractly apart from the bible. Calvin understood it in Christ’s *etiam extra carnem*. Oberman interprets Calvin in this manner, that Christ who is the *veritas* of the New Testament was earlier present as the *umbra* of the Old Testament.<sup>34</sup> Calvin conceives functional Christology in Christ’s office as mediator. Undoubtedly, Calvin’s view of trinity, which affirms divine simplicity, leaves the Trinity intact, immutable in his *ousia*. The changes that occur can only happen *ad extra*; which is in “the office of Christ” (as a provisional term) bore by the Son, whether in his divine nature only or with the additional human nature.

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<sup>33</sup> *Inst.* 2.16.12. n.33.

<sup>34</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 257. Cf. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation*, 238 who notes Calvin’s term as *umbratilis mediator*/ shadowy mediator in the OT, *Comm. Ps* 132:10.



In Calvin's functional Christology with Christ as the mediator in redemption, we can say that: Christ's mediated prophecy will come to an end, eventually the prophetic office will be immediate; Christ's last judgment will bring a new order, when he will remove, in a manner, his kingly office so that God rules immediately; Yet, Christ will still be a priest forever, due to God's solemn oath (Psalm 110:4). In our union with Christ, our everlasting intercessor, we participate by entering the heavenly sanctuary in freedom with our sacrifices of prayers and praise.<sup>35</sup> Thus, in the upcoming administration of the kingdom, the church will keep the priestly office to bring continual praises before the presence of the Triune God. This truth finds its resemblance in the *theologoumenon* of Jenson, "the end is music".

It seems that the bodily post-existence of Christ has a lesser significance in Jenson. There is a withdrawal of Jesus' body into *being going to be* mode of existence. Besides, the lack characterization of Jesus as an independent human being in his consciousness also contributes to our temporary conclusion.

### 5.2.2. *The Body of Christ*

As pointed out earlier, we should scrutinize further Jenson's concept of the body of Christ. In the Lutheran tradition, the spoken word as an auricular event is greatly stressed. Thus, the character of the divine discourse, whether in the

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<sup>35</sup> *Inst.* 2.15.6.

account of creation or in the account of eternal blessedness is depicted in terms of hearing. Yet, because the notion of sacrament as “visible words” cannot be discarded, Jenson has to theologize the significance of physical matter, especially with regards the body of Christ. Therefore, our discussion on the instrumentality of Christ’s human nature in bringing righteousness needed for redemption has its locus on the sacrament.

In the sacrament, the bodily presence of Jesus has been dispersed in terms of its “ontological context”: in his Word, in the created space, in the hearts of believers, etc. Jenson adopts this view based on Brenz’s teaching of “communication constitutive of reality”. This ubiquitous body of Jesus in the distinctive Lutheran understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum genus maeistaticum* has reinterpreted the body concept. Jenson tries to secure Jesus’ bodily existence based on Paul’s understanding in 1 Corinthians: the church along with the bread and cup. Furthermore, in the *eschaton*, there is no indication of Jenson’s conceiving the presence of the proper body of Jesus rather than in the church as the body of *totus Christus*. Even the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* is not materialized, only interpreted as *availability*.<sup>36</sup> Viewed in this manner, Jenson has come to the position of a thoroughgoing eschatology, an opposite from his earlier not-yet position in our assessment of promise-existence Christology of the *totus*

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. *ST* 2.VI: 26.II

*christus*. This thoroughgoing eschatology can bear no significant change to the body of Christ from its present state, found in the church during her administration of the Lord's Supper. The proper body of Jesus consisting of flesh and bones has gone missing.<sup>37</sup> The dangers of Miaphysitism and Docetism are obvious at the point of Christ's incarnation in the former, and from the point of Christ's resurrection in the latter.

With Calvin, the proper resurrected body of Jesus is clearly defined as bounded by limitations in spatial manner. The body of Christ bears an utmost significance. The resurrected body of Christ even though it has a different quality yet is the same nature as Christ's crucified body. Christ's resurrected body is defined as life-giving flesh, bounded by limitations and now received in heaven. It is in referring to this same flesh that Calvin takes seriously in his view of the Lord's Supper. The *totus non totum* principle is firmly held to by Calvin; that Christ is wholly present in his person, yet not the whole Christ in his divine substance. This principle is true whether in the incarnation – the *extra-calvinisticum*, or in the Lord's Supper – as it depends on the power of God's word and Spirit.

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<sup>37</sup> Luke 24:39, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have *flesh and bones* as you see that I have." Cf. Calvin, *Answer to the Calumnies of Joachim Westphal* (1556), 288 also criticizes Westphal based on the same scripture reference.

Have we misunderstood Jenson's position in his Lutheran tradition? There are surely dissatisfactions that come either from the Reformed or the Lutheran position towards the other. On the one hand, the Lutherans thinks the Reformed position has chained/ imprisoned the body of Christ in heaven with its receptacle notion of space. The Reformed, on the other hand, is dissatisfied with the injustice done to the humanity of Christ by the Lutheran.

We can partially clear some misconceptions by drawing from T. F. Torrance's substantial work in *Space, Time and Incarnation* where he deals with the issue of receptacle notion of space from the Greek philosophers that intrudes Christian traditions. Based on Torrance's insight, the proper understanding of the Reformed's position is that we hold to an *open (or relational) and differential* concept of space. Here is how Torrance put it:

As the incarnation meant the entry of the Son into space and time without the loss of God's transcendence over space and time, so the Ascension meant the transcendence of the Son over space and time without the loss of His incarnational involvement in space and time.<sup>38</sup>

There is a consistency in the Reformed's doctrine of the *extra calvinisticum*. Reformed then does not subscribe to the closeness in the notion of space in Aristotlean metaphysics or Ptolemaic cosmology.

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<sup>38</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 31.

Jenson's contribution should be appreciated on how he tried to release the bondage in the Lutherans' timeless understanding of real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.<sup>39</sup> He did so by still keeping Luther's understanding of space dynamically from a centre in God's creative and almighty activity; this is coupled with their soteriological concern to do justice of God's presence that is meant *for us* as *Deus manifestus*.<sup>40</sup> As the result, space is understood by Jenson as "a dramatic and linguistic space determined by the coordinates of the triune name: to the Father, with the Son, in the Spirit".<sup>41</sup> In such space the church inhabits as the body of Christ.

Jenson also has this *totus non totum* notion within the "ontological context" of the bodily presence described earlier. However, there is a significant difference with Calvin. In Calvin, the *signum* and the *res* are firmly distinct, that the bread and wine are secured as the means to channel Christ's life-giving flesh. In Jenson, as a result of expanding Christ's body, the *signum* is also expanded. The confusion arises that the bread and wine are not only *signum* but also simultaneously the *res*. This middle reality (*signum et res*) applies to the church's communion as well as the body and blood of Christ. What Jenson views as *res* eventually is the mystical body of Christ—our communion with God and with

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> ST 1.II: 6.I.

one another. We appreciate Jenson's eschatological goal is conceived, first ecumenically in the one communion of the church, and also transcendently in the Triune communion. Christ, however, should be seen not only as means, but also as our ends.

In contrast, Calvin sees the reality (*res* though it is *nondum*) in the perpetual union, which is signified in the eating of Christ's life-giving flesh in the Supper. As clearly taught by Calvin, the key to this union, whether perpetual or being signified, lies in the power of the spirit. Through the Spirit we are brought nearer to the integral union with Christ's flesh, which subsequently leads to our union with God due to Christ who naturally resides in God. To repeat what was said earlier, our destiny lies in Christ as he brings all the benefits channeled through his human nature. Our *deification* will be as near as Christ brought to his (our) human nature to the level of his elevation in glory. That body is a spiritual body and no longer a natural body (1 Corinthians 15:44), a glorious body and no longer a lowly body (Philippians 3:21). The Creator-creature distinction remains intact.

### 5.2.3. "Ontic" Righteousness

The issue of righteousness has long been coupled with the notion of justification, the major tenet in the reformation churches. Jenson seeks a more comprehensive notion of justification by interpreting it in a triune manner; not only in forensic-legal righteousness sense, but in *unio*-justification as a mode of *deification*. He

does this by redefining Luther's two kinds of righteousness—the earthly legal righteousness and the heavenly gospel-righteousness—into just one righteousness in his one temporal reality framework. This ontic righteousness is effective through faith in hearing the gospel. Faith then is the means to unite the soul with Christ which brings this ontic change. The ontological union with Christ then is what brings the redeemed into the triune relation; such that the Father, in his judgment, sees Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ. This *unio*-justification in the triune relation of righteousness is seen ontologically as *perichoresis*, in a relational and not in an essential sense. Jenson has consistently interpreted the *ousia* as life in God or “being as communion”.

However, Jenson does not differentiate between God's essential righteousness and Christ's human righteousness. When one hears and sees the gospel, one apprehends Christ himself which includes his divine righteousness. Does Jenson fall into the same mistake as Osiander, who mixed God's essential righteousness with man's nature? Yet, Jenson has redefined God's righteousness, or God's essence in a relational sense, as *perichoresis*. This is seen as active faithfulness to community or God's own divine discourse. Therefore, what is considered essential of God's righteousness in Osiander has a different meaning in Jenson. This sense of righteousness arguably has no difference from Calvin's eternal righteousness as a fellowship of righteousness, which is also not in an essential manner.

Calvin stresses that the righteousness of Christ that we receive comes from Christ's human nature in his priestly office acquired by his obedience and sacrificial death. The role of Christ as the Mediator then qualifies on how the Father and the Spirit could dwell in us. The second qualifier, still from Christ's human righteousness, comes through the spirit's role that causes us to grow together with Christ to make us one with God. The righteousness that we enjoy through Christ's flesh channeling is termed eternal righteousness, which is trinitarian and eschatological.

Like Jenson, Calvin has a view that relation is essential in the Triune God himself; but the proper essential which is not relational is equally affirmed by Calvin. That *hypostasis* (person defined as subsistence in God's essence) exists only in relation shows that relation is essential; and in *autotheos* that each *hypostasis* has the whole *ousia* shows the proper essential. Therefore, essential righteousness is seen exclusively belong to God himself.

Calvin defines eternal righteousness as the "fellowship of righteousness". When God grants his eternal righteousness to the deified creatures, this then cannot be understood in God's essence, but in his relational-essential nature in order not to conflict with God's divine simple essence. The graciousness of God by concealing himself in divine accommodation is found in Christ's flesh which first act as a veil but later will display his fullness of glory. That is the mystery that differentiates essential righteousness from eternal righteousness. Christ is



not dispensable even at the *eschaton*. Nevertheless, the eschatological character that marks the eternal righteousness shows a remarkable resemblance to Jenson's eschatological understanding of righteousness, the relational in triune relation; in which the creatures' lot is to be fulfilled in the being of *totus Christus*.

In this criterion, we highlight the importance of Christ's humanity in bringing righteousness to mediate the Creator with creatures. However, Jenson's ontological term is auricular-relational rather than substantial. As such, the importance of Jesus in administering ontic righteousness is not so much mediated through his human body, but rather immediate to himself; as the gospel which essentially is his being as communication that leads to our communion with God in that discourse.

In our comparison between Calvin in his traditional layered metaphysical framework and Jenson in his temporal metaphysical framework, there is a merging line of eschatological righteousness as defined in the Triune fellowship. While Jenson is willing to include the deified creature in *perichoresis*, Calvin has more restraint in describing that blessedness by making sure the Creator-creature distinction is not brushed off in our union with Christ as the mediator.

### **5.3. Third Criterion: The Pneumatological Self**

In this section, we examine Jenson's concept of *theosis* in which the individual self is identified communally as *totus christus*. Prior to that state, does Jenson see

humans as truly human in the protological state, and whether there is an ontological change that is drastic or transformative along the way to the eschatological state?

Calvin has a clear map of what human is at his/her point of creation, as the result of the fall, during redemption, and later in the glorified state. There is a transformative and yet significant pneumatological change in redemption which transcends humanity's state in his/her protological state while at the same time maintaining the continuity of the substance of human body in the eschatological state. Calvin's concept of the eschatological self is pneumatological as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. It is both essential—in our partaking Christ's life-giving flesh, and relational—living as the children of the resurrection in the fellowship with the Triune God.

### *5.3.1. The Protological State*

Jenson sees humans are created to be God's counterpart by included in the divine conversation to hear and to respond in prayer. The being of human, defined as being in communication, is open to the future by God who addresses the moral word which brings obligation to the hearer. This asymmetrical relation is also reciprocal which has mutual obligations on the part of the speaker in the word of promise. Thus, in its protological state, humanity is a morally and teleologically praying creature. In his bodily form, a man's prayer then is his sacrifice; this is

represented in its final word of prayer and sacrifice as *totus Christus*. This *totus Christus* reconciles the tension that Jenson conceives in enslaving subject-object struggle of Hegelian framework, where God can be seen as a tyrant if without his embodiment as an object in his relationship with humans.

Without compromising the role of man as being a listener/ hearer, Calvin identifies man's first role in God's theater as a spectator.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the paradigm of seeing in human's protological state is equally important for Calvin. Calvin does not lack the eschatological sense of man's *telos* in his notion of creation. From the beginning, Calvin understands human's existence subsists in the one God.<sup>43</sup> With the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as God the Creator, man is already in debt for his existence on the paternal solicitude of God the Father who works this out through the means of the Spirit who energizes by his life-transfusing power in breathing essence, life, and movement into humans. The Son as *logos asarkos* bears his office as the mediator of creation to bridge the ontological gap between God and creatures through his sustaining and reconciling roles.

In comparison regarding the human's protological state, Jenson's view of human creation is less satisfying due to the need of the embodiment of God to resolve the inherent tension of master-slave struggle seen in God and human relationship. Meanwhile Calvin has a more harmonious view of the biblical "very

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<sup>42</sup> *Inst.* 1.6.2.

<sup>43</sup> *Inst.* 1.1.1.

good” in human creation. What about Calvin’s own view of the great ontological gap between God and humans in their protological state? This can be interpreted as humans’ integrity state that can grow into perfection in God. This ontological gap finds its solution by being bridged in the broad mediatorship of the Son as *logos asarkos*. Jenson on the other hand refuses to entertain this hypothetical case which is an abstraction apart from the scripture. Hence the embodiment of Christ is both contingent and necessity from both creation and redemption point of views. For Calvin, the embodiment of Christ is needed in the reparative context of man’s fall into sin, and not by necessity (the sense of God’s *ad intra* “emanation” to his *ad extra* is rejected). However, the shortcoming in Calvin lies in the unsatisfying notion to identify firmly the eternal Son with the *logos asarkos* in his office as the mediator in creation, and so with the *logos ensarkos* as mediator in redemption. But Calvin was not unaware of this concern. Instead, his line of reasoning lies in maintaining the equality of the eternal Son with the Father and the Spirit. So, the role of mediator of the Son in submission carries no subordinationism into the realm of the immanent trinity. With this rationale, Calvin sees the present administration in which Christ acts as the mediator to be completed when he delivers the kingdom to the Father. That God may be all in all is already the same *telos* of human in one’s protological state.

Jenson did not develop further his insightful understanding of God’s personhood as reality of the divine discourse—that is the self-conversation

among the three identities who locate the object in the embodiment of the Son — to his view of human as created in the image of God. Earlier, Jenson mentioned an interior dialogue as live active being.<sup>44</sup> However, he seems to lay aside this self-conversation as consciousness insight and opts to embrace the notion of its integrity in a communal self.<sup>45</sup> Jenson is cautious to the modern danger that the defective notion of autonomous man can gain its foothold. The freedom arises from the transcendental experience in one's self-conversation costs too much in man's fallen state. Instead, the integrity of a communal self lies in one's conversation with the triune God as divine discourse.

### *5.3.2. Restorative/Reparative Aspect*

While both Jenson and Calvin shares the same eschatological notion of union with Christ, the significance of sin takes a different measure in both theologians. In Calvin, the fall of human is presented in his/her desperate need of righteousness that can only be restored through faith in acceptance of Christ's human righteousness.

Jenson's description of sin is manifold, in terms of idolatry, lust, injustice and despair.<sup>46</sup> The righteousness that human need is viewed by Jenson as a

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<sup>44</sup> Jenson, "The Doctrine of Justification and the Practice of Counselling," 113.

<sup>45</sup> *ST* 2.V: 20.II–III, V.

<sup>46</sup> *ST* 2.V: 22, "Sin".

communal entity. The underlying cause is that Jenson prefers to interpret human nature not as something impersonal that makes humans human. His interpretation is that the being of human nature is in communion (like God), then becoming personalized (again like God) in the role one plays as *dramatis personae* in the historical narrative of creation. In his perspective, sin lies as man's despair in his non-reaction to taking risks, succumbing to the irrationality of disobedience; A sinner then is one who is not opened towards the future, unwilling to take risks in the God of the gospel. One sins by falling into idolatry by depersonalizing God, and lust by depersonalizing other humans.

Does Jenson's position imperil the significance of sin, implied also of redemption by Christ? If the reparative aspect of righteousness in sin is "simply" to be in having a relation or a role in the whole narrative which is God, will not this eventually led to the conclusion that sin has no significance whatsoever? Furthermore, one may be drawn towards the universalist position as a result.

Jenson treats sin as significant in the narrative sense as shown in the crucifixion of Christ who prayed to the Father to justify the ungodly. Thus, Jenson does not belittle sin. However, his unwillingness to point out the substance of human being makes one wonder, of what will the end be to those who choose not to take the risk, who maintain their incurvature towards themselves in idolatry? If the end is *das nichtige* instead of God, will such a person still exist? For such a person played no role in the narrative which would

have been closed in the *eschaton*. Jenson's concept of the image of God may give us a hint where he defines one's act of prayer as being the counterpart of God. Humans who sin fail to participate in the freedom and love that is the Spirit of God. In such a decision, one truly falls into the *das nichtige* in the *eschaton*. Such a person has existence as addressed by God but has no identity since there is no response. Such a person's existence will have no bearing whatsoever upon his availability to God nor to others. But this is just one plausible interpretation. In another equally plausible interpretation, due to Christ's willingness to be identified with creatures even to *sheol*, the resurrection will have its impact universally; which idea Jenson entertains.<sup>47</sup>

As for Calvin, his position surprisingly has a close connection to Jenson's reality of divine discourse: as created in the image of God, man, having heard the last word of judgment by Jesus, will not lose his existence. Understood in the two *sensus* of the image of God in man, man's *sensus divinitatis* will lose its object (no longer see, nor hear, of God's majesty after the *last* judgment), but man's *sensus conscientiae* will be the continual condemning voice in eternity, separated without any further word from God himself.<sup>48</sup> That is the final state of "living" in the

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<sup>47</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 34.V.

<sup>48</sup> Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, describes the death of the soul as losing the presence of God which is life; a blind, dumb, deaf, and lame state. These depictions are in contrast to seeing, praying, hearing, and self-support in God's power and will.

reality of man's inner conversation absent from God's divine discourse of truth, righteousness, and holiness.

How about the justified then? Jenson sees the justified responding in faith will transcend him/her-self by the deifying address of God. One who believes in the resurrection of the Son will be in the *homoousia* of Jesus and his Father. One then is righteous by participation in *perichoresis* by being united with Christ. In Calvin, righteousness is not essential righteousness, but eternal righteousness. Thus, the communion with God is real, but not at the *homoousia* level.

Jenson's view of the reparative aspect of humans with regards to Calvin's are not a compatible comparison. The traditional positioning of comprehending justification in either forensic or participation terms has lost its relevance due to the purging of substantial understanding in human nature. Substance has been recategorized by Jenson as "being in communication". In the openness of the narrative future, the possibility of anything that might happen has been placed under the death and resurrection of Christ as humanity's lot as *anamnetic* being.

### ***5.3.3. The Body of Totus Christus***

What kind of body does the believer in *totus Christus* have in the *eschaton*? Jenson spells out different aspects of what constitutes a body: as object-presence to others and to oneself, thus implies its availability; to be transcended presence of the person by mediating the past; and as a person's identifiability.



Jenson defines *totus Christus* as one *hypostasis*/ person with many identities or irreducible personalities.<sup>49</sup> Now, identity has been earlier defined as one who not only has an existence but a role in the history. The many identities in *totus Christus* must first bear the “stamp” of their own past prior to the *eschaton*. The body as transcended presence incurs in the future relative to the past so that these bodies of the many identities will be the mediated presence of their *persons*. Since in common perception there is a one to one correlation of a person with one’s body, we notice a confusion: how to discern whether there is one person of *totus Christus* or many persons?

For *totus Christus* to be only one person, there must be some kind of union either in persons or in bodies. When at present the church is recognized as the body of Christ, Jenson understands this as existence in anticipation. In the *eschaton* then, it is recognized as the one mystical body of Christ. Will this mean that the body is one instead of many? If the body is one, then the person too can be identified as one. Yet, this mystical body of Christ as defined by Jenson constitutes of communion with God and with one another.<sup>50</sup> So, the oneness of mystical body is understood as one communion, wherein that communion multiple identities/ irreducible personalities are affirmed; similar to the notion of the triune God, one life consists of three identities.

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<sup>49</sup> ST 1.II: 7.III.

<sup>50</sup> ST 2.VI: 28.I.

The oneness of communion can also be understood in terms of one life of the *perichoresis* of the triune God. As expressed by Jenson, “our lives will be congruent with and moved by the divine life, the mutual life of irreducible identities.”<sup>51</sup> So what Jesus personally in his body as the embodiment of God in the past is, will be *totus christus* as the mystical body of God in the *eschaton*. On this body, Jenson opines,

[i]n this eschatology, union with God will be an embodied union; only within this union will we see God, with God who sees himself; and therefore we will see God with the eyes of the risen body.<sup>52</sup>

Upon resurrection, the Spirit will use the saints’ bodily eyes to see God himself.

But what about the one person? Jenson believes, as members of *totus christus*, we are not to become one monadic superperson.<sup>53</sup> The one person then is to be defined in the same manner that the triune God can be called a person. That is the trinitarian selfhood of God, of which the Father is the immediate consciousness who finds his “I” in the Son, and free each other in the Spirit.<sup>54</sup> In the *eschaton* this “I” then is *totus christus*.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 34.III.

<sup>53</sup> *ST* 2.VII: 34.I.

<sup>54</sup> *ST* 1.II: 7.III.

In comprehending the body-person issue, we encounter in Jenson the danger of erasing the Creator-creature distinction. If we recap our discussion, our future existence will be as one person in God's trinitarian selfhood, to be identified as God's "I" in the Son as *totus Christus*, an existence of one *hypostasis*/person with many identities, living the one life of communion. Our future bodies are not much figured, except one that will be risen and mystical as *totus Christus*, the body of Christ. It lacks the necessary distinction of creatures apart from the Creator. The church becomes a mystery of our future in God. To repeat Jenson's aphorism, "In the Spirit, the Christ who is *what* I am is the Christ who is *who* I am." The church is the *what*, the Christ is the *who*, and the "I am" is a sublated notion of person (God and *totus Christus*), identities (personal and communal), body (individual and mystical) found in Christ that is realized in the Spirit.

Calvin teaches that in comprehending our union with Christ, there are two boundary markers: there is no confusion or mixing of natures, and there is no loss of identity as the result of the union.<sup>55</sup> Calvin makes a distinction between *unio* and *unitas*; that our union is expressed as *unio* in Christ, rather than *unitas* that belong only to God himself in his *ousia*. The *unio* has no bearing in Jenson's. Therefore his understanding of *totus christus* fails to maintain the separation of divine and human natures that in Calvin's thought applies even in Christ's two

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<sup>55</sup> See section 3.3.1.ii.b.

natures. While the nature of matter, including the body, in the *eschaton* as conceived by Jenson is malleable as God intends.

Meanwhile, Calvin also affirms the transforming power of the Spirit upon our body in resurrection, that as pneumatological beings in Christ, we will be life-giving spirit. However, we will not lose our identities. The union that we have with Christ will still have differentiation within us as the *corpus* and Christ as the *caput*; Christ will hold the highest glory which he then shares with the members of his body.

To reiterate what has been discussed earlier, the body of Christ plays a central role as the life-giving flesh that through the power of the Spirit we become in closer union with Christ. With the Spirit himself is given by the Son, we too will become like Christ in our bodies as life-giving spirit, as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. One thing to note, we disagree with the interpretation that Calvin disaffirms mediation of Christ at the *eschaton*.<sup>56</sup> In the end, Calvin believes that we will see the essence of God (without the mediation of Christ “in a manner”, qualified in his kingly office) which results in the deifying union with God.<sup>57</sup> If we say there is no priestly body of Christ to mediate, then we will end up in Jenson’s position that the only body of Christ that exists is the *totus christus*. With the affirmation of the eternal priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek by God’s

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 274, follows Quistorp’s interpretation rather than Muller’s. See 3.2.2.ii.c.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Boersma himself believes our seeing God is in Christ.

solemn oath, Christ's priestly office would not be obsolete. The “no longer interpose as mediator” should be seen as epistemological to us, but ontological to both Christ as the first fruit then us in our bodies being beautified and glorified. It will be one mystical body as the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* but with different kinds of glory (1 Corinthians 15:41, cf 3:10–15).

At the present administration of Christ, the idea of union with God in Calvin is seen for us to be joined with the Father; a union that is qualified with “the measure of our weakness permits.”<sup>58</sup> It is now by faith that we see Christ in his accommodating function as mediator, but in the *eschaton* as partakers in heavenly glory, we will see “Christ as the Son of God he really is.” Oberman too indicates regarding the *Extra* in Calvin, “God has revealed himself, but certain “secrets” are not to be shared till the final manifestation of Christ in glory.”<sup>59</sup> In this manner, the non-coincide identity of Christ and the Son in how we perceive him epistemologically will perfectly coincide then.

There is also a difference regarding the lasting value of the sacraments. For Jenson, the sacrament of the eucharist is a reality that will continue in the *eschaton*. The saints will find God as embodied in each other as *totus Christus* and find each other precisely in the sacramental use of the eucharist. But for Calvin

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<sup>58</sup> *Inst.* 2.14.3.

<sup>59</sup> Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 258.

the sacrament, as another form in the ministry of the word that is of the gospel, would have run its course in the temporal present age. In the *eschaton* the mediate prophetic office of Christ due to the final revelation of His glory will be immediate, the sacrament will no longer be needed. In view of Calvin's rejection of sacrificial view of the sacrament, in the *eschaton* we will simply enjoy in participation of the everlasting fruits out of Christ's perfect offering in his body. Again, the difference lies in how one understands the sacrament: either as *signum* only as in Calvin, or *signum et res* as in Jenson. If *signum*, then the eucharist is temporal and instrumental until the *res* is fulfilled; but if *signum et res*, it is indispensable.

Jenson seems to have more consistency in terms of the continuity of the body, albeit in his reinterpretation, in the *eschaton*. While in Calvin we are left guessing as to how the body functions in the priestly office without the mediate prophetic nor the kingly functions, or, to be precise, with the priestly office summing up the prophetic and kingly office.<sup>60</sup> But this how will be known when that resurrected body of Jesus is revealed to and in us.

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<sup>60</sup> In Rev. 21:23 "for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the lamb", gives us a glimpse as to how the priestly function of the body serves the prophetic and kingly function in immediate manner.

## 5.4. Conclusion

Based upon the systematic theological assessment of Jenson's theological notion of *theosis* above, we see how Jenson seeks to maintain the Creator-creature distinction.

In the first criterion, Jenson conceives only one reality which is God's discourse which creatures inhabit. He affirms that upon resurrection, we creatures share the *homoousia* of the Father and the Son, which is the communal life of the triune. The divine discourse then is the triune reality that is inclusive to the creatures' being who in their hearing can respond and be conformed and thus deified. Where Jenson fails is not in the transcendence locus of God which he transforms into temporal reality that creatures cannot keep up. But rather, in the locus of the Son's deity, which is ontologically inferior to the Father and the Spirit. Jesus' deity is seen in his willful submission to the Father as his subject, and by being determined to be the Son of God in the resurrecting power of the Spirit. As such, the Creator-creature distinction is seen between God (the Father and the Spirit) and the whole of Jesus during his incarnation, instead of between Christ's two natures.

In the second criterion of Calvin we see the significance of Christ in his role by bridging the ontological and soteriological gap in *theosis*. However, these gaps are not relevant in Jenson's metaphysics in narrative unity. The post-existence of Jesus as promise is relevant up to a certain point, the resurrection. Thereafter, the

promise of the gospel is substantialized by pointing to the church as *totus christus* though it exists in dialectic between the *non totum* and a thoroughgoing eschatological reality as the body of Christ in the sacrament. The Lutheran simply cannot dispense the *pro nobis* of Christ's presence, while the Reformed still maintains the absence of Christ's bodily presence, yet without the power of the Spirit.

Connected to the third locus, in view of the missing proper body of Christ, *theosis* can only be seen as an already realized event in the church as *anamnetic* being in the antinomy of hope. In a hypothetical contrary position, let us take for granted that there is a promise to be fulfilled in the end, and that the promise is *totus christus*. This fulfilled promise will bring an ontological change not only to the church/creatures, but to God himself who identifies the "I" as the second hypostasis in the body of *totus christus*. The Creator-creature distinction then has disappeared. And since "Christ's death constitutes God's life", and the eschatological offering of *totus Christus* is in anticipation, what we expect is a life of a paradoxical death and resurrection at the same time, a sublated reality of freedom and love in the Spirit. But again, this is what the gospel is accounted for by Jenson by seeing the contingency not as ontological deficit.

In the third criterion, we view the necessity of righteousness to restore the fellowship of sinful creatures with the triune God, commonly understood as justification. In Calvin's view we have learnt that the body will be glorified,



while still in the same substance. But in Jenson, with *kenotic Christology* intact in the sacrament, we feel the indication of the future body that will not undergo such a wonderful transformation. In fact, Jenson spells out the future transformation with malleable matter, that is a risen and yet mystical body defined as communion. Thus, to link Jenson's Christological view of the body with the church's being in union with Christ as *totus christus*, the reality of the end tends to be poorly conceived materially. And yet, somehow in a dialectically opposite position, Jenson seems to affirm the materiality of the body due to the continuity of the sacrament in the *eschaton*. In Jenson, we can either have an optimistic hope or pessimistic view of the bodiless spirit in the future; both somehow are presented in the *Aufhebung*.

There are three common positions in Jenson and Calvin that we can find in their different expressions: Their view of the reality in God — despite their different notions of eternity — that the intra-divine discourse is God's simple essence; The eschatological state of blessedness that does not reduce the personalities or identities of the believers in their mystical union with Christ; And the eschatological state of reprobates which is the opposite of *theosis*, an existence without identities due to their non-participation in the reality of divine discourse.

The fundamental differences that separates these two theologians are found in: Jenson's emphasis on the paradigm of hearing that undermines the

physicality of the body, whether of Christ or of the believers; The interpretation of Chalcedonian Christology which may emphasize the *hypostatic union* or two natures. Calvin does not only articulate the western Leonine interpretation, but also the Cyrillian interpretation in understanding of how Christ's flesh is being vivified. In fact, Calvin expresses the vivifying flesh of Christ in a Triune manner as the work of the Father, himself as the Son, and the Spirit. Jenson in his reinterpretation of the body despite taking a serious account on Paul's view of the bread and the cup, and the church as Christ's body (1 Corinthians 10:16–17), yet develops a less satisfying notion of Christ's actual resurrected flesh (1 Corinthians 15:44).

To conclude, there are similarities despite the differences between Jenson and Calvin. Both theologians, despite their opposite philosophical presuppositions, do not divert from the common hope of *theosis*. Both equally affirm the notion of *theosis* as the yet-to-be-fulfilled blessedness. Their hopes are grounded on the promises of God in scripture.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As we come to the final part of this study, we return to the question posed earlier: “To what extent can Robert Jenson’s idea of *theosis* be integrated within the Reformed theology, as exemplified by John Calvin’s theology, with regards to the relation between the Triune God as Creator and the created world, the mediatory role of the incarnated Christ, and the understanding of self?”

To answer this question, we will first recapitulate our findings of Calvin’s notion on *theosis*. Thereafter, Jenson’s contributions are accounted to be finally integrated in our final reflection on this subject of *theosis*.

### 6.1 Rediscovering Calvin’s notion on *Theosis*

On the relation between the Creator and the creatures, Calvin is firm to his accommodation principle. Calvin clearly distinguishes the eternity-temporality character. Eternity is conceived in a static manner, in the sense of a blessed rest. While the acts of creation and redemption in temporality are more dynamic in character. In our findings, even though Calvin has a more Platonic leaning in his ontological metaphysics, yet he does not follow this position uncritically. For example, Calvin takes account of an immanent relation of creatures whose lives are in God the Creator (Acts 17:28, Cf. *Inst.* 1.1.1.). Then, based on Calvin’s accommodation principle, a more nuanced notion of heaven can be seen; not adhering to it as spatial in absolute manner, but as a transcendental notion.

Calvin's metaphysics is epistemologically oriented, seen as concentric-circles model of God's accommodations. However, in our pairing comparison of Calvin with Jenson, we discover Calvin speaks more beyond his commonly non-speculative approach regarding God in His essence. Thus, we can say that ontologically, God's essence is word and spirit (*Inst.* 1.13.16). Calvin shies away from the ontological discussion and satisfies in his major presentation of God's roles as the Creator and Redeemer.

As for the mediatory role of the incarnated Christ, it is in two natures of Christ that *theosis* finds its articulation in Calvin's theology. The *telos* of creation and redemption acts is to be found in our union with the Father. The union is by the agency of the eternal Son, whose official bearing as Christ acts as our mediator in creation and redemption. Under this pretext, *theosis* is needed as a viable solution only through the act of incarnation. In Christ's vivified human flesh, the indivisible act of the Triune God, is found our *deification*. *Theosis* discussion then requires a step beyond the epistemological boundary into an ontological realism that finds its fulfilment in Christ's resurrection. This step involves our bodily likeness to Christ in which we too shall be conformed as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*.

Now, for the understanding of self, Calvin insists that without *theosis*, the soteriological concern of human's salvation would fall short of becoming like God himself, succumbed to "mere" gratuitous created gifts. *Theosis* then must be conceived in trinitarian manner. The Father bestows upon us, as adopted

children of God, the human righteousness of Christ as justification *extra nos*. God will eventually lift us up as the children of the resurrection to enter the fellowship of the triune God in his eternal righteousness. Whereas the role of the Spirit is seen in his renewing God's image in us. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are granted the attribute of God's holiness. This attribute makes God to be distinct from any creatures. In the indwelling of the Spirit, what we receive is not just God's holiness that separates us to be his people, but God himself. This *duplex gratia* is found in Christ – whose perfect identification with us comes upon the completion of our union with him, in our being engrafted into his body. Christ will actualize our union with God through his two final acts of *theosis* in the *eschaton*: resurrection and judgment to life. After which, Christ will bring the incomprehensible knowledge of God to be apprehended clearly in our seeing Christ face to face in the full manifestation of His glorified life-giving flesh that no longer interposes between us and Him. This final epistemological blessedness of *theosis* is seen in *visio Dei en Christo*.

Despite that *theosis* is both a full epistemological blessedness in *visio Dei en Christo* and a full ontological blessedness in our union with God through Christ's vivified flesh in the Spirit, our beings are not in the *homoousios* of the Father as *autotheos*, (like the Son or the Spirit). It is only the Father, the Son, and the Spirit who are *autotheos*, whose fullness of their common *ousia* is found in their own *hypostasis*. However, through our union with the Son's life-giving flesh, we share

the same Spirit of redemption. We live in the reality of the incarnated Word and resurrecting power of the Spirit – partaking of Christ’s life-giving flesh to live as life-giving Spirit. This renewed “word and spirit” reality of redemption draws us closer to God than at the initial stage of God’s creating us human beings, even at the pre-fall stage. In viewing our perfect felicity, Calvin affirms the promise of 1 John 3:2 in the *eschaton* is more dynamic than what he is willing to accept in his notion of static eternity. We will live in the dynamic *epektasis* of God’s life.

To summarize, Calvin’s notion of *theosis* is “our union with God through participation in the reality of God’s word and spirit as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, established in Christ’s life-giving flesh.” Succinctly defined, “*Theosis* is our union with God through the mediation of Christ in the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

## 6.2 Contributions of Jenson on *Theosis* Discussion

We note two main principles in Jenson’s revisionary metaphysics that corelate eternity and temporality, that is the reality in God the Creator and the creatures. The first is the condition of possibility (*Bedingung der Möglichkeit*) principle. Of which the creatures in their existence, reality, substance, or being are possible on the basis of the Creator in his Triune relations. The second is the constitutive principle, in which eternity is characterized by its openness. From all temporal

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<sup>1</sup> It is cosmic in nature seeing that Jesus Christ in his humanity as microcosm of creation. Cf. Bauckham, “The Incarnation and the Cosmic Christ,” 37ff.

events, of special importance are Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection that are constitutive to eternity. The result from these two principles is a perichoretic relationship surfaces between the Creator and His creatures; that creatures are enveloped in the Creator, and Jesus (as both Creator—one of the Trinity, and creature—one of us) is present in creation continually in his post-existence. Thus, in Jesus, who is the Father's word as Law and the Spirit's promise as Gospel, temporality finds its basis of eternity's constitutive.

We will now see the contributions of Jenson, explicated in the three loci that we have been discussing. The main thought in the first locus on the Creator and creature relation is founded on the triune God identified as *communion*. This communion is God's *ousia*, that provides the condition of possibility for *theosis* as participation in God's reality as divine discourse.

In the second locus, Christ's mediatorial role is conceived in him being fully identified with us. What happens to him in crucifixion and resurrection, as events in temporality, shows "the what or who" and "that" God is. These events are none other than Jesus' sacrificial prayer of intra-divine discourse for us (Cf. John 17). With this prayer having been answered in Jesus' resurrection, God then includes us. Hence Jesus' life which affects our present, by him addressing us from the future, is constitutive with regards to our being included to the communion of God. Jesus constitutes our *inclusion into God's communion*.

In the third locus of the concept of self, *totus Christus* becomes the result of the first locus as “condition of possibility” and the second locus as “constitutive” in creatures. We will live our *deified* lives as a *communal self*; that is in God, yet without being absorbed. Jenson believes that as *totus Christus*, we will be one person with many identities.<sup>2</sup> As such, the Father as God’s consciousness can address Christ-and-us as *totus Christus* as God’s Ego, in God’s freedom of the Spirit.

To summarize, Jenson’s contributions on *theosis* discussion is “We, as communal-self embodied in *totus Christus*, will be included to the communal life of the Triune God.” The key point lies in communion, even in communication.<sup>3</sup>

### 6.3 Integration to Reformed Conception of *Theosis* from Jenson

Apart from the earlier delineation as Jenson’s more general contributions of *theosis*. We now seek his more specific contributions that can be integrated to Reformed Theology.

Jenson would agree with Calvin’s understanding of “*theosis* as our union with God through the mediation of Christ in the Spirit.” Surely, he would qualify the

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<sup>2</sup> See sec. 2.3.2.i.b.

<sup>3</sup> Jenson affirms both “*lex orandi lex credendi*” and “*lex proclamandi lex credendi*”. Thus our communion with God and one another encapsulates communication. It is one same event that we do, both to God before others, and to others before God.



union in terms of *communion*, that is God's own life whose communication is substance, rather than in an unknown *ousia* of God. In view of Calvin's defining word and spirit as God's very essence, Jenson would have no objection whatsoever. And yet, Calvin's position is a dialectical one, since he also sees God's *ousia* as incomprehensible. In Calvin then, the sense of mystery remains despite our elevated participation in this reality of word and spirit as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. God's life seems impenetrable within his exclusive *homoousios* quality. Jenson however purges any vestiges of modalism. He presents Triune God as more inclusive and gracious, whose life has been fully opened in Christ's death and resurrection by Christ having identified himself fully with the creatures in order to invite us to participate in his life.

However, the articulations of Jenson's temporal revisionary metaphysic still require him to locate the transcendence of God. On one hand, Jenson is able to translate this transcendence to the temporal future. On the other hand, it becomes necessary to show how the union of God and man as *totus Christus* is possible. The "elevation" needed in *theosis* is found lacking. Hence Jenson's theologoumenon tends to oscillate dialectically between an anticipated future of to-be-fulfilled hope and a thoroughly realized eschatology during the administration of sacraments in the reality of word-speech.

So, the transcendence of God is held firm by both Calvin and Jenson, without compromising God's promise of our inclusion in his eternal life. Each model in

Calvin and Jenson has their own limitations; in terms of undefined incomprehensible *ousia* or a dialectic present realization of temporal futurity. But these limitations are rightly placed on the creatures rather than the Creator.

A structure of concentric circles model based on God's temple can serve both Calvin's static rest concern and Jenson's dynamic everlasting concern. As seen in the imagery of God's temple, I believe we can understand *theosis* in a concentric circles model of ontology.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the temple structure is ingrained in the religious societal structure of Israel in the OT; and it is very much connected to the concentric-circles model of ontology. The circles from its innermost to the outermost parts are: The holy of holiest where God is, which entrance on the earth is allowed only for the high priest on a yearly basis, but entered by Christ in heaven at his ascension; The holy place where only priests are allowed for their daily duties; The inner temple court where the Levites were ministers during Moses' time, and the whole Israelites were allowed to come and pray; The outer temple court where non-Israelites were allowed to come and pray; The outcast position at the outermost is beyond the society of Israel where unclean people or pagan gentiles live.

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<sup>4</sup> This model complements the epistemological kind of concentric-circles model as constructed by Huijgen. See p.105, sec. 3.1. Our ontology as creatures created in the image of God lies in the Word (God's righteousness) and the Spirit (God's holiness).

In each circle, the appointed people are holy within their proper and outer circles but would be unclean when anyone moves to the more inner circle. This is the case for Isaiah who was holy as a prophet among the people of Israel, but had to declare himself unclean before God's presence (Isaiah 6) in a similar manner a leper cried "unclean" among the Israelites as God's holy people. The insight to our *theosis* discussion is our entering the innermost circle is made possible only in our union with Christ in His high-priestly role as our righteousness. In our sanctification by the Holy Spirit, we are cleansed to enter the most holy place where God's full presence is, right at the very centre of concentric circles.

*Theosis* then is a person's inclusion from an outer circle to the innermost circle, that brings one to union with God in Christ and the Spirit. Jesus' death on the cross surely represents this inclusion by the tearing of the temple's curtain that had been separating the most holy place, making what was hidden in view to be revealed. His resurrection and ascension then secure this inclusion to its transcended reality. Jesus' ascension is his entrance into this innermost circle, and he will lead us inside which is none other than his temple-body. This is his return to the Father which is located in the Spirit, a transcendence located in both spatial and temporal in God's sense. That is, the right hand of the Father as the spatial understanding, and the future as the Spirit's realm. Calvin's static concern is satisfied that in the innermost circle lies our rest in God where there can be no further *telos*. Jenson's dynamic eternity concern is also satisfied, that in

the innermost circle we will worship God with our praises that can exist only as temporal event and not in a timeless manner.

Still related to the temple imagery that couples righteousness and holiness, we can find our integrated understanding of *theosis* through cross-interpretations between Jenson's and Calvin's triads. Jenson contributes to our articulation of God's dynamic life as the reality of a reciprocal discourse within the Triune identities who then includes man. Calvin expresses *theosis* as the renewal of God's image in us, which consists of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Jenson, on the other hand, seeks to rearticulate the commonly accepted Greek's timeless divine ideals: of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, into his temporal trinitarian metaphysics. As such, humans can participate in the knowability, lovability, and enjoyability of these de-abstracted ideals of the Triune God. Jenson's triadic 'truth, goodness, beauty' then correlates well to complement Calvin's triadic 'knowledge, righteousness, holiness'. This is true since both of these triads are communicable attributes of God. In Jenson's triad as what we can participate (though Jenson is reluctant to identify his triad as God's attributes);<sup>5</sup> And in Calvin's triad as what constitutes the image of God in us. The integration of both triads helps to provide us a clearer expression of our end in God.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ST* 1.III: 13.VII.

*Truth* is the realized immediate *knowledge* that eventuates within us in our bodily resurrection. The truth of resurrection itself is a realization of the Son's discourse with the Father in the Spirit, which we then participate. *Goodness* lies in God's *righteous* (moral) discourse of Law and Gospel which we can lovingly participate. At the *eschaton*, this discourse surges as fugue. In fugue then lies the harmonious *beauty* of the *holy* God's discourse. The *beauty* of God lies initially in His own integral perfection as unity, but also His inclusive plurality for our enjoyability. Such enjoyability of God's unsurpassed beauty is possible only by our immediate participation which Jenson finds in our doubling the Son's praise to the Father in the surge of the Spirit.

To wrap these notions with John 17:3, *theosis* is living the eternal life, which is knowing the only true God through Jesus Christ whom he has sent. This knowing is an intimate sense (ידע) that includes enjoying and loving God.<sup>6</sup> This knowing is not mere epistemological but also ontological; a faith turned to sight in body-spirit experience, with the Spirit as our present guarantee (Ephesians 1:14). Returning to God's temple imagery, Calvin hints that even at present, our bodies are true temples. "For since we ourselves are God's true temples, if we

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gen. 4:1 of Adam *knew* his wife, implies union, not only in the physical sense but more so spiritually. Then in Psalm 1:6 The Lord *knows* the way of the righteous. In contrast to the way of the wicked that will perish, the Lord's knowing implies his love and enjoyment towards the righteous, that is *totus Christus*.

would call upon God in his holy temple, we must pray within ourselves."<sup>7</sup> There is a perichoretic understanding where God is in his holy temple and at the same time is also in us, since we embody God's temple. If this notion of temple is true even in our pre-resurrected soul-bodies, how much more will this ontologically true in our holy and righteous resurrected bodies (Cf. Rev. 21:3).

The above *theosis* fulfilments can also be expressed in Calvin's well-known threefold office. In God's kingdom where God will be all in all, our perfection lies in: a fulfilled prophecy of *truth* in our *σῶμα πνευματικόν* as a life-giving spirit; administering *goodness* by being a co-ruler as members of *totus Christus* with Christ as our head taking up the active role in his divine nature with the Father in the Spirit; and lifting up everlasting praises of God's *beauty* based on the accomplished Christ's priestly work of redemption in incarnation. *Theosis* then finds its ultimate fulfilment in our threefold office in the *eschaton*.

In our integration, the *communion/communication* notion of Jenson complements the Reformed trinitarian theology of *theosis*. In a temple structure concentric-circles model based on God's holiness, what are found lacking in the notion of eternity, each of Jenson's and Calvin's model, could then be satisfyingly meet to be static and dynamic at the same time. In God is our *finis* and *epektasis*. Expressed in terms of the triads, *theosis* begins in the realization of

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<sup>7</sup> *Inst.* 3.20.30.

truth in our embodiment of God's knowledge as *totus Christus*, which would then elevate us up to enter his presence to enjoy God's goodness and love God's beauty in our escalated role of threefold office.

#### 6.4 Final Reflection on *Theosis*

This research presents that *theosis* is a common tradition that is also native in the tapestry of Reformed theology.<sup>8</sup> While we seek to maintain firmly the biblical truth of *theosis*, at the same time a careful articulation is needed to respect the boundary between the Creator and creature. Thus, what will be delineated here are Reformed expression of *theosis*, one that should be closer to Calvin.

The hope that we have in Reformed *theosis* is that after the bodily resurrection, in God's deifying address at the last judgment, we will be elevated to be united with God.<sup>9</sup> This elevation is our beautification in nature, which destiny lies in our deified-deifier, Christ, whose own resurrected body has been vivified, sanctified, and glorified. Upon being deified creatures as *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, we will join the

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<sup>8</sup> In a recently published book (2019), *Systematic Theology*, Robert Letham devoted a sub-chapter on *theosis*. The growing interest to discover the orthodoxy of *theosis* is catching up within the Reformed circle.

<sup>9</sup> The expression "elevation" may not fit to the more recent neo-Calvinist reformed theology. Nevertheless, viewed from Calvin's perspective with the spatial transcendence metaphysics, it is perfectly acceptable.

fellowship or communion of the triune God as God's children due to the sharing of the eternal Son's right with us through our union by his Spirit.

Understood in two natures-one *hypostasis* Christology, *theosis* is the result due to Christ taking our nature. In him taking our nature, we could then abide in the Son who abides naturally in the Father. As such, we are as he is in our relation to the Father. Without the Son residing naturally in the Father, our salvation would not be a *theosis* because the Son himself as deifier would need to be deified in the first place. In such case, an unbridgeable gap would exist between one who being deified and God the deifier; we can't be united with God. On the contrary, *theosis* is true because the Son has given himself in his gift of the Spirit, who resides in us as the Father's promise. With the Spirit resides in us, we reside in the Son, and so reside in the Father; a non-*unitas* union with God.

We ask then what is the best expression of *theosis*? The short answer is "in Christ." That in the *eschaton* we will be perfectly united with Christ, to be like Christ in two manners: ontologically and epistemologically. In the former is our sanctification by the Spirit where we will be beautified with incorruption and invested with glory; only then we can be received to participate in the Triune God's eternal fellowship of righteousness. While, in the latter, due to our being like him, we will see God as he is, or Christ in his naked glory (1 John 3:2).

We will live with God in Christ which means that we will live in the reality of "word and spirit" in personal relational manner. We are brought into the



knowledge of God that continuously drawing us closer to the inner circle of inaccessible light, the holiest place, to the extent of that capacity (the *infinitum capax finiti*) from the elevated Christ's human nature. Yet despite our apprehension, the distance will always be greater due to our *finitum non capax infiniti*.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the *extra-calvinisticum* remains true.

The character of *theosis* has a Creator-creature distinction emphasis in Reformed tradition. The role of Christ in Reformed theology should not be understood as passing away but should complement the Lutheran hearing tradition. In scripture we find the exclamation "Behold, the lamb of God!", not "Hark, the lamb of God!" Before the beholding act, one need to first take heed of the hark. Christ is the lamb who was slain in his once-sacrificed "flesh and blood"; he will appear in his resurrected-glorified state. In that harking-beholding stance we will be glorified, raptured in prostration to worship him in the sevenfold everlasting glory which is none other of the Father (Revelation 4–5). The end is indeed music, but even more the end is worship; an enjoyable feast to both of our seeing and hearing senses.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Comm. 1 John* 3:2.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Articles on Calvin and Calvinism, ed. R. C. Gamble
CC	Christian Century
CCCD	Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine, ed. Colin E. Gunton
CCKB	Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth, ed. John Webster
CCML	Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther, ed. Donald McKim
CD	Christian Dogmatics, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson
CEGC	Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos
CH	Calvin Handbook, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis
CSS	Calvin – Saint or Sinner?, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis
CSSP	Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser
CSLI	Calvinus Sacrarum Literarum Interpres, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis
CTJ	Calvin Theological Journal
CTQ	Concordia Theological Quarterly
DDSR	Duke Divinity School Review
ETC	Essays in Theology of Culture
GOTR	Greek Orthodox Theological Review
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
Inst.	Institutes of the Christian Religion, by John Calvin, Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles
IJST	International Journal of Systematic Theology
JCRR	John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees
JCTR	Journal for Christian Theological Research
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
JRT	Journal of Reformed Theology
KK	Kirche und Konfession
LQ	Lutheran Quarterly
MT	Modern Theology
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. Philip Schaff
PE	Pro Ecclesia
RHT	Reformed Historical Theology
RefRR	Reformation and Renaissance review
RTR	Reformed Theological Review
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SBJT	Southern Baptist Journal of Theology
SoJT	Southwestern Journal of Theology
TRM	Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics
TSRPRT	Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought
TT	Theology Today

ToTS	Treatises on The Sacraments: Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Forms of Prayer, And Confessions of Faith, Tracts
TTC	Trinity, Time, and Church
VE	Vox Evangelica
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
WThJ	Westminster Theological Journal
WBBW	Works of Benjamin B. Warfield

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## Summary of “Union with God: An Assessment of Deification (*Theosis*) in the Theologies of Robert Jenson and John Calvin”

### *Introduction*

Theosis is a growing acceptance subject within the western church tradition in recent decades. Robert W. Jenson has incorporated this notion, not only in a section, but permeated throughout his Systematic Theology. This research outgrew its projected systematic characterization, analysis, and assessment of Jenson’s notion of theosis to a parallel comparison of John Calvin’s. The immediate main concern within the framework of Reformed theology is on the issue of Creator-creature distinction. The research question is then formulated, “to what extent can Robert Jenson’s idea of *theosis* be integrated within the Reformed theology, as exemplified by John Calvin’s theology, with regards to the relation between the Triune God as Creator and the created world, the mediatory role of the incarnate Christ, and the understanding of self?”

In the historical background and contextualization, *theosis* is found to be a common tradition from Irenaeus, Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and Cyril. While later Greek theologians like Maximus, and Palamas have a more *apophatic* expression to it, recent ones like Zizioulas has a closer Western expression. The Western streams of post-reformation traditions – Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed – have discovered the ignored tenet, each in Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. Jenson’s theological context flourished from his Lutheran background, widened by an eschatological emphasis within the ecumenical climate, dealt with post-Kantian philosophical challenges, and creatively constructed his theology from various traditions. Calvin presented the reformation cause as a continuation with his occasional appeals to the church Fathers’ authority; he was committed to an ecumenical unity in Protestant front in the midst of religious persecution climate that also shaped his eschatological view.

From Calvin’s own defense against the Osiandrian false charge, we draw three evaluating criteria for our assessment. They are the rejection of mixing the divine and human essences, the emphasis on Christ’s human righteousness, and the pneumatological self-transformation in one’s redemption.

### *Jenson’s Conception of Theosis*

In chapter two, Jenson’s conception of *theosis* is characterized. It is seen as the result of the creation’s inclusion to the common reality of intra-divine discourse of the triune God. Jenson’s theology critically revises our basic a priori notions of time and space to the locus of the triune God *opera ad intra* as the conditions of possibility for His *ad extra*. In this common reality, Jenson revises God’s transcendentals of “Truth, Goodness, and Beauty” to be seen open for participation by creatures in God’s knowability, lovability, and enjoyability. To affirm the Creator-creature distinction, Jenson interprets God’s *ousia* as temporal infinity instead of divine incomprehensibility; one that correlates well with the Lutheran paradoxical notion of God’s hiddenness.

Within the common reality, the incarnated life of Jesus as one of the Triune God and one of us, was seen to be constitutive to both God’s life and ours. Jesus is the necessary embodiment of God, whose selfhood consists in the triunity of consciousness/ ego/

freedom. Jesus, as one of us, made his full identification by making his life as a sacrificial prayer being offered to God which was answered in his resurrection. Yet, Jenson's idiosyncrasy lies in his notion of Jesus' post-existence in the future as promise.

Immediately related to this post-existence, *totus Christus* is seen by Jenson as the true self that is found in the church as Christ's body. In the *eschaton*, the *totus Christus* constitutes the ego of the triune God. It is a reciprocal transformation in the common reality of the Spirit such that what affects us affect God himself. Transformed from a praying animal, in the transcended divine discourse reality of praise, *theosis* ends in music by doubling the Son's praise to the Father in the surge of the Spirit.

### *Calvin's Conception of Theosis*

In chapter three, prompted by Jenson's ontological discussion, it is necessary to step beyond the non-speculative Calvin's epistemological oriented metaphysics. Calvin succinctly describes his ontology that Word and Spirit as God's simple essence. Yet, Calvin comprehends eternity as a static notion that appropriates to the notion of *autotheos* trinity. However, even in his economic trinity articulations, Calvin unabashedly stated that our goal is to be united with God the triune creator and redeemer.

On the second locus, the role of Christ as mediator is indispensable to reach our union with God. Calvin employs *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ's two natures that effectuates our *deification* in our union with Christ. Calvin accounts that Christ ceases his mediatorship at the *eschaton*; seen as an epistemological blessedness, the previously incomprehensible divinity of Christ will then be made apprehensible.

As to the third locus, *theosis* as Calvin's soteriological concern must be conceived in trinitarian manner. Through our union with Christ, the *duplex gratia* is received in our being adopted by the Father and sanctified by the Spirit. We are to be *deified* creatures in our knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This blessedness can be seen threefold: epistemological in our seeing God through Christ, eschatological in our fellowship with the Triune God, and ontological as *soma pneumatikon*. This eschatological blessedness, even though is conceived as static rest, must be seen as an escalation in the reality of Word and Spirit.

### *The Lord's Supper Comparison*

In seeing the coherency of beliefs in *theosis* and its practice, both Calvin and Jenson hold to a high view of the supper. Their underlying Christological views however keep them separated. Jenson holds to an *aufhebung* reality of a *ubiquitous* and kenotic Christ in the supper. While securing the reality of the church as the body of Christ, Jenson confuses the *signum et res* as the middle reality; Thus, it compromises Christ's flesh and blood kind of body. As such, Jenson's conception of *theosis* compromises its anticipation character due to a thoroughgoing eschatology at the supper's administration.

Whereas Calvin's view has a more proper *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ's two natures in our deification within the spatial transcendental metaphysics. The supper as the pledge of our union with God is a reality of non-separated Word and Spirit; one that bears its epistemological witness by faith, its ontological participation of life-giving



flesh, and its escalating eschatological anticipation despite the *totus non totum* character on God's side and *finitum non capax infiniti* character on ours.

### *Evaluation*

Based on the first criterion, Jenson's common metaphysical model can satisfy the Creator-creature distinction. Jenson seeks a temporal dynamic interpretation of Nicaean Trinity, while Calvin seeks a static eternity. As the result, Jenson's futuristic-pneumatological emphasis in Hegel's Lord and master struggle has diminished the Son's lordship. However, Calvin's non-coinciding of the eternal Son (*ad intra* as one of the immanent trinity) and Christ (*ad extra* as one of the economic trinity) are brought to a perfect epistemological alignment at the *eschaton*.

On the second criterion of Christ's human righteousness in his mediatorial role, Jenson's post-existence Christology lacks the coherency of Christ's body; both during the incarnation that requires an extra understanding in temporal common reality, and at the Supper with its interpreted transformation of what constitutes Christ's body. Jenson does not make a clear distinction in *ecclesial hypostasis* as *totus Christus* between Christ and the church. Calvin on his side cautiously qualifies that God's righteousness participated at the *eschaton* is not God's essential righteousness, but rather his eternal righteousness. Since righteousness is understood by Jenson as ontologically-relational, he views *theosis* as the inclusion in the triune *perichoretic* communion.

As for the third criterion, Jenson rejects an autonomous view of self for a communal self. Such notion of self is not bounded to the past, but rather is open to the future as being in communication. Even though Jenson maintains the many irreducible identities within one *hypostasis* as *totus Christus*, yet this auricular paradigm sublates the significance of any physical body. Calvin also secures our identities in Christ firmly. He qualifies these in the threefold office of Christ, summed up in the priestly aspect that maintains the importance of life-giving flesh. The open to the future kind of being can be seen as a progress within concentric circles of pneumatic-ontological model. Our lives are to approach nearer to the inner circle as we are brought to a greater degree of knowledge, holiness, and righteousness. Even as one mystical body of the *soma pneumatikon*, the differentiation occurs in different kinds of glory between the head and the body, as well among the members.

### *Conclusion*

Calvin's identification of Word and Spirit as God's simple essence is the same reality that Jenson describes as intra-divine discourse. *Theosis* as an inclusion in that discourse then can also be seen as an inclusion from an outer circle to the innermost circle in the pneumatic-ontological concentric circles model. Thus, one is brought to a closer union with God in Christ and the Spirit. The employment of this concentric model serves well to both of Calvin's static rest concern and Jenson's dynamic everlasting concern.

Furthermore, Calvin's triad of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness are compatible with Jenson's truth, goodness, and beauty. Resurrection is the knowledge of truth in our embodiment, the discourse content of goodness is in the Law and the Gospel that manifests God's righteousness, and the Spirit's prerogative to beatify us in holiness enable us to praise God's beauty within ourselves as the embodiment of His temple. The

result of the Spirit indwells in us leads to our dwelling in the Son, and so our dwelling in the Father. That end is worship; a feast to both our hearing and seeing paradigm.

## **Samenvatting van Unie met God: Beoordeling van de Deïficatie (Theosis) in de Theologieën van Robert Jenson en Johannes Calvijn**

### *Inleiding*

Theosis is een groeiend acceptatieonderwerp binnen de traditie van de westerse kerk in de afgelopen decennia. Robert W. Jenson heeft dit begrip niet alleen in een sectie opgenomen, maar het is in zijn gehele systematische theologie doorgedrongen. Dit onderzoek ontgroeide de geprojecteerde systematische karakterisering, analyse en beoordeling van Jenson's notie van theosis tot een parallelle vergelijking van die van Johannes Calvijn. De eerst noodzakelijkste zorg in het kader van de gereformeerde theologie is de kwestie van het onderscheid tussen Schepper en schepsel. De onderzoeksvraag werd vervolgens geformuleerd: "in hoeverre kan Robert Jenson's idee van theosis worden geïntegreerd in de Gereformeerde theologie, zoals geïllustreerd wordt door Johannes Calvijn's theologie, met betrekking tot de relatie tussen de Drie-enige God als Schepper en de geschapen wereld, de bemiddelende rol van de geïncarneerde Christus, en het verstaan van het zelf?"

In de historische achtergrond en de contextualisering wordt de theosis als een gemeenschappelijke traditie gevonden bij Irenaeus, Athanasius, de Cappadociërs en Cyrillus. Terwijl latere Griekse theologen zoals Maximus en Palamas een meer apofatische uitdrukking hebben, hebben recente theologen zoals Zizioulas een meer westerse uitdrukking. De westerse stromen van post-reformatietradities – Rooms-Katholiek, Luthers en Gereformeerd – hebben het genegeerde leerstuk ontdekt, elk in Augustinus, Luther en Calvijn. Jenson's theologische context bloeide op vanuit zijn Lutherse achtergrond, werd verbreed door een eschatologische nadruk binnen het oecumenische klimaat, en ging op in de post-Kantiaanse filosofische uitdagingen. Hij bouwde zijn theologie creatief vanuit verschillende tradities op. Calvijn presenteerde de zaak van de reformatie als een voortzetting van zijn incidentele oproepen aan het gezag van de kerkvaders; hij zette zich in voor een oecumenische eenheid in het protestantse front, temidden van een religieus vervolgingsklimaat dat ook zijn eschatologische visie gevormd heeft.

Uit Calvijn's eigen verdediging tegen de valse beschuldiging van Osiandrië trekken we drie criteria voor onze beoordeling. Het betreft de afwijzing van de vermenging van de goddelijke en menselijke essenties, de nadruk op de menselijke gerechtigheid van Christus en de pneumatologische zelf-transformatie in de verlossing.

### *Jenson's opvatting van theosis*

In hoofdstuk twee wordt Jenson's voorstelling van de theose gekarakteriseerd. Het wordt gezien als het resultaat van de opname van de schepping in de gemeenschappelijke realiteit van de inter-Goddelijke redevoering van de drie-enige God. Jenson's theologie herzielt kritisch onze standaard a priori noties van tijd en ruimte tot de locus van de drie-enige God opera ad intra als de voorwaarden voor de mogelijkheid van Zijn ad extra. In deze gemeenschappelijke realiteit herzielt Jenson Gods transcendenten van "Waarheid, Goedheid en Schoonheid" om open te staan voor

deelname van de schepselen aan Gods kenbaarheid, beminnelijkheid en plezier. Om het Schepper-schepsel onderscheid te bekrachtigen, interpreteert Jenson Gods ousia als een tijdelijke oneindigheid in plaats van goddelijke onbegrijpelijkheid; iets dat goed samenhangt met de Lutherse paradoxale notie van Gods verborgenheid.

Binnen de gemeenschappelijke werkelijkheid werd het vleesgeworden leven van Jezus, als een van de Drie-enige God en een van ons, gezien als constitutief voor zowel het leven van God als dat van ons. Jezus is de noodzakelijke belichaming van God, wiens persoonlijkheid bestaat uit de drie-eenheid van besef/ego/vrijheid. Jezus heeft zich, als één van ons, volledig geïdentificeerd door zijn leven te maken als een offergebed dat aan God werd geofferd en dat in zijn verrijzenis werd verhoord. Toch ligt Jenson's eigenzinnigheid in zijn notie van Jezus' post-existentie in de toekomst als belofte.

Direct gerelateerd aan deze post-existentie, wordt totus Christus door Jenson gezien als het ware zelf dat in de kerk wordt gevonden als het lichaam van Christus. In de eschaton vormt de totus Christus het ego van de drie-enige God. Het is een wederzijdse transformatie in de gemeenschappelijke werkelijkheid van de Geest, zodat wat ons raakt God zelf raakt. Omgevormd van een biddend dier, in de overstijgende goddelijke gespreksrealiteit van de lofprijzing, eindigt de theose in muziek door de lofprijzing van de Zoon aan de Vader te verdubbelen in de vloedgolf van de Geest.

#### *Calvijns opvatting van theosis*

In hoofdstuk drie, ingegeven door Jenson's ontologische discussie, is het nodig om verder te gaan dan de epistemologisch georiënteerde metafysica van Calvijn. Calvijn beschrijft zijn ontologie op beknopte wijze over Woord en Geest als Gods eenvoudige wezen. Toch begrijpt Calvijn de eeuwigheid als een statisch begrip dat zich toe-eigent aan het begrip van autotheos drie-eenheid. Maar zelfs in zijn economische drie-eenheid articulaties stelt Calvijn ongegeneerd dat het ons doel is om verenigd te zijn met God, de drie-enige schepper en verlosser.

Op de tweede plaats is de rol van Christus als bemiddelaar onmisbaar om onze vereniging met God te bereiken. Calvijn maakt gebruik van *communicatio idiomatum* van de twee naturen van Christus die onze deification in onze vereniging met Christus tot stand brengt. Calvijn vertelt dat Christus ophoudt met zijn bemiddelende rol bij de eschaton; gezien als een epistemologische zegening zal de voorheen onbegrijpelijke goddelijkheid van Christus dan verstaanbaar worden gemaakt.

Wat de derde locus betreft, moet de theosis als Calvijns soteriologische zorg op een trinitaire manier worden opgevat. Door onze vereniging met Christus wordt de duplex gratia ontvangen in ons aangenomen zijn door de Vader en geheiligd zijn door de Geest. Wij behoren gedeïficeerde wezens te zijn in onze kennis, gerechtigheid en heiligheid. Deze zegening kan drieledig gezien worden: epistemologisch in het zien van God door Christus, eschatologisch in onze gemeenschap met de Drie-enige God en ontologisch als soma pneumatikon. Deze eschatologische gelukzaligheid, ook al wordt ze opgevat als statische rust, moet gezien worden als een escalation in de realiteit van Woord en Geest.

#### *Het avondmaal van de Heer*

Bij het zien van de samenhang van de geloofsovertuigingen in de theosis en de praktijk ervan, houden zowel Calvin als Jenson vast aan een hoge waardering van het avondmaal. Hun onderliggende Christologische opvattingen houden hen echter gescheiden. Jenson houdt vast aan een *aufhebung* realiteit van een alomtegenwoordige en kenotische Christus in het avondmaal. Terwijl hij de realiteit van de kerk als het lichaam van Christus veiligstelt, verwacht Jenson de *signum et res* als de middelste realiteit; zo schaadt hij het lichaam van Christus in zijn vlees en bloed. Als zodanig brengt Jenson's voorstelling van de theosis het anticiperend karakter ervan in gevaar als gevolg van een diepgaand eschatologie bij de toediening van het avondmaal.

Terwijl Calvin's visie een meer juiste *communicatio idiomatum* heeft van Christus' twee naturen in onze deification binnen de ruimtelijke transcendentale metafysica. Het avondmaal als het onderpand van onze vereniging met God is een werkelijkheid van niet gescheiden Woord en Geest; een die zijn epistemologische getuigenis door het geloof, zijn ontologische deelname van levenggevend vlees, en zijn escalerende eschatologische anticipatie draagt, ondanks het *totus non totum* karakter aan Gods kant en *finitum non capax infiniti* karakter aan onze kant.

### *Evaluatie*

Op basis van het eerste criterium kan Jenson's gemeenschappelijke metafysische model voldoen aan het Schepper-schepsel onderscheid. Jenson zoekt een temporeel dynamische interpretatie van de Niceaanse Drie-eenheid, terwijl Calvin een statische eeuwigheid zoekt. Het resultaat is dat Jenson's futuristisch-pneumatologische nadruk in Hegels Heer-en-meester strijd de heerschappij van de Zoon heeft verminderd. Calvin's non-coincidence van de eeuwige Zoon (*ad intra* als één van de immanente drie-eenheid) en Christus (*ad extra* als één van de economische drie-eenheid) worden echter op de eschaton tot een perfecte epistemologische uitlijning gebracht.

Wat betreft het tweede criterium van Christus' menselijke gerechtigheid in zijn bemiddelende rol, mist Jenson's post-existentie Christologie het samenhang van het lichaam van Christus; zowel tijdens de incarnatie, die een extra begrip in de temporele gemeenschappelijke werkelijkheid vereist, als bij het Avondmaal, met zijn geïnterpreteerde transformatie van wat het lichaam van Christus vormt. Jenson maakt geen helder onderscheid in de ecclesial hypostasis als *totus Christus* tussen Christus en de kerk. Calvin kwalificeert van zijn kant voorzichtig dat Gods gerechtigheid aan de eschaton niet Gods essentiële gerechtigheid, maar Zijn eeuwige gerechtigheid is. Omdat de gerechtigheid door Jenson wordt begrepen als ontologisch-relationeel, ziet hij theosis als de opname in de driedubbele perichoretic gemeenschap.

Wat het derde criterium betreft, verworpt Jenson een autonome opvatting van het zelf voor een gemeenschappelijke opvatting van het zelf. Een dergelijke opvatting van het zelf is niet gebonden aan het verleden, maar staat open voor de toekomst als zijnde in gemeenschap. Hoewel Jenson de vele onherleidbare identiteiten binnen één hypostasis als *totus Christus* handhaaft, sublimeert dit auriculaire paradigma de betekenis van elk fysiek lichaam. Calvin stelt ook onze identiteiten in Christus stevig vast. Hij kwalificeert deze in het drievoudige ambt van Christus, samengevat in het priesterlijke aspect dat het belang van levenggevend vlees in stand houdt. Het openstaan voor het toekomstige soort wezen kan gezien worden als een vooruitgang binnen

concentrische cirkels van het pneumatisch-ontologische model. Onze levens moeten dichter bij de binnenste cirkel komen, terwijl we naar een grotere mate van kennis, heiligheid en gerechtigheid worden gebracht. Zelfs als een mystiek lichaam van de soma pneumatikon komt de differentiatie in verschillende soorten van glorie voor tussen het hoofd en het lichaam, en ook tussen de leden.

### *Conclusie*

Calvijs identificatie van Woord en Geest als Gods eenvoudige essentie is dezelfde realiteit die Jenson beschrijft als inter-Goddelijke redevoering. Theosis als insluiting in dat gesprek kan dan ook gezien worden als insluiting van een buitenste cirkel naar de binnenste cirkel in het pneumatisch-ontologische concentrische cirkelmodel. Zo wordt men tot een nauwere vereniging met God in Christus en de Geest gebracht. Het gebruik van dit concentrische model dient zowel de statische rust van Calvijn als de dynamische eeuwige zorg van Jenson.

Bovendien zijn Calvijs drie-eenheid van kennis, gerechtigheid en heiligheid compatibel met Jenson's waarheid, goedheid en schoonheid. De opstanding is de kennis van de waarheid in onze belichaming, het gesprek gaat over de goedheid die staat in de Wet en het Evangelie dat Gods gerechtigheid openbaart, en het voorrecht van de Geest om ons in heiligheid zalig te verklaren, stelt ons in staat om Gods schoonheid in onszelf te prijzen als de belichaming van Zijn tempel. Het resultaat van de Geest die in ons woont, leidt naar onze woning in de Zoon, en dus naar onze woning in de Vader. Dat einde is aanbidding; een feest voor zowel ons horen als zien.