

The Rediscovery of Participation in God as Deification/Divinisation (Greek: Theōsis) in the Anglican Theological and Spiritual Tradition

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In recent decades there has been an increasing interest across the Christian spectrum in both the doctrine and teaching of deification as a tenet of the Christian life. Perhaps it was through the patristic revival of the Oxford movement (1833-45) that the concept of deification was recovered. The Oxford Dictionary describes deification (Gr: θεωσις . Eng. Theōsis) or theopoiesis, [as] ‘Becoming God’, the normal term for the transforming effect of grace in Greek patristic and Eastern Orthodox Theology. Theologian-philosopher E L Mascall writes that ‘no term less than ‘deification’ is adequate to describe the condition of the human being who has been taken by grace into the supernatural realm; and... not simply the condition of the mystic united to God... but also that of the newly baptized infant at the font or of the newly absolved sinner in the confessional.’ Recent scholarship has identified deification in St. Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, early Anglicanism, early Methodism and Jonathan Edwards – all fountainheads of Western Theology. Allchin argues that in addition to mystics such as Julian of Norwich, George Fox and William Blake who are a part of the Anglican theological and spiritual tradition, there are those who write about divinisation such as Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, Charles Wesley and E.B. Pusey, to mention only a few. Newey examines the doctrine of deification in seventeenth century Anglican theology, writing that the Anglican theologians Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth, and Jeremy Taylor understood that ‘the highest human calling is to conformity with Christ by partaking in the divine pedagogy which is the life of the Trinity.’ Rowan Williams suggests that ‘the ‘deification’ tradition enables us to envisage a contemporary theology and spirituality of Christlike freedom – freedom dependent on relation with the Father, yet ‘divine’ in its own authority, creativity and capacity for self-giving and compassion.’

Daniel A. Keating writes that ‘In the past two or three generations a conscious effort has been made across the Christian spectrum to retrieve an understanding of Christian life in terms of ‘deification’ and to give explicit attention to its meaning and content.’¹ Keating further observes: ‘The doctrine of deification functions centrally in Eastern Orthodox theology and liturgy, and it is within the ambit of Orthodoxy that deification (theosis) has received its fullest development. Catholic theologians, however, have not been far behind in their efforts to reinvigorate the idea of deification within a specifically Western context.’² What is ‘more striking’ to Keating is ‘the interest that some theologians from the churches of the Reformation are giving to the notion of

¹ Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace*, Naples, Sapientia Press, 2007, p. 2

² Keating, *Deification and Grace*.

deification.’³ Keating further writes that ‘Anglican writers, especially those steeped in patristic theology, have long been well disposed to the idea of deification.’⁴

In 1988, A.M. Allchin in his book *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* made the case that ‘the patristic adage ‘God became man so that man might become God’ is not so foreign to Anglican tradition as is commonly assumed.’⁵ Similarly Don Armentrout and Robert Slocum write that ‘Although theōsis [Greek: Deification/Divinisation] has not been emphasized in Anglican theology of salvation, it is compatible with William Porcher DuBose’s understanding of humanity’s destined union with God through the saving process of divine grace.’⁶

A.M. Allchin points out in his monograph that in addition to mystics such as Julian of Norwich, George Fox and William Blake⁷ who are part of the English theological and spiritual tradition, there are those who write about divinisation such as Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, Charles Wesley and E.B. Pusey, to mention only a few.⁸ The existence of a mystical dimension to theology in the history of Anglican spirituality that should make necessary for members of the English Church to reassess their theological traditions and this paper intends to survey some of the recent ideas which have offered this reorientation of the Anglican theological tradition.⁹ Allchin writes that the English ‘shall have to take seriously the subtitle which Nicholas Lossky has given to his study of the theology of Lancelot Andrewes, ‘the origins of the mystical theology of the Church of England’ (aux sources de la theologie mystique de l’Eglise d’Angleterre).’¹⁰

However Allchin also writes (in 1988) that: ‘...it is common knowledge that Anglicans do not hold this doctrine [of deification], and certainly do not use this terminology.’ It should be remembered that the Anglican – Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission reached different conclusions in their Agreed Statement in Moscow in 1976, for the Orthodox tradition spoke of ‘the fullness of man’s sanctification in terms of his sharing in the life of God, using the term theosis kata charin (divinisation by grace),’ but ‘such language is not normally used by Anglicans, some of whom regard it as dangerous and misleading.’¹¹ In 1983, the now Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, wrote that the word ‘deification’ [Greek: theōsis (θεώσις)] ‘...has acquired a very suspicious sound in the ears of perhaps the majority of Western Christians.’¹²

³ Keating, *Deification and Grace*, p. 4

⁴ Keating, *Deification and Grace*, p. 4. Keating recommends the following Anglican writers: A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition*, Wilton, Morehouse-Barlow, 1988. For the influence of the Greek Fathers and the doctrine of deification on the Anglican Oxford movement, see Andrew Louth, ‘Manhood into God: The Oxford Movement, the Fathers and Deification of Man,’ in Kenneth Leech and Rowan Williams (eds), *Essays Catholic and Radical*, London. Bowerdean, 1983, pp. 70-80. Louth also published in 2007 on ‘The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology’ in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*. The theology of deification shows up prominently in the Anglican theologian-philosopher E. L. Mascall, *Christ, the Christian and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and Its Consequences*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1946.

⁵ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p.ix

⁶ Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, ‘Deification’ in Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum (eds), *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User friendly Reference for Episcopalians*, New York, Church Publishing Incorporated 2000, p.518.

⁷ Armentrout and Slocum, *Participation in God*, p. 3.

⁸ Armentrout and Slocum, *Participation in God*, p. 3.

⁹ Armentrout and Slocum, *Participation in God*, p. 3

¹⁰ Armentrout and Slocum, *Participation in God*, p. 3

¹¹ Armentrout and Slocum, *Participation in God*, p. 3

¹² Rowan Williams, ‘Deification’, in Gordon S Wakefield (ed), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, London, SCM Press, 1983, p.106

Williams also notes that discussion of the subject ‘...has also been a good deal hampered by the confusion of doctrines of deification with speculations [such as those of Gnosticism and the New Age] about a divine and uncreated ‘core’ of the human soul.’¹³

Williams considers that the antipathy towards the doctrine of divinisation is due in part as ‘...a result of the claims of mediaeval and sixteenth - century sectarian and apocalyptic groups to be united in essence with God (and so incapable of sin).’¹⁴ In contrast to the claims of such groups, is teaching provided by Maximus the Confessor, arguably the best of the Eastern Theologians who focus on ‘the sense of grace’. Norris writes that in the context of his discussion of deification, Maximus the Confessor ‘...describes it not as a magical activity that overpowers a human being [an error sometimes made by fringe Pentecostal groups] so that the person has no moral life or growth, but one in which grace and free will work together.’¹⁵

Maximus writes:

[God the Father] gives adoption by giving through the Spirit a supernatural birth from on high in grace; the guardian and preserver of that divine birth is the free will of those who are thus born. By a sincere disposition it cherishes the grace bestowed and by careful observance of the commandments it adorns the beauty given in grace. By the humbling of the passions, it takes on divinity in the same measure that the Word of God willed to empty himself in the incarnation of his own unmixed glory in becoming genuinely human.¹⁶

Keating considers that ‘given a widespread interest in deification from various theological perspectives and commitments, there is a need for a clear description of what the classical doctrine of deification is, and an estimation of what value it might possess.’¹⁷ Kevin Hill, reviewer of Norman Russell’s *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, writes that: ‘Over the past 100 years, scholars of Western Christianity have begun to rediscover the startling patristic description of salvation as deification.’¹⁸ David V. Meconi S.J. writes succinctly: ‘Enlisting the voices of Irenaeus, Athanasius and Aquinas, [together with many others] the church teaches that divinization never confuses, the human and divine natures remaining eternally other and distinct. Rather, a theology of deification points to the human person’s graced participation in God’s very nature: perfect communion and the subsequent sharing in divine characteristics’ [cf. 2 Peter 1:4].¹⁹

As described by Andrew Louth in the *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Deification is ‘...the doctrine that the destiny of human kind, or indeed of the cosmos as a whole, is to share in the divine life, and actually to become God, though by grace rather than by nature.’²⁰ Louth views this doctrine, characteristic of

¹³ F. W. Norris, ‘Deification: Consensual and Cogent: A Protestant Perspective on Eastern Orthodoxy,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology*, v.49, no. 4, 1996, p.418.

¹⁴ Williams, ‘Deification’, p.106

¹⁵ Norris, ‘Deification: Consensual and Cogent’, p. 417.

¹⁶ George Berthold, ‘Commentary on the Our Father 2,’ in George Berthold (ed), *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, New York, Paulist Press, 1985, p.103. Quoted in Norris, ‘Deification: Consensual and Cogent’, p. 418.

¹⁷ Keating, *Deification and Grace*, p. 5

¹⁸ Kevin Douglas Hill, ‘The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition,’ *Anglican Theological Review*, 90, no. 399, 2008, p.399.

¹⁹ David V. Meconi, ‘Deification in the Thought of John Paul II,’ *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71, 2006, p.129

²⁰ Andrew Louth, ‘Deification,’ in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Westminster, John Knox Press, 2005, p.229

Eastern Orthodox theology in particular, as ‘having developed out of a host of suggestions in the Bible that human engagement with God involves a profound intimacy.’²¹ In the Old Testament, these suggestions include Israel’s proximity to God, (Deut.4.7) and Israel’s sense of a filial relationship to God (Ex. 4.22).²² In the New Testament these suggestions of intimacy with God are multiplied: ‘the notion of sonship/[daughtership] becomes central (cf Matt. 6.9-13; Rom. 8. 14-17; Gal.4.4-7).’²³ Finally, Louth writes that ‘...the notion of transformation into the Lord’s glory appears (cf. 2 Cor.3.18; 1 Cor.13.12-13), and there are explicit assertions that ‘we shall be like him’ (1 John 3.2), and ‘become partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1.4).’²⁴ (*theias koinōnoi physeōs*).

The Retrieval of Deification in modern Theology and Spirituality

In Western Christianity, the recovery of the doctrine or teaching of deification has occurred somewhat differently. The *Oxford Dictionary of Christianity* for example, attributes the modern recovery of the concept of deification to the patristic revival in the Oxford Movement.²⁵ Allchin writes that ‘central to the concerns of the Oxford movement’ is the subject of his book *Participation in God* which considers:

[t]he reaffirmation of the doctrine of *theōsis* , seen as an immediate consequence of the doctrine of the incarnation, and the foundation of a new and transformed vision of the calling and destiny of man. For man is lifted up into participation in God by the loving movement of God’s coming to share in the very nature and predicament of man. This doctrine, which was at the heart of the Christianity of East and West in the first millennium of the Christian era, and which has remained central in the Christianity of the Orthodox East, suddenly came to new life with unexpected power in the middle of nineteenth-century England. It was as if there was a veritable epiphany of patristic spirituality and theology in the midst of our divided western Christendom, an epiphany which would draw together into new possibilities of reconciliation elements of the Reformation heritage and elements of the continuing tradition of the churches in communion with Rome. Here again there is much unfinished business, much in the original vision of the Oxford Movement which has not yet been realised and appropriated.²⁶

Allchin comments further that the Oxford Movement:

[c]ombined in a remarkable way a rediscovery of doctrine with a renewal of life, a search for the fullness of the faith which was at the same time a search for the life of holiness. In this movement there was no separation between theology and spirituality, between theory and practice. Everything that was seen as the will of God made an immediate demand on man’s obedience.²⁷

The early sermons of members of the Oxford Movement, notably Newman’s Lectures on Justification, published in 1836, ‘expresses this central conviction of the Oxford Movement, the conviction that as we respond to God in Christ, God himself is present

²¹ Louth, ‘Deification’, p.229

²² Louth, ‘Deification’, p.229

²³ Louth, ‘Deification’, p.229

²⁴ Louth, ‘Deification’, p.229

²⁵ F.L Cross and E.A. Livingstone, ‘Deification,’ in F.L.Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church 3rd Edition*, Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 465.

²⁶ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 49

²⁷ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 49

to us, in our hearts, drawing us to himself; a conviction which expresses the heart of the patristic doctrine of deification'.²⁸ Allchin suggests that in these Lectures Newman argues:

...that the Reformers were right in insisting that our justification is wholly the work of Christ. They were wrong in teaching that this righteousness is only imputed to us and not imparted. Christ himself becomes our righteousness. 'Our true righteousness is the indwelling of our glorified Lord... This is to be justified, to receive the Divine Presence with us and to be made a temple of the Holy Ghost.' So Newman can affirm 'justification comes through the sacraments; it is received by faith; consists in God's inward presence; and lives in obedience'.

This understanding of justification has immediate ethical implications for members of the Anglican tradition. Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum point out that 'Although *theōsis* [deification/divinisation] has not been emphasized in Anglican theology of salvation, it is compatible with William Porcher DuBose's understanding of humanity's destined union with God through the saving process of divine grace.'²⁹ They then point to the English theologian Richard Hooker [1554 - 1600] who '...emphasized the theological significance of sacramental participation in Book V of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*'.³⁰ Allchin writes that Hooker '...treats of the doctrine of the Church and the sacraments on the basis of a reaffirmation of the Christology of Chalcedon...the concept of participation is essential'. Further:

Sacraments are the powerful instruments of God to eternal life. For as our natural life consisteth in the union of body with soul, so our life supernatural [consisteth in] in the union of the soul with God. And forasmuch as there is no union of God with man without that mean [Jesus Christ – both human and divine] between both which is both, it seemeth requisite that we first consider how [in what manner] God is in Christ, then how Christ is in us, and how the sacraments do serve to make us partakers of Christ. In other things we may be more brief, but the weight of these requireth largeness.'³¹

Allchin writes that this is the basis for Hooker's '...detailed exposition of what it means that we should be called to live the life of God and to share in Christ as members of his body, which occupies that later part of his work. It is an exposition which at one point Hooker sums up in terms of the most familiar Trinitarian formula of the New Testament.'³²

Hooker's own words amplify this strand of thought: 'Life, as all other gifts and benefits groweth originally from the Father, and cometh not to us but by the Son; nor by the Son to any of us in particular but through the Spirit. For this cause the apostle wisheth the church of Corinth 'The grace of [from] our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love [from] of God, and the fellowship of [from] the Holy Ghost,' which three St Peter comprehendeth in one, 'The participation of the divine nature.' (theias koinōnoi physeōs).'³³

²⁸ Andrew Louth, 'Manhood into God: The Oxford Movement, the Fathers and the Deification of Man,' in Kenneth Leech and Rowan Williams (eds) *Essays Catholic and Radical*, London Bowerdean Press, 1983, p. 74-75. Quoted in Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 51

²⁹ Armentrout and Slocum, 'Deification', p.518.

³⁰ Armentrout and Slocum, 'Deification', p.518.

³¹ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p.13-14; cf. Hooker, *Laws of Eccles.Pol.*, V,1,3, in Works, vol. II

³² Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 14; cf. *Laws of Eccles. Pol.*, V, Ivi, 7.

³³ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p.14

Hooker's views, expressed at the end of the Elizabethan period, remained influential into the seventeenth century. Allchin writes that: 'Half a century later...preaching before the House of Commons...Ralph Cudworth placed the same doctrine at the centre of his presentation of the Christian message.'³⁴ Allchin finds it striking that 'a thinker in many ways different from Hooker...should have made this same affirmation.'³⁵ Allchin considers that 'One could not have a clearer indication of the influence of patristic thinking on the mainstream of Anglican theology.'³⁶ In March 1647, Cudworth preached:

And though the Gospel be not God, as he is on his own brightness, but God veiled and masked to us, God in a state of humiliation and condescendent as the sun in a rainbow, yet it is nothing else but a clear and unspotted mirror of divine holiness, goodness, purity, in which attributes lie the very life and essence of God himself. The Gospel is nothing else but God descending into the world in our form and conversing with us in our likeness that he might allure and draw us up to God and make us partakers of his divine form, *theos gegonen anthrōpos* (as Athanasius speaks) *hina hēmas en eautō theopoiēsē*; 'God was therefore incarnated and made man that he might deify us'; that is (as St Peter expresseth it) makes us partakers of the divine nature.³⁷

The impact of these ideas can be traced in the works of other seventeenth century writers. Allchin also argues that in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes (1556-1626), a contemporary of Richard Hooker, we have a 'kerygmatic and liturgical theology, a theology of praise and proclamation, whose models are patristic...It is a theology which reaffirms and represents...that particular synthesis of dogma and experience, of thought and intuition, of learning and devotion which we find in the fathers of the first ten centuries, alike in East and West.'³⁸ Other scholars have since endorsed this view. Nicholas Lossky, a distinguished Russian Orthodox scholar teaching in Paris, 'shows in the preaching of the seventeenth century Bishop [Andrewes], a living and dynamic presence of that understanding of the mystery of Christ which is characteristic of the teaching of the fathers, and especially of the fathers of the East.'³⁹

The act of God in the incarnation and the Cross is one of extirpation, of removing the errant principle of privation and of stamping out finitude and death, in order to give the gift of new ontology [a new being] to humanity, an ontology that is identical to God, not that human beings become in essence (*ousia*) the same as God, but that God, in a sense becomes their own being. This is the goal, the *telos*, of redemption. The conceit of this ontological union is *theosis* or divinization, which means principally a union of being with God [a union of God's being with our being]. Maximus conceives of this as the drawing of humanity into union with God, which changes the essence of human beings in transfixion or transelementation [approximate to transubstantiation] in the ultimate beauty and glory of God. Yet this concept of *theosis* does not posit a blending of God and humanity into each other, where all differentiation is lost. Rather, human beings are moved into a participation in God through 'beholding the ultimate and ineffable beauty, which transfixes our nature as with a stamp by which we are impressed into conformity and perfection with God's image.' We will participate without being restricted, being uncontainably contained [in God]. It is a

³⁴ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p.14

³⁵ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 14

³⁶ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 14

³⁷ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 14

³⁸ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 15

³⁹ Allchin, *Participation in God*, p. 15

genuine harmony with the fullness of God who will infuse us and unite us to God's being.⁴⁰ Gibson writes that [Jonathan] Edwards seems to ascribe this understanding of *theosis* as the ultimate goal of union with God's being and the perfection of communion in God's glory.⁴¹

Participation in God as Panentheism

Panentheism is central to the notion of participation in God among many of today's Christian theologians involved in the science religion dialogue,⁴² as well as many other prominent theologians, especially of the Anglican tradition.⁴³ Gregory Peterson writes that 'As theory, panentheism claims to give a definitive account of the relationship between God and the world that necessarily excludes competing alternatives [such as Pantheism].'⁴⁴ On the one hand, panentheism avoids the error of pantheism, which identifies God with the world. On the other hand, panentheism removes the possibility of deism, which serves to disassociate God from the world, so that 'God's action in the world becomes inconceivable.'⁴⁵ Robert Hughes argues that 'In a true panentheism as opposed to pantheism, God is in all things and all things are in God, but God and 'things' remain distinct.'⁴⁶ Similarly Peterson argues:

Analogy from the mind-body relationship leads to a 'weak' panentheism that emphasizes the presence of God, while whole-part analogies suggest a 'strong' panentheism that emphasizes some level of identity between God and the world. In turn, these analogies and metaphors bear nontrivial similarities to early Trinitarian and Christological debates in their treatment of God and the world as distinct substances.⁴⁷

Theosis in seventeenth-century Anglican theology and spirituality

With these thoughts in mind, it is necessary to return to the mental world of seventeenth-century English theology. Newey argues that '...the Patristic doctrine of participation, in spite of its implicit rejection by influential contemporary figures such as Descartes and Hobbes, [both critiqued by Cudworth] is vital to a true understanding of much late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Anglican divinity.'⁴⁸ Newey argues that the term 'reason' '...as used by the four seventeenth century Anglican theologians [above] that he discusses, '... can only be understood in the context of

⁴⁰ Max. Conf., Ambig. 7, PG 91: 1076B, 1088B; quoted in Michael D. Gibson, 'The Beauty of the Redemption of the World: The Theological Aesthetics of Maximus the Confessor and Jonathan Edwards,' *Harvard Theological Review* 101, no. 1, 2008, p. 69

⁴¹ Gibson, 'The Beauty of the Redemption of the World', pp. 68-69.

⁴² Theologians such as Arthur Peacocke (1993) and Philip Clayton (1997) as referred to by Gregory R. Peterson, 'Whither Panentheism?', *Zygon*, 36, no. 3, 2001.

⁴³ These prominent theologians include Sally McFague (1993), Jürgen Moltmann (1985), and Leonardo Boff (1997) referred to by Peterson, 'Whither Panentheism?'.

⁴⁴ Peterson, 'Whither Panentheism?', p.398.

⁴⁵ Peterson, 'Whither Panentheism?'

⁴⁶ Robert Davis Hughes III, 'A Critical Note on Two Aspects of Self-Transcendence,' *Sewanee Theological Review* 46, no. 1, 2002, pp.119-120.

⁴⁷ Peterson, 'Whither Panentheism?', p. 395. The Jesuit Process Philosopher and Theologian Joseph Bracken proposes that 'the notion of 'field' within a process-oriented worldview could serve as the equivalent of 'substance' within classical metaphysics. Bracken writes that 'Like a substance in classical metaphysics, a field is an enduring physical reality that serves as a principle of continuity in the midst of constant change and thus provides for the stable transmission of form or pattern from one moment to the next.' Quoted in Joseph A. Bracken, 'Dependent Co-Origination and Universal Intersubjectivity,' *Buddhist Christian Studies*, 27, 2007, p. 7

⁴⁸ Edmund Newey, 'The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor', *Modern Theology*, vol. 18, I, pp. 1-26, p.3.

participative form, namely that of the embodiment of the divine reason, the Logos, in Christ. Newey claims that all of the Anglican theologians he discusses see ‘...participative union with the Creator God as the origin and the end of all created human being...’reason’ in their work cannot be separated from God’s loving disposition towards us in his Son, the incarnate Logos, who is both the form of reason, and the only means of its true realisation in us through the Spirit. As Whichcote puts it: ‘As Sin is a Vitiating the Reason of Man; the Restauration must be by the reason of God: by Christ, the Logos.’⁴⁹

Newey further points out that: ‘The influence of Platonic thought, particularly as refracted through the work of Augustine and Aquinas’,⁵⁰ is evident in all the Anglican theologians he discusses. Newey writes:

Plato employed a wide range of terms in his discussion of the participation that lies between the transcendent Forms and mere earthly appearances. *Parousia* (presence), *symploke* (interweaving), *koinonia* (coupling), *mimesis* (imitation), *mixis* (mixture) and *methexis* (participation) are all to a large extent interchangeable. It was the last term, methexis , which was the most influential in the Christian tradition however, implying both ‘the logical connection of the one to the many’ and ‘the paradox...[of a] participation ...that does not take a part, but participates in the whole – as the day participates in the light of the sun.’⁵¹

We can conclude that this reading of much seventeenth century Anglican theology has reasserted the element of participation in this thought. Newey feels that ‘The rediscovery of participation at the heart of much sixteenth and seventeenth century Anglican theology has become an urgent imperative in recent decades.’ Doing so would align Anglican theological traditions with much of the intellectual activity in contemporary Christian theology, which has ‘increasingly recognised the importance of participation , particularly as expressed in the Patristic period by the terms *theōsis* or *theopoēsis* (‘deification’ or ‘divinisation’).’⁵² He further points out that ‘Rowan Williams has suggested that the ‘deification’ tradition enables us to envisage ‘a contemporary theology and spirituality of Christlike freedom – freedom dependent on relation with the Father, yet ‘divine’ in its own authority, creativity and capacity for self-giving and compassion’.’⁵³

Newey holds that resources are present for a constructive reappraisal of participative reason ‘in continuity not only with the Fathers and Aquinas, but with the indigenous English tradition also’.⁵⁴ To end on a controversial note, Paul L. Gavrilyuk has ventured ‘a conditional forecast’ that:

[d]eification, provided that its full implications are realized, will work like a time-bomb in due course producing a ‘creative destruction’ of the soteriological visions developed by the Churches of the Reformation. Whether the idea will have the power to move these churches closer to the Christian East in other respects, say by developing a sacramental understanding of the world or synergistic anthropology, only time will show.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Newey, ‘The Form of Reason’, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Newey, ‘The Form of Reason’, p.4.

⁵¹ H.-G. Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, p.10f , in Newey, ‘The Form of Reason’, p. 4

⁵² Newey, ‘The Form of Reason’, p.4.

⁵³ Williams, ‘Deification’, pp. 107-108, in Newey , ‘The Form of Reason’, p.5.

⁵⁴ Newey, ‘The Form of Reason’, p.5

⁵⁵ Gavrilyuk, ‘The Retrieval of Deification’, p.657.