IN CADENCE WITH GOD: A PERICHORETIC PASTORAL THEOLOGY

by

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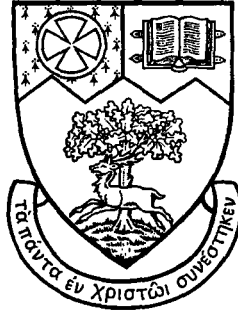
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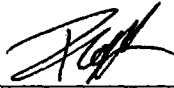SUPERVISORS: Phil Zylla and Lee Beach

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ABSTRACT

"In Cadence with God: A Perichoretic Pastoral Theology"

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This dissertation is an attempt to construct a perichoretic pastoral theology. This constructive proposal comes through a conversation between central dimensions of pastoral theology and salient features of the doctrine of perichoresis. The conversation partners are: (1) theologies of experience and perichoretic relationality; (2) concern for human angst and perichoretic participation; and (3) situational attentiveness and perichoretic spirituality. This conversation yields a pastoral theology that is being called 'the practice of perichoresis.' The practice of perichoresis is a pastoral theology that helps ministering persons to navigate how their ministry practice can be done participatively (with God), attentively (in situations of ministry) and authentically (personal life and ministry). Spiritual polarities will be used to articulate this relational, participative and spiritual approach to pastoral theology. This perichoretic pastoral theology is articulated as three interrelated movements. The first polarity is the move from experience to relationship. The practices and methods pastoral theology uses to engage human experience is drawn into conversation with perichoretic relationality. This interaction encourages a move toward relationship in all pastoral theological work. The second polarity is the move from concern to presence. Here pastoral concern for human angst is drawn into conversation with perichoretic participation. This interaction encourages a move toward presence; a presence which hopes to disclose God's presence

even in the most perplexing circumstances. The third polarity is the move from

competence to communion. In this conversation pastoral theology's situational

attentiveness is drawn into dialogue with perichoretic spirituality. The move toward

communion encourages practices of situational attentiveness that are rooted in

communion with God and within the community of faith. A fourth polarity is offered

which incorporates the other three. It is the move from practice to prayer. Prayer is the

practice that integrates the theological, contextual and personal dimensions of the

practice of perichoresis. This perichoretic pastoral theology is constructed in the hope of

helping ministering persons to live and minister in an ever-deepening cadence with the

triune God.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to each of the persons who made up the churches I have had the gift of serving as pastor:

- Revelstoke Alliance Church

- Cranbrook Alliance Church

  and

- Fort Macleod Alliance Church

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Introduction

Pastoral theology equips ministering persons to serve the church and the world

faithfully and effectively. It is an integrative discipline that endeavours to bring the

mysteries of the Christian faith together with the complexities of human and ecclesial

life in the here and now. The art of keeping faith and life together has been a

considerable challenge to the discipline. Presently, pastoral theology is still coming to

terms with its attraction to the social sciences—an attraction that threatened to erode

much of the theological nature of the discipline. Many pastoral theologians have

addressed this problem.[1] This dissertation seeks to contribute to the movement to

strengthen the theological nature of pastoral theology. It does so by developing a

perichoretic rhythm by which pastoral theology can assist ministering persons to live

and minister in communion with God. This rhythm is ultimately rooted in the

perichoretic being of God. In what follows, a perichoretic pastoral theology will be

articulated by showing how the central dynamics of pastoral theology (experience,

human angst and situational attentiveness) can move in relational, participative and

spiritual cadence with the triune God. As ministering persons discover how to live and

minister in ever-deepening cadence with God this eschatological journey might be called

the practice of perichoresis.

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[1] See, Campbell, *Rediscovering*, 13–23; Pattison, *A Critique*, 5–18; Anderson, *The Shape*, 11–34; Purves, *Reconstructing*, xiii–xxxv; Gerkin, *The Living*, 11; Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical*, 1–7; Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 135–138.

Pastoral theology has much to gain from the contemporary resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. Since the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christian's have wrestled to accurately articulate the nature of the being of God. The church has found the language of Trinity to speak to the mystery of the God revealed by Christ through the Holy Spirit in the biblical narrative. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is not an isolated monad existing in eternal seclusion. The doctrine of the Trinity expresses the relational, participative and spiritual environment that is opened up for humanity through creation, incarnation, redemption and glorification. Contemporary trinitarian theologians speak of the 'social Trinity' or the 'social God' to express the relationality and persons-in-communion that reflects God's being.[2] It is such a social understanding of God's trinitarian being that sets the

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[2] While not the only option in contemporary Trinitarian theology, the social Trinity is making a significant contribution. The articulation of this model can be traced to Jürgen Moltmann who in *The Trinity*, 19, states "we shall be attempting to develop a social doctrine of the Trinity." Veli Kärkkäinen in *The Trinity*, 63, defines this model, "[w]hatever else social Trinitarianism may mean—and we might be better to speak of a family of social analogies in Trinitarian theology—there is a consensus on the need to define *person* in terms of relationality. Based on the biblical idea of God as love and the cultural resources of the twentieth century evident in fields as diverse as psychology, philosophy and linguistics, among others, the idea of communion/community is the defining criteria for speaking of the Trinity." Emphasis original. Stan Grenz notes the historical rootedness in *The Social God*, 4, stating "more consequential than the mere renewal of *interest* in the trinitarian conception of God has been the revival of one *particular model* of the Trinity, the social analogy that has its roots in the patristic era." Emphasis original. Often contrasted with the Augustinian psychological model of the Trinity, the social model of the Trinity is rooted in the Cappadocian Fathers. For a discussion of the patristic roots of the doctrine of the Trinity with an appreciation for the contemporary developments see Ayers, *Nicaea*, 404–25. For a reassessment of the divergence between the Augustinian and Cappadocian model of the Trinity see Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards*. Others question and/or resist the social model of the Trinity. See Gresham, "The Social Model," Chapman, "The Social Doctrine," Metzler, "The Trinity," Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism," Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," Holmes, "Three Versus One?", Husbands, "The Trinity." For a biblical engagement with social Trinitarian doctrine see Horrell, "Toward a Biblical Model." For a concise overview of "contemporary reassessments" of Trinitarian and social Trinitarian doctrine see Bloesch *God*, 177–191. For a more detailed analysis of the contemporary rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity see Grenz, *Rediscovering*. An alternative to social Trinitarianism is stated by Metzler in "The Trinity," 287, "I would therefore lean toward an understating of the trinity not as social or communitarian, but rather as dynamically personal and proleptic. It seems to me that this loving personal God is working out His salvific purposes in history through what I would prefer to call His three *personae*, not to confuse His threefoldness in eschatological unity with some sort of social or personalist tritheism." Metzler remains open to conversation with social Trinitarians. The doctrine of the social Trinity is an important

context for this discussion. The profound pastoral implications of the doctrine of the

Trinity are anticipated in Jesus' prayer to the Father for his disciples, "Father, just as you

are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us" (John 17:21b).[3] This dissertation

offers a creative engagement between pastoral theology and the doctrine of the Trinity,

one that will provide the discipline with a robust doctrinal orientation and a freedom to

discover how ministering persons might "live and move and have our being" in God

(Acts 17:28).

There is a natural affinity between the doctrine of the Trinity and pastoral

theology.[4] At the core they both are concerned with persons. Historically pastoral

theology is concerned with the cure and care of souls. The emphasis has been on care for

others in times of crises and the guiding of others toward physical, mental and spiritual

wholeness. Pastoral theology has always approached this work relationally, that is,

through personal pastoral encounters. The doctrine of the Trinity uses the ancient Greek

word perichoresis to speak to how each of the Trinitarian members participate in one

another relationally without ceasing to be distinct: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is at

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contemporary contribution to the ongoing quest to find words which faithfully express the wonder and mystery of the triune God.

[3] All scriptural quotations are from NIV unless otherwise noted.

[4] Some caution that this affinity can be misconstrued and create a sense where more is being offered than actually realized. Stephen Pickard speaks to this when he says in *Theological Foundations*, "whilst the trends in Trinitarian thinking in relation to ecclesiology and ministry are evident, the work of transposition and interweaving of Trinitarian and relational categories into an ecclesiology of ministry remains significantly underdeveloped," 41.

John Horder is also concerned about some of the practical elements of perichoresis. He responds to an article written by Bernard Nausner, see Nausner, "The Medical," which argues for a perichoretic understanding of the doctor patient relationship. Horder observes in "Making Music," "[o]ne initial reaction to Nausner's ideas is that they are a counsel of perfection, unrealistic in the busy world of NHS healthcare. Another reaction is to say that the mutuality he is asking for is not appropriate; the doctor-patient encounter must be constrained by professional protocols and a non-negotiable imbalance of power" ultimately concluding that Nausner "does offer both doctor and patient something of value to work for," 99–100.

the relational level that the doctrine of the Trinity, more specifically the doctrine of perichoresis, and pastoral theology are drawn into a mutually transformative discussion.

The doctrine of perichoresis and pastoral theology mutually enlighten each other and together inform the mystery, complexity and wonder of Christian ministry. The doctrine of perichoresis presents an understanding of the being of God in relational, participative and spiritual terms. Pastoral theology endeavours to articulate theologies of experience, responses to human angst and to be situationally attentive. Bringing the respective concerns of these disciplines into dialogical relationship is fruitful because it sketches a vision of pastoral theology that is rich theologically and practically while also remaining situationally relevant. The practice of perichoresis attempts to be such an approach to pastoral theology.

One of the initial ways this discussion helps advance the discipline of pastoral theology is that it clarifies the relationship between the triune God and pastoral ministry. Is Christian ministry done in light of God? Do ministering persons simply glean principles and develop programs based on timeless biblical truths?[5] Is ministry done for God? Is God in heaven looking down on the world waiting to evaluate how Christians perform in ministry?[6] The practice of perichoresis suggests that ministry is something Christian's do as participants *with* God. A perichoretic understanding of Christian ministry is like an invitation to a dance. The triune God invites his people to participate

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[5] For a critique of this approach see Peterson, *The Jesus Way*, 3, he argues, "The courses first instruct us in skills and principles that we are told are foundational and then motivate us to use these skills so that we can get what we want out of this shrunken, desiccated 'world, flesh, and devil' field. And of course it works wonderfully as long as we are working in that particular field, the field in which getting *things* done is the 'end.'" Emphasis original.

[6] See Volf, "Being as God," 3, where he argues, "In this scenario, the nature of God would be more or less irrelevant to the character of the Christian pilgrimage."

in *his* ministry.[7] Stephen Seamand's defines his Trinitarian approach to ministry as "[t]he ministry we have entered is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world."[8] The perichoretic pastoral theology being developed in this dissertation will seek to explain what such a participative understanding of Christian ministry looks like from the pastoral theological perspective.

In arguing for the practice of perichoresis this is *an* approach to pastoral theology, this dissertation is not suggesting it is *the* approach. The author believes that the dialectic between pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis will yield some transformative developments. In particular it offers pastoral theology a doctrinal approach that is relational, participative and spiritual. The practice of perichoresis hopes to articulate a pastoral theology that serves the triune God by being faithful to God's self revelation and serves the church and world by being sensitive and attentive to the real struggles and aspirations of people living in the complexity, opportunity and challenges of life today. The common rhythm by which the practice of perichoresis seeks to hold these realties together is the perichoretic being of God.

The practice of perichoresis is articulating a pastoral theology that seeks to keep theology and practice together. It seeks to serve a first level dynamic of Christian ministry (ministering persons) that is theocentric (Trinitarian) in a manner that enhances sensitivity to persons and situations. Two elements need to be set in place in order to proceed toward the development of this vision for pastoral theology. First, the thesis statement needs to be introduced. Second, the methodological approach of this work will

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[7] Fiddes, *Participating*, 302.
[8] Seamands, *Ministry*, 9–10. Emphasis original.

need to be explained. In doing so both the destination and the means of travel will come into view for this journey into the practice of perichoresis.

Thesis Statement and Method

The doctrine of perichoresis is relevant to pastoral theology because it brings into the conversation a relational, participative and spiritual doctrine which resonates with the central concerns of pastoral theology. This dissertation argues that the triune being of God is the genesis of and context for Christian practice. In light of this conviction, the dissertation serves pastoral theology in three mutually interdependent ways. First, it will contribute a *relational* approach to pastoral theology by connecting the relationality of the triune God with theologies of experience. Second, it will articulate a *participative* understanding of pastoral theology by relating participation in Christ with human angst. Third, it will clarify the *spiritual* nature of pastoral theology by engaging the Spirit's illumination and gifting with situational attentiveness. This dissertation, then, is a constructive endeavour to consider what a perichoretic pastoral theology looks like and to gain insight into what God's perichoretic being means for the discipline of pastoral theology. The relational, participative, and spiritual environment of this approach to pastoral theology resonates with a biblical and confessional understanding of the triune being of God. The practice of perichoresis is a pastoral theological expression of participating in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the practice of perichoresis pastoral theology serves ministering persons to live and move in ever-deepening cadence with the relational, participative and spiritual movements of the triune God.

Methodology

As a discipline, pastoral theology functions with a variety of methods.[9] What complicates this reality is that a given pastoral theologian might use certain methods for one project and a different set of methods for another.[10] This means there is no agreed upon universal method for doing pastoral theology, there are only a variety of methods and the subject matter itself may influence the methodological choice.[11]

For this constructive pastoral theology the method of revised critical correlation will be used to articulate the practice of perichoresis.[12] This method is used because it is through a critical and constructive dialogue between contemporary pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis that allows this project to be generative for both the doctrine of perichoresis and pastoral theology. T.W. Jennings asserts that "the sign of mature, responsible, and fruitful dialogue is that both sides come to require revision in the light of the discussion."[13] Stephen Pattison points to the value of such a method, "[t]here are advantages in seeing the pastoral theological process as an enjoyable, illuminating, and often demanding conversation which draws participants onwards and outwards without

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[9] Rodney J. Hunter in "What is Pastoral," 42–47, offers seven features of pastoral theology. They can be summarized as: (1) it sees life from below, (2) focuses on human situations, (3) prioritizes being over doing, (4) gives attention to ambiguity, depth and mystery, (5) is committed to concreteness (as opposed to just the conceptual), (6) is religious and ethical, and (7) lends priority to the language of symbol, myth, dialogue and story. These seven features help to set the context for how any given method works within the field of pastoral theology.

[10] See Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 59–77, for (1) an explanation of the types of methodologies used in pastoral and practical theology, and, 81–95, (2) an explanation of the pastoral cycle which is a means of using a variety of methods in pastoral theology.

[11] For a discussion of method in pastoral theology see, Ballard and Pritchard *Practical Theology* and Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*. As the titles of the two respective books suggest, there is much methodological overlap between pastoral and practical theology. While debatable, the two theologies are virtually synonymous when it comes to methodology.

[12] This method is explained in detail in Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 77–98.

[13] Jennings, "Pastoral," 864.

prescribing exactly where they should end up or what they should do."[14] How will this critical conversation work out in this dissertation?

Revised critical correlation draws four elements into this mutual and critical conversation. Swinton and Mowat articulate them as: (1) situational exploration, (2) theological exploration/reflection, (3) experience and (4) revised practice.[15] In the practice of perichoresis the conversation partners are: (1) contemporary pastoral theology, (2) the doctrine of perichoresis, (3) central elements of contemporary pastoral theology, and (4) the practice of perichoresis. In this conversation the method works as follows. It will begin with the concern over the place of doctrine in pastoral theology (situational exploration), then engage with the doctrine of perichoresis (theological exploration/reflection), consider the central elements of contemporary pastoral theology (experience), with the desire of articulating the practice of perichoresis (revised practice). It is hoped that in doing so the practice of perichoresis will bring forth constructive and analytical insights for the ongoing conversation that is pastoral theology.

An important development in the choice to use this method is *revised* critical correlation.[16] Revised critical correlation is 'revised' in the sense that it allows for "a realist ontology" that "helps prevent a drift into forms of relativism which ultimately risk removing the significance of the reality of God from the practical-theological endeavour."[17] Swinton and Mowat explain how revised critical correlation allows for

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[14] Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, 230.

[15] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 81.

[16] For the development of "correlation," seen in Tillich and Hiltner, to "critical correlation" see David Tracy, *Blessed Rage*, 32–34 and Don Browning, *A Fundamental*, 44–54.

[17] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 88.

God to speak through revelation in pastoral theology while also appreciating, at the methodological level, that doctrine and theology are interpretive enterprises. They state,

> We are in agreement with van Deusen Hunsinger that revelation is real and that God does speak meaningfully and uniquely through the witness of scripture. Nevertheless . . .we cannot escape from the fact that doing theology is an interpretive enterprise within which divine revelation is interpreted by human beings who are fallen, contextually bound and have a variety of different personal and denominational agendas . . . These contexts, histories and traditions profoundly impact upon the types of practices that are developed in response to revelation and the degree to which these practices will remain faithful to that revelation . . .theology itself can be and indeed should be the subject of critical reflection and challenge.[18]

It is in this context that revised critical correlation will be used toward articulating the practice of perichoresis.

The author of this dissertation locates himself as an evangelical working in the field of pastoral theology. The evangelical thrust of this dissertation affirms four priorities that define the movement: conversionism, a conviction that people's lives need to change through repentance and placing faith in Jesus Christ; activism, a belief that the gospel is to be urgently expressed through mission and ministry; biblicism, a confidence in the Bible as God's word; crucicentrism, emphasising the saving work of Jesus Christ through his death on the cross.[19] Within these broad priorities that define evangelicalism, this work also take a centrist position. Stanley Grenz articulates the evangelical centre as, "a vision of a renewed evangelical center that engages with all of life and embraces all of creation under the rubric of the gospel of the biblical God who promises to renew and transform not only the human heart and the community of faith

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[18] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 89–90.
[19] See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2–3.

but 'all things' in the glorious eschatological new creation."[20] It is from this theological perspective and with this hope that this dissertation seeks to make a contribution in pastoral theology.

Attentive Reflection: Pastoral Theology and Christian Doctrine

The move toward a perichoretic pastoral theology occurs within the existing dynamics, and tensions of the contemporary relationship between pastoral theology and Christian doctrine. Pastoral theology as a discipline has a unique relationship with Christian doctrine. The goal of pastoral theology is not to affirm or debate the relative merits of doctrine, its scriptural warrant, its historical development or even its philosophical agreement. The goal of pastoral theology is to reflect on Christian doctrine from the perspective of practice. Pastoral theology engages its task with a particular vision and from a particular perspective. It is a theological vision that hopes to articulate not just what doctrine is but how it is to be practiced in the church and the world. In this way a perichoretic pastoral theology is mutually beneficial for both pastoral theology as a discipline and for perichoresis as a doctrine. This is because the doctrine of perichoresis itself stresses the need for the kind of mutuality pastoral theology seeks to encourage between doctrine and practice. Keeping doctrine and practice together in a mutuality is an essential part of all pastoral theology.

Mutuality offers a way forward for the complex relationship between pastoral theology and doctrine. Pastoral theology and doctrine exist in a complex nexus of tensions. These tensions focus on how doctrine and practice relate in concrete ways both methodologically and historically. On the one hand, pastoral theologians are often

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[20] Grenz, *Renewing the Centre*, 351. To be more specific Grenz suggests the shape of the evangelical centre is: Gospel in focus, doctrinal in orientation and catholic in vision, 336–51.

concerned by the dominance of doctrine when dealing with people. The concern is that doctrine can dominate and control and in so doing truncate the depths and complexities of human experience. Well intentioned pastoral caregivers may give doctrinal answers prematurely thus cutting off the deep searching that is needed for those under their care. In pastoral theology, the goal is not only to encourage assent to right doctrine but to do so in the context of proper care and practice.[21] On the other hand, the relevance of doctrine is diluted when it is distanced from Christian practice. When doctrine is well defined and even given assent but is missing in practice, its true meaning and relevance is lost.

The doctrine of the Trinity has, at times, lost practical relevance in the church.[22] James Torrance has shown that worship practices in many denominations are more unitarian than Trinitarian. The difference between unitarian and Trinitarian worship for Torrance focuses on the worshipers understanding of God's agency in the practice of worship. Torrance explains unitarian worship as "what we do before God."[23] Torrance teaches that in unitarian worship God is so removed from the practice of worship it makes no difference to the worshiper that God is triune. Torrance promotes Trinitarian worship as, "the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion

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[21] In *The Poet's Gift*, 3, Donald Capps writes, "Again and again, pastors confess that they have been unable to communicate a 'theological' answer to a parishioner in distress, not because the pastor did not know what such an answer would be but because this answer would violate the experience itself, usually by imposing greater certainty or clarity onto the experience than the parishioner or pastor felt was warranted at the time." Capps turns to poets for help because they too find words to express what is in the moment inexpressible.

[22] In the past century Karl Rahner was one of the first to note this. In *The Trinity*, 10–11, he writes, "All of these considerations should not lead us to overlook the fact that, despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."

[23] Torrance, *Worship*, 20.

with the Father."[24] In unitarian worship God remains in heaven and human beings seek

to do what is appropriate and expected on earth. In Trinitarian worship the believer is

drawn into the communion that exists in the life of the triune God. In Trinitarian worship

doctrine is essential because it supports the understanding of participative worship.

Doctrine and practice are meant to be a mutual relationship.[25] From the pastoral

theological perspective the concern is to hold together the controlling tendencies of

doctrine together with the vulnerabilities of human experience in a mutually

transforming way. A development that has added to the complexity of this concern has

been the postmodern turn and its impact upon pastoral theology.

The Postmodern Context of Contemporary Pastoral Theology

The concern for persons, situations and practice all increase the relevance of

pastoral theology in the postmodern context.[26] As a discipline pastoral theology is

responsive to shifts in culture because it seeks to be attentive to persons in specific

situations. In the contexts of concern for persons, care must be taken to account for

human limits and sinfulness in all pastoral theological engagement.[27] In general, pastoral

theology affirms the postmodern turn. It sees the move away from modern approaches to

knowledge that sought to overcome the motives and maladies of human influence as

positive. Some foundationalist approaches to knowledge sought to bracket human

experience out of the conversation so that sure foundations could be discovered upon

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[24] Torrance, *Worship*, 20.

[25] Cunningham in *The Three*, 15, points to the mutuality of doctrine and practice when we writes, "[Doctrines] would not be treated as mere intellectual abstractions; rather, they should be examined in relation to the practices of the community they address."

[26] For pastoral theology articulated in light of the postmodern turn see, Cooper-White, *Many Faces* and Doehering, *The Practice of Pastoral Care*.

[27] See for example the concerns raised by Paul Molnar in *Divine Freedom*, 1, who asserts that "theology must allow the unique nature of its object to determine what can and cannot be said about the triune God." He worries that some use human experience in a manner that "reduces speech about God to our human attempt to give meaning to our experience using theological categories."

which superstructures of knowledge were to be built.[28] Both conservative and liberal

approaches to theology have pursued this line of reasoning: conservatives opting for an

inerrant Bible as their foundation while liberals opting for religious experience. The

postmodern turn has shown that such foundationalist approaches to knowledge are naive

and have done little to overcome the influence of human beings in the pursuit and use of

knowledge. The postmodern turn sets the context for this survey of contemporary

approaches to doctrine and pastoral theology.

The postmodern turn in pastoral theology continues to influence and shape the

discipline. Pamela Couture defines "postmodernity" for pastoral theology as

> . . . a culture state. It identifies changes in global culture associated with a decline
> of metanarrences, the respect for human differences, the analysis of power, the
> fragmentation of communal life, the loss of confidence of scientific reason, the
> rise of technology and virtual reality, the re-emergence of an integrated global
> economy, and the development of post-colonial identity. [29]

These postmodern dynamics impact pastoral theology by accentuating some key

developments in the discipline.

The first is pastoral theology's turn to hermeneutics. Lamenting the loss of the

theological in modern psychological approaches to pastoral theology, Charles Gerkin

asserts that in the present context hermeneutics can be the way forward for pastoral

theology. He writes, "[p]astors needed to become more proficient interpreters:

interpreters of the Christian language and its way of seeing and evaluating the world of

human affairs, and interpreters of the cultural languages that shape much of everyday

life."[30] Gerkin promotes an understanding of the minister as an interpretive guide for the

community of faith. The turn to hermeneutics often brings with it a turn to both biblical

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[28] Jones, "Foundationalism," 289.
[29] Couture, "The Effect of Postmodern," 85.
[30] Gerkin, *An Introduction*, 76.

and personal narratives.[31] Gerkin explains that a key dimension of pastoral care is "to interpret the texts and stories of the Bible, but also to carefully guide the process of interpretation. The interpretive guide cultivates a dialogical relationship between biblical stories and the stories of people's lives."[32] Hermeneutics is used in pastoral theology to understand scripture, human lives and, as will be explained below, situations.

The impact of feminist theology is another postmodern influence in pastoral theology. One of the main advocates and authors of this stream of pastoral theology is Elaine Graham. She asserts that, "the heterogeneity of multiple identities and narratives is the way by which feminism can escape the totalizing discourses of modernity within which they had no stake in the first place."[33]In her view, a crucial dimension of pastoral theological work is focused on the liberation of those who are pushed to the fringes of society. The marginalization of women is a cautionary tale that should motivate pastoral theologians to resist all forms of exclusion and should motivate the discipline to be attentive to those who are being oppressed in any form.

Contextualization is another postmodern dynamic that influences the discipline. Pamela Couture concludes her article on postmodernism and pastoral theology with an affirmation of the contextual nature of pastoral theology. It is pastoral theology's inherent concern for the local contexts of ministry that has a strong affinity with postmodern thought. She writes,

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[31] Gerkin discusses as it relates to pastoral care "the stories of our lives and the Christian story" *An Introduction* 97–114. Graham in *Tranforming*, 124, is more cautious but not completely dismissive of such a turn to the narrative. Her concern is not to dismiss the "incarnational medium of narrative" but to recall that "the dominant scientific, medical and political narrative tend to rationalize and naturalize coercive regimes of power and difference, and serve to categorize and exclude subordinated groups as the 'other.'"

[32] Gerkin, *An Introduction*, 123.

[33] Graham, *Transforming*, 35.

> [a]s philosophy and philosophical theology move away from grand schemes toward the local and contextual, we who think about and practice pastoral care and counselling, pastoral and practical theology, who have been concerned with the local and contextual all along, may find a particularly ironic sense of validation, legitimation and opportunity of contribution.[34]

The postmodern turn is a fertile environment for pastoral theology and may well be one factor explaining the growing interest in the discipline.

Contextuality prompts postmodern pastoral theologians to carefully articulate the social dimensions which contribute to the pastoral care relationship. Carrie Doehring affirms that part of the assessment process must include culture, community and family.[35] This is done so that the caregiver "(1) gains an understanding of the careseeker's experience of social oppression, (2) anticipates the kind of help the careseeker will need . . . (3) identifies the social systems that will have to be transformed before full healing and justice are possible."[36] In this case the contextual dynamics of both the caregiver and careseeker are explored so that the care offered suits the circumstance. Embracing locality and personal experience are important dynamics of both postmodernism and pastoral theology.

Stephen Pattison shows some of the postmodern ramifications for the use of doctrine in pastoral theology. He states, "[c]hristian theological activity has been dominated by dogmas, propositions and arguments to which 'believers' have been invited to give assent."[37] Pattison encourages the discipline to "express theology in terms of a rich story, myth, metaphor, image and symbol."[38] He concludes stating, "rationality does not need to be excluded from pastoral theological process, but its dominance needs

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[34] Couture, "The Effect of Postmodernism," 100.
[35] Doehring, *The Practice*, 97.
[36] Doehring, *The Practice*, 103.
[37] Pattison, *A Critique*, 233.
[38] Pattison, *A Critique*, 234.

to be relativized."[39] Pastoral theologians tend to value the relational, dynamic, narrative and hopeful use of doctrine and this aids in keeping rationalism in check. Despite the postmodern turn, the legitimization of pastoral theology has yet to be fully realized. Of concern is to understand its relationship with the other disciplines of Christian theology, perhaps most notably systematic theology.

Pastoral Theology and Doctrine: Rhythms and Tensions

Doctrine illumines some of the rhythms and tensions that exist in the discipline of pastoral theology. Andrew Lester's pastoral theology clearly shows the rhythm that pastoral theology has in its use of doctrine. Lester is a helpful example because his work shows how he draws systematic theological thought into his pastoral theology as well as using his pastoral theology to critique and challenge the other discipline of theology. With Lester doctrine flows in both directions. The tensions in pastoral theology can be seen in how doctrine functions in four types of pastoral theology. In therapeutic, missional, liberation and theological approaches to pastoral theology, the varied use of doctrine contributes to the tensions which exist within the discipline. These four types of pastoral theology each have a unique rhythm that is largely defined by how doctrine functions within them. The tension that this creates is part of the richness and complexity of contemporary pastoral theology.

The Rhythm of Doctrine in Pastoral Theology

Andrew Lester's work demonstrates the basic rhythm of doctrine in contemporary pastoral theology. Lester's example shows how pastoral theology and doctrine possess a movement toward each other. Lester's pastoral theology is a movement from doctrine to pastoral theology *and* from pastoral theology to doctrine.

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[39] Pattison, *A Critique*, 234.

His example displays how it is a correlative movement which is mutually refining for both doctrine and pastoral theology. This bidirectional flow is part of the rhythm between pastoral theology and doctrine.

Two works of Lester's provide an example of each of these movements in his pastoral theology. The first is *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* the second is Lester's *The Angry Christian*. Each will be briefly discussed to show the mutual and dynamic relationship his pastoral theology has with Christian doctrine.

In *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* Lester is responding to the call for pastoral theologians to pay more careful attention to the second of the Apostle Paul's triad of virtue in 1 Cor 13. While much attention has been shed on faith and love, Lester argues that hope deserves more attention. In doing so, Lester is drawing doctrinal developments in systematic theology into his pastoral theology. He does this by engaging with theologies of hope. In his proposal, Lester's move is from doctrine (theologies of hope) to his therapeutic pastoral theology.[40] Lester is responding to Wolfhart Pannenberg's call for more robust theological anthropologies.[41] He is also drawing on Jürgen Moltmann's eschatological theology of hope.[42] For his pastoral theology, Lester is conversant with these doctrinal developments and draws insight from these into his vision for hope in pastoral care and counseling. Through his engagement with and reflection on these developments he sketches a compelling vision for the discipline; he states, "[t]he gospel describes a God who has certainly been present and active in the past and is present with us today, but (most importantly) this God is out in

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[40] This movement is still part of the correlative methodology Lester uses in his book. In fact he identifies the need for theologies of hope out of his pastoral counseling ministry and in true correlative fashion then examines theologies of hope and draws relevant insights into his articulation of this pastoral theology of hope.

[41] Lester, *Hope*, 3. See Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 11–23.

[42] Lester, *Hope*, 60.

front of us calling us, inviting us, into the future . . . God reaches into the present from the future."[43] Locating God in front of humanity, in the eschatological future, in Lester's view, is transforming for pastoral care and counseling because it provides hope for the future. Lester's use of the theology of hope is an example of how he uses doctrine in his pastoral theology.

Lester provides an example of the movement from pastoral theology to doctrine in *The Angry Christian*. In this volume, Lester tackles the common assumption that anger is sin. Here Lester confronts anger's placement on the lists of deadly sins. He views this as an error. Lester believes that placing anger on such lists causes much confusion for believers and ultimately should be corrected. His movement from pastoral theology to doctrine is done in light of contemporary scientific discoveries (neuroscience) as they relate to anger, his own experience as a pastoral counsellor, and a thorough biblical and theological exploration of the concept of anger. Drawing on all these streams of thought, Lester argues that:

> Continuing to place anger on the list of Seven Deadly Sins is a costly mistake. Given what we have learned from the neurosciences, constructionist narrative theory, Scripture and historical theology, the anger-is-sin tradition is no longer a viable belief. *I hope that moral and systematic theologians attend to these alternative stories and work to remove anger from the list of deadly sins.* Perhaps they could substitute hostility, hate, abuse, violence, or any other expression of anger that has become destructive. An effective case could be made for the inclusion of any of these, but to include anger on the list, without separating the capacity of anger from destructive expressions of anger, is unfair to this gift from God, denies its relationship to the *imago Dei*, and ignores the many positive contributions that anger makes to our life—as discussed in the following chapters.[44]

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[43] Lester, *Hope*, 69.
[44] Lester, *The Angry*, 184–5. Emphasis added.

Lester, here, is firmly pushing the belief that 'anger-is-sin' back to systematic theologians to reconsider and redefine. In doing so Lester is a helpful example of the second movement in view, from pastoral theology to doctrine.

Pastoral theology has a reciprocal relationship with doctrine. The relationship embraces movement that is mutually transforming. Contemporary pastoral theology resists simply applying doctrine to the church and the world in a unidirectional manner. Pastoral theology is a rich and relevant part of the theological process. It often will glean theological insights into its work with creative and transforming results as Lester does with the theology of hope. It will also challenge the settled assumptions of doctrinal conclusions when they are untenable at the practical level, as Lester does with the anger is sin position. In this way, pastoral theology as a discipline is careful to engage doctrine from the perspective of practice. This engagement carries with it the bi-directional concern of seeing doctrine lived well and also to listen well, to draw experience into the theological conversation.

The Tensions of Pastoral Theology and Doctrine

The relationship between pastoral theology and doctrine is dynamic, diverse and, at times, tense. There is no one approach that has satisfied this relationship methodologically, historically or practically. Each pastoral theologian brings a unique approach to how doctrine is used in pastoral theology. There are, however, areas of common concern and common perspective that do give shape to the discipline. In the contemporary context the most obvious of these is that pastoral theology does not define itself as an applied discipline. As the example of Lester shows, pastoral theologians are no longer satisfied to receive the theological offerings of systematic theology and apply them to the church and world. Pastoral theology is a robust *theological* discipline in its

own right, and while it works in cooperation with all the disciplines of Christian theology, it does not consider itself to be an applied discipline.[45]

Elaine Graham in arguing against the applied paradigm, also shows the tensions that are a part of contemporary pastoral theology. She argues,

> far from being an applied and unreflective discipline, therefore, pastoral literature contains a wealth of theological understandings about the ways in which suffering humanity may be offered deliverance and healing from their distress; visions of human destiny and flourishing; and maybe even occasional glimpses of the nature and will of Divine activity in the midst of human experiences.[46]

Graham describes well the interplay between theological understanding and human experience that is inherent to contemporary pastoral theology. The tension with her vision of the discipline comes when she speaks of "occasional glimpses of the nature and will of Divine activity."[47] In contrast to Graham, this dissertation is seeking to be more precise about the nature of the Divine. The practice of perichoresis is rooted in the theological understanding that God has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Resting in the settled conviction concerning the mystery of the triune being of God, the practice of perichoresis seeks to articulate a pastoral theology that moves in cadence with the triune God. In this way perichoretic relationality, participation and spirituality are allies towards understanding the complexity and mystery of human experience.

With this distinction in mind, Graham's perspective is helpful as she highlights the theological nature of three pastoral theological approaches. These approaches each

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[45] This statement is in contrast to some who question the theological nature of pastoral theology. Graham points to Washington Gladden who in reference to pastoral theology states, "theology, by any proper sense of the word is not connoted by it. . . Its subject is applied Christianity." Quoted in Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 135.

[46] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 137.

[47] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 137.

contain their own "theological narrative."[48] They are: therapeutic, mission and liberation pastoral theology. One additional approach will be offered. It is pastoral theology in theological tradition. With the inclusion of this approach all the main types of pastoral theology will be considered. The four approaches will be outlined below to show the complex and fruitful relationship pastoral theology has with Christian doctrine. Care will be taken to demonstrate that pastoral theology is indeed theological and that these approaches are part of a mutually interdependent discipline.

Therapeutic Pastoral Theology

Therapeutic pastoral theology engages theology from the pastoral care and counseling perspective. The popularity of this approach has almost overwhelmed the field of pastoral theology. Critics suggest that the use of psychology and the social sciences has almost extinguished the theological nature of the discipline.[49] What is clear is that the 19th and 20th century developments in psychology have permanently altered the way the therapeutic perspective views pastoral theology. What is not so clear is if this is an inherently unfortunate occurrence, or if psychology has actually displaced theology at the core of the discipline. It is important to appreciate the significance and nature of therapeutic pastoral theology and to understand that, as Graham shows, it does have an intrinsic doctrinal element.

Graham shows that therapeutic pastoral theology is intimately connected with the pastoral counseling movement in North America and Europe. Advocates of this approach sought to draw into the discipline of pastoral theology the new discoveries and

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[48] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 137.

[49] Tidball in *Skillful Shepherds*, 13, states "[therapeutic influences] took a heavy toll on the spiritual and theological elements of pastoral theology. Many questioned if in the end there was much that was distinctively different from a secular approach to the social sciences." See also Purves, *Reconstructing*, xiii–xxiii.

advances psychology was making. With the help of psychology, these pastoral theologians saw the pastoral benefit of using psychological tools to gain access into the inner lives of those in their care. A key initiator of this movement is Anton Boisen who was convinced that "mental illness was not organic but psychodynamic – even symptomatic of spiritual malaise and dislocation."[50] In this way, the life experience of an individual was seen to be a source for healing and therefore became a primary focus for therapeutic pastoral theology.

The momentum of therapeutic pastoral theology which began with Boisen continued to develop through the middle of the 20th century. By this time theologians like Paul Tillich and pastoral theologians like Seward Hiltner, along with psychologists such as Eric Erickson and Carl Rogers were using psychology to aid contemporary society to understand their existential problems. As these developments relate to pastoral theology, Graham notes that "these people popularized forms of Christian care closely modelled on the dynamics of therapeutic practice, and advanced perspectives on human personality found on varying degrees of psychology and theology in synthesis."[51] Graham shows that while psychology was a fresh and vibrant new voice it was not the only voice in the therapeutic approach to pastoral theology. She contends, while admitting that some did not do this sufficiently, that psychology was to be used in combination with theology.

The nature of the synthesis between psychology and theology is the matter of much debate. Graham highlights how the use of a Rogerian approach to counseling has

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[50] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 139. Graham rightly shows that Boisen was affected by his own experience with mental illness. Boisen and his contribution to the discipline will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter and in chapter three.
[51] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 140.

been questioned because "of becoming so assimilated into the secular humanist world-view that it abandons any distinctive Christian perspective."[52] She also shows that others suggest that the Rogerian approach actually has resonance with Christian theology. She points to research which suggests that Rogers "psychological congruence" is similar to what Jonathan Edwards was articulating with his "consent to being in general."[53] Without being forced to decide on the relative merits of these two interpretations, it is important to emphasize that it was not the goal of the central figures of the therapeutic pastoral theology to dismiss the theological nature of the discipline for a psychological one.[54] The question for this dissertation is how is therapeutic pastoral theology attentive to Christian doctrine?

Graham shows that the therapeutic pastoral theology is concerned with "the practice of personal care, support and healing."[55] Graham articulates the theological nature of this approach in that "[t]he theological dimensions to this model lie in its emphasis on the implicit values of healing and reconciliation. The interpersonal encounter characterized by unconditional positive regard is thus seen as analogous to the compassion and grace of the Divine."[56] A doctrine which provides a sense of theological rigor as well as personal concern for therapeutic pastoral theology is the doctrine of the incarnation. The fact that the Divine stepped into human history as a person reveals both

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[52] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 140.
[53] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 141.
[54] For instance it can be argued that in the 1950s Seward Hiltner in his *Preface to Pastoral Theology* was already reacting to the disproportionate influence of psychology. His approach in this book was to move toward a more theological approach to pastoral theology. He did this by employing a theological method, most likely gleaned for Paul Tillich, for his pastoral theology. His approach sought to correlate theology and psychology but not allow for psychology to dominate the discipline. In the contemporary context Charles Gerkin also moves in a more theological direction in his pastoral theology. Again he like Hiltner welcomes psychological influences but in his *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* the Christian narrative figures prominently. Like Hiltner did fifty years earlier Gerkin draws on a contemporary theological method in this case George Lindbeck's cultural linguistic approach.
[55] Graham, "Pastoral Care," 148.
[56] Graham, "Pastoral Care," 148–49.

God's concern to offer compassion and grace personally as well as, elevating the value of humanity and human experience as something within which God participates and so understands.

Moving beyond Graham's survey, another way in which therapeutic pastoral theology is attentive to Christian doctrine is through the use of the Bible in pastoral care and counseling.[57] Donald Capps is one who sought to synthesize modern approaches to biblical scholarship into pastoral care and counseling. Capps observes, "I have been struck by the fact that contemporary Biblical studies have not informed these discussions to an appreciable degree."[58] He uses form criticism to draw the insights from psalms, proverbs and parables and works these insights into pastoral counseling. Specifically he draws the use of psalms (especially the form of psalms of lament) into grief counseling, proverbs for pre-marital counseling and parables for marriage counseling.[59] In doing so, Capp's attention to the Bible and contemporary biblical scholarship allows for Christian doctrine to form some of the most crucial themes for his approach to pastoral counseling.

Therapeutic pastoral theology has transformed the discipline of pastoral theology. It is an approach to the discipline that draws on the social sciences to aid its work. Pastoral theologians must be careful to ensure that the use of such sources does not negate or diminish the theological nature of the discipline. The doctrine of the

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[57] See Pattison, *A Critique*, 114–129, for his survey of the Bible in Pastoral Care and Counseling. He surveys five approaches. They are: the fundamentalist or Biblicist approach, the tokenist approach, the imagist or suggestive approach, the informative approach and the thematic approach.

[58] Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, 11.

[59] See Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively for his explanations of these relationships. One example of the applicability of Capps' approach has to do with grief counseling and psalms of lament. Capps, following Brueggemann, highlights that the form of the lament is especially relevant to the contemporary context. He writes in *Biblical Approaches*, 74, "Brueggemann contends that the basic *intention* of the lament is to rehabilitate and restore those who are suffering, and the form of the lament helps to realize this objective."

incarnation affirms a deep and intimate connection between the Divine and the human and such a doctrine can aid pastoral theologians to keep the synthesis it seeks between theology and the social sciences. The doctrine of perichoresis is also helpful in this regard. The relationality of the persons of the Trinity is an example of the deep textured knowing that the therapeutic approach values. Therapeutic pastoral theology is perhaps the most wide spread approach to the discipline, but it is not the only approach and its dominance of the discipline has begun to recede. One of the most stinging critiques of this approach is that it is individualist, clerical and clinical; it is difficult to know what role the church has in its actual function.

Therapeutic pastoral theology is one approach to the discipline of pastoral theology. Its unique rhythm is a concern for persons that is best rooted doctrinally in God's concern for others made manifest in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It has changed the discipline by drawing on the social sciences, especially psychology, and showing their use in the cure and care of souls. The therapeutic approach, however, is one approach that is part of the discipline of pastoral theology. It will benefit from being kept in conversation with other approaches to pastoral theology and help to ensure the theological nature of the discipline is not overwhelmed by the social scientific. Indeed, keeping in conversation with mission pastoral theology will remind the therapeutic approach of the importance of the Christian community.

Pastoral Theology in Missional-Ethical Engagement

Mission pastoral theology keeps the church at the centre and the world on the horizon of this approach to pastoral theology. As Graham shows mission pastoral theology has a Protestant and Catholic expression. In her survey she draws together an eclectic mix of theologians. From the Protestant perspective she engages with Don

Browning and Stanley Hauerwas. From the Catholic perspective she draws on Karl

Rahner. The missional church movement, while outside of Graham's discussion, also

fits this designation and warrants discussion as well.

Graham draws Browning and Hauerwas together as two key voices articulating

the Protestant move toward mission pastoral theology. For Graham, Browning and

Hauerwas are connected in that they are theologians "who similarly regard the Christian

life as the telling and retelling of classic Christian narratives in which the core ethical

and exemplary precepts of the gospel are embodied."[60] Graham connects Browning and

Hauerwas' communal, narratival and ethical approach to theology with the "resurgence"

in North America of congregational studies.[61] Such studies analyse local congregations

seeking to make sense of the many factors that speak to the life of a given congregation

with the hope of gaining insight into and strengthening "faith commitments and

corporate truth-claims."[62] Such developments show how protestant approaches to

pastoral theology were moving in a communal and congregational direction and

perceived that the life of the community was linked with the mission of the Christian

narrative. The concern of Browning and Hauerwas is with living out the Christian

calling in the church and to strengthen the voice the church has in the world.

Graham draws on Rahner to show the Roman Catholic perspective as it relates to

mission pastoral theology. She explains that it is with Rahner and Vatican II that "we see

most clearly how pastoral theology as *mission* is closely allied to Roman Catholic moral

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[60] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 143.

[61] See Browning, *A Fundamental*, 16, where he uses three different churches in his practical theology: "One was a liberal upper-middle-class Methodist church in an exclusive, suburban New England village. One was a conservative, middle class Presbyterian church in county seat in Ohio—a church close in style and social ethos to the church of my youth. The third was a Pentecostal church located only eight blocks from my home on the south Side of Chicago."

[62] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 143.

theology."[63] Coming out of Vatican II it was "understood that if God was at work in the world redeeming God's creation, then to be a Christian was to be actively involved in that task, understood as building up the world in truth, justice and love."[64] Rahner was instrumental in articulating the developments of Vatican II. These developments allowed him to focus on a theology of the Church in the world. In Rahner's view, such a theology could become the centre of Catholic thought and practice. Graham comments, for Rahner "[a]ll theology is essentially pastoral, for it is driven by the concrete, the immediate and the practical."[65] In both Protestant and Roman Catholic developments the Church and its relationship with and mission in the world has become primary to its pastoral understanding.

Graham applauds mission pastoral theology for avoiding the clinical and individualistic tendencies of therapeutic pastoral theology. The strength of this model, she argues, "lies in its rooting of pastoral action within the life of the Christian community and the collective ministry of the congregation."[66] Her concern, however, is that these developments can slide into judgementalism and moralism. It is susceptible to moralism because focus can rest too much on the life of the church and the wisdom the church receives from its own tradition. It can slip into judgementalism as it tries to demark the boundaries between the church and the world. Graham's desire, in light of her resistance to any hint of oppression, is an open and inclusive approach by the church to the world. To this end, Graham encourages the church to remember it's eschatological as well as its ecclesiological imperatives stating, "the life of communities that proclaim

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[63] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 143. Emphasis original.
[64] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 144.
[65] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 144.
[66] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 144.

and embody such values must be both gathered *and* outward-looking; faithful *and* prophetic."[67] With these explanations and cautions in place the question that is at the core of this dissertation is how is mission pastoral theology attentive to Christian doctrine?

Developments made in the missional church movement help to clarify mission pastoral theology and continue to show its attentiveness to doctrine.[68] It was the resurgent interest in the doctrine of the Trinity that helped theologians to articulate that the church participates in the mission of God. The writers of *The Missional Church* observe that,

> The emphasis in mission thought shifted toward a *theocentric* approach, that, in contrast, stressed the mission of God (*missio Dei*) as the foundation for the mission of the church. The Church became redefined as the community spawned by the mission of God and gathered up into mission . . . the church's essence is missional, for the calling and sending action of God forms its identity. Mission is found on the mission of God in the world, rather than the church's effort to extend itself.[69]

From the perspective of the missional church movement, mission pastoral theology is attentive to who God is, what God is doing and participates in God's action in gathering the church and sending it into the world.[70]

Graham highlights ecclesiology in her affirmation of doctrine in mission pastoral theology. Ecclesiology is inherent to mission pastoral theology because it grows out of the communal life of the church, adult education and catechesis to guide its development and expression. Graham explains,

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[67] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 145. Emphasis original.
[68] See Guder, *The Missional Church*.
[69] Guder, *The Missional Church*, 81–2.
[70] See Hastings, *Missional God*, 15, where he states "[God] is bidirectional in His missional nature. He *both sends and brings*." Emphasis original.

> [t]heologically, this model might be seen as reflecting values of *koinonia* and *kenosis*; the visible presence of the Church in the world as the present and tangible expression of God's grace; the Church as partner in God's self-giving and costly presence within the world; community as the essential mode of human living in reflection of the Trinitarian fellowship of the divine.[71]

Like therapeutic pastoral theology, mission pastoral theology resonates with the doctrine of the incarnation. Graham may well have the doctrine of the incarnation in mind when she speaks of "God's self-giving and costly presence in the world."[72] Graham also points to the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for a communitarian approach to "human living."[73] The doctrine of perichoresis speaks more specifically to what the "Trinitarian fellowship of the divine"[74] might actually mean for pastoral theology. Mission pastoral theology flows out of the church's understanding of God and his work in the world. It also opens up the interesting question of how the church is to participate in God's ongoing mission in the world. These questions anticipate the fruitful and continued engagement of pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis.

In mission pastoral theology doctrine plays a crucial role. It offers at least three horizons to which pastoral theology can be attentive. First is attention to how the biblical narrative reveals the interrelation between the triune God and the church's mission in the world. Second it focuses attention on ecclesiology and how the church is understood in relation to its mission.[75] Third it is attentive to a theology of culture that enables the church to be relevant and responsive to the people and places in its local context.

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[71] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 149.

[72] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 149.

[73] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 149.

[74] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 149.

[75] Gerkin in *An Introduction*, 127, comments, "As interpretive guide of the community of Christians, the pastor is thus called not only to nurture the process by which the community cares for its members, but also to nurture within the members of the community an awareness of the needs of all people in the world."

The doctrine of perichoresis can aid in showing how the church is to participate in the mission of God in the world. This can speak to Graham's caution that a theology of church and world must resist becoming moralistic or judgemental. The doctrine of perichoresis opens up a connection between the triune God and ministering persons. It understands ministry as participating in Christ's on-going ministry in the world. The incarnational, sacrificial and loving ministry of Christ, as displayed in the biblical narrative, becomes the paradigmatic means of furthering the mission of God in the present context. To move in cadence with God is to minister humbly, graciously and justly.

Mission pastoral theology's unique rhythm is to serve local churches to discern, understand and engage in their unique contribution to God's ongoing mission in the world. It is an approach to pastoral theology that values a diversity of expressions. Denominationally, locally and personally the mission of the church takes on a multitude of expressions. It is unified in God. It is God who sends the church on its mission into the world. It is God who equips the church to fulfill its mission. It is God who empowers the church to fulfill its mission. The interplay between diversity and unity is a key theme that will be picked up in the practice of perichoresis.

Pastoral Theology and Liberation

Liberation pastoral theology is defined by its commitment to providing a voice for the poor and marginalized in theology. In fact, the poor and the marginalized are the ones whose voice *must* be heard in this approach to pastoral theology. Graham comments, "[p]roperly understood, therefore, the liberationist approach to pastoral activity is one in which the people (the poor) are the agents of theological action and

reflection."[76] The quest here is for right action which leads to liberation from the socio-political environment that marginalizes the vulnerable. Given the political and subversive nature of liberation theology, it is the most controversial of the three models of pastoral theology Graham considers.[77]

Graham points to three strands that give rise to liberation pastoral theology. The first strand comes from Roman Catholic social concern which emerged in the 1960s. This movement linked social justice with the preaching of the Gospel and began to call the people of God to work actively for peace and justice. Graham shows that in the Roman Catholic thought of the day "[f]idelity to the gospel entails solidarity with the marginalized."[78] Concern for the marginalized focused attention on the imbalances between Northern and Southern hemispheres in the world and the massive debt held by the third world.

The second strand of liberation pastoral theology comes through German political theology. This theological movement was reacting to the privatization of theology and practice following the enlightenment. German political theologians worked toward articulating a political theology that proclaimed and practiced justice and peace in the face of the many pressing concerns of the day. Graham observes, "political theology is unequivocal about the status of the Christian message as 'public proclamation' which must necessarily call the faithful to a life of what Metz

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[76] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 147.
[77] Pattison speaks to the controversial natural of liberation theology. In *Pastoral Care*, 57, he writes, "Liberation theology is not unproblematic. It is full of complexities, obscurities, and contradictions. To put it in more positive terms, it is rich, lively, and controversial with much power to confront, challenge and annoy on many different levels."
[78] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 145.

characterizes as 'liberty, peace, justice, reconciliation.'"[79] German political theology was motivated to intentionally bring justice, peace and liberation to others.

The third strand of liberation theology is the fertile ground Catholic social movements in Latin America offered for such ideas.[80] Graham suggests the Latin American theologians fused two principles towards a liberation theology. First, with Marx they believed that all knowledge "reflects and serves particular concrete social interests."[81] Second, with Scripture they contend that "faithful action necessitated a 'preferential option for the poor.'"[82] The pursuit now was for *orthopraxy* which liberation theologians believed would bring justice, liberation and thus full humanity to the world.

Liberation pastoral theology emerged out of these social, political and theological movements swirling around the 1960s and continues in the present day. Western pastoral theology continues to draw on liberationist impulses. Pastoral theologian Stephen Pattison develops liberation as a motif for pastoral care in his work with chaplains serving in psychiatric institutions.[83] One of the benefits of liberation theology Pattison develops is its ability to overcome the individualistic "captivity" of Western therapeutic approaches to pastoral theology.[84] Graham herself draws on liberation theology in her feminist theology. She, with a measure of critique, observes the promise of liberation pastoral theology as "concerned to address the exclusion and invisibility of 'the poor' would therefore need to adopt a more interventionist and

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[79] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 146.
[80] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 146.
[81] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 146.
[82] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 146.
[83] Pattison, *Pastoral Care*. See especially chapter 12 "Pastoral care with mentally ill people," and chapter 15 "Liberating Pastoral Care."
[84] Pattison, *Pastoral Care*, 209.

preventative stance, aiming for justice, addressing structures, critical of power dynamics in caring relationships."[85] The question this dissertation turns to once again is how is liberation pastoral theology attentive to Christian doctrine?

Liberation pastoral theology is attentive to the biblical narrative and its concern for the poor and oppressed as well as theologies of hope. The *telos* of liberation pastoral theology is social transformation. The doctrine which resonates most with this hope is the doctrine of the Kingdom. Graham states, "[t]he theological language is 'Kingdom'; the imagery that of 'prophet'; salvation embraces the entire inhabited universe, not merely disembodied souls. Nor is the gospel to be misused as a consolation in the next world for the social injustices in this one."[86] Liberation pastoral theology wants to hear and be moved by the voice of the marginalized and it works to transform the cries of the vulnerable with the justice and peace that is part of the coming Kingdom of God.

It is helpful to add to Graham's relatively short survey of liberation pastoral theology. This is because in liberation pastoral theology there is an impulse to integrate doctrine and practice. Gustavo Gutiérrez approaches liberation theology with a desire to engage doctrine toward "critical reflection on praxis."[87] He points to the two classical functions of theology as "theology as wisdom and theology as rational knowledge."[88] Theology as wisdom emerges in the first centuries of the church. It is what might be called today spiritual theology. Theology as wisdom has the goal of spiritual maturation—this was often pursued monastically with some ambivalence toward the

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[85] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 147.
[86] Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 149.
[87] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 5–11.
[88] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 4.

"present life."[89] Gutiérrez identifies a rift between "theologians and masters of the spiritual life" around the fourteenth century.[90] It is this rift that liberation theology seeks to overcome.

Gutiérrez teaches that theology became established as a science in the twelfth century. When coupled with the rift between the spiritual masters and the theologians in the fourteenth century the synthetic nature of theology and spirituality was split.[91] The extent of this fissure on the theological task, says Gutiérrez , is that "it is more accurate to regard the theological task not as a science, but as a rational knowledge."[92] Gutiérrez is in search of methods that will reunite these two tasks of theology.

Gutiérrez's solution is for an understanding of theology as critical reflection on Christian praxis. It is this approach, he invites "theology as wisdom" and "theology as rational knowledge" into a mutual relationship toward faithful Christian praxis. Gutiérrez writes, "[t]heology as a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word does not replace the other function of theology, such as wisdom and rational knowledge; rather it presupposes and needs them."[93] Gutiérrez shows that liberation theology is attentive to doctrine in its pursuit of transformational, liberating praxis.

Liberation pastoral theology is theological practice towards the transformation of the world—the in-breaking of the peace and justice of God's Kingdom. Working towards this transformation is doctrinal work. It is out of developing doctrines of justice, peace and hope—done by hearing from those who are in need of justice, peace and hope—that liberation pastoral theology articulates doctrine that is searching for

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[89] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 4.
[90] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 4.
[91] Edward Farley also highlights the division of the theological disciplines as something to be lamented and overcome. He calls for "the recovery of *theologia*," see *Theologia*, 151–71.
[92] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 5.
[93] Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 11.

orthopraxis. Liberation pastoral theology adds focus and unity to the pastoral theological conversation being developed here. Liberation pastoral theology helps to focus therapeutic and pastoral theology on persons who are in the greatest need. Liberation pastoral theology aids the discipline to hear the voices of the most vulnerable which informs both mission and therapeutic pastoral theology.

The rhythm of liberation theology is to work tangibly toward the hope and justice of the coming Kingdom of God. It seeks to heal the fissure in theology between rationality and spirituality by putting it in service of the most vulnerable people in the world. In seeking for *orthopraxy* liberation pastoral theology works towards discerning, listening and helping those who God is most concerned with in the world. Its integrative nature will become an important feature for the practice of perichoresis.

Therapeutic, mission and liberation pastoral theologies are three diverse examples of pastoral theology's engagement with Christian doctrine. Graham makes it clear that each of the approaches to pastoral theology retain a vital doctrinal dimension. In therapeutic pastoral theology the doctrine of the incarnation informs much of its theory and practice. In mission pastoral theology the doctrine of the Trinity and ecclesiology are crucial. In liberation pastoral theology a robust theology of the Kingdom of God guides this approach. However, there are still those who are concerned about the role of doctrine in pastoral theology. A cluster of pastoral theologians hope that doctrine might be engaged in with more attention to the theological tradition.

Pastoral Theology in Theological Tradition

Tradition pastoral theology is a loose grouping of approaches to pastoral theology that are unified around an emphasis on the Christian theological tradition. There are a variety of pastoral theological perspectives that fit the ethos of this approach.

From the fundamentalist approach to pastoral counseling found in Jay Adams,[94] to the neo-orthodox pastoral theology of Edward Thurneysen,[95] the focus in these two perspectives is the application of doctrine to pastoral care and counseling. More recent developments are the pastoral theologies of Derek Tidball, Thomas Oden and Andrew Purves. These three pastoral theologians offer very different pastoral theological perspectives but are grouped together here because they each engage the Christian tradition in a manner that defines their approach to pastoral theology.

Derek Tidball articulates a biblical/evangelical approach to pastoral theology that draws on biblical theology to inform his vision of pastoral theology.[96] Tidball uses the biblical motif of "skillful shepherds" to articulate his pastoral theology.[97] He draws on the idea of shepherding starting with the book of Genesis. Tidball explains, "It was rare for [OT writers] to speak of God as 'the Shepherd'. Genesis 49:24; Psalms 23:1 and 80:1 are the only other direct references to him by this name; but the evidence that they saw God as their shepherd is to be found everywhere."[98] So for Tidball the biblical understanding of God as Shepherd sets the context for the skillful shepherds he hopes to inspire in his pastoral theology.

Another distinctive element's of Tidball's pastoral theology is that he actually engages the whole of scripture in its development. The core of his book is a biblical theological survey of skillful shepherding seen throughout the biblical narrative. Tidball organizes his survey logically: Old Testament first, then the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, followed by the writings of John, the apostle Paul and finally the general epistles. His

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[94] See Adams, *Lectures on Counseling* and *A Theology*.
[95] See Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*.
[96] Tidball, *Skillfull Shepherds*.
[97] Tidball, *Skillfull*, 45–48.
[98] Tidball, *Skillfull*, 31.

survey of scripture with the hope of informing the motif of skillful shepherds is necessarily brief but does engage the entire biblical narrative which provides a measure of cohesion. One of his most helpful observations is that Bible is filled with pastoral theology.

Tidball teaches that the New Testament corpus is an actual expression of pastoral theology. Tidball explains, "[i]mplicitly, the New Testament documents are pastoral documents. They are theology called forth by the pastoral situation of the church and theology shaped to speak to particular pastoral situations."[99] Tidball teaches that this realization will aid contemporary pastors to see how the doctrine of the New Testament is responsive to contemporary pastoral situations. The pastoral nature of the New Testament has been lost over the centuries of the Church. This occurred as doctrinal controversy eroded the pastoral nature of the New Testament. Viewing the New Testament as doctrinal treaties and not pastoral documents suggest that "they have failed to appreciate the pastoral value of much doctrine and have not seen that the pastoral strategies within the New Testament could enrich their own ministries."[100] In Tidball's biblical theological approach to tradition pastoral theology both the relevance and wisdom of the biblical narrative is brought to the discipline of pastoral theology.

Thomas Oden is another contemporary pastoral theologian who fits a description as tradition pastoral theology. Oden's journey as a pastoral theologian is unique in that his understanding of pastoral theology has been radically altered over his career. Oden has moved from a therapeutic approach to pastoral theology to a "rediscovery of

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[99] Tidball, *Skillfull*, 55.
[100] Tidball, *Skillfull*, 56.

orthodoxy."[101] He now offers a systematic, historical and orthodox pastoral theology that is defined by a deep engagement with orthodox Christian doctrine.[102]

Oden has become a strong voice in the discipline calling for its theological renewal. Oden invites the discipline to "attempt to re-engage the then atrophied dialogue between theology and many approaches to psychotherapy."[103] Oden's desire was to "turn to the classical Christian pastoral tradition, especially as expressed by the ecumenical consensus of Christianity's first millennium of experience in caring for souls."[104] Oden does not wish to abandon the contemporary context or even ignore psychological and social scientific developments but invites contemporary pastoral theology to re-engage more carefully with its orthodox tradition. This means that Oden is working toward a more robust synthesis between historic, orthodox Christian doctrine and the psychological and social scientific disciplines at play in pastoral theology today. Seen in this way, Oden's work fits with pastoral theology in Christian tradition. Oden's engagement with Christian orthodoxy can be seen in how he organizes his pastoral theology and the methods that he uses in its articulation.

Oden conceives of pastoral theology as a part of practical and systematic theology. He writes,

> Pastoral theology is a special form of practical theology because it focuses on the practice of ministry, with particular attention to the systematic definition of the pastoral office and function. Pastoral theology is also a form of systematic theology, because it attempts a systematic, consistent reflection on the offices and gifts of ministry, and their integral relationship with the task of ministry.[105]

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[101] Oden in *The Rebirth*, 35, argues, "[t]his gospel is always declared within some particular time and place. It speaks not as an *echo* of the 'spirit of the times' but in critical *response* to the time."
[102] For Oden's own description of these developments in his life see his *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 82–96.
[103] Oden, "Recovering," 6.
[104] Oden, "Recovering," 8.
[105] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, x.

Viewed in this way, Oden organizes his book *Pastoral Theology* systematically. It moves from the pastoral call through to crisis ministry in a systematic manner. One of the significant contributions Oden offers the field of pastoral theology is to remind the discipline of its fruitful history. Oden argues,

> I am hoping to offer a classically grounded systematic pastoral theology that is not insufferably dull . . . that is why I intentionally quote very few modern writers and stress more heavily that most consensual patristic sources, weighing most heavily the eight 'great doctors of the church': Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom from the east and Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great from the West.[106]

Oden's concern is that contemporary pastoral theology has lost its connection with the pastoral and doctrinal wisdom of its tradition and invites the discipline to return to the ancient consensus, and to bring the wisdom of the past to the issues of pastoral ministry today.

Oden's method, the Wesleyan quadrilateral, brings doctrine and experience together. Oden is careful to keep the four parts of the quadrilateral in their respective order. He teaches, "pastoral theology is attentive to that knowledge of God witnessed to in *Scripture*, mediated through *tradition*, reflected on in systematic *reason*ing, and embodied in social and personal *experience*."[107] Scripture, tradition, reason and experience are the methodological elements that Oden uses in his pastoral theology. Choosing to embrace the Wesleyan quadrilateral is further evidence that Oden wants to ensure that tradition and doctrine gain a more prominent role in his pastoral theology.

Oden's voice in contemporary pastoral theology draws Christian orthodoxy into all aspects of his pastoral theology. Oden's work draws on the long tradition of pastoral theology to engage the contemporary pastoral context. In particular, Oden draws on the

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[106] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 7
[107] Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, x. Emphasis added.

pastoral doctors from Church history and integrates their wisdom to contemporary pastoral concerns. In so doing Oden reminds the discipline of its tradition and shows the wisdom of the past. His is a contemporary, orthodox pastoral theology.

Andrew Purves is another contemporary pastoral theologian who fits in the pastoral theology in theological tradition approach. His concern for the discipline is more dramatic than that of Oden or Tidball. Purves is intentionally trying to overcome what he understands as the loss of doctrine in contemporary pastoral theology and is working to "reconstruct" the discipline on a solid dogmatic foundation. He writes, "[t]his book will lay the ax to the root of much that has borne the name of pastoral theology in recent times."[108] Purves, it seems, is critical of the present state of the discipline and is seeking to correct it by placing it on a more sure dogmatic footing. It is less clear if he desires to work with the discipline to achieve these ends, or if he is moving on from the discipline with his own version of pastoral theology. What he does offer is a Christological foundation and cruciform expression of pastoral theology.[109]

Purves' approach emphasizes doctrine throughout. His doctrinal emphasis is seen in how he conceives of the nature of pastoral theology. Contemporary pastoral theology is commonly thought of in non-systematic terms. Purves, however, emphasizes the unity that pastoral theology has with systematic theology.[110] He observes, "[t]he relationship between systematic/dogmatic and pastoral theology, then, is utterly complementary, because they have the same content and are really only distinguishable

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[108] Purves, *Reconstructing*, xv.
[109] For his Christological foundation see Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral*. For his cruciform expression see Purves, *The Crucifixion* and *The Resurrection*.
[110] In contrast with Purves' some pastoral theologians champion the unsystematic nature of pastoral theology. For example, Stephen Pattison's approach to pastoral theology is "unsystematic." He writes in *A Critique*, 235, "Pastoral theology is not systematic partly because it is the product of direct reflection of particular and immediate situations and events."

for the sake of convenience and task."[111] For Purves pastoral and systematic theology

share a family similarity, yet he affirms pastoral theology is not to be thought of as

applied theology.

Purves draws Christian doctrine into his pastoral theology as a correction to the

discipline. He believes contemporary pastoral theology has lost its doctrinal grounding.

Purves argues, "this [pastoral theology] is explicitly developed out of the evangelical,

catholic, and ecumenical theology of the Christian faith."[112] Purves' approach is meant

to be a specific rebuttal and reconstruction of the modern pastoral care movement in

general, and Seward Hiltner's "shepherding perspective" specifically.[113] While Oden

seems to invite the discipline to rediscover orthodoxy and so be transformed, Purves'

approach is to correct and rebuild the discipline on a doctrinal foundation.

Another feature of Purves's pastoral theology is ensuring the priority of doctrine.

Purves argues, again in contrast to contemporary pastoral theology, "[t]he pastoral

theologian, then, must give primary attention to understanding God in and as Jesus

Christ as the source of life and hope, meaning and value, and everything that should

follow from this attention for the church's ministries of care."[114] While still emphasizing

the priority of doctrine, Purves does allow a small measure of mutuality to exist between

doctrine and practice. He contends that, "it is right to insist that doctrine shape pastoral

work insofar as it discloses the human situation and bears witness to the pastoring God,

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[111] Purves, *Reconstructing*, xxiii.

[112] Purves, *Reconstructing*, xv.

[113] For Purves' critique of contemporary pastoral theology see his *Reconstructing*, xix-xx, he has three reasons for offering this critique: (1) "views of human wholeness and competent function seem to dominate;" (2) "[it] is by and large shaped by psychological categories regarding human experience and by symbolic interpretations regarding God;" (3) "pastoral work today is understood largely in functional terms." For his critique of Shepherding and Hiltner see xxvi–xxxiv. Purves' hope is to move from "Preface to Pastoral Dogmatics" xxxiv.

[114] Purves, *Reconstructing*, 4.

which is the content of the Gospel, it is right also to insist that reflection on pastoral

practice leads to the interpretation of Scripture and reformation of doctrine."[115] The

strong doctrinal emphasis is the distinguishing mark of Purves's pastoral theology.

Pastoral theology in Christian tradition is an important part of the contemporary

pastoral theological conversation. These three examples reveal the promise of affirming

normative Christian doctrine as a valuable perspective in pastoral theology. Tidball's

contribution helps the discipline to see the pastoral nature of much of the biblical

narrative and that such a biblical approach to pastoral theology is relevant to today's

pastoral concerns. Oden also engages the discipline in a way that invites pastoral

theologians to value the orthodox doctrine that defines the Christian faith and the

wisdom of two thousand years of pastoral practice. Purves also is a helpful reminder to

consider what priorities are operative in pastoral theology and the place that is provided

for reflection on the self-revelation of God in both the development and expression of

pastoral theology. Pastoral theology in theological tradition is necessary to remind the

entire discipline of pastoral theology of its biblical, historical and doctrinal orientation.

The rhythm of pastoral theology in Christian tradition is biblical and doctrinal. It

is intentional about remaining in continuity with the biblical narrative, the theological

tradition and the doctrinal affirmations of the Christian faith. It is important for the

practice of perichoresis that tradition pastoral theology is not isolated from pastoral

theology as a discipline. Indeed the doctrine of perichoresis is derived from reflection on

the biblical narrative and theological history. The approach to pastoral theology being

developed in this dissertation is best located here as pastoral theology in theological

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[115] Purves, *Reconstructing*, 12.

tradition. This approach is probing the doctrine of perichoresis in order to serve ministering persons to live and minister in cadence with God.

Pastoral Theologies

What can be gleaned about the use of doctrine in pastoral theology from the four options surveyed? First, doctrine plays a vital role in each of the respective approaches to pastoral theology. Therapeutic pastoral theology is informed as a healing discipline by the doctrine of the incarnation. Mission pastoral theology is conversant with the doctrine of the Trinity and ecclesiology. Liberation pastoral theology is informed by theologies of hope, and the peace and justice that are coming to earth through the Kingdom of God. Tradition pastoral theology is intentionally doctrinal seeking to ensure that all facets of the discipline are grounded by biblical, historical and doctrinal wisdom. While it is clear from this exploration that doctrine is not absent from any of the approaches to pastoral theology, it is just as clear that doctrine is not used consistently in the various options. What pastoral theology requires is a dynamic approach to the use of doctrine and freedom to engage and apply it as the complexity of the situation it is working with demands. Of course this freedom can see doctrine become eclipsed by many other concerns, but it can also allow for doctrine to be used sensitively, judiciously and relevantly. Pastoral theology must learn to be attentive to the complexity of Christian doctrine as well as to the complexity of human beings and the situations it is engaging.

Moving forward, in pastoral theology the concern is not 'if' but 'how' doctrine is used. Pastoral theology in theological tradition seeks to renew and/or correct the discipline, working to reorient pastoral theology with the traditional commitments of the Christian faith. In therapeutic pastoral theology, conversely, doctrine can be elusive and even eclipsed by the dominance of psychological and social scientific perspectives.

Doctrine is important to this approach but is used with discretion as the concerns of each individual case come to light—in pastoral counseling the use of doctrine is often intentionally nondirective.[116] In mission pastoral theology the doctrine of the Trinity and ecclesiology come to the forefront. Doctrine is held in tension with the missional intentions of the people of God. Liberation pastoral theology helps focus the discipline on the specific concerns of oppressed people; it wants to hear the voice of the oppressed and respond appropriately. What is clear is that each of the approaches embraces doctrine but in a different way. This distinctiveness is something to be valued. Each of these approaches has a unique rhythm that is best experience not in isolation but together. Their diversity and the tensions this creates is part of the richness that is pastoral theology.

The kind of diversity that a survey of doctrine in pastoral theology reveals contributes to the strength of the discipline. Few pastoral theologians call for a uniformity of approach, instead most embrace the diversity. This dissertation hopes to contribute to this discussion by articulating a doctrinal rooted approach to contemporary pastoral theology. The doctrine of perichoresis aids in understanding how diversity, unity, mutuality and movement all can work together. These are all aspects that need to be choreographed for this pastoral theology to serve ministering persons.

Pastoral theology has a sense of rhythm. Unity, diversity, mutuality and movement are all vital parts of a robust pastoral theology. The movements that occur within pastoral theology are disciplined and specific. Having surveyed how doctrine functions in pastoral theology it is now necessary to discover the specific areas from the discipline that will be taken forward to engage with the doctrine of perichoresis. These

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[116] Hiltner speaks to the use of Christian doctrine in pastoral counseling, see *Pastoral Counseling*, 216–23.

points of contact will be the basis of the dialogical conversation with the doctrine of perichoresis which is the focus of this dissertation.

Points of Contact

In the doctrine of perichoresis a mutuality of love speaks to the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In pastoral theology mutuality speaks to the diversity of theological perspectives with a unifying concern to serve ministering persons and local churches. The diversity that exists within the discipline of pastoral theology is an essential part of its contemporary expression. Moving forward, this dissertation will focus on three specific areas of contemporary pastoral theology. It is these features of the discipline which will be drawn into conversation with the doctrine of perichoresis. They will inform the constructive conversation toward the articulation of the practice of perichoresis. The three features of contemporary pastoral theology are: (1) theologies of experience, (2) human angst and (3) situational attentiveness.[117] These three features are each important components in contemporary pastoral theology. Theologies of experience, human angst and situational attentiveness will be introduced and their importance to the discipline will be highlighted.

Theologies of Human Experience

Theologies of human experience are the fabric of contemporary pastoral theology. Pastoral theology as a discipline is concerned with human experience, how to interpret it and how to draw it into an ongoing theological conversation. As Bonnie Miller-McLemore strains to articulate the differences between pastoral and practical theology, she observes that their connection lies in the reality that they are focused on human experience. She asserts, "[p]astoral and practical theologies are theologies caught

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[117] These three features have been gleaned from Bonnie Miller-McLemore article, "Also a Pastoral."

in the act of people's lives."[118] Miller-McLemore values the psychological and social scientific disciplines that the therapeutic tradition of pastoral theology embraces because they help her to discover what is at stake for people in their lived experiences.[119] Discovering and sensitively touching people's lives in a pastoral way is the nature of pastoral theology.

A robust theological understanding of what is at stake in lived human experience is a biblical concern. A biblical expression of this dimension of theologies of human experience is found in Jesus' invitation, "[c]ome to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mat 11:28-30). Jesus calls people to respond to him from within the perplexing situations of their lived experience. It is the weary and burdened that Jesus invites to come to him. Pastoral theology is concerned to help the weary and burdened to hear Jesus' call. It theologically interprets experience in light of the hope of Jesus' personal concern.

Theologies of human experience define many of the developments in pastoral theology over the last century. The prominence of human experience over this time span began with Anton Boisen, moves through Seward Hiltner and finds its contemporary articulation with Charles Gerkin.

Anton Boisen had the seminal insight that pastoral theologians can interpret human experience through the concept of the living human document. In the same way that other disciplines of theology have interpreted texts, pastoral theology's call is to

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[118] Miller-McLemore, "Also a Pastoral," 820.
[119] Miller-McLemore, "Also a Pastoral," 822.

carefully interpret the lives of human beings. For Boisen this was very personal. He brought his own experiences with mental illness into what ultimately became a pastoral theological conversation. He shares,

> [t]o be plunged as a patient into a hospital for the insane may be a tragedy or it may be an opportunity. For me it has been an opportunity . . . throughout its entire range, from the bottommost depths of the nether regions to the heights of religious experience at its best; it has made me aware of certain relationships between two important fields of human experience which thus far have been held strictly apart.[120]

For Boisen, the two important fields he brought together are the "interrelatedness of mental disorder and religious experience."[121] While never fully getting over his mental illness, Boisen set the direction for contemporary pastoral theology by drawing human experience into the centre of pastoral theology.

Seward Hiltner advanced human experience in pastoral theology by providing a methodology which ensured that the voice of human experience was heard in pastoral theological work. Hiltner applied an early version of the method of correlation into pastoral theology. He taught that pastoral theology "begins with theological questions and ends with theological answers."[122] The theological questions Hiltner has in mind are human theological questions. For Hiltner theological questions come out of lived human experience and result in theological answers by engaging with the Christian tradition. Hiltner articulates this as a pastoral theological method that is done from the perspective of Christian shepherding.[123] Hiltner also provides pastoral theology with the content for

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[120] Boisen, *The Exploration*, 1.
[121] Boisen, *Out of*, 209.
[122] Hiltner, *Preface*, 24.
[123] Hiltner, *Preface*, 24. Hiltner offers here the most rudimentary form of the method of correlation. The discipline of pastoral theology has further developed this method to ensure that the conversation can flow from human experience into Christian doctrine and from Christian doctrine to human experience. The example of Andrew Lester earlier in this chapter is reflective of these developments.

what this means in pastoral practice. He suggests that the content of pastoral theology is "healing, sustaining and guiding."[124]

A contemporary articulation of theologies of experience comes through Charles Gerkin. Gerkin, by drawing on theological, philosophical and psychological developments, points toward a way of interpreting the *living human document*.[125] Gerkin attempts to answer the question, "[h]ow can pastoral counseling be at the same time both an authentically theological and a scientifically psychological discipline?"[126] One of the key insights Gerkin offers is the importance of maintaining the pastoral perspective. He argues that without the pastoral perspective the theological and pastoral elements of the counseling relationship can be obscured. He states, "it is just at this point that the biblical and theological grounding for the pastoral counselor's self-understanding become crucial . . . Without it pastoral counseling soon loses that primary orientation that makes the interpretive relationship pastoral."[127] The pastoral nature of the discipline of pastoral theology must retain its biblical and theological grounding in and through its work. For Gerkin this orients the pastoral counseling relationship in a hermeneutical mode.[128]

Theologies of human experience dominate the landscape of pastoral theology. They are a vital part of the discipline. Contemporary pastoral theology is not confined just to this perspective, however. While always connected to the broad context of human

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[124] Hiltner, *Preface*, see ch. 6, 7, and 8 for his explanation of each of these.

[125] See Gerkin, *The Living Human Document* and *An Introduction*.

[126] Gerkin, *The Living*, 11.

[127] Gerkin, *The Living*, 55.

[128] Gerkin, *The Living*, 160 where he describes his vision as "wholistically human (play and suffering) and subject to the possibilities and limits of human life in God (the work of the Spirit in the 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God)."

experience, contemporary pastoral theology also focuses on certain aspects of human life. One of these is pastoral theology's concern for human angst.

Human Angst

Human angst and flourishing are the words the discipline of pastoral theology uses to speak of the human dilemma.[129] Pastoral theology is focused on what it means to be human, at the best and at the worst of times. Human angst and flourishing seeks to understand what it means to live life abundantly while still grappling authentically with the suffering and evil in the world. Miller-McLemore shows the importance of these interrelated aspects of human anthropology for the discipline of pastoral theology. She teaches that it is out of angst and flourishing that belief begins and, vitally, where belief is tested. She asserts that, "[angst and flourishing] evoke exclamation of belief that leads to more formal proclamation and or creedal profession of belief. And they have the power to devastate it, making confessional decree even more necessary."[130] Human angst and flourishing provides a voice for humanity to speak into Christian doctrine. As such it is a vital focus of pastoral theology.

The biblical narrative is written within the tension of human angst and flourishing. Seen through the lens of the incarnation, the high point of God's revelation to humanity, human angst and flourishing are given profound expression. In Jesus, human angst and flourishing are given their most articulate voice. Two declarations by Jesus reveal the tension the two have in his own life and ministry. The first is the Lord's assertion "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10b).

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[129] Both human angst and flourishing will be introduced here because they belong together. Only human angst will be drawn into dialogue with the doctrine of perichoresis in chapter four simply because there is only room to develop one of these dynamics.

[130] Miller-McLemore, "Also a Pastoral," 823.

Jesus life and ministry is about drawing people into the best kind of life—the life which is full of and flourishes in God. The second declaration is the clearest human articulation of angst, it is Jesus cry from the cross, "My God my God why have you forsaken me?" (Mat 27: 46c). Jesus personal and painful words spoken from the cross to his Father are words which also speak to the bewildering, anguishing, godforsaken aspects of the human dilemma. In Jesus' life and ministry, human angst and flourishing are clearly present. Pastoral theology accepts the tension between angst and flourishing and works between them toward healing, sustaining and guiding persons in their experiences of these tensions.

Pastoral theology grapples personally with the issues of human angst. Pastoral theologians try not to explain suffering philosophically or even theologically. Even the value of theodicy is questioned from the pastoral theological perspective.[131] Suffering is dealt with pastorally—this means personally and responsively with those who are suffering. This is seen in a variety of ways, but as a means of introduction, two are of particular importance. The first is the "sustaining" that Seward Hiltner articulates as part of the content of pastoral theology. The second is the rediscovery of lament in pastoral practice. Pastoral theologians are learning to teach people and congregations to employ the ancient biblical expression of lament. To cry out to God in the midst of suffering with a complaint in the hope that God will hear and act. It is out of the rich soil of

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[131] See Swinton, *Raging with Compassion, 4,* where he argues for a practical theodicy, "I maintain that theodicy should not be understood as a series of disembodied arguments designed to defend God's love, goodness, and power. We require a different mode of understanding, a mode of theodicy that is embodied within the life and practices of the Christian community. Such a mode of theodicy does not seek primarily to *explain* evil and suffering, but rather presents ways in which evil and suffering can be *resisted* and *transformed* by the Christian community. Emphasis original. See also Chapter 4 "From Theodicy to Resistance" 69-89.

human angst that pastoral theology works to test belief and respond in faith, to offer the pastoral responses of sustaining and lamenting in the face of suffering.

Pastoral theology also has a vision for human flourishing. Human flourishing is anchored theologically with the in-breaking of the kingdom of God through the ministry of Jesus Christ. As was noted above, Jesus invites human beings to live life to the full. Pastoral theologians tend to agree that human flourishing is not the same in every situation and is complicated this side of the *eschaton* by the provisional nature of the Kingdom's in-breaking. Sharing these concerns, one recent study seeks to speak to what is meant by human flourishing. The authors suggest that human flourishing is: receiving humility, receiving grace and receiving freedom.[132] Humility comes through relinquishing the illusion of control, grace comes from letting go of independence and freedom comes from striking the balance between structure and creativity. Human flourishing then comes through a receptivity to the grace and freedom that comes from the triune God.

Pastoral theology deals with the most vulnerable and inspiring realities of human experience. It is in the crucible of life that beliefs and doctrines are tested and their resilience affirmed. It is here that pastoral practice is forged. In this way pastoral theology is a discipline that is nimble enough to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15).

Situational Attentiveness

Situational attentiveness is unique in that it contributes to the pastoral theological conversation by seeking to come to terms with the complexities and multivalent factors that make up human situations. Pastoral theology is focused on what is going on in the

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[132] Cameron *et al.*, *Theological Reflection*, 123–25.

situations in which people are living and in which church communities are functioning. Miller-McLemore highlights pastoral theology's situational attentiveness by contrasting it with systematic theologies "cognitive capacity."[133] Situational attentiveness is dynamic in that depending on the situation it might use any or all of the doctrinal approaches or methodological tools available in pastoral theology. Pastoral theology is in search of a deep understanding of all that goes on in a situation. Pastoral theologians will often complexify rather than simplify situations so as to seek to interpret them as deeply and accurately as possible.

Situational attentiveness in pastoral theology finds biblical agreement with Jesus teachings at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, "everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).[134] Here Jesus invites his audience to not just hear what he is teaching but to put his words into practice. The invitation is to go deep, down to the foundations of life and build one's life upon the rock of integration of God's Word into one's life. Situational attentiveness means getting as deep as possible into the dimensions of the situation so that faith, hope and love might penetrate where it is most potent and most needed. In the practice of perichoresis this means relating, participating and being spiritually united with the triune God.

Edward Farley sees the value of situational attentiveness in pastoral theology. He believes that the interpretation of situations is one way to define the nature of pastoral theology. Farley observes that the Christian faith has become very good at interpreting

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[133] Miller-Mclemore, "Also a Pastoral," 818.

[134] Jesus use of the parable in his teaching also resonates with situational attentiveness. Jesus use of parable aids the reader/hearer to reinterpret their situations. When one finds the treasure they have been searching for their entire life, the sell all their positions to buy the field in which it lies. In this story the situation of life has been entirely reinterpreted through the discovery of the treasure.

authoritative texts. It has not done as well at interpreting the situations to which these texts are applied. He states, "[t]he movement is from disciplined interpretation of the authoritative past to casual and impressionistic grasp of the present."[135] For Farley a situation is "the way various items, powers, and events in the environment gather together to evoke responses from participants."[136] The goal of the interpretation of situations is, for Farley, to "discern the situation's demand."[137] Pastoral theology is situationally attentive as it seeks to understand the complexities and demands that are inherent in the situations in which it does its pastoral work.

Theopoetics is another tool pastoral theologians use to gain insight into situations. Theopoetics is helpful because it transcends the dominance of reason and evokes the emotion and feeling of situations. Rubem Alves and Phil Zylla are important contributors to theopoetics in pastoral theology. Alves emphasizes the poetic beauty of specific concrete situations. He writes, "[a]s opposed to the scientists who look for the most abstract, God gives birth to the most concrete. It is in the concreteness of beauty that God's universality is revealed."[138] Alves alerts pastoral theologians to the importance of beauty and aesthetics in discovering God's presence in concrete situations. Zylla helps to articulate how theopoetics enhances pastoral theology. He argues,

> the theopoetic renewal of pastoral theology would imply at least three foundational tasks:
> 1. To establish contact again with the complex and concrete world of human experience . . .
> 2. To ground pastoral response and pastoral reflection in concrete realities not general abstractions.

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[135] Farley, *Practicing*, 37.
[136] Farley, *Practicing*, 38.
[137] Farley, *Practicing*, 39–40.
[138] Alves, *The Poet*, 130.

3. To move into the mystery of God's reconciling action in the world as co-participants in the *missio Dei*.[139]

Theopoetics is an ally to pastoral theology as it aids in probing the non-cognitive dimensions of human experience—the very dimensions that are often most important to the people involved.

The pastoral cycle is also a help to the situational attentiveness of pastoral theology. The pastoral cycle consists of four movements which enable ministering persons to deal with situations consistently and thoroughly.[140] Based on action reflection research it involves: 1. Experience—the interruption of the status quo by something that demands a response. 2. Exploration—a thorough analysis of the situation. 3. Reflection—on the beliefs and values of those involved. 4. Action—which comes now from informed decisions and appropriate initiatives. The cycle need not stop as new action becomes another experience to move through the process. The pastoral cycle offers ministering persons a tool that helps them to deal with pastoral situations consistently and thoroughly.

Theologies of human experience, human angst and situational attentiveness are vital components of contemporary pastoral theology. Their prominence in the discipline makes them prime conversation partners for the engagement with the doctrine of perichoresis this dissertation has in view. This is because ministering persons are constantly engaged with human experiences, dealing with human angst and straining to be situationally attentive. These three areas inform much of the work pastoral theology serves ministering persons to do well. As they are brought into dialogue with the doctrine of perichoresis they will help to sketch a vision of pastoral theology that is in

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[139] Zylla, "What Language," 131.
[140] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 82–87.

agreement with Christian orthodoxy and engaged in the complexities of human life and situations.

Summary

Pastoral theology's relationship to doctrine is a critical dimension of the discipline. Therapeutic, mission, liberation and pastoral theology in theological tradition all engage with Christian doctrine uniquely. Part of the rich texture and interest in contemporary pastoral theology is the diversity of approaches and options available. As this dissertation moves forward it will accept the diversity inherent within the field of pastoral theology. While rooted in the pastoral theology in theological tradition approach, this dissertation will glean from the other three approaches to pastoral theology. Theologies of human experience, human angst and situational attentiveness will engage in transformational dialogue with the doctrine of perichoresis. This will deepen the importance of doctrine in the discipline while allowing for the necessary freedom to be responsive to the actual situations of ministry. The doctrine of perichoresis is particularly helpful in this regard because it too values movement and mutuality, unity and diversity, freedom and discipline. It is this ancient and relevant doctrine of perichoresis which will be explored in chapter two.

CHAPTER TWO
PERICHORETIC RHYTHM: RELATIONALITY, PARTICIPATION AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

The doctrine of perichoresis expresses how the persons of the Godhead exist as a mutuality—the three persons as the one God. Perichoresis aids Christian theology to articulate how the diversity in God does not overcome the unity of God. The benefit of this doctrinal development is that it speaks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as existing in a relational, participative and spiritual unity. The complexity, mystery and relationality inherent to the doctrine of perichoresis all encourage its integration with pastoral theology. Perichoresis is often understood as a divine dance where the persons of the Trinity "move in and through each other so that the pattern is all inclusive."[1] It is from the perichoretic being of God that the movements of creation, redemption and glorification emerge. It is this kind of creative, sorrowful, and beautiful movement that constitutes the vision for the practice of perichoresis. This vision comes into reality as ministering persons learn to move in cadence with the perichoretic rhythms of the triune God.

This chapter will introduce the doctrine of perichoresis and identify the key features it brings to the constructive part of this dissertation: relationality, participation and spirituality. It is when these three features are brought into a constructive dialogue with the corresponding features from pastoral theology (experience, human angst and situational attentiveness) that the practice of perichoresis will come into view. The introduction of the doctrine of perichoresis will be examined by surveying its ancient development and its contemporary resurgence. Once the historical and theological

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[1] Fiddes, *Participation*, 72.

developments of perichoresis are in place, they will test the definition of perichoresis in view for this discussion. Perichoresis can be defined as *the mutual indwelling without confusion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. Once this definition is established historically and theologically the focus will turn to the constructive dimensions that will be used to articulate the practice of perichoresis.

Paul Fiddes offers a glimpse into the potential of this journey for ministering persons. He writes, "[t]he sacramental life is one that is open to the presence of God, and can open a door for others into eternal movements of love and justice that are there ahead of us, and before us, and embracing us. This openness can be felt like the invitation to a dance, but sometimes like the raw edge of a wound."[2] The engagement between pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis is ripe with potential. What is envisioned is a pastoral theology that is attentive to the presence of God and responsive to situations of ministry. It is specifically Trinitarian. It through relationship with God, participation with Christ and spiritual union with the Holy Spirit that ministering persons do ministry in ever-deepening cadence with God. The doctrine of perichoresis aids Christians to articulate the mystery of sharing in both the diversity and unity, and, the ministry and mission of the triune God.

The Doctrine of Perichoresis

The resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in recent decades has brought with it a rediscovery of the doctrine of perichoresis.[3] Perichoresis is an ancient Greek term used in theology to speak to the deepest mysteries of the triune God. Historically it was used in reference to God's triune being in an effort to combat tri-

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[2] Fiddes, *Participating*, 302.
[3] For two accounts of the resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity see, Grenz, *Rediscovering*, and Karkkainen, *The Trinity*.

theism. It did so by straining to articulate the mystery of how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God. In the contemporary setting the doctrine of perichoresis is an important part of Trinitarian thought and has encouraged an understanding of the social nature of God.[4] The doctrine of perichoresis is also having a modest influence in the discipline of pastoral theology.[5] The promise of a perichoretic pastoral theology is just coming into view and this dissertation is an effort to articulate a thoroughly perichoretic pastoral theology. The roots of the doctrine of perichoresis stretch back to the early centuries of the Christian church.

Perichoresis ~ An Ancient Word

The word perichoresis has a rich theological history. It has proven to be a flexible term, first used in the patristic era in the area of Christology before it found its theological home as integral to the doctrine of the Trinity. The noun perichoresis came into patristic use through Maximus the Confessor.[6] He used it to define how the two natures, human and divine, function in Christ. G.L. Prestige shows that, "[w]hen therefore [Maximus] comes to apply perichoresis to the problems of Christology, we find that it means reciprocity of action."[7] This means that the two natures in Christ have a "singleness of action and effect" much like a hot knife cutting and burning as it moves through an object.[8] Pseudo-Cyril continued to take up the term Christologically to explain how the two natures in Christ are unified. He used perichoresis to explain that

[4] One of the chief architects of the social God is Jürgen Moltmann, see his *The Trinity,* 19. He writes, "in distinction to the trinity of substance and to the trinity of subject we shall be attempting to develop a social doctrine of the Trinity." For an evangelical development of the concept of the social God see Grenz, *The Social God.*
[5] This modest influence will be highlighted in the work of Pembroke and Buxton's respective pastoral theologies.
[6] Prestige, *God in Patristic,* 293. See also Buxton, *The Trinity,* 130, who points out that Maximus "drew from Gregory's Christological use of *perichoreo.*"
[7] Prestige, *God in Patristic,* 293.
[8] Prestige, *God in Patristic,* 294.

Jesus' divine and human natures exist with permeation, but without confusion. Prestige writes, "[w]hat pseudo-Cyril appears to have in mind is a permeation of co-inherence between the two natures... The two natures are not confused, but as each occupies the whole extension of the same hypostasis they must, on the physical metaphor, be regarded as interpenetrative."[9] The patristic use of perichoresis in Christology, to (1) show singleness of effect within a mutuality of action and (2) permeation without confusion in the human and divine natures of Jesus, anticipates its more fruitful appropriation for the doctrine of the Trinity.[10]

In the sixth century, perichoresis was used to temper the suggestion of tri-theism in Trinitarian doctrine. Prestige aptly sets the context for the Trinitarian appropriation of perichoresis,

> But owing at first to the accidents of controversy, and later to the abstract tendencies of the sixth century, the aspect in which God came to be more commonly regarded was that of three objects in a single ousia. The uppermost term is now hypostasis, and it becomes an eminent practical necessity to formulate a definition which, beginning from the uppermost term, will equally well express the truth of the monotheistic being of God. Without such a definition, the recurrence of tri-theism was almost inevitable.[11]

It was pseudo-Cyril in the sixth century and John of Damascus in the eighth century who applied perichoresis to the Trinity and thus articulated a theological construct that appreciated the "three objects" while resisting tri-theism.[12]

The Patristic Fathers resisted tri-theism by articulating an understanding of the co-inherence of the three persons of the Godhead or perichoresis. Prestige explains,

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[9] Prestige, *God in Patristic,* 295.

[10] Prestige in *God in Patristic,* 296, views the use of *perichoresis* in patristic Christology as something "forced" but describes it as something "admirable" as it relates to the Trinity.

[11] Prestige, 297. For more on the development of perichoresis in the Patristic era see: Harrison, "Perichoresis," 53–65. For the development of the Trinity in this time see, Kelly, *Early Christian* 252–79 and Ayers, *Nicaea and its Legacy.*

[12] Buxton, *The Trinity,* 131.

"[t]his definition was provided in the formula of the perichoresis or circumincession of three co-inherent Persons in a single substance."[13] Reflecting further on the fact that the three persons of the Godhead maintain one *ousia* while each possessing a perfect *hypostasis*, pseudo-Cyril taught that the three persons of the Trinity "possess co-inherence in one another without any coalescence or commixture."[14] Verna Harrison illustrates this by saying,

> the Father gives all that he is to the Son. In return, the Son gives all that he is to the Father, and the Holy Spirit, too, is united to the others in mutual self giving. This relationship among the persons is an eternal rest in each other but also an eternal movement of love, though without change or process.[15]

Prestige defines the patristic doctrine of Trinitarian perichoresis as "the co-inherence of the three Persons in one another."[16]

This definition illumines how earlier patristic theologians used the concept of perichoresis if not the actual word. Presitge points to Athanasius as an example of one who used the concept of perichoresis. Athanasius does so in his teaching on the relations of the divine persons. Concerning the Father and the Son, Athanasius observed, "that the Son is omnipresent, because He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him."[17] Applied to the Spirit Athanasius stated, "[t]hat the Spirit belongs to the ousia of the Word and belongs to God and is said to be in Him; He is not called Son, yet is not outside the Son; if we partake of the Spirit we possess the Son, and if we possess the Son we possess the Spirit."[18] It seems that in the patristic era there was a generally accepted concept of perichoresis. In light of Prestige a definition of perichoresis might be *the co-inherence,*

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[13] Prestige, *God in Patristic*, 297.
[14] Prestige, *God in Patristic*, 298.
[15] Harrison, "Perichoresis," 64.
[16] Prestige, *God in Patristic*, 284.
[17] Quoted by Prestige, *God in Patristic*, 284.
[18] Quoted by Prestige, *God in Patristic*, 284

without confusion, of the three persons of the one God. The concept of perichoresis, if

not at all times the word itself, has had a significant impact on the patristic development

of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Perichoresis ~ A Contemporary Word

Contemporary Trinitarian theologians draw on the patristic understanding of

perichoresis as they seek to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity today.[19] As the social

nature of God continues to be studied and applied, perichoresis is consistently employed

to speak of the relational dynamics of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[20] It is

helpful to consider several definitions of this term to see if the concept being used today

is congruent with the patristic articulation. Helpfully, perichoresis is a novel enough

term that most contemporary theologians provide a definition when they employ its use.

Karl Barth made cautious use of the term perichoresis and defined it in relation

to the Trinity as, "the divine modes of existence condition and permeate one another

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[19] I do not want to leave the impression that the concept of *perichoresis* was lost from the 8th century until the contemporary renaissance of Trinitarian reflection. As one prime example, the Council of Florence (1438-45) certainly made use of the concept of *perichoresis* when it wrote: "The three persons are one God not three Gods. . . . Because of this unity the Father is entirely in the Son, entirely in the Holy Spirit, the Son is entirely in the Father, entirely in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is entirely in the Father, entirely in the Son," quoted in Seamans, *Ministry in The Image,* 141.

[20] Some argue against the social use of the doctrine of the Trinity. The concern is that such social approaches are shaping the triune nature of God in a human image. For an example of such a concern see Mark Husbands', "The Trinity is Not Our Social Program." This work is helpful to push social Trinitarians to define their work biblically and theologically. Husbands does seem to push his point too far this, at times, actually takes away from the otherwise important points he is arguing. In one example he insinuates that Miroslav Volf worships three Gods, unlike the much more orthodox Gregory and Barth who worship one God, 137. While Volf does start with the plurality and not the unity of the Godhead, this does not mean he worships three Gods any more than a fair reading of Barth and Husbands would conclude that they are mere modalists. The tension is to strain for an orthodox understanding of the mystery of the Trinity which theological history says exists somewhere between modalism and tri-theism. It is less than helpful when those who approach the discussion from different points in this spectrum accuse the other of being beyond orthodoxy. Volf, a social Trinitarian, does not espouse tri-theism, like all trinitarian theologians his language strains to stay within these points of tension.

mutually with such perfection, that one is as invariably in the other two as the other two

are in the one."[21] Jürgen Moltman understands that

> The Father, the Son and the Spirit are by no means merely *distinguished* from
> one another by their character as Persons; they are just as much united with one
> another and in one another . . . The concept of person must therefore in itself
> contain the concept of unitedness or at-oneness, just as, conversely, the concept
> of God's at-oneness must in itself contain the concept of the three persons. This
> means that the concept of God's unity cannot in the trinitarian sense be fitted
> into the homogeneity of the one divine substance ... it must be perceived in the
> perichoresis of the divine persons.[22]

Catherine LaCugna champions perichoresis as "a defence both against tritheism and

Arian subordinationism" and teaches "*perichoresis* means being-in-one-another,

permeation without confusion."[23] Miroslav Volf articulates perichoresis as "the

reciprocal *interiority* of the Trinitarian persons" explaining that "in every divine person

as a subject, the other persons also indwell; all mutually permeate one another, though in

so doing they do not cease to be distinct persons."[24] Finally, Paul Fiddes writes, "[t]he

term 'perichoresis' thus expresses the permeation of each person by the other, their

coinherence without confusion."[25] These definitions display general agreement with the

patristic concept of perichoresis.

The concept of perichoresis in both its patristic and contemporary use contains

two salient features. The first is that the three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and

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[21] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1,425. Barth was very cautious in his use of *perichoresis*. He was concerned
that it could be misused in a manner that lead to (1) modalism and conversely (2) tri-theism. Barth
cautions "We can only say that the doctrine of perichoresis, which admits of misuse in a one-sided
emphasis on the involution of interpenetration of the three modes of existence, also includes the other
element, by which we should be warned against misuse, namely, regarding the involution as a convolution
presupposing the eternal independence of the three modes of existence in their eternal community. And in
any case it may be stated quite definitely, that to systematize the one-sidedness... is absolutely forbidden,
because it would mean the dissolution of the three-in-oneness into the neutral fourth," Barth, *Church
Dogmatics* I/1, 456.
[22] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 150. Emphasis original.
[23] LaCugna, *God For Us*, 270–271.
[24] Volf, *After Our Likeness,* 209. Emphasis original.
[25] Fiddes, *Participating in God,* 71.

Spirit) mutually indwell one another. In the patristic concept, defined above as *the co-inherence, without confusion, of the three persons of the one God*, the word "co-inherence" captures the idea that the Father, Son, and Spirit mutually indwell one another. Each of the contemporary theologians captures this meaning as well. Fiddes uses the same word as in the patristic concept, "coinherence."[26] Volf's phrase is "mutually permeate."[27] LaCugna employs "being-in-one-another, permeate."[28] Moltmann utilizes "in one another."[29] While Barth articulates, "permeate one another mutually."[30] Each of these words or phrases captures the reality that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mutually indwell one another.

The second salient feature of perichoresis is that there is to be no confusion of the persons of the Godhead in this mutual indwelling of divine persons. This means that despite their mutual indwelling, the Father, Son and Spirit are and remain distinct persons and, although they are one, are never to be confused: the Son is never the Father, the Spirit is never the Son, the Father is never the Son or the Spirit, and so forth. The patristic concept along with Fiddes and LaCugna all clarify this through the use of the words "without confusion."[31] Volf emphasizes this when he teaches that Father, Son, and Spirit "do not cease to be distinct persons."[32] Moltmann explains this by saying "God's at-oneness must in itself contain the concept of the three Persons."[33] Finally, Barth is also concerned that the divine persons do not become "convoluted."[34] If in

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[26] Fiddes, *Participating*, 71.
[27] Volf, *After*, 209
[28] LaCugna, *God*, 270–271
[29] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 150.
[30] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 425.
[31] Fiddes, *Participating*, 71 and LaCugna, *God*, 271.
[32] Volf, *After*, 209.
[33] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 150.
[34] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 425.

Barth's definition the reference that "one is as invariably in the other two as the other two are in the one" is not clear enough, his further teaching about perichoresis makes it explicit.[35] Barth taught, "we should be warned against misuse [of perichoresis], namely, regarding the involution as a convolution presupposing the eternal independence of the three modes of existence in their eternal community."[36] In both patristic and contemporary usage perichoresis resists any confusion of the divine persons.

Bringing the two salient features of perichoresis together will define the general idea this concept carries in both its ancient and contemporary use. The concept of perichoresis can be defined historically and theologically as *the mutual indwelling, without confusion, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

Perichoresis is a relevant term in contemporary pastoral theology. It opens up an understanding of God that has deep resonance with the central concerns of pastoral theology. It offers an understanding of God where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit experience each other eternally and ontologically in love.[37] It provides a vision of God as a flourishing community. Moltmann describes the divine triune life as "[t]he Persons of the Trinity make one another shine through that glory, mutually and together. They glow into perfect form through one another and awake to perfect beauty in one another."[38] It offers a vision of God that embraces human suffering and upon the cross of Calvary the perichoretic dance of the triune God is understood as a "suffering love."[39]

[35] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1,425.
[36] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 456.
[37] Gunton in *The One*, 214, shows, "the [divine] persons do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations. Father, Son and Spirit are eternally what they are by virtue of what they are from and to one another. Being and relation can be distinguished in thought, but in no way separated ontologically."
[38] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 176.
[39] Buxton in *The Trinity*, 136, writes "the cross is therefore an intra-trinitarian drama, a dynamic *perichoresis* of suffering love for the sake of the whole world, and event in which Father, Son and Holy

It offers a vision of God that embraces a deep relational understanding. It is not surprising that with the resurgence of theological interest in the Trinity in recent decades pastoral theologians have begun to draw the perichoretic dimensions of God's being into their own work. With this brief historical and contemporary survey of the doctrine of perichoresis in place, attention will turn to its scriptural roots and guiding metaphor of this doctrine.

Perichoretic Scripture and Metaphor

Like the word 'trinity' the word 'perichoresis' does not appear in the Bible. As with the word 'trinity,' it is a word that theologians developed to speak faithfully about the mystery of the triune being of God. There are several biblical texts from the Gospel of John which lay the biblical foundation for the doctrine of perichoresis.[40] One of these is from Jesus' high priestly prayer. In John 17, not only does this verse speak of the mutually indwelling of the Father and the Son, but Jesus prays that the intimacy he enjoys with the Father might be opened up to his followers. In John 17:21 Jesus prays to the Father, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Jesus' words, "just as you are in me and I am in you" establish, in part, the biblical basis for the doctrine of perichoresis. Jesus' words reference what Trinitarian theologians understand

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Spirit are all intimately, necessarily, *perichoretically*, involved: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' (2 Corinthians 5:9)."

[40] The Gospel of John provides the bulk of the biblical teaching which supports the doctrine of perichoresis. In John 10:38; 14:10–11; 17:21 a phrase indicating that "Jesus is in the Father as the Father is in Jesus" is used. Some Johannine scholars call this a "formula of reciprocal immanence." See Beasley–Murray, *John,* 253 and Ridderbos, *The Gospel,* 495. See also Crump, *Re-examining,* 395–412 for an exploration of perichoresis in the Gospel of John.

as the perichoretic mutuality of the Father and the Son.[41] Jesus also opens up this rich

relational environment to his disciples, not just so that they might mirror at a distance

the unity of the Godhead "that all of them may be one," but, profoundly, that they "may

also be in us." Paul Fiddes comments, "[b]ut human persons can dwell in the places

opened out within the interweaving relationships of God."[42] In Fiddes view, there is

room within the relational space opened up by God for human persons to participate

within the life of the Trinity. This reality is illustrated well by one of the more

compelling images of perichoresis.

Scholars share a favourite image of the perichoretic union of the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. This image aids in understanding how disciples might be included

in such a profound relational space. The image of perichoresis is that of a dance. The

image of a dance is compelling because it incorporates mutuality, movement and

participation as it provides a measure of definition to the dynamics which exists between

the persons of the triune God.

There is something of a linguistic relationship between the word perichoresis and

the word dance. The Greek word for 'dance' and perichoresis share the same

philological home. This can be seen in the English word 'choreography.' While Eugene

Peterson equates perichoresis with the Greek for "dance around,"[43] Fiddes suggests it is

more of a "play on words."[44] Nevertheless, they both use the image of dance to illustrate

the perichoretic unity of the Godhead and how human beings might participate in that

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[41] It is my view that this verse presumes the inclusion of the Spirit. In support of this, I point to 1 John 4:13,where John includes both disciples and the Holy Spirit in such perichoretic relations. It says, "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

[42] Fiddes, *Participating*, 50.

[43] Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 44–45.

[44] Fiddes, *Participating*, 72.

unity. Peterson writes, "[h]e was active in this way as Father, Son and Holy Spirit long before we showed up on the scene, and he has clearly made it known that he wants us in on what he is doing. He invites our participation. He welcomes us into the Trinitarian dance, what I earlier described as the *perichoresis*."[45] Fiddes articulates his vision of the divine "dance" as "the partners not only encircle each other and weave in and out between each other as in human dancing; in the divine dance, so intimate is the communion that they move in and through each other so that the pattern is all-inclusive."[46] Fiddes adds, "[a]ll such passionate actions, at every level, share in the movements within God which are always making space with the divine dance for new participants."[47] For both of these scholars, the relational vibrancy of Father, Son, and Spirit invite creaturely participation. As the triune God is active in giving and receiving love, joy, and delight within the Godhead, humanity is invited to participate in this giving and receiving. It is this movement of 'worship and mission' that allows for an understanding of the Christian life in general, and pastoral theology in particular, as a participative activity. Fiddes says, "the point of Trinitarian language is not to provide an example to copy, but to draw us into participation in God, out of which human life can be transformed."[48] The image of dance helps this pastoral theology to affirm the definition of perichoresis as the mutual indwelling without confusion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The mutuality, movement and inviting nature of the dance of perichoresis suggest that learning to move in cadence with God is a worthy pastoral theological pursuit.

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[45] Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 305.
[46] Fiddes, *Participating*, 72.
[47] Fiddes, *Participating*, 97.
[48] Fiddes, *Participating*, 66.

It remains necessary to show the importance the doctrine of perichoresis has for the doctrine of God. To do this Jürgen Moltmann's Trinitarian theology will be discussed as an example of the importance perichoresis has in his understanding of God. While his doctrine of God is controversial, Moltmann use of the doctrine of perichoresis will prove beneficial for pastoral theology.[49]

Jürgen Moltmann's Use of Perichoresis

There are several reasons for focusing on Moltmann's development of the doctrine of perichoresis as the journey toward the practice of perichoresis unfolds. First, Moltmann's use of perichoresis is central to his doctrine of God and as such is a useful example for pastoral theology. With Moltmann if perichoresis were to be removed from his theology he would be left with three gods—the plurality overtakes the unity. Second, Moltmann affirms that the perichoretic being of God is intimately caught up in the rhythms of creation, redemption and glorification. This shows that perichoresis has direct relevance in his theology to the primary concerns of the Christian faith and human life.[50] Third, Moltmann's approach to theology in general possesses a natural affinity with pastoral theology.[51] He engages his theological vocation with an eye to influencing the church and the world. Given these reasons, Moltmann's articulation is best seen as a part of the overall development of perichoresis in the contemporary context.[52]

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[49] See Otto, *The Use*, 366–84, where he shares his concerns with Moltmann's use of perichoresis.

[50] Moltmann articulates how the essence of the perichoretic nature of God, men and women, and the unfolding of salvation history come together in this way in *The Trinity*, 178, "[t]o throw open the circulatory movement of the divine light and the divine relationships, and to take men and women, with the whole of creation, into the life-stream of the triune God: that is the meaning of creation, reconciliation and glorification."

[51] For Moltmann's influence in contemporary pastoral theology see the discussion of Pembroke and Buxton below. For his affinity with pastoral theology, see Moltmann et al, *Hope for the Church*.

[52] I tend to always hold Moltmann's development of perichoresis in tension with Barth's Trinitarian theology. In general Barth is accused by others, Moltmann included, of being a modalist in his Trinitarian theology. Moltmann, conversely, is accused, of being a tri-theist. As was noted above, both Barth and

It is not simply that Moltmann uses the doctrine of perichoresis, but how he uses it that makes his approach relevant for the practice of perichoresis. In *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, Moltmann is expressly moving beyond traditional approaches to the doctrine of God, namely, God understood as the "supreme substance" and the "absolute subject."[53] In their place, Moltmann offers the "Triune God."[54] Moltmann argues, "in distinction to the trinity of substance and to the trinity of subject we shall be attempting to develop a social doctrine of the Trinity."[55] Moltmann regards the "trinity of substance" to so privilege the unity of God that it puts undue stress on the unity and reduces the Trinity to the one God.[56] The "trinity of subject" fares no better in Moltmann's view. He teaches that, again, God's oneness dominates as the Trinitarian persons "disintegrate into aspects of the one subject."[57] Within his critique of the "trinity of subject," Moltmann is also arguing against Barth's desire to relinquish the language of persons when speaking of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Barth prefers the term "mode of being."[58] On his way to articulate his social doctrine of God, Moltmann, first, wants to clear away much of the metaphysical philosophy that, in his view, imprisons God in precast philosophical categories.[59] Once clear of these constricting elements,

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Moltmann draw on perichoresis to affirm the unity of God and that this unity is a mutuality of three persons. Barth tends to approach this mutuality from the perspective of the one God, Moltmann approaches it from the perspective of the three persons. Moltmann's is more compelling example of the use of perichoresis in contemporary theology because his approach to the doctrine of the Trinity (from the three persons) makes perichoresis more crucial to his development. While Moltmann is used here Barth's Trinitarian thought will be drawn on as well as the dissertation moves forward.

[53] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 10–16.

[54] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 16–20.

[55] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 19.

[56] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 17.

[57] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 18.

[58] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 299, where Barth writes, "Thus to the same God who in unimpaired unity is the Reveler, the revelation and the reveledness, there is also ascribed in unimpaired differentiation within Himself this threefold mode of being."

[59] Moltmann in *The Trinity*, 17, writes, "Natural theology's definitions of the nature of the deity quite obviously become a prison for the statements made by the theology of revelation."

Moltmann believes he is free to develop his social understanding of the triune God.[60] Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity begins not where Western theology arrived in its understanding of the triune God, but where it seems Eastern theology began its Trinitarian theology.

Moltmann's starting point for his doctrine of the Trinity is the three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moltmann says, "the Western tradition began with God's unity and then went on to ask about the trinity. We are beginning with the trinity of the Persons and shall then go on to ask about the unity."[61] This social approach for Moltmann is rooted in "the scriptures as the testimony to the history of the Trinity's relations of fellowship" and these "trinitarian hermeneutics leads us to think in terms of relationships and communities."[62] Moltmann views history as the history of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Stanley Grenz shows that, "this approach leads Moltmann to view the doctrine of the trinity less as a statement about the eternal nature of God apart from the world than as a retelling of the history of God viewed as the history of the communal relationships of the three divine persons."[63] This eschatological 'retelling' is the historical narrative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with the cross of Christ becoming central to this Trinitarian history. For example, Moltmann's theology of the cross has a compelling Trinitarian focus. He writes "[h]ere the innermost life of the trinity is at stake . . . What happens on Golgotha reaches into the innermost depth of the Godhead,

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[60] As it relates to the Absolute Subject Moltmann is concerned that it reduces the persons of the Trinity to non-subjective expressions like Barth's mode of being. Moltmann writes in *The Trinity*, 18, "It must surrender the concept of person to the one, identical God-subject, and choose for the Trinitarian Persons another, non-subjective expression."

[61] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 19.

[62] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 19.

[63] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 75.

putting its impress on the Trinitarian life in eternity."[64] For Moltmann, the cross of Christ is an intra-Trinitarian drama of the three divine persons. It is also apparent that Moltmann understands God's being and action to be tied closely together. This has implications for this dissertation because it ties the triune being of God together with the action of God in the church and world. The unity of divine being and action is seen most clearly through Christ's ministry. Moltmann teaches that Christ's action on the cross had eternal consequences for God's being in eternity.

Since the history of God speaks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Moltmann believes this affirms three subjects in the one God. He argues, "we understood this history as the Trinitarian history of God in the concurrent and joint workings of the three subjects: Father, Son and Spirit."[65] The question becomes how can three subjects end in one God? Having set up the three subjects in God as the starting point, Moltmann's task is to offer an understanding of God's oneness that resists the charge of tri-theism. It is here that the doctrine of perichoresis becomes indispensible to Moltmann's theology.

Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity is a radical departure from much of Western theology.[66] The charge of tri-theism seems almost inevitable as Moltmann

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[64] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 81.

[65] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 156.

[66] For those who are concerned about Moltmann's use of perichoresis see Otto "The Use," 366–384. Here Otto's somewhat scathing assessment of Moltman's use of *Perichoresis* is concerned with his "non-ontological stance" because "Perichoresis demands an ontological basis for relations if there is to be a *real* and not merely *conceptual* relationship," 368. Emphasis original. While Otto does not dismiss the "social interests" of Moltmann's use of *perichoresis* he critiques him for basing this on "an *analogia relationis*" (analogy of relations) without the necessary *analogia entis* (analogy of being) concluding that in Moltmann "Perichoresis is here emasculated of its essential basis and is wrongly employed," 384.

If the recent developments of perichoresis do in fact diminish the divine being of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit this should cause alarm. I am concerned about this in Fiddes when he says, "I suggest that the image of the dance makes most sense when we understand the divine persons as movements of relationship, rather than as individual subjects who *have* relationships." Fiddes, *Participating*, 72. Emphasis original. Yet Buxton in *The Trinity*, 132, helpfully shows that there need not be an "implied separation between ontology and relations" and believes Fiddes overcomes the ontological concern. Buxton on page 133 argues, "the three persons of the Trinity coinhere in *being* as well as in act."

posits three subjects, Father, Son and Spirit, working out the Trinitarian history of the one God. To this point Moltmann's theological proposal is concerning because it seems to be susceptible to three doctrinal concerns: the first being his rejection of the immutability of God; the second being his criticism of monotheism; the third, and most vitally as it relates to perichoresis, is the concern of tri-theism.[67] The first two concerns will be addressed briefly while the third opens up the importance of the doctrine of perichoresis in Moltmann's theology and, in turn, for this dissertation.

As it relates to God's immutability, Moltmann rejects this as one of the philosophical restrictions with which western philosophy confines Christian theology. Grenz explains, "in Moltmann's estimation, this historical event shows that, contrary to classical theism, God is not immutable."[68] As it relates to monotheism it is important to note that Moltmann's critique of monotheism is levelled at specific forms of monotheistic doctrine and not monotheism in general. Buxton, citing Wolfhart Pannenberg, observes that "Moltmann's polemic against monotheism in a number of his writings is addressed to the *abstract* monotheism typical of nineteenth-century thinking."[69] Buxton goes on to show that Moltmann's critique of monotheism may be a poor choice of terms, but does not equal his abandoning of the unity of God. Yet the related and more pressing question is how does Moltmann articulate the three subjects of Father, Son and Spirit as the one God? In a word his answer is: perichoresis.

Emphasis original. What then is crucial for the development of this doctrine is for God's being and God's act to be held together, for the *analogia relationis* to take seriously the *analogia entis*. Buxton's clarification also helps to temper some of the concerns with Moltman's use of perichoresis as well.

[67] As it relates to Moltmann's apparent Tritheism see Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 227–33.

[68] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 78.

[69] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 115, n99. Emphasis original.

Moltmann's approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is radical and even revolutionary, yet he speaks of doing so biblically and theologically. He posits a biblical not a philosophical rooting for his social doctrine of God. Moltmann writes,

> If the biblical testimony is chosen as point of departure, then we shall have to start from the three Persons of the history of Christ. If philosophical logic is made the starting point, then the enquirer proceeds from the One God . . . it seems to make more sense theologically to start from the biblical history, and therefore to make the unity of the three Persons the problem.[70]

With perichoresis he draws on theological/biblical history to provide for the divine unity that is necessary in Christian theology. To do this Moltmann draws on theological history and points to John Damascene and his "profound doctrine of eternal *perichoresis*."[71]

For Moltmann perichoresis is the solution to the problem of the three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moltmann sees the unity of the three subjects in God as a perichoretic unity. By embracing a perichoretic understanding of God, he is seeking to avoid the dangers of both tri-theism and modalism. He teaches,

> In their perichoresis and because of it, the Trinitarian persons are not to be understood as three different individuals, who only subsequently enter into relationship with one another (which is the customary approach, under the name tritheism). But they are not, either, three modes of being or three repetitions of the One God, as the modalistic interpretation suggests.[72]

From this it seems that Moltmann would make a distinction between divine persons as *subjects* in God and divine persons understood as *individuals* in God. This is why perichoresis is so important in Moltmann's thought; it allows him to begin with the three persons (subjects not individuals) in God without the loss of one God. Yet how does this work out in Moltmann's theology of perichoresis?

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[70] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 149.
[71] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 174.
[72] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 175.

There are three salient elements to Moltmann's doctrine of perichoresis. The first is that the three divine persons dwell in one another in love. Second is the interplay of distinction in unity—with Moltmann the divine personal characteristics become the means of the divine unity. Third is the hope that the doctrine of perichoresis removes subordination from the Godhead. These three elements show the importance of the doctrine of perichoresis in Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity and will be discussed in turn.

In Moltmann's thought the perichoretic unity of God is established by the rich relational environment of love that the triune God enjoys. God is not a static deity, but a God whose eternal life emanates through the "exchange of energies."[73] These energies are the divine persons living in one another and sharing love one to the other. Moltmann explains, "[t]he Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son."[74] This is Moltmann's way of expressing the common perichoretic understanding of the triune God: that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit mutually indwell one another. Moltmann speaks to the relationality of this perichoretic divine reality by emphasizing love. He writes, "[b]y virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one."[75] The means by which the persons of the Trinity exist as one God is, in Moltmann's view, through the perichoresis of the Father, Son and Spirit in and through their eternal love.

For Moltmann the personal characteristics of the divine persons of the Godhead are not obstacles to the divine unity but the means of it. Moltmann shows that,

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[73] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 174.
[74] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 174–75.
[75] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 175.

"precisely through the personal characteristics that distinguish them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another. In the perichoresis, the very thing that divides becomes that which binds them together."[76] Here the social implications of Moltmann's proposal hold their deepest significance, because the unity of the one God and the personal characteristics of the divine persons do not have preference one over the other, but are held together perichoretically. Moltmann says,

> The doctrine of the perichoresis links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to the unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness. The unity of the triunity lies in the eternal perichoresis of the Trinitarian persons. Interpreted perichoretically, the Trinitarian persons form their own unity by themselves in the circulation of the divine life.[77]

With Moltmann, the personal characteristics of the persons of the Trinity, through the doctrine of perichoresis, are a means of divine unity and emphasize the relational nature of the one God of Christian theology.

Moltmann also teaches that the doctrine of perichoresis avoids forms of subordination within the Godhead. While Moltmann does speak of the "monarchy of the Father" he does so in a nuanced way.[78] He contends that the Father's monarchy has only to do with the fact that the Father is the "starting point" or "origin" of the Trinity; he applies it only to the constitution of the Trinity.[79] Once constituted, the monarchy of the Father "has no validity within the eternal circulation of the divine life, and none in the

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[76] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 175.
[77] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 175.
[78] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 176.
[79] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 176.

perichoretic unity of the Trinity."[80] Within the divine life the members of the Trinity, are

co-equal and exist to glorify the other members of the Godhead.

It is the perichoretic God which Moltmann believes is the open Trinity. Open in

love to all creation. Grenz states, "[t]his dynamic comprises the history of God's love,

liberation, and reconciliation of all creation, for it brings about the inclusion of the world

within the life of the triune God."[81] Perichoresis is the key theological move Moltmann

makes to retain both the diversity and the unity of the triune God. The final word has yet

to be given on the overall ramifications of Moltmann's theology. To cite one

sympathetic observer, Buxton offers cautious affirmation, "his critics are concerned that

he gives too much ground to the notion of a social Trinity at the expense of the divine

unity. Whatever the final verdict, it is clear that Moltmann's major contribution to

Trinitarian theology is the exposition of a theology of 'openness.'"[82] While clearly not

free of concern or even controversy, Moltmann's theology of perichoresis has proven to

be relevant to pastoral theology. It is perhaps not surprising that it is Moltmann's

theology that some pastoral theologians have engaged with to develop perichoretic

insights in pastoral theology.

Perichoresis and Pastoral Theology

Neil Pembroke and Graham Buxton are two pastoral theologians who have

drawn insights of Trinitarian theology, more generally, and the doctrine of perichoresis,

more specifically, into their respective pastoral theologies.[83] Pembroke's book,

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[80] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 176.
[81] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 75.
[82] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 115.
[83] Others have seen the importance of the Trinity for pastoral practice. These include: Purves, *Reconstructing*, Fiddes, *Participating in God*, Torrance, *Worship, Community*, Seamands, *Ministry* and Peterson, *Christ Plays* as well as edited books such as Trier and Lauber eds., *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*. These will be drawn on throughout this dissertation but it is necessary to focus on these two

Renewing Pastoral Practice is focused on pastoral care and counseling and how

Trinitarian theology can aid in renewing this area of pastoral theology. Buxton, in his

book *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry*, offers a Trinitarian approach to

pastoral ministry, as he brings together the doctrine of the Trinity, science, and pastoral

ministry. Pembroke and Buxton affirm that the renewed interest in Trinitarian theology

is helpful for contemporary pastoral theology. Pembroke and Buxton are useful for this

dissertation because they specifically engage with the doctrine of perichoresis.

Neil Pembroke and Spiritual Friendship

Pembroke employs the doctrine of perichoresis to articulate what healthy

spiritual friendship is in the context of ministry. He speaks of perichoresis as the notion

of "being-in-one-another" and is careful to show that this involves a deep sense of unity

and diversity.[84] Pembroke understands that within the divine life the three persons "draw

close to each other in the intimacy of perfect love, but at the same time they provide

each other with the space to be."[85] He develops this as the pastoral concern of fostering

spiritual friendship by articulating the "perichoretic practice of intimacy-with-space."[86]

Pembroke's contribution shows how the doctrine of perichoresis balances both

spiritual intimacy and relational space. Spiritual friendship is a worthwhile pursuit for

ministering persons but no friendship should eclipse one's individuality. Pembroke is

pressing for authentic spiritual friendship and believes that the doctrine of perichoresis is

a model for this. In the perichoretic relations of God their distinctiveness enhances their

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approaches that come from within the discipline of pastoral theology and who apply the doctrine of
perichoresis specifically.
[84] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 48.
[85] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 49.
[86] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 50.

unity. This relational dynamic, Pembroke believes, is a healthy model for all spiritual friendships.

Perichoresis helps Pembroke to see the importance of a "commitment to intimacy" and "respects the need for distance."[87] In practice, then, spiritual friendship is to have a perichoretic authenticity about it—a deep openness and desire for intimacy and a healthy respect for space to be oneself within the relationship. As such Pembroke shows how perichoresis guides and informs pastoral practice and the cultivation of spiritual friendship.

Pembroke's approach is helpful because it shows the relevance that the doctrine of perichoresis has for ministering persons. Spiritual friendships are complex realities and require the fluidity and mystery that the doctrine of perichoresis offers as a paradigm for healthy spiritual friendship. Perichoresis does have this kind of practical relevance that can inform and guide the challenges inherent in the dynamics of healthy spiritual relationships. He rightly draws on the doctrine of perichoresis to define the dynamics of authentic, healthy spiritual friendship. Perichoresis affirms both the unity and diversity in the triune God and this kind of respect for intimacy and distinction becomes a mark for healthy spiritual relationships. The doctrine of perichoresis can help ministering persons to asses their spiritual friendships in order to discern if they are becoming co-dependent or dominating. Perichoretic thought affirms the interplay between intimacy and distance that is required for healthy spiritual friendship.

Pembroke uses the doctrine of perichoresis as a model for spiritual friendship, but rightly shows that it is also much more than this. Pembroke states, "[t]he Trinity is a model of communal life, but it is also much more than that. We are granted the

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[87] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 53.

enormous privilege of participating in the divine communion."[88] Perichoresis speaks to the mystery of how the triune essence of God is held together in love. It seeks to speak to how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit mutually indwell one another to such a degree that the three remain the one God. It is important that Pembroke's use of perichoresis is not understood only as a model to follow. There is a more pervasive dynamic that is inherent to the doctrine. Perichoretic thought aids ministering persons to understand how their lives and ministry participate in the divine life while offering practical guidance in the actual dynamics of ministry in the here and now. As the practice of perichoresis moves forward it will return to the concept of spiritual friendship—especially as it relates to prayer. With Pembroke this proposal affirms that spiritual friendship is characterized by the perichoretic being of God, but it will move beyond Pembroke's construal by showing how such spiritual friendships also disclose God's presence. Pembroke's use of perichoresis is very focused, in this dissertation the doctrine is being used in a more pervasive way. The doctrine of perichoresis is significant enough to be the salient feature for an entire approach to pastoral theology.

Graham Buxton's Imaging of the Perichoretic God

Graham Buxton's use of the doctrine of perichoresis is more comprehensive than Pembroke's. He uses the doctrine to develop a perichoretic approach to pastoral ministry. In his pursuit to "image the perichoretic God"[89] he points to three perichoretic themes in pastoral life: (1) community formation, (2) community realization and (3) community operation.[90] For Buxton community formation corresponds to the relationality and mutuality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He writes, "[t]he shape

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[88] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 43.
[89] Buxton, *The Trinity*, the subtitle for his book is *"Imaging the Perichoretic God."*
[90] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 149–193.

and life of the pastoral community, therefore, derives from the initiative of the triune God of grace, who has chosen human beings to participate in his dynamic, perichoretic self-giving love."[91] Here the triune God is both the source and means for the perichoretic theme of community formation.

The second of Buxton's perichoretic themes flows out of community formation toward community realization. Here Buxton shows that the mutual interiority of the divine being is approximated at the creaturely level through the actual realization of perichoretic community. Buxton focuses on the word 'hospitality' to explain this, saying "[t]he notion of hospitality is a characteristic feature of God, who creates space for human beings to experience in the fullest sense possible what it means to 'feel at home.'"[92] In this way human hospitality (which conveys the virtues of openness, fidelity and belonging) is connected with the perichoretic hospitality of the triune God.[93]

The third perichoretic theme is community operation and focuses on the *praxis* of ministry. Buxton argues that community operation is the perichoretic participation in the ongoing ministry of Christ. This is the "worship, mission, compassion" dimension of ecclesial life.[94] Buxton links these visible dimension of pastoral practice with the term *theosis* understanding their interrelation in the context of perichoresis as "participation in the life of God to such a degree that God's life and energy are expressed through believers, who become, in Luther's phrase, 'little Christ's.'"[95]

Buxton articulates a thorough perichoretic approach to *pastoral* ministry. He carefully explains with a refreshing degree of theological insight and practical relevance

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[91] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 151.
[92] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 152.
[93] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 153–66.
[94] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 176.
[95] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 153.

a vision for the *ecclesial* life understood in perichoretic terms. Buxton shows how the doctrine of perichoresis is a means by which church life and ministry can be filled with the presence and mission of the triune God. His perichoretic theology also deals with some of the tensions the doctrine of perichoresis presents. One of these tensions is how the doctrine of perichoresis can actually be lived out at the human level. Buxton argues, "since human beings do not possess the capacity to indwell it is more appropriate to posit an asymmetrical relationship between God and humanity – but a relationship nonetheless, which is intensely alive, creatively dynamic and as mutually reciprocal as the divine-human distinction is able to offer."[96] Buxton offers the church a carefully constructed and thoughtful application of the doctrine of perichoresis to the life of the church on the one hand and the natural sciences on the other.

Buxton's perichoretic theology is an important contribution. His discussion of the natural sciences, while interesting on one level, can become somewhat of an abstraction especially if one is not conversant with the field or agrees with his contention concerning the relevance of perichoresis in the realm of science. A dimension of Buxton's theology that lacks precision, however, is how pastoral theology as a discipline fits into his teaching about pastoral ministry. He uses a variety of terms that contribute to this lack of clarity. For instance he uses "practical theology,"[97] the less than clear term "practical/pastoral theology,"[98] but for the most part speaks of a theology of pastoral ministry in the book. He suggests that the term *praxis* provides definition for "the nature and scope of practical theology today."[99] It is not clear if he equates *praxis*

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[96] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 151.
[97] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 81.
[98] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 96
[99] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 78.

with pastoral practice. This ambiguity not-with-standing, Buxton advances the dialogue between pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis by offering a perichoretic theology of pastoral practice.

Pembroke and Buxton are both helpful to this dissertation because they show the relevance that the doctrine of perichoresis has for pastoral theology. The doctrine of perichoresis can provide insight to ministering persons from spiritual friendships, for Pembroke, to a perichoretic approach to pastoral ministry and science, for Buxton. While appreciating their developments this dissertation hopes to harness the perichoretic insights of Pembroke and Buxton and articulate a perichoretic pastoral theology.

The practice of perichoresis develops through a dialogue between key elements in contemporary pastoral theology and salient features of the doctrine of perichoresis. The elements of pastoral theology that will engage in this conversation were identified in chapter one (human experience, human angst and situational attentiveness). It is now time to explore the features of the doctrine of perichoresis which will be used to advance the journey toward the practice of perichoresis.

Perichoretic Relationality, Participation and Spirituality

The doctrine of perichoresis speaks of a mystery that is far beyond human comprehension. It is a doctrine that strains to articulate how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God. It is this mystery that is being drawn into transformational dialogue with pastoral theology toward the practice of perichoresis. There are three rhythms that emerge from reflection on the doctrine of perichoresis. They are: relationality, participation and spirituality. These contours of the doctrine of perichoresis suggest that

ministering persons can live and minister in ever-deepening relational, participative and spiritual cadence with the triune God.

The Rhythm of Relationality

Out of the mystery of divine perichoresis comes the understanding that the unity and distinction in God is to be understood relationally. Relations are not something God happens to get involved in but are the ontological essence of the perichoretic being of God. This is what is meant by the term 'relational ontology' when used in theology. In perichoretic terms, relational ontology affirms that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist as they are because of the relations inherent to the divine being. It is this relational understanding of God that opens up the social dimensions of the triune life and offers insight into God's essential nature. It is the relationality inherent within the triune God that provides the theological context for human and ecclesial relationality. This exposes the inadequacy of individualist approaches to pastoral practice and encourages the development of pastoral theologies that are communal.[100] From the renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, fresh theological formulations are emerging that incorporate relationality and foster collaborative ministry.[101] Reflection on perichoretic relationality encourages an understanding of the practice of perichoresis that is thoroughly relational.

As Stanley Grenz traces the rediscovery of Trinitarian thought in the last hundred years he clusters together three theologians under the chapter title, *The Triumph*

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[100] For example, Gerkin in *An Introduction*, 111, embraces a more communal understanding of practical theology and pastoral ministry when he says, "Practical theology becomes the task of maintaining the connections between the varied stories of life and the grounding story of the Christian community. Pastoral care becomes the community of faith's living expression of that grounding story."

[101] Stephen Pickard shows in *Theological Foundations*, 33–43, that Christological and Pneumatological foundations are inadequate for developing a theological understanding for the relationship between church and ministry, while he points out that this is as of yet underdeveloped, he argues for a Trinitarian integration.

of Relationality.[102] The most influential of these in terms of relational ontology is the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas.[103]

Zizioulas's contribution to contemporary Trinitarian thought is unique in two ways. First, he does not develop a doctrine of the Trinity as such. As an Orthodox theologian the mystery of the Trinity pervades his thought but his focus is on ecclesiology. It is his ecclesiology that is rooted in an Orthodox theology of the triune God. Second, Zizioulas draws heavily on the patristic Fathers for his relational understanding of God. More specifically, and of interest to pastoral theology, Zizioulas draws on the patristic Fathers who also served the church as pastors. He chooses to focus on these *pastoral* theologians because he believes that the experience of life in a church community was a necessary part in coming to understand the being of God. He writes, "the being of God could be known only through personal relationships and personal love."[104] Zizioulas preferences the contributions of St. Ignatius, St. Irenaeus and St. Athanasius over apologists like Justin Martyr and more academic theologians like Clement and Origen. Zizioulas believes that the latter could not "avoid the trap of ontological monism of Greek thought"[105] and the former approach "the being of God through the experience of ecclesial community, of *ecclesial being*."[106] It is from this ecclesially rooted, patristic understanding of the being of God that is the impetus for Zizioulas' relational ontology.[107]

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[102] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 117–62.
[103] Zizioulas is also a dialogue partner in Volf's book *After Our Likeness*.
[104] Zizioulas, *Being*, 16.
[105] Zizioulas, *Being*, 16.
[106] Zizioulas, *Being*, 16. Emphasis original.
[107] The patristic Father's Zizioulas is indebted to are Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

In Zizioulas' understanding the patristic fathers made a profound philosophical

discovery, one he is eager to develop for the contemporary context. He argues that the

patristic fathers through their ecclesial work and their reflection of the Trinitarian nature

of God, made relationality a philosophical concept. Zizioulas argues, "communion

becomes an ontological concept in patristic thought."[108] This move is decisive for two

reasons. First, Zizioulas shows how a relational ontology confronts individualism and

critiques it. He writes, "nothing in existence is conceivable in itself, as an individual."[109]

Second, he contends that it establishes communion as an ontological reality that impacts

all things. Zizioulas argues, "the ancient world heard for the first time that it is

communion which makes beings 'be': nothing exists without it not even God."[110]

Zizioulas' communal ontology has implications relating to God, humanity and the

church.

Drawing on the patristic fathers, Zizioulas argues that at the ontological level

God is not substance, but communion (*koinōnia*). Zizioulas begins his understanding of

the Trinity with the Father and believes this makes the relational and personal realities

of being primary—not the "impersonal" and "incommunicable" categories of

"substance."[111] He articulates the Cappadocian development of a communal ontology as,

> Up until the period when the Cappadocians undertook to develop a solution to
> the trinitarian problems, an identifying of *ousia* with *hypostasis* implied that a
> thing's concrete individuality (hypostasis) means simply that it *is* (i.e. its *ousia*).
> Now, however, changes occurred. The term *hypostasis* was dissociated from that
> of *ousia* and became identified with that of *prosopon*. But this latter term is
> *relational*, and was so when adopted in trinitarian theology. This meant that from
> now on a relational term entered into ontology and, conversely, that an

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[108] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.
[109] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.
[110] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.
[111] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17–18.

ontological category such as *hypostasis* entered the relational category of existence. *To be* and *to be in relation* becomes identical.[112]

At the very essence of God, Zizioulas argues, communion is essential to his being. From God's being relationality pervades as God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The implications of this for Zizioulas are that communion and freedom are expressions of divine relationality. Zizioulas argues, "[t]here is not true being without communion. Nothing exists as an 'individual,' conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category."[113] Communion pervades everything from the triune God through to the eschatological fulfillment of all of creation. The main implication of this for Zizioulas is a decisive theological critique of individualism. All individualistic notions of God, of the church, and of human beings are considered suspect because communion is the realm in which all things exist. As it relates to freedom, this is also rooted in Ziziolas's concern for communion. He argues, "communion which does not come from a 'hypostasis' that is, a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to 'hypostases,' that is concrete and free persons, is not an 'image' of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible."[114] In this regard, Zizioulas construct reflects a perichoretic concern for persons in communion that respects both diversity and unity. Zizioulas finds this reality expressed in the being of God and in the church. The church is so decisive for Zizioulas that he teaches that people only achieve personhood in the fellowship of the church.

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[112] Zizioulas, *Being*, 87–88. Emphasis original.
[113] Zizioulas, *Being*, 18.
[114] Zizioulas, *Being*, 18.

Zizioulas contends that the quest for free persons is only realized in the mystery of the church. Zizioulas believes that existential philosophy and sociology have not been able to find this kind of freedom because it only comes as a divine gift. Zizioulas believes that creature-hood creates a gulf between God and human beings.[115] This gulf is only overcome by God, "the being of each human person is *given* to him."[116] This gift from God to human persons is received in the ecclesial community. Zizioulas states, "[t]he demand of the person for absolute freedom involves a 'new birth,' a birth 'from on high,' *a baptism*."[117] It is in the church that persons are able to enter into God's way of being, and this is a gift of grace. For Zizioulas, this is "what makes the church the image of the triune God."[118] To enter into God's way of being, that is, being as communion, persons are given the gift of baptism into the church, where they become persons in communion, and the church functions as an image of the triune God. This is Zizioulas' vision for 'being as communion' and it celebrates communion as interrelated realities on the theological, ecclesial and anthropological levels.

Despite several serious critiques of his work, Zizioulas' contribution to contemporary Trinitarian theology continues. Grenz writes, "despite the thoroughgoing character of criticisms such as these, they have not lead to a wholesale dismissal of Zizioulas's proposal."[119] The criticisms generally focus on issues of historical accuracy, and the monarchy of the Father in Zizioulas' development of relational ontology. Grenz affirms that there are real questions surrounding Zizioulas's understanding of patristic theology, in general, and, more specifically, if he accurately engages the debate

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[115] Zizioulas, *Being*, 19.
[116] Zizioulas, *Being*, 19. Emphasis original.
[117] Zizioulas, *Being*, 19. Emphasis original.
[118] Zizioulas, *Being*, 19.
[119] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 145.

concerning the patristic Fathers' and if the "unity of the Godhead lay in the *ousia* rather that in the *hypostasis* or person of the Father."[120] Zizioulas also comes under critique for placing too much emphasis on God the Father in his theology. The concern here is simply that he so emphasizes the Father that he may be subordinating the Son and Holy Spirit in this theology.

With these concerns in view, it seems that the general thrust of Zizioulas's argument, that communion is an ontological reality for God, and that this has profound implications for ecclesiology and anthropology, is a welcome and encouraging part of contemporary Trinitarian thought. If God's being is communion and if God's being and action are interrelated, God's actions in creation, redemption and glorification will carry with them the relationality that is an essential part of his being. If perichoresis is to be practiced and if pastoral theology is to be the place where such practices are shaped, the practice of perichoresis will be thoroughly relational.

Catharine LaCugna also develops a relational ontology in her theology. She is influenced by Zizioulas but is worthy of attention because she deals with the doctrine of perichoresis. This helps to make some of the implicit understandings of Zizioulas' relational ontology more explicitly linked to the doctrine of perichoresis.

LaCugna argues that the doctrine of perichoresis roots the divine unity in "a true *communion* of persons."[121] She shows that relationality is inherent to this perichoretic union. She goes on to employ the use of the perichoretic image of dance to explain this reality stating, "[t]he divine dance is fully personal and interpersonal, expressing the essence of the unity of God. The image of the dance forbids us to think of God as

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[120] Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 144.
[121] LaCugna, *God For Us*, 271. Emphasis original.

solitary. The idea of trinitarian *perichoresis* provides a marvellous point of entry into contemplating what it means to say that God is alive from all eternity in love."[122] LaCugna also reflects on the practical nature of such descriptions of the triune God. She suggests that, "the doctrine of the Trinity is practical because it is the theological criterion to measure the fidelity of ethics, doctrine, spirituality, and worship."[123] Perichoretic relationality helps ministering persons to assess the interplay between communal and personal dynamics in their situations of ministry.

Zizioulas' and LaCugna's relational ontology is a benefit to pastoral theology. Ziziouolas highlights the realms in which a relational ontology impact God, the church and humanity. In Zizioulas's thought these three entities are mysteriously related to one another. Pastoral theology shares a similar concern for God, the church and humanity. While the discipline displays nothing like the mystical coherence between the three as Zizioulas' Orthodox theology does, a relational ontology can aid pastoral theology in keeping the three interrelated in all its practices. LaCugna aids in tying such relationality more clearly together with the doctrine of perichoresis while also showing its vitality at the level of practice. They both help the discipline of pastoral theology to move in a relational direction

Participation

Perichoretic participation speaks of the relational and spiritual context for Christian life and ministry. Disciples are invited to participate in the triune God's life and ministry in the world. A perichoretic understanding of the Christian life and ministry asserts that such ministry is done as participants with God. It is this perichoretic

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[122] LaCugna, *God For Us*, 272.
[123] LaCugna, *God For Us*, 410.

participation that will be drawn into dialogue with human angst in chapter four of this dissertation. Presently the concept of perichoretic participation will be introduced and its relevance shown through the lens of the practice of worship. Perichoretic participation is the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer to the Father in John 17:21, "may they also be in us."

The implications of Jesus' prayer for Christian life and ministry are enormous. It opens up a theology of ministry that is saturated with the presence of God. It rejects the notion that ministry is to be done in dutiful independence. It affirms the notion that all of Christian life and ministry is to be full of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father's desire is that the Spirit draws disciples to live and minister participatively with Christ. The genesis of ministry comes out of this rich spiritual environment. The Father calls persons to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Fiddes is one who articulates a robust participative vision of the Christian life and ministry. He notes that participation begins within the life of the triune God. In regards to Trinitarian participation Fiddes asserts "thus we can never think of the triune God, or the name the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, without participation."[124] This idea of participation is not reserved for the divine life, but this participative way of being is opened up graciously by God to humanity. Fiddes argues, "But human persons can dwell in the places opened out within the interweaving relationships of God; they dwell, we might say, not in 'spaces of subjectivity' but in 'relational spaces.'"[125] Perichoretic

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[124] Fiddes, *Participating*, 50.

[125] Fiddes, *Participating*, 59. There is a robust debate about the degree to which human persons can participate in the triune God. Volf in *After* 211, suggests that this can only be done in a "creaturely fashion." In *Participating*, 47, Fiddes view is that such a one sided view of participation "hardly takes seriously the prayer of the Christ of the Fourth Gospel."

participation is the theological explanation for how God's people share in the divine being (*theosis*) and participate in the *missio Dei*.

Worship illumines the relevance of Christian participation. James Torrance has defined worship as "the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father."[126] The relevance of this view of worship is seen in the theological models of worship he identifies. In articulating a participative understanding of worship, Torrance affirms that Jesus opens up to humanity, by the Spirit, the very life of God. This profound reality is transformative for an understanding of worship as Torrance shows that much worship done in churches today would be better described as unitarian than Trinitarian.

Torrance surveys three contemporary theological models of worship in an effort to illumine what Trinitarian, participative worship is. The first is the *Harnack (Hick) Model*.[127] In this model the focus is exclusively on God the Father and the individual worshiper's experience of God—who is understood in unitarian not Trinitarian terms. This model rejects many of the doctrines of the Christian faith including: the Trinity and the incarnation (Jesus is one of many sons of God). Torrance states, "with this moralistic, individualistic understanding of God and the Christian life, the doctrine of the Trinity loses its meaning, in fact disappears—and with it all doctrines of atonement and unconditional free grace, held out to us in Christ."[128] In this view Christian practice is perhaps modeled after Christ, but is not something engaged relationally or participatively with Christ.

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[126] Torrance, *Worship*, 30.
[127] Torrance, *Worship*, 26–27.
[128] Torrance, *Worship*, 26.

The second model Torrance offers is the "existential present-day experience model."[129] In this model, Christ and his cross is crucial but the central focus is "God and me."[130] Torrance shows this can take on a radical liberal approach such as with Rudolph Bultmann, as well as more evangelical approach as is seen with the "early Barth."[131] Torrance teaches that this model separates act and being stating, "stressing the work of Christ at the expense of his person can reduce the gospel to 'events' with no ontology (separate act and being) and make our religious experience of grace central."[132] Torrance's concern with this model is that "although it stresses the God-humanward movement in Christ, the human-Godward movement is still ours!"[133] In this model the emphasis is on what the individual does. Torrance believes this diminishes union with Christ as people may be inspired by his action but are separated from his being. Here Christian practice is done as a personal response to what God has done. It may be motivated by gratitude, obedience and inspiration, but it does not embrace the relational and spiritual environment of participation with Christ.

The third model Torrance articulates is the incarnational Trinitarian model.[134] This model is both *perichoretic* and participative. Torrence teaches, "[t]his model articulates a trinitarian view of worship—that worship is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father."[135] Bringing act and being together, Torrance teaches that Jesus' relationship with the Father and the Spirit

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[129] Torrance, *Worship*, 26–27.
[130] Torrance, *Worship*, 26,
[131] Torrance, *Worship*, 27.
[132] Torrance, *Worship*, 27–8.
[133] Torrance, *Worship*, 29.
[134] Torrance, *Worship*, 30–32.
[135] Torrance, *Worship*, 30.

becomes the focus and means for the believing community's worship and relationship

with the triune God. He explains,

> A *twofold relationship* is thus established between the triune God and ourselves,
> through the Spirit. It is a relationship between God and humanity realized
> vicariously for us in Christ, and at the same time a relationship between Christ
> and the church, that we might participate by the Spirit in Jesus' communion with
> the Father in the life of intimate communion. In both, there is a bond of mutual
> love and mutual self-giving—of mutual 'indwelling' (*perichoresis*, to use the
> word of the ancient church), of 'perichoretic unity.'"[136]

In Torrance's view, Jesus becomes the mediator and means of the church's participation

in the life of the triune God. Torrance emphasizes the importance of this being a two-

fold movement. Not only does God meet people in Christ by the Spirit, but there is also

a human God-ward movement that moves to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

In this model, Christian practice realizes its full Trinitarian potential as it is understood

as participating with Christ in the living, celebrating, proclaiming and serving that is

expressive of life in Christ and participation in the *missio Dei*. In Torrance's

incarnational Trinitarian model relationality and participation are vital. He shows how,

by Christ's ministry and invitation, humanity is invited to participate in the life of the

triune God.

As this dissertation seeks to articulate what the practice of perichoresis means for

pastoral theology, perichoretic participation is central. As Torrance has shown the

relevance of such a participative theology of worship, perichoretic participation is also

relevant for the discipline of pastoral theology. It helps to keep the relational and

spiritual dynamics of the practice of ministry in the forefront. Most importantly,

however, it offers a pastoral theology which emphasizes the creative and sustaining role

of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have in the actual practice of ministry. The relational

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[136] Torrance, *Worship*, 31–32.

dynamics and participative context the doctrine of perichoresis offers pastoral theology

flows naturally into a consideration of perichoretic spirituality.

Perichoretic Spirituality

Inseparable from perichoretic relationality and perichoretic participation, is

perichoretic spirituality. It is how, by the Spirit, human beings participate in Christ and

live in the relational love of God. In the Apostle Paul's words disciples are invited into

the "fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the Holy Spirit."[137] A perichoretic spirituality is a

spirituality of *koinōnia*; it is a spirituality that has a personal and communal expression

that is most fully realized in the life of the local church. Miroslav Volf observes,

"[s]uccessful participative church life must be sustained by deep spirituality. Only the

person who lives from the Spirit of communion (2 Cor. 13:13) can participate

authentically in the life of the ecclesial community."[138] This introduction of perichoretic

spirituality will focus on ecclesial perichoretic spirituality (the local church) and

personal perichoretic spirituality (human beings). For ministering persons there is a

constant interplay between these to spiritual realms.

The doctrine of perichoresis is proving helpful in ensuring that these communal

and personal dimensions are held in tension in ecclesiology and anthropology. In

articulating the spiritual union between the triune God and the church, theologians are

employing words like "echo" and "image."[139] As it relates to the spiritual union between

human persons and the triune God, the human self is understood in "catholic" and

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[137] 2 Cor 13:14.
[138] Volf. *After*, 257.
[139] See respectively, Chia, "Trinity," 3, and Volf, *After*, 191.

"ecclesial" terms[140] Consistent in both sets of these descriptions is that they are rooted in, flow out of, and are expressions of, perichoretic spirituality.

Stephen Pickard highlights the essential spiritual nature of church ministry. He states, "[t]he ministries which exist to serve this purpose do not exist at a distance from such divine action but rather ought to exemplify the actual form and life of the triune God in the way they perform their task and relate to each other."[141] Pickard helps to show the interplay between the triune God, as the action and form of ministry, and the local church as the context for this divine expression. It is through the Holy Spirit that the local church and persons are united with the triune God and also with fellow believers in a manner that reflects the unity and diversity of the triune God. This unity and diversity is the basic dimensions of perichoretic spirituality.

Miroslav Volf and Colin Gunton both speak of the implications of God's Trinitarian being for the church. With some similarities and differences, they each offer a communal spirituality for the local church rooted in a perichoretic understanding of God. They will be engaged with to introduce the ecclesial dimensions of ecclesial perichoretic spirituality.

Volf understands the church to be an 'image' of the Trinity. He argues "that in some real sense these fragile and frustrating communities called churches are images of the triune God."[142] Volf is interested in showing how the church corresponds to the triune God.[143] Volf's concern is for the local church in general and the Free Church in particular. He deals with the local church because "the people of God gathering at one

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[140] See respectively, Volf, *After*, 278 and Grenz, *The Social*, 312.
[141] Pickard, *Theological*, 43.
[142] Volf, *After*, x, He also refers to the Church as an icon of the Trinity, 25.
[143] Volf, *After*, 191.

place constitute the primary subject of ecclesiality."[144] As it relates to the Free Church, Volf's "intention here is to make a contribution to the trinitarian reshaping of Free Church ecclesiology."[145] Volf pursues this because "the idea of a correspondence between church and Trinity has remained largely alien to the Free Church tradition."[146] Volf appreciates "how those assembled in the name of Christ, even if they number only three, can be an *eikoon* ("image") of the Trinity."[147] Perichoretic spirituality will aid in showing the vibrant union that exists between those "assembled in the name of Christ" and the triune God. [148]

Gunton, like Volf, is keen to draw Trinitarian theology into his conversation with ecclesiology. He is concerned that, "modern ecclesiology is dominated by monistic and hierarchical conceptions of the church" and that this is due to a "failure to reflect more deeply on the ontology of the church."[149] Gunton suggests these ecclesiological deficiencies "are due to theology's failure to ground its understanding of the church in the conception of the being of God as triune."[150] Rooted in a theology of creation, the church, in Gunton's view, is "a finite echo or bodying forth of the divine personal dynamics."[151] Gunton states, "the Church is what it is by virtue of being called to be a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is."[152] Gunton's use of phrases like, "conception of the being of God as triune,"[153] and "bodying forth of the divine personal

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[144] Volf, *After*, 25.
[145] Volf, *After*, 197.
[146] Volf, *After*, 196.
[147] Volf, *After*, 197.
[148] Volf, *After*, 197.
[149] Chia, "Trinity." 1.
[150] Chia, "Trinity." 2.
[151] Chia, "Trinity," 3.
[152] Gunton, *The Church on Earth*, 75, quoted in *Chia*, "Trinity."
[153] Chia, "Trinity." 3.

dynamics"[154] are informative for the perichoretic spirituality in view for this dissertation.

Both Volf and Gunton welcome Trinitarian developments and embrace their usefulness for rejuvenating ecclesiology. Drawing the two theologians into dialogue will provide definition for what is meant by the term ecclesial perichoretic spirituality. This conversation will specifically engage three areas: eschatology, community and distinction (how the two theologians distinguish between the triune God and the church). Both Volf and Gunton offer proposals which seek to draw the mystery of the triune God and the mystery of the church together in a manner that speaks to contemporary ecclesial problems. Of special concern is individualism. They both seek to avoid it by championing a relational and spiritual union rooted in the triune God. In doing so, the 'one' and the 'many' are held in tension in theology, ecclesiology and anthropology. This is a central feature of perichoretic spirituality.

Eschatology is a key element in Volf's ecclesiology. Volf understands that the reality of the church is eschatological. Volf argues, "the future of the church in God's new creation is the mutual personal indwelling of the triune God and of his glorified people, as becomes clear from the description of the new Jerusalem in the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 21:1-22:5)."[155] Volf goes on to explain, "such participation in the communion of the triune God, however, is not only an object of hope for the church, but also its present experience."[156] Volf's ecclesiology is constituted by the eschatological presence of Christ, by the Spirit, in contemporary ecclesial communions. He affirms, "whenever the Spirit of Christ, which as the eschatological gift anticipates God's new

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[154] Chia, "Trinity." 3.
[155] Volf, *After*, 128.
[156] Volf, *After*, 129.

creation in history . . . is present in its *ecclesially constitutive activity*, there is the church."[157] Volf's ecclesiology is eschatological, the very constitution of the church is the gift of the Spirit's eschatological presence. In Volf's thought the church is gathered by the Spirit, in Christ, to be the people of God. In this way the local church is an image of the triune God and is a local expression of ecclesial perichoretic spirituality.

Gunton's ecclesiology helps to show the communal implications of ecclesial perichoretic spirituality. Roland Chia describes the communal dimensions of Gunton's theology of church, "in the *ecclesia*, this is fleshed out in the concept of *koinonia* where relationality transcends mere reciprocity and takes the form of creative subordination in conformity to Christ."[158] Chia goes on to show, "that according to the New Testament, the human community becomes concrete in the church, whose purpose is to be the medium and realization *of communion*."[159] The church in Gunton's view is a "community rooted in the being of God" while also recognizing that "it remains a highly fallible community on this side of eternity."[160] Gunton's ecclesiology highlights communion, the *koinōnia* that the apostle Paul teaches comes from the Holy Spirit. Gunton contributes to ecclesial perichoretic spirituality by emphasizing the importance of communion while also retaining a realistic perspective of where the church is at on its eschatological journey.

Both Volf and Gunton are careful to clarify the distinction that exists between the church and the triune God. Volf's concern is not to reduce "theology to

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[157] Volf, *After*, 129. Emphasis original.
[158] Chia, "Trinity," 9.
[159] Chia, "Trinity,:"10. Emphasis added.
[160] Chia, "Trinity,"10.

anthropology" or conversely elevate "anthropology to theology."[161] He teaches that "our notions of the triune God are not the triune God," which means, more practically, that "'person' and 'communion' in ecclesiology cannot be identical with 'person' and 'communion' in the doctrine of the Trinity; they can only be understood as analogous to them."[162] Volf appreciates the implications of this for both humanity and the church. For human beings this means that "human beings are creations of the triune God and can correspond to God only in a creaturely fashion" ecclesially this means "for a sojourning church, only a dynamic understanding of its correspondence to the Trinity is meaningful."[163] Volf concludes by suggesting, "the ecclesiologically relevant question is how the church is to correspond to the Trinity within history."[164]

Gunton shares many of Volf's concerns in his own effort to show that the church and the triune God are intimately related but nevertheless distinct. He likewise wants to avoid equating the church with the triune God. Gunton also recognizes the limits of analogy and helpfully suggests that "analogy therefore refers to similarities amidst ever-greater dissimilarities."[165] Gunton offers an example of the dissimilarities between divine persons and human persons. He argues that it is not possible to conceive of divine persons who live "in isolation from one another while this is not the case for ecclesial persons."[166]

Gunton and Volf affirm that there is distinction between the triune God and the church. They also offer ecclesiologies that emphasize the participative nature of life in

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[161] Volf, *After*, 198.
[162] Volf, *After*, 198–99.
[163] Volf, *After*, 199.
[164] Volf, *After*, 200.
[165] Chia, "Trinity," 12.
[166] Chia, "Trinity," 12.

the triune God and embrace eschatological and communal elements. Further they encourage a relationality that originates in the triune God and is 'imaged' or 'echoed' in the church. In this way, the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity to ecclesiology, in their thought, informs the ecclesial perichoretic spirituality being developed here. Volf and Gunton help to show that such an ecclesial spirituality is moving toward fulfillment in the triune God while also working out what it means to be moving in cadence with God. The word cadence being used in this dissertation is operating in the same way as Volf and Gunton use image and echo. Cadence affirms intimate union between the church and the triune God without equating the two. This allows for freedom for the church to accept it own uniqueness and limits, while striving to achieve as full a measure as possible of its eschatological reality in the here and now.

Complementing the ecclesial perichoretic spirituality discussed above is personal perichoretic spirituality. Stanley Grenz articulates the idea of personal nature of perichoretic spirituality when he speaks of the "ecclesial self."[167] Personal perichoretic spirituality will be developed in conversation with Grenz.

Grenz helps to illumine the personal dimension of the doctrine of perichoresis. He teaches that the ecclesial self is "the new humanity in communion with the triune God."[168] The ecclesial self is defined by: (1) the love of God,[169] (2) an eschatological character[170] and (3) participation in Christ.[171] In Grenz's theological anthropology these three features are rooted in the doctrine of perichoresis.[172] Grenz advances this

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[167] Grenz, *The Social*, 312.
[168] Grenz, *The Social*, 312.
[169] Grenz speaks of divine love as the basis for the ecclesial self. *The Social*, 312–22.
[170] See Grenz, *The Social*, 322–23.
[171] Grenz shows how participation in Christ, which he links to *theosis*, is an eschatological promise, that also has a ecclesial realization in the present age. See *The Social*, 325–28.
[172] Grenz, *The Social*, 316–17.

discussion by highlighting the general landscape for the personal dimension of this perichoretic spirituality.

The personal dimensions of perichoretic spirituality affirm the loving, eschatological and participatory features of the ecclesial self. It is necessary, however, to add additional content to Grenz's articulation of the ecclesial self. The biblical narrative suggests that a crucial dimension of personal spirituality is the New Testament understanding of spiritual giftedness. Spiritual giftedness is integral to personal perichoretic spirituality. This is because it is through the gifts of grace that communion is created with the triune God and within the community of faith. The Apostle Paul teaches in Ephesians 4 that the diverse gifts flow into human beings from the "one Lord." Spiritual giftedness is a movement of grace originating in the triune God moving by the Spirit into human beings as tangible expressions of Christ's grace in the church and world.[173] A New Testament theology of spiritual giftedness is a vital aspect that helps ministering persons to live and serve in cadence with God.

Personal perichoretic spirituality expresses both a person's union with the triune God and the community of faith. It has vertical and horizontal spiritual dimensions. This kind of perichoretic spirituality has four elements. It is: (1) immersed in God's perichoretic love, (2) has an eschatological character, (3) participates in Christ by the Holy Spirit and (4) is expressed in spiritual gifts which enable the church to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13b).

With the inclusion of spiritual giftedness, Grenz's discussion of the ecclesial self continues to be a helpful guide for personal perichoretic spirituality. In collecting

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[173] Elsewhere I have argued for how such a view of giftedness combined with the doctrine of perichoresis is helpful to pastoral leadership. See my "Participants with God."

together many of the strands he uses to develop the ecclesial self, Grenz articulates his

vision as,

> Being-in-relationship with the triune God by means of participation in the Jesus
> narrative and hence incorporation into Christ by the Spirit not only inherently
> includes but also is even comprised by being-in-relationship with those who
> participate together in that identity-producing narrative and thereby are the
> ecclesial sign in the present of the eschatological new humanity.[174]

Grenz's phrase "incorporation into Christ by the Spirit" is important because it clarifies

the pneumatological development Grenz has as his vision for the ecclesial self. This

makes it clear that Grenz conceives of the ecclesial self in Trinitarian terms. Grenz

continues to develop the spiritual nature of the ecclesial self. It is worth quoting him at

some length to bring into view the development of his thought:

> The connection between being 'in Christ' and the ecclesial self must be taken a
> step further. It must be given its full trinitarian-theological cast. As the Pauline
> text indicates, the christological aspect noted previously is connected to a
> particular pnuematology and, together with it, lies within a larger trinitarian
> theological perspective. Its pneumatological-trinitarian context bestows an
> eschatological character upon the ecclesial self.
>   The pneumatological foundation of the eschatological ecclesial self
> emerges from the Pauline understanding of the role of the Spirit in believers'
> lives. Paul links the prerogative of addressing God as 'Abba' explicitly to the
> presence of the indwelling Spirit, whom the Apostle identifies as 'the Spirit of
> [God's] Son' (Gal.4:6). Furthermore, according to Paul, the Spirit who leads
> those who are 'in Christ' to address God as 'Abba' likewise constitutes them as
> 'heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ' (Rom 8:17).[175]

Grenz believes it is the work of the Holy Spirit that actualizes the ecclesial self. The

Spirit unites believers in God's love so they can address God as "Abba." The Spirit

orients believers with the eschatological hope of the new creation. It is the indwelling

Spirit that allows persons to participate in Christ and become co-heirs of God. Now

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[174] Grenz, *The Social*, 331.
[175] Grenz, *The Social*, 326.

adding to Grenz's thought, the Spirit is the means by which Christ distributes the gifts for the maturing and mission of the body of Christ.

The personal dynamics of perichoretic spirituality resonates with the "pneumatological-trinitarian context" Grenz articulates. Perichoretic spirituality is ecclesial, eschatological, participative and charismatic. It embraces the perichoretic tension that holds personal particularity and ecclesial unity together. Grenz's impetus to affirm a robust Trinitarian understanding of the ecclesial self is also vital to this spirituality. It is a Trinitarian spirituality that affirms the unity of the one God and the diversity of the three divine Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is this kind of spirituality that speaks to the mystery of how human beings participate in the practice of perichoresis. Perichoretic spirituality works out the implications of both communal and personal dimensions of the Christian life. On the communal level ecclesial perichoretic spirituality expresses a Trinitarian ecclesiology. The church is an echo of the Trinitarian dynamics and increasingly realizes its eschatological potential as it learns to live and move in cadence with God. Understood in this way perichoretic spirituality will be drawn into dialogue with pastoral theology's situational attentiveness. This constructive development will be the focus of chapter five of this dissertation.

Summary

Along with the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of perichoresis has been rediscovered in the contemporary theological context. The mutual indwelling without confusion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is proving fruitful to the discipline of theology. Pastoral theology has begun to draw from this rich theological source and to

understand its relevance to Christian practice. Relations, participation and spirituality are rooted in the triune God and invite human participation. The practice of perichoresis is rooted in these three theological realities. To serve ministering persons to live and move in ever-deepening cadence with the triune God it will be necessary to probe what these developments might mean in the discipline of pastoral theology. In chapter three, perichoretic relationality will be drawn into dialogue with theologies of experience. This conversation moves into the constructive dimension of this dissertation. The practice of perichoresis will begin to come into view as a pastoral theological move from experience to relationship.

CHAPTER THREE
PERICHORETIC RELATIONALITY: FROM
EXPERIENCE TO RELATIONSHIP

Introduction

One of the hallmarks of the contemporary resurgence of Trinitarian thought is the fresh perspective it brings to the question of divine and human identity.[1] Emulating these developments in systematic theology,[2] theological anthropology[3] and ecclesiology,[4] the practice of perichoresis will consider what such developments mean for pastoral theology. This emerges from the critical conversation between contemporary pastoral theology introduced in chapter one and the doctrine of perichoresis, introduced in chapter two. One of the initial fruits of this dialogue is an understanding of ministering persons that is relational, participative and spiritual. In this chapter the practice of perichoresis will be explored as the move from experience to relationship. This movement serves ministering persons by helping them to live and minister in *relational* cadence with God.

The concept of spiritual polarities will be used to explain the practice of perichoresis. Found in the writings of Henri Nouwen, the use of spiritual polarities has proven to be a constructive contribution to contemporary pastoral theology.[5] Each of the remaining chapters in this dissertation will use a spiritual polarity to express the constructive engagement that results from the dialogue between pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis. Wil Hernandez shows that Nouwen's polarities fall into two

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[1] By identity I mean fresh understanding of what the self is. For example is Grenz's concept of the ecclesial self, see *The Social God*, 320–31 and Volf's articulation of perichoretic personhood, see *After our Likeness*, 208–13.

[2] See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, Gunton, *The One*.

[3] See Grenz, *The Social God*, Shultz, *Reforming*.

[4] See Volf, *After Our Likeness*.

[5] For a discussion of Nouwen's use of spiritual polarities see Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*.

categories: conversional and cooperative.[6] The polarities used in this dissertation are all cooperative—the polarities cooperate rather than compete with each other.[7] The move from experience to relationship is an example of a cooperative polarity. This means that moving from experience to relationship is not saying that experience is bad and relationship is good. It is saying that the move from experience to relationship is a movement toward a more mature pastoral theology.

In what follows pastoral theologies of experience and perichoretic relationality will be drawn into constructive conversation toward the practice of perichoresis. In drawing these two features into dialogue fresh perspectives on pastoral theology emerge. Relationality provides a focus and context for a conversation between Anton Boisen and Karl Barth. As Boisen's psychology of religious experience and Barth's relational theology of revelation are brought into dialogue a vital distinction must be made. This conversation is not trying to harmonize Boisen and Barth, but to explore ways in which their perspectives can relate in a manner that strengthens Christian ministry. This will lead into a discussion of theological method. Here Bernard Nausner's Trinitarian interstitial method will be introduced. Nausner's method advances the discussion in two ways. First, it is a method that has a perichoretic rhythm—it is intentionally developed in light of the Trinitarian theology. Second, it helps pastoral theology to navigate the tension between the use of human experience and divine revelation in theology. The discussion will then turn to the concept of the living human document. It will be argued that this concept can engage with relational ontological perspectives toward a more communal and theologically nuanced understanding of persons. Here it will be affirmed

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[6] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 4–5.
[7] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen*, 5.

that relationship with God enhances personhood. It is through these pastoral theological conversations that the move from experience to relationship is made. They each elevate the value of relationship in a manner that carefully draws ministering persons into relationship with God and those they serve.

Theologies of human experience, as will be discussed below, have yielded a particular understanding of pastoral identity. One of the unfortunate aspects of this identity was the individualism and clericalism common in therapeutic pastoral theology. The pastor- as-therapist perspective resulted in a focus on pastoral care and counseling that was individualistic, clergy driven, and more therapeutic than theological.[8] The pastor-as-therapist identity tended to minimize the theological and ecclesial dimensions of pastoral ministry.[9] More recently pastoral theologians have wrestled to keep the theological and ecclesial dimensions engaged with the therapeutic understanding of pastoral theology.[10] The move from experience to relations embraces the theological and relational dimensions that resist an individualistic therapeutic understanding of ministering persons.[11]

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[8] See Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* where he calls for a move "beyond professionalism" xv ff.
[9] Cooper-White in *Many Faces,* 20, comments, "I am deliberately making the point here that the pastoral/theological is not an addendum—an accusation that has been perhaps rightly leveled at many of the most therapeutically oriented pastoral counseling paradigms in previous decades."
[10] See Gerkin, *The Living,* Cooper-White, *Many Voices,* Purves, *Reconstructing.*
[11] The term ministering persons will require some clarification. By it I mean three kinds of expressions of ministry. The first is the understanding of ministry as a pastoral identity that suits the designation clergy—people set apart for the work of ministry by their respective ecclesial bodies. The second kind of ministry is the kind of service done by "ministering persons." This is ministry done through a variety of means that is an expression of ecclesial ministry done in and through the church and world. The third ministering self is the ministry that goes on in the world with minimal or no connection to an ecclesial body but is never-the-less tangible expressions of God's care in the world. Moving forward the phrase ministering persons generally includes these three realms but when necessary I will identify which of the three is being indicated.

The practice of perichoresis understands ministry in relationship with God. Ministry is done in relationship with God. Ministry is *diakonía* or serving. It is serving God, the church and the world. The doctrine of perichoresis helps to clarify the relational dimensions inherent to the practice of ministry. Ministering persons do serve God but not at a distance and in isolation. They minister through the grace of the Lord Jesus, with the love of God and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Ministry is at all times relating with the triune God and the community of faith. [12] Paul Fiddes speaks of the sacramental life to explain the interplay that exists between the triune God, ministering persons and their context of ministry. He states, "[t]he sacramental life is one that is open to the presence of God, and can open a door for others into eternal movements of love and justice that are there ahead of us, and before us, and embracing us. This openness can be felt like the invitation to a dance, but sometimes like the raw edges of a wound."[13] Such a vision describes well the core rhythms of ministry being explored in the practice of perichoresis.

From Pastoral Theologies of Experience to Perichoretic Relationship

The move from experience to relationship encourages the integration of the theological and anthropological concerns of pastoral theology. Jürgen Moltmann sketches a vision of human freedom from a Trinitarian perspective that is instructive for the move toward relationship. He writes,

> In mutual participation in life, individual people become free beyond the limits of their individuality, and discover the common room for living which their freedom offers. This is the social side of freedom. We call it love and solidarity.

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[12] Paul Fiddes offers a sacramental understanding of pastoral identity to show the connection between the perichoretic God and pastoral practice. See *Particpating* 281–302.

[13] Fiddes, *Participating*, 302.

In it we experience the uniting of isolated individuals. In it we experience the uniting of things that have been forcibly divided.[14]

The move from experience to relationship is a move toward "the common room for living" that Moltman describes.[15] It is rooted in the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and believes that ministering persons can serve in relational cadence with these Divine rhythms. Pastoral theology and the doctrine of perichoresis share an appreciation for the experience of the individual. The doctrine of perichoresis helps pastoral theology to always guide this concern in a relational direction. The theological goal of human life is not individual self understanding, but participation in life—the life of God and life in the community of faith. Relationship is the means by which ministering persons can engage in faithful and effective service with God.

The challenge is that relationships are difficult. This will become obvious as Anton Boisen and Karl Barth are brought into dialogue. It is suggested here that their diverse contributions to theology can be held together relationally when viewed from the perspective of the practice of ministry. It is the tensions between the two approaches that aid in making the relationship fruitful for the discipline of pastoral theology.

Boisen's Religious Experience and Barth's Relational Theology of Revelation

Theologies of experience, briefly introduced in chapter one, are a vital part of the practice of perichoresis. Far from being seen as an inherently corrupting element to theology, experience keeps pastoral theology engaged in the contemporary context and relevant to pastoral practice. As the practice of perichoresis develops it recognizes that experience needs to move in a relational/theological direction. This means that experience is understood in all its complexity but moves toward a relational engagement

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[14] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 216.
[15] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 216.

with God's self-revelation. To do this, Boisen's theology of religious experience will be brought into conversation with Barth's Trinitarian theology of revelation. This dialogue will help to inform the move from experience to relationship.

Boisen and Barth approach theology from different vantage points. Boisen, the founder of the clinical pastoral education movement, is committed to understanding the experience of persons even in the most perplexing of circumstances. Barth is committed to *Church Dogmatics*. He is focused on God's self-revelation. As will be shown, Boisen literally serves theology from the context of the mental institution and Barth serves it from the theological academy of the church. Drawing Boisen and Barth into dialectical relationship will serve the practice of perichoresis by keeping experience and relations in constant tension.

Boisen's influence on pastoral theology continues to this day. He is considered by many to be the father of contemporary pastoral theology.[16] Boisen's contribution to this discussion comes through his pioneering work of drawing experience into the pastoral theological task. Once Boisen's contribution is considered, attention will turn to developments in Trinitarian theology brought through Karl Barth's Trinitarian theology of revelation. Bringing Boisen and Barth into dialogical engagement creates both tension and richness. The potential of this conversation comes into view as the tensions between the two are held together relationally.

Boisen is the pastoral theologian who brought human experience into the heart of the pastoral theological conversation. He was motivated to do so through his own experience with mental illness. Over time he came to see his own experience as an

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[16] Asquith Jr. speaks of Boisen as a Father of contemporary pastoral theology. He writes "Anton T. Boisen has been identified as the Father of clinical pastoral education. It can also be argued that he is the father of modern pastoral theology." See Asquith, "An Experiential," 19.

important theological source. Boisen's life reveals a man who was both deeply troubled and wonderfully creative.[17] In the last line of his autobiography Boisen articulates the strain of his illness and the hopefulness of his creativity. He writes, "[i]t was necessary for me to pass through the purgatorial fires of a horrifying psychosis before I set foot in my promised land of creative activity."[18] Boisen's struggles became generative for pastoral theology. Boisen's conviction, rooted in his own experience, that there is an "interrelatedness of mental disorder and religious experience"[19] has been transformational to the discipline of pastoral theology. Out of these experiences Boisen was also helped to initiate the "clinical-training movement."[20] These developments are a direct result of his severe mental disturbance and subsequent admission to mental hospitals.[21]

In daring to hold mental disorder and religious experience together, Boisen opened up a way for what he coined "the living human document" to have a voice in pastoral theology.[22] Practically, for Boisen, this compelled him to work with the mentally ill, serving as a Chaplain and pastoral educator for the bulk of his career.[23]

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[17] See Nouwen, "Anton T. Boison," for a survey of his life from the pastoral theological perspective.

[18] Boisen, *Out of*, 208.

[19] Boisen, *Out of*, 209.

[20] Boisen, *Out of*, 209.

[21] Boisen speaks of "five psychotic episodes [and] five major decisions which have been marked by deviation from the normal" *Out of*, 202. Boisen spent fifteen months in a mental hospital recovering from the most traumatic of these episodes. Boisen did not see these episodes as entirely negative and, by probing their religious dimensions, was able to assert that after each of these he was better for the experience.

[22] Charles Gerkin comments on the origins of the term in Boisen's thought in *The Living*, 200n1, he writes, "Just when Boisen first used this phrase, which has become legendary in the memory of those who claim him as a professional ancestor, is not certain. He used the term 'human document' in print as early as 1930 . . . in 1950 in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, vol.9 no.1. Boisen then said, "We are trying to call attention back to the central task of the Church, that of 'saving souls,' and to the central problem of theology, that of sin and salvation. *What is new is the attempt to begin with the study of living human documents rather than with books and to focus attention upon those who are grappling desperately with the issues of spiritual life and death.*". Emphasis original.

[23] Asquith, "An Experiential," 22–23.

John Patton observes that Boisen fulfilled these roles with the conviction that, "the real evil in mental disorder is not to be found in the conflict but in the sense of isolation or estrangement experienced by the patient."[24] Patton also notes that Boisen's influence began to remove the barriers between illness and health and between patient and pastor.[25] For Boisen, experience became a central element in his self understanding, pastoral work and pastoral theology.[26]

While few deny the impressive and unique contribution Boisen makes to pastoral theology, his work does require some qualification. Boisen was a deeply troubled person who never fully recovered from the psychological maladies which impacted his life.[27] It is clear that Boisen's genius flowed out of his troubles, but at times they did hinder his work. One critic of Boisen's suggests that he lacked the depth perception needed for him to deal with his life in a healthier manner.[28] Yet it is part of Boisen's creative genius that he embraced his experiences as relevant to his religious understanding. Boisen does not

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[24] Patton, "Modern Pastoral Theology," 51.

[25] Patton, "Modern Pastoral Theology," 51.

[26] See Boisen, *The Exploration*, for many examples of his use of his own and others experience in his pastoral theology.

[27] This is primarily evidenced by his ongoing obsession with Alice. At one part of his autobiography, *Out of*, he describes ending their relationship, feeling it was best, a few pages later he is once again writing to her.

[28] James Dittes in "Boisen" points to an early experience in Boisen's life that seems to foreshadow the concern of diminished perspective in Boisen. Close to his eighth birthday Boisen sustained an injury that caused him to lose sight in one eye. Boisen was in the back yard of his grandparents' home which had a peach tree—full and ripe. Some children came by and demanded that Boisen give them some of the peaches. Boisen refused. This was met by a threat which included a rudimentary gun using an elastic to fire its "bullet." The hungry boys aimed the gun straight at Boisen's eye. Boisen, who stubbornly refused to blink, was shot in the eye, losing its sight for the rest of his life. Dittes notes Boisen's own comment on the loss of sight in his eye, "I have not been aware of the difference," 225. For Dittes this highlights his concern with Boisen. Dittes' counters, "monocular vision does make a difference: it deprives the person of the principle capacity or depth perception. The author's not noticing the difference illustrates the point," 225. Noting a lack of critical depth perception in Boisen's personal reflections, Dittes argues, "[Boisen's] point of view from which he writes never transcends his afflictions; the story is not understood other than in terms of the fear and fantasies which are part of his pathology. He does not speak from the standpoint out of the depths. He cries from out of the depths," 231. Dittes offers an accurate evaluation of a troubled human being whose autobiography does continue to show the lingering effects of his mental disturbances.

seek to first come fully out of the depths before he engages in his version of pastoral theology. [29] Boisen is one who cries from the depths of his mental illness and this is where his life of service to God took its most fruitful form.[30]

Boisen's influence on pastoral theology is helpful for the practice of perichoresis. His primary contribution to this construct is the conviction that experience is a source in pastoral theology that must be carefully interpreted. Christopher DeBono argues that this is Boisen's most creative contribution. He argues, "we need to challenge the church to say that when we as ministers go into mental health centers, we don't 'bring' theology to these people. What we actually discover in their lives is something of the revelation of God, something of the search for God."[31] Boisen believed that human beings through the concept of the living human document deserve as careful hermeneutical attention as other sources of Christian theology. Boisen argues,

> Not in any revelation handed down from the past, not in anything that can be demonstrated in test-tube or under the microscope, not in systems found in books, nor in rules and techniques taken over from successful workers would I seek the basis of spiritual healing, but in the living human documents in all their complexity and in all their elusiveness and in the tested insights of the wise and noble of the past as well as the present.[32]

Pastoral theology in a variety of ways has affirmed and embraced Boisen's articulation of the concept of the living human documents. It is the goal of the practice of

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[29] This aspect of Boisen's approach to pastoral theology has been carried forward by Henri Nouwen. Nouwen was profoundly influenced by Boisen. Nouwen's biographer writes, "From Anton Boisen Henri Nouwen drew direct inspiration for his own ministry. He learned from Boisen that one's own psychological troubles and weakness could be a source of inspiration and a path to God, something that would become a hallmark of his spiritual writing and speaking," O'Laughlin *Henri Nouwen*, 51. Nouwen's *The Wounded Healer* is influenced by Boisen's work. See Higgins and Burns, *Genius*, 34.

[30] Boisen, in *Out of the* Depths, 209, says, "[o]ur evil has been overcome with good. If it had not been for my failure on that occasion, Alice and I might have been married, and with her help I might have become a passably successful minister. But so far as I am concerned, there would have been no new light up on the interrelatedness of mental disorder and religious experience. Neither would there have been for me any clinical training movement."

[31] Quoted as an interview in Higgens and Burns, *Genius*, 31.

[32] Boisen, *The Exploration*, 248–49.

perichoresis to take this conviction forward but to understanding it in a manner that is relationally engaged with the perichoretic movements of love that flow from the triune God.

It is helpful to note the barriers Boisen broke down in his theological career. Along with the barriers which existed between patient and pastor and illness and health, Boisen's contribution eroded the barrier between theology and experience. In articulating experience in terms that academics might appreciate, Boisen made human beings, interpreted through the concept of the living human document, available for the careful kind of analysis that neither excludes other sources nor diminishes the experience in question. Boisen learned to analyse with great precisions through his early experience as a forester, as church surveyor and ultimately as a Chaplain with the mentally ill.

Boisen brought into pastoral theology the concept of the living human document, but he did not provide the discipline with the methods or means to engage this concept with the theological moorings of the discipline. In his wake, the discipline began to drift into the domain of psychology. Boisen is perhaps best located in the interplay between the disciplines of psychology of religion and pastoral theology.[33] This is an important tension in Boisen's work. While this dissertation wants to draw Boisen in a more theological direction, he is chided by Paul Pruyser because "he seemed to have succumbed to the need to single out a 'valid' type of religious experience."[34]Pruyser advocates that in psychology of religion,

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[33] See Boisen, "Present Status," where he offers his reflections on the continuing influence and direction of William James' psychology of religion.
[34] Pruyser, "Anton T. Boisen," 215.

> *all* religious phenomena are bona fide. Whether they be primitive or highly developed, vague or articulate, feelingful or conceptualized, childish or mature, healthy or sick, ritualistic or mystical, constructive or destructive, divine or satanic, highly individualist or broadly corporate and collective, deistic, theistic or non-theistic, they are all worth describing and studying from a psychological point of view.[35]

Psychology of religion is interested in the religious experience. Boisen's pastoral instincts wanted to move these experiences toward what Pruyser calls a "pastoral perspective, which means that he tried to understand the process of his patients' cataclysmic episodes with a view to helping them come to a good ending."[36] Drawing human experience into the centre of his work, Boisen values the psychology of religion[37] but nevertheless naturally moves in a pastoral direction. As the practice of perichoresis moves forward, it will engage with the Trinitarian theology of revelation of Karl Barth in order to bring a relational theological perspective that takes what is best from Boisen and integrates it with this dimension of perichoretic relationality. In so doing, it will become evident that Boisen's concern for human experience can be enhanced by Barth's theology of God's self revelation and vica versa.

There is no doubt that Barth and Boisen are two very different theologians to engage in a dialogical and transformative conversation. If Boisen was actually blind in one eye, Barth's theology also displays a measure of theological monocular vision. Boisen focused on the concept of the living human document as the crucial source in his theology while Barth focused on God's self revelation as being sufficient for his

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[35] Pruyser, "Anton T. Boisen," 215. Emphasis original.

[36] Pruyser, "Anton T. Boisen," 214.

[37] The influence of psychology of religion on Boisen is seen in the definition of God he offers in *The Exploration*, 307. First he sets aside "the metaphysical reality which may or may not be involved" 307. He then defines "God" as: "a social or psychological fact of basic importance; [what] he counts of highest value and with which he would be identified; It represents the composite impress of those whom he counts most worthy of love and honor; the symbol of abiding collective interests." Boisen's definition of God is more psychological than theological.

theology. It is exactly this rich tension that creates the opportunity for fruitful

interaction. It also presents the opportunity to discover some surprising connections

between the two theologians.[38] The main contribution of this discussion is to show how

Barth's Trinitarian theology of revelation when brought into dialogue with Boisen's

theology of experience actually encourages the move from experience to relationship.[39]

This is because ministering persons serve God in the interplay between human

experience and God's self-revaltion.

Barth's Relational Theology of Revelation

Barth's theology of revelation is rooted in the triune being of God. For Barth

revelation is God's self-revelation. The being of the triune God pervades his theology

and this is especially so for his theology of revelation.[40] In Barth's doctrine of divine

revelation; God's self-revelation does not only reveal the triune God it presupposes it.

Barth's understanding of revelation describes God reaching to the world personally,

relationally and lovingly as the triune God. Barth's theology of revelation is God's self-

revelation and God reveals himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The implication

of this is that for Barth, as Trevor Hart shows, revelation "is an event: it is something

which happens, something which God does, and something in which we are actively

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[38] Three points of connection present themselves. First, they lived during the same time period: Boisen lived from 1876–1965 Barth lived from 1886–1968. Second, they are both considered fathers in their respective theological disciplines. Third, by the end of their careers, they both expressed their pastoral work in service to the institutionalized—Boisen as Chaplain in mental hospitals and Barth as preacher to prisoners. Boisen's work as a Chaplain and Barth's service as a preacher also illumine the constant tension that remains between their theologies as well as the wisdom of trying to keep their respective approaches together.

[39] For an helpful engagement with key dimensions of Barth's theology see, Webster ed., *The Cambridge Companion,* Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace* and Grenz, *Rediscovering.* For attempts to integrate Barth with Pastoral theology see, Thurneysen, *Pastoral Care*, Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral* and Son, "Agents of Joy."

[40] Alan Torrance in "The Trinity," 75, comments on Barth's Trinitarian theology of revelation, "Barth emphasizes categorically that the Word of God is and remains it own criterion; the event of revelation included the condition for the recognition of that same revelation." It is important to emphasize that each of these three revelational dynamics are understood in Trinitarian and so relational terms.

involved."[41] With Barth, God's revelation is a gift given to human beings who are otherwise incapable of knowing God.

Barth speaks of God's self revelation in Trinitarian and relational terms. For Barth the question of revelation contains within it the question of the doctrine of the Trinity. Barth is concerned with understanding the subject of revelation (who is being revealed), the act of revelation (how is the one being revealed) and the effect of revelation (how is the revelation given).[42] Barth's answer to these three questions has something of a perichoretic rhythm to it. He says they are "like and yet different, different and yet like."[43] Barth's answer to these three questions is the triune God. Barth explains that the self revealing God's being is also the means of the revelation. He argues "*God* reveals Himself. God reveals Himself *through* Himself, God reveals *Himself.*"[44] For Barth the subject of revelation (*God* reveals Himself) is a reference to God the Father. The act of revelation (God reveals Himself *through* Himself) speaks of Jesus, God the Son. The effect of revelation (God reveals *Himself*) refers to God the Holy Spirit. So the threefold form of revelation assumes the triune nature of God. God reveals himself. It is the triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who in the act of revelation also reveal God's being, the essential unity and distinction of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the language of this dissertation, Barth is describing the perichoretic relationality that is inherent to God's act of self-revelation.

Barth speaks carefully and cautiously but also relationally when he discusses how human beings experience God's self revelation. Barth is careful to show that when

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[41] Hart, "Revelation," 45.
[42] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 295–96.
[43] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 303.
[44] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 296. Emphasis original.

the Word of God is "acknowledged" this is done in a relational manner.[45] He argues,

"experience of God's Word involves a relation of man as person to another person,

naturally the person of God."[46] In Barth's understanding, the human experience of

acknowledging the Word of God is relational. From the perspective of the practice of

perichoresis the acknowledgement of the word of God, relational as it is, is the initial

and sustaining human experience that moves in cadence with the triune God.

In Barth's theology, relationality is something that is intrinsic to the triune God.

It sets the context for God's self revelation and provides the means of human salvation

and communion. Using perichoretic imagery, George Hunsinger describes well the

relational and communal dimensions of Barth's understanding of the triune God. His

description is worth quoting at length,

> As the mediator of communion, the Spirit unites believers with Christ, through
> whom they participate in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity, while at the
> same time they also find communion in one another. 'Communion' means love
> in knowledge, and knowledge in love, thus fellowship and mutual self giving. It
> means sharing and participating in the being of another, without the loss of
> identity of either partner; for the true fellowship the identity of each is not
> effaced but enhanced; indeed, the identity of each is constituted not in isolation
> but only in encounter with another. The deepest form of communion, as depicted
> in the New Testament, is mutual indwelling, an I-Thou relation of ineffable
> spiritual intimacy (*koinonia*).[47]

For the practice of perichoresis this description of perichoretic communion of God is

significant. With this description of Barth's theology comes the insight that in "true

fellowship the identity of each is not *effaced but enhanced*."[48] It is through communion

with the triune God that the divine persons are made more beautiful and brilliant in

shared love. It is in such a rich communion that human beings discover their identity as

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[45] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 204–205
[46] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, 205.
[47] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's," 187.
[48] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's," 187.

beloved children of God. Boisen's development of the concept of the living human document aids pastoral theologians to deal with all the contextual complexity to understand and begin to minister in the lives of human persons. The Trinitarian reality of revelation is a salient feature that encourages the move from experience to relationship.

The Practice of Ministry within the Tension

In the practice of perichoresis such a relational understanding of revelation becomes decisive for its engagement with theologies of experience. Relationality becomes the characteristic of this approach. From the perspective of ministering persons, theologies of experience are always to be drawn into a transformative dialogue with God's self-revelation. Likewise, God's self- revelation is to be drawn into transformative dialogue with human experience.[49] When revelation is understood relationally, as the triune God's self-revelation, it is an opportunity for communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the practice of ministry which can sustain the tension between Boisen and Barth and allow for an ongoing relational interplay between experience and revelation.

In the practice of ministry, experience and revelation is commonly held together in a nexus of tensions that is beyond clear conceptual articulation. When a preacher delivers a message in which a person experiences God in a transforming way, this cannot be delineated and explained—it is a mystery. The practice of perichoresis rests in this mystery. It serves ministering persons by offering a relational pastoral theology that

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[49] This conversation between experience and revelation does not imply that the conversation partners are equal. God's revelation clearly is the normative voice for this discussion. The move to relationship views this as a dialogue that needs to play out for relational reasons. See Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 63–83 for a methodological explanation for how Scripture as the "norming norm" in theology can still allow for such a conversation.

holds human experience and divine revelation together. Practices of ministry are crucial because they are the contextual way ministering persons keep this nexus of tension together. Practices of ministry when used paradigmatically are flexible enough to sustain the tension between revelation and experience.[50]

A definition of Christian practice sheds light on how ministry practice allows for these tensions to remain together. Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass define Christian practices as *"things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world."*[51] For the practice of perichoresis two elements of this definition illumine how practice aids in keeping human experience and God's revelation together. If ministering persons are to address 'fundamental human needs' it is necessary to know what these needs are. Boisen's concept of the living human document helps ministering persons to understand the experiences of those they are ministering to in order to interpret them and to respond to them appropriately. Boisen developed careful surveys that he used to glean a deep and textured understanding of the experiences of his patients.[52] In the practice of perichoresis ministering persons are relationally engaged with those they minister in order to meet them in their experiences and to disclose to them the love of God in terms that they will understand.

This definition of Christian practice also alerts ministering persons to be attentive to God's active presence in the world. The practice of perichoresis attempts to root all ministry practice in God. This is understood as joining in the dance of

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[50] Zylla in "Contours," 208, explains, *"Paradigms are flexible but settled sets of core convictions* that are derived from living with ambiguity, practicing displacement and managing complex and often competing bodies of information." Emphasis original.

[51] Dykstra and Bass, "A Theological," 18. Emphasis original.

[52] See Asquith, "The Case Study," for an explanation of Boisen's development of the case study method.

perichoresis which is a flexible way to understand how practices can move in cadence with God. Perichoretic practices can be developed that share in the flourishing of life, love and hope as well as practices that share in the sorrowful movements of suffering, grieving and death. The practice of perichoresis is attentive to God's presence in the situations of ministry and seeks to serve others with practices that help others to understand, discern and attend to God. It learns from Barth that God's presence (like his revelation) assumes his Trinitarian being. The practice of perichoresis rests in the confidence that the way God is present in situations is relational, participative and spiritual (of course this is not saying this is the only way God is present). In light of this, the practice of perichoresis develops practices that seek to move in cadence with the relational rhythms of the doctrine of perichoresis.

Neil Pembroke's example of spiritual friendship is a helpful example of the kind of perichoretic practice in view here. Spiritual friendship is rooted in what Pembroke calls "the perichoretic practice of intimacy-with-space."[53] This practice holds the tensions of experience and revelation together. In regards to revelation, it affirms that proper balance between the human need for intimacy and distance. This comes from an understanding of the perichoretic nature of God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also alerts ministering persons that intimacy with God requires intimacy with other people. Spiritual friendship is important because this practice both reflects God's perichoretic being and guides human beings toward intimacy with God and healthy friendships with one another. In regards to human experience this practice helps ministering persons to discern "pseudo-community" from true intimacy-with-space.[54] It

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[53] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 50.
[54] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 49.

is in the practice of perichoresis that experience and revelation are always in fruitful tension. It is in the actual practice of ministry that the move from experience to relationship is made.

In this perichoretic pastoral theology, ministry is intimately related to the triune God. Ministry is also deeply engaged in the lives of people. Understanding ministry in relational terms allows for the flow of grace to move cooperatively amongst these relationships. It is the nature of ministry to become fluent in theology and fluent in the mystery and misery of human experience. Deborah van Deusin Hunsinger turns to linguistics to find help in using Barth's theology in pastoral counseling. She also suggests that it is best not to overcome the differences but for the pastoral counselor to become fluent in psychology and theology. A linguist does not mix English and French together to try to be conversant with both languages but learns each well enough so that they become "bi-lingual." [55] The practice of perichoresis argues for a similar perspective when it comes to Barth and Boisen. With Barth, ministering persons learn that God is personally and relationally present in and through his revelation—God reveals himself. With Boisen, ministering persons learn to be attentive to the actual person in the complexity of their situation. Ministry is living this tension and doing so in ever deepening cadence with God who actually encourages a thorough understanding of human experience. Stephen Seamands' definition of ministry bears repeating. Ministry "is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Spirit, for the sake of the church and world."[56] The ministering person participates in God's self revelation

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[55] Hunsinger, "Theology," 5–6.
[56] Seamands, *Minstry*, 9–10. Emphasis original.

and this enhances the task of interpreting the living human document—this is understood as a move from experience to relationship.

The practice of perichoresis moves from experience to relationship in order to serve ministering persons to minister in the interplay between religious experience and God's self-revelation. In this proposal, the difference between the two is not overcome by cognitive explanations but considers these tensions from the perspective of practice. The practice of perichoresis affirms that from this perspective God's self-revelation actually meets people in the complexities and confusion of human experience.[57] Theologically this is seen in the incarnation of Jesus Christ who "made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil 2:7). In this context a pastoral visit is not simply two people talking about God, but the opportunity for communion with God and with each other. The move toward relations transforms a theology of ministry from dutiful obedient action done on behalf of God, to intimate loving communion with God and others. Relationships become the conduit through which God's grace flows into the world. These relationships are also a foretaste of the eschatological fulfillment that is promised by God. The move from experience to relationship is a movement toward God.

The move from experience to relations is continues. The transformative dialogue between Boisen and Barth yields helpful insights that encourage the move toward relationship. The practice of perichoresis must stay engaged with human experience and work cooperatively with the self-revelation of the triune God. It is

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[57] The incarnation makes this explicit. Jesus invitation is for the weary and burdened to come to him. See Matt 11:25–30. Henri Nouwen does a better job of integrating orthodox theology into a pastoral theology that takes seriously human experience. See also Pamela Cooper-White's *Many Voices* who also draws theologies of experience into to a more robust conversation with theology and the doctrine of Trinity, than is seen in Boisen's work.

through ministering persons adopting appropriate Christian practice that these tensions are held together. With these relational contours in place, this conversation will turn to the question of pastoral theological method and how Trinitarian methodological developments might advance the movement from experience to relationship.

Pastoral Theological Method and Interstitial Method

One of the underdeveloped elements of Boisen's legacy is the lack of a method for incorporating human experience into the theological endeavour. The discipline has actively explored methodological ways to keep human experience integral to the pastoral theological conversation. All of the approaches to pastoral theology discussed in chapter one—therapeutic, liberation, mission and theological tradition pastoral theologies—seek to keep theology and human experience engaged with each other.[58] Yet, as was shown, they each are influenced by the focus of their respective approaches. Pastoral theology needs the relational space to move around methodologically. The practice of perichoresis embraces this methodological necessity and hopes to provide a Trinitarian shape to the most common of pastoral theological methods, the method of correlation.

In what follows, the pastoral theological method of correlation will be drawn into conversation with the interstitial method developed by Bernard Nausner. The interstitial method, to be explained below, is a vital aspect of Nausner's argument that asserts the relevance of human experience for Trinitarian theology.[59] The dialogue between these methods of theology will contribute to the move from experience to

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[58] Even Andrew Purves assents to a form of the method of correlation. He argues in *Reconstructing*, 12, "while it is right to insist that doctrine shapes pastoral work insofar as it discloses the human situation and bears witness to the pastoring God, which is the content of the gospel, it is right also to insist that reflection on pastoral practice leads to the interpretation of Scripture and the reformation of doctrine."
[59] See Nausner, *Human Experience*.

relations by providing a perichoretic impress upon pastoral theological method—this development allows pastoral theology to be responsive both methodologically and relationally to the complexities of the situation it is dealing with.

In pastoral theology the method of correlation is the most common method used in the discipline. The nature of the method of correlation ensures that experience is a central ingredient in the discipline. So important was the development of the method of correlation in pastoral theology that it can be argued that it helped the discipline to avoid being overwhelmed by the advances of psychology and the social sciences. Since Boisen's turn toward the concept of the living human document, understanding experience became central to the discipline and its theological nature began to be threatened.[60] In the early stages of the twentieth century, so fruitful were the advances in psychology at accessing the hidden dimensions of human beings and so optimistic was the culture that human experience began to overwhelm the discipline. Pastoral theology was in need of a method that would incorporate human experience into a Christian theological context.

The tensions described above were most acute in the United States. So it is little surprise that Seward Hiltner, professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, is the pastoral theologian who articulated a method of pastoral theology that

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[60] Miller-Mclemore in "Revisiting," 8, comments, "This concern reflects a wider enduring suspicion apparent at the start of the movement about the social sciences and a fear (sometimes justified) that the focus in CPE moves away from divine to human action and from pastoral and theological to medical and psychological models of care," 7. She goes on to suggest that the turn to psychology was legitimate saying, "People turned to psychology not so much because they were caving into secular culture, as Holifield implies, nor because they sought 'academic or scholarly respectability' as Edward Farley asserts, but because they found in the sciences a powerful way to understand religious experience and healing (perhaps better at the time than that found elsewhere in theology)." As Miller-McLemore suggests, even if there is some merit for turning to psychology to the neglect of the theology of the day, it shows the importance of the development of the method of correlation because it helped the discipline to understand human experience while staying engaged with the discipline of theology.

placed together the two central concerns of the discipline, theology and human experience. Hiltner's theological method would correlate human experience with the discipline of Christian theology. As he did so he sought to form a more robust connection between pastoral theology within "the body of divinity."[61]

Hiltner's definition of pastoral theology shows how he integrates the method of correlation into his understanding of pastoral theology.

> Pastoral theology, to present the definition in slightly different language, is an operation-focused branch of theology, which begins with theological questions and concludes with theological answers, in the interim examining all acts and operations of pastor and church to the degree that they involve the perspective of Christian shepherding.[62]

The key phrase as it relates to the method of correlation from this definition is 'which begins with theological questions and concludes with theological answers.' With more recent development in mind, this definition both shows the promise and problem in Hiltner's articulation.

The promise of Hilner's integration of the method of correlation to pastoral theology is that this helped to draw Christian theology back into the heart of pastoral theology. Hiltner placed theological questions (i.e. human experience) and theological answers (i.e. the body of divinity) together in conversation. For its day this was a decisive move because it strengthens the theological nature of the discipline of pastoral theology.

As a discipline, however, pastoral theology has found Hiltner's articulation of the method of correlation problematic. The reason for this is that Hiltner's version does not take the method of correlation far enough. Hiltner's method is seemingly uni-

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[61] Hiltner, *Preface*, 28, here he offers a sketch of his understanding of the "organization of theological knowledge and study."
[62] Hiltner, *Preface*, 24.

directional. His method goes in one direction from theological questions to theological

answers. As the discussion in chapter one noted, pastoral theology tends to prefer a bi-

directional flow between experience and theology. This means that theology does not

only provide answers for human questions but that human experience can speak into

theology. The example given in chapter one was from Andrew Lester's pastoral

theology. He shows the move from experience to theology by challenging theology's

placement of anger as one of the deadly sins. Lester feels that his experience as a

pastoral counsellor, his research into neuroscience and his consideration of historical

theology all lead him to challenge the "anger is sin" theological tradition.[63] This is the

kind of bi-directional movement pastoral theology uses and it took some time for the

discipline to adapt the method of correlation to allow for this kind of bi-directional flow.

Hiltner articulated the method of correlation that helped to redefine pastoral

theology in more theological terms. It took several decades but the discipline found a

more suitable method which is called "critical correlation."[64] Critical correlation offers

the bi-directional flow that has become the staple of contemporary pastoral theology.

From Hiltner's theological answers to theological questions, David Tracy offers a

mutually transformational correlation of experience and theology. He argues, "[t]he

object-referent of the revisionist model can perhaps be best described as a critical

reformulation of both the meanings manifested by our common human experience and

the meanings manifested by an interpretation of the central motifs of the Christian

tradition."[65] With Tracy there is a 'critical reformulation' that moves both toward human

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[63] See Lester, *The Angry*.

[64] Tracy in *Blessed Rage*, 45, states as his second thesis in his revisionist model that "[t]he theological task will involve a critical correlation of the results of the investigations of the two sources of theology."

[65] Tracy, *Blessed*, 34.

experience and toward the Christian tradition. He introduced the idea of critical

correlation which has been well received in pastoral theology.[66]

Critical correlation has become the norm to much of contemporary pastoral

theology. [67] The ability for human experience to not only receive theological answers

from the questions of human experience but to also offer a voice that might reformulate

theological thought has allowed the discipline to thrive. Pastoral theologians have

adapted critical correlation in the user friendly way as a critical conversation. Stephen

Pattison explains how a critical conversation functions as a method in pastoral theology.

He introduces his preferred method as a "critical, creative conversation between (a) my

own ideas, beliefs, feelings, perceptions and assumptions; (b) the beliefs, perceptions

and assumptions arising from the Christian community and tradition; and (c) the

contemporary situation, practice or event which is under consideration."[68] Pattison goes

on to show that such a critical conversation is adaptable to different levels of

understanding and sophistication and has a natural fit with pastoral theology because it

is similar to the many pastoral conversations which are inherent to ministry practice.

While the method of critical correlation has gained wide spread use in pastoral

theology it too has received some refinement. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat wonder

if it is possible to give all the participants in such a critical conversation equal weight.[69]

Without dismissing the wisdom of the method of critical correlation, Swinton and

Mowat seek to affirm that God's revelation does have greater weight in all theological

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[66] Browning in *A Fundamental*, 46, comments, "Tracy envisions theology as a mutually critical dialogue between interpretations of the Christian message and interpretations of contemporary culture experiences and practices."

[67] For a sampling of those who use the method of critical correlation see: Browning, *A Fundamental*; Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method*; Pattison, "Some Straw" and Mowat and Swinton, *Practical Theology*.

[68] Pattison, *A Critique*, 230.

[69] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 83.

conversations. The move toward the practice of perichoresis similarly seeks to affirm that God's self revelation does have a greater weight in the theological conversation being developed here. It seeks to do so in relational terms, understanding that God's self-revelation is done relationally and for the purpose of communion between human beings and God. As such, giving God's self-revelation more weight in the conversation does not hinder the back and forth conversation that is essential to contemporary pastoral theology. Swinton and Mowat help in providing a means for this concern to be incorporated into the method of critical correlation.

Swinton and Mowat articulate "a revised model of mutual critical correlation"[70] in their attempt to deal with this concern. In doing so, they affirm the priority of God's revelation in their use of the method of correlation. In short, Swinton and Mowat give logical priority to God's revelation over human experience. They argue, "[w]ithin the critical conversation which is Practical Theology, we recognize and accept fully that theology has logical priority . . . Nevertheless, the ways in which that revelation is interpreted, embodied and worked out are deeply influenced by specific contexts and individual and communal histories and traditions."[71] In their *revised* critical correlation Swinton and Mowat make room for faith commitments in a manner that affirms the revelation of God as logically prior to the insights of human experience. They make this affirmation being fully aware that theological interpretation is done by fallible human beings from within specific social contexts.

The practice of perichoresis seeks to work within these tensions as well. What it adds to the discussion is the importance of seeing God's self-revelation in relational

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[70] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 88–91.
[71] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*. 89.

terms. Turning to a specifically Trinitarian method will help to show how these tensions can be held together in something like a perichoretic relationship. Once understood in relational terms such a methodology encourages movement towards the different sources used in pastoral theology. This dissertation now turns to Bernard Nausner's interstitial method which will be drawn into dialogue with the method of revised critical correlation. This conversation will encourage the move from experience to relationship by engaging a method that is rooted in the doctrine of perichoresis.

The Interstitial Method

In *Human Experience and the Triune God*, Nausner's concern is to show that contemporary Trinitarian theology is in need of human experience. What Nausner offers is a relational understanding of God and human beings that resists overcoming the tensions that are an inherent part of this relationship. Nausner's move is to hold experience and revelation together in relational tension and he develops a method that respects this reality. Nausner points to Trinitarian theology to explain what he is pursuing with his interstitial method. He explains,

> Trinitarian theology's abode then displays a kind of interstice, a place where experience and revelation can be distinguished conceptually but not clearly separated on experiential or epistemological grounds. They belong together in such complex way that I cannot simply start at one point and work my way in a linear fashion down or up to the other.[72]

It is Nausner's interstitial methodology which helps him to "sustain this tension."[73]

As the practice of perichoresis moves from experience to relationship the interstitial method is a timely discovery. This is a method that functions in-between the elements that the practice of perichoresis seeks to keep together in relational proximity.

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[72] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 58.
[73] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 262.

Nausner comments, "my aim is to establish what I would like to call an *interstitial methodology*. 'Interstitial' is used here because Trinitarian theology is in need of recognising its 'in-between place' due to an essential dialectic between experience and revelation which underlies its discourse."[74] Nausner is dissatisfied with options that force a choice between experience or revelation. He opts to work out of the interstices, to embrace the tension between the two. So instead of viewing revelation and experience in oppositional categories he shows that "[e]xperience and revelation seem to mutually interrelate with and depend upon one another."[75] Such a turn is valuable for pastoral theology because, as was seen above, it is at the level of practice where it is impossible to actually separate revelation and experience. Such an interstitial method can aid the discipline to navigate the in-between while keeping revelation and experience together in creative tension.[76]

Nausner does a compelling job of showing how revelation and experience can be held together in the interstices. What his method "attempts to provide is space for an open and creative encounter between the concepts of experience and revelation."[77] To keep the two concepts together without either of them overwhelming the other, Nausner asserts two aspects of what he calls "an *interstitial attitude*."[78] The first aspect of an interstitial attitude focuses on experience. Nausner argues, "with respect to the concept of experience, to be aware of both the fact that human experience is the sole ground for doing theology and that this embeddedness does not necessarily rule out the possibility

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[74] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 57.
[75] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 57.
[76] Rubem Alves captures some of the creative power of the interstices in his book *The Poet*, 98, he writes, "Two melodies. . . The one I hear: it comes with your words, your voice . . .The other, which is not yours, was heard in the interstices of your words, out of your silence."
[77] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 60.
[78] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 60. Emphasis original.

of divine revelation occurring within this condition."[79] Nausner is convinced that human experience cannot be dismissed; it is a part of all theological work. He notes that the reception of revelation (which is given to human beings) is itself a human experience that is obviously part of Christian theology.

Nausner's second component of an interstitial attitude focuses on revelation. Here he argues, "an *inter-stitial attitude* is also aware of both the possibility that divine revelation might meaningfully indicate something beyond the realm of human experience and the impossibility of revelation occurring unless it occurs within the realm of human experience."[80] In this way, God's self-revelation draws human beings beyond just the sum of their collective understanding of God, but connected with this is the fact that God only reveals himself in and through human experience. The incarnation is a profound example of this. The life, death and resurrection of Christ, reveal dimensions of God's love that far exceed anything that human experience alone could comprehend. Yet, God's self revelation occurred precisely within the dimensions of human experience; "the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth," (John 1:12).

The relational dimensions of the move from experience to relationship also come into sharper relief with Nausner's help. Based on his interstitial methodology he offers a "Trinitarian hermeneutics in the interstices."[81] This development will be drawn into dialogue with the method of revised critical correlation and provides insight into the 'perichoretic' in the move from experience to relationship.

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[79] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 60.
[80] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 60–61. Emphasis original
[81] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 136.

In an effort to keep revelation and human experience together and in creative tension, Nausner envisions the Trinitarian theologian working in the interstices between three levels (see figure 3.1). Level A corresponds with God the Father and is understood as "experiences of the human condition as relational and of what it means to be human (conditions of divine creation)."[82] This level focuses on the human condition and is a vital link for Nausner who believes that it is only through human experience that theologians can speak meaningfully about the social doctrine of the Trinity. Here the social and relational dimension of the human condition is paramount.[83] Level B speaks of the "experiences of Jesus who interacted with human beings and lived relationships (conditions of divine incarnation)."[84] Level C speaks of "experiences of the Spirit who renders possible God encounters through the ages (condition of the Spirit)."[85] In levels B and C, Nausner focuses upon the Gospel narratives and the Bible as a whole.[86] As his interstitial method allows, Nausner embraces the creative tension which exists between each of the three levels. He places the Trinitarian theologian in the interstices between them suggesting that "[t]heological discourse about the social doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, must be at home with all three levels of human experience and uphold a creative tension between them and move in the interstices."[87] The relationality of God and the relational dimensions of the "conditions of divine creation"[88] set the context for the development of theology from within the interstices. Placing the theologian in the interstices between the three levels can be appropriated by the practice of perichoresis

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[82] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 137.
[83] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 138.
[84] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 137.
[85] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 137.
[86] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 138.
[87] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 136–38.
[88] Nausner, *Human Experience*, 137.

with the idea of doing ministry in cadence with God. Both approaches have a Trinitarian framework that encourages attentiveness to both divine revelation and human experience.

Nausner's approach advances the practice of perichoresis methodologically. He opens up a pathway for pastoral theology to move with the revised method of critical correlation into the interstices that the triune God creates. This provides a relational methodological outworking for the discipline. Nausner's move helps at the methodological level to hold together both God's revelation and human experience within a Trinitarian form. The relational dimension of both experience and revelation provide the common ground to help both of these elements remain together in creative tension.

In what follows, a pastoral perichoretic interstitial method will be articulated. This approach is being developed in light of the discussion above concerning pastoral theological method and Nausner's interstitial method and Trinitarian hermeneutics. It brings together the critical conversation of the method of revised critical correlation and aligns them with the three levels of Nausner's Trinitarian hermeneutic. In this approach the three levels each correspond to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit respectively. It is the ministering persons and/or the pastoral theologian who functions in the interstices between the three levels.

The Pastoral Perichoretic Interstitial Method

Level A
Experiences of the
human condition as
relational and of what it
means to be human
(conditions of creation)

**Trinitarian
Theologian**

Level B
Experiences of Jesus
who interacted with
human beings and lived
relationships
(conditions of divine
incarnation)

Level C
Experiences of the Spirit
who renders possible
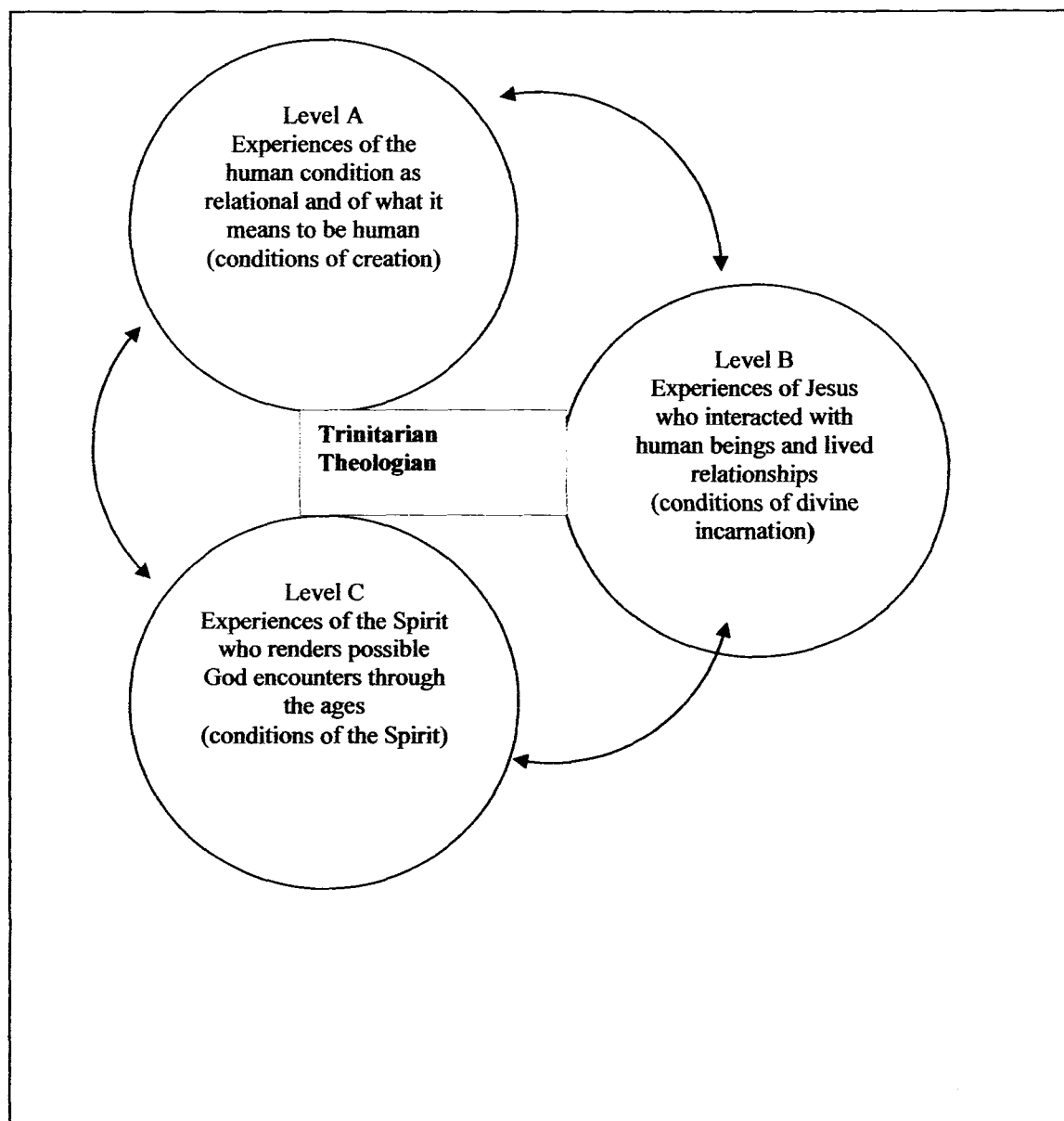God encounters through
the ages
(conditions of the Spirit)

Figure 3.1[89]

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[89] Nausner calls this diagram "Trinitarian Hermeneutics in the Interstice." See *Human Experience*, 137.

The relational dimensions of this pastoral theological method are rooted in the doctrine of perichoresis. The three levels have a dynamic sense of movement as they move in cadence together and in harmony reflective of how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to each other in love. The perichoretic orientation of this method emphasizes the relational dynamics of this approach. It is out of the creative tension of affirming the differences that exists between revelation and experience that allow the method to function with a perichoretic cadence. Like in the perichoretic dance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this method opens up theological engagement within the process of theological reflection. In this way, the being of God understood through the doctrine of perichoresis conditions the rhythm by which this method operates.

The pastoral perichoretic interstitial method consists of three relational movements.[90] As was seen in Figure 3.1, Nausner offers geometric shapes to explain his Trinitarian hermeneutics. What is in view with the practice of perichoresis is something more relational and poetic. It is a picture which provides a sense of unity, diversity and movement (see Fig. 3.2). This picture is a unity—it is a picture of one entity. It is a diversity—it contains three different shades of the one colour red. It also has a sense of movement—it is not a linear display but has a sense of pervasive movement. With this in mind, this method is described not geometrically but more fluidly and artistically. The artistry of the picture speaks more of the unity, diversity and movement of the triune God and is used to get a glimpse of the spiritual dynamic which underlies this relational method in pastoral theology.

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[90] These three realms roughly correspond with Nausner's three levels of the hermeneutical method described above and the three conversation partners in Pattison's critical conversation.

The first movement of this perichoretic method is related to God the Father. In Figure 3.2 the Father is represented by the darkest shades of red in the picture. It focuses on the creational context where the questions, expressions and wisdom of human experience and praxis are given voice. The second movement of this method seeks to be moving in relational cadence with Jesus. Jesus is represented by the mid-shade of red seen in the picture. This movement speaks of the theological, historical and contemporary voices of the community of faith. Here the drama of human angst and suffering is considered in light of God's self revelation in Christ. The third movement flows in cadence with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is marked by the lightest shade of red in the picture. This movement, rooted in the dance of perichoresis, speaks of the in breaking of the Kingdom of God into the church and the world. It is the context of the *ecclesia* where God's reign has begun but has yet to be reached in fullness that Christian life and faith is shaped by the Spirit. Pastoral theology serves ministering persons who move in between these three realms to live and minister in cadence with the triune God.

The promise of this method is the freedom it offers for those with differing interests to move and consider the discussion from the differing perspectives. This method also takes a perichoretic shape which illumines God's role in doing pastoral theology. With this method, pastoral theology is not done outside of God's covenant and care, but with God who is working with the pastoral theologian to both discover the

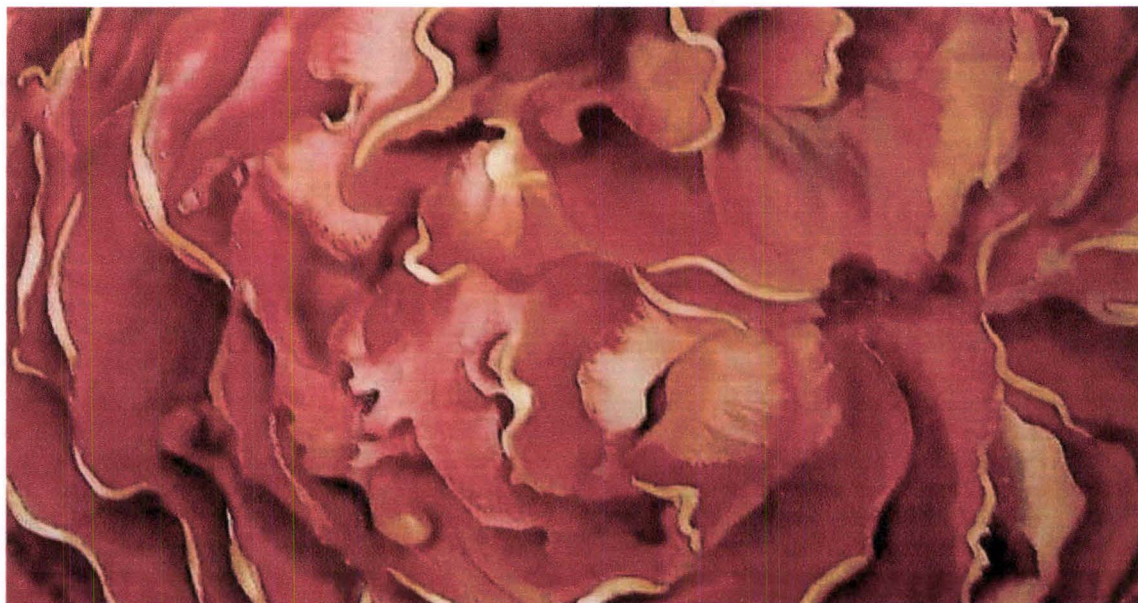depths of human experience and the mystery of God's self revelation.

Fig. 3.2[91]

This perichoretic interstitial method itself is developed in part to keep

ministering persons and pastoral theologians in relationship with the triune God.[92] This

method embraces the tension that exists between human and divine agency. Affirming

the infinite qualitative distinction between human beings and God, it embraces the

immanence of God in all three realms. It affirms the providence of God over all of

creation and human knowledge. It looks to Christ to understand the Christian faith and

how it has developed through the centuries. It relies on the Holy Spirit as the promised

counsellor who will aid God's children to understand the complexities and promise of

the contemporary context and realize the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. This

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[91] Online: http://0.tqn.com/d/painting/1/0/y/h/1ppredFPruden.jpg .

[92] The importance of prayer as a means of integrating theology and experience will be discussed in chapter 6. Karl Barth speaks of the importance of prayer in theological work as skylight. In *Evangelical,* 161, he writes, "[p]roper and useful theological work is distinguished by the fact that it takes place in the realm which not only has open windows . . . facing the surrounding life of the Church and the world, but also and above all has a skylight . . . theological work is opened by heaven and God's work and word, but it is also open toward heaven and God's work and word."

perichoretic dance is seen in that each of these three movements is part of a greater movement that seeks to participate in fostering the love and justice that flow from the triune God and into the church and the world.

As the practice of perichoresis moves from experience to relationship, this perichoretic interstitial method serves ministering persons to navigate the challenges of keeping experience and revelation together. It is part of the perichoretic nature of this pastoral theological method to keep the tensions of diversity and unity together through relationship. In doing so. it embraces the complexity of human experience, the priority of God's self- revelation and seeks to serve ministering persons with both of these dynamics. With the aid of Nausner, this method embraces this tension and moves forward not in a linear but in a relational manner. It does not only do pastoral theology from one specific perspective—therapeutic, liberation, mission or tradition—but moves with God to adapt a variety of perspectives and methodological options that will hold human experience and God's self revelation together relationally. It is also relies on the triune God to do its work valuing the practices of prayer and reflection as the method operates. It brings with it a dynamic sense of movement. In this approach, theology is never finished. The pastoral theological process continues as each fresh discovery and experience opens up new vistas of insight, mystery and complexity. What this method is careful to develop is relationship: relationship with the triune God and relationship with those involved in the specific pastoral theological endeavour.

The heightened relationality of this pastoral theological method should be clearly seen. Seward Hiltner drew the questions of human experience in order to receive the answers of Christian theology. His flow of thought moved in one direction. His method

only introduced the participants of the discussion to each other. In this perichoretic interstitial method, relationality is embraced on all levels. It flows out of the perichoretic movements of the triune God and seeks to relate experience and revelation, humanity and divinity, in a way that allows for a thorough understanding of human experience, God's self-revelation and the situation under consideration. The relational dynamic allows it to be fruitful and continuous. Just as in healthy relationships, this method is never finished but offers a continuous interplay between the three salient realms. For the practice of perichoresis, this development ensures that the relational dynamics of the being of God are ingrained in all aspects of this approach to pastoral theology. It is a method that helps ministering persons to live and move in cadence with the triune God by ensuring that experience and revelation are held together in methodological relationship.

The Living Human Document and Relational Ontology

As is clear by now, human beings are intrinsically important to pastoral theology. The discipline strives to keep the human person central in all its pastoral and academic endeavours. The concept of the living human document is the seminal way pastoral theology has sought to keep the human person central. The living human document is as critical to pastoral theology as historical, doctrinal and sacred texts are to the other disciplines of theology. In pastoral theology it is the complex dynamics of all of human life that demands to be interpreted as carefully as any other text used in the discipline of theology. The concept of the living human document aids pastoral theologians to be attentive to this task.

As was shown above, it was Anton Boisen who coined the term 'the living human document.' Since his articulation of this concept, it has become a staple in pastoral theology, and continues to be developed and considered in contemporary pastoral theology. One of the most important developments since Boisen's coining of the term has been Charles Gerkin's engagement with the concept, providing it with a hermeneutical mode.[93] More recently, Bonnie Miller-McLemore has worked to supply the concept of the living human document with a more relevant postmodern construction.[94] It is these developments of the concept of living human document that will be drawn into dialogue with Trinitarian relational ontology as the move from experience to relationship continues.

The concept of the living human document keeps human beings central to the pastoral theological endeavour. For the practice of perichoresis this is an important reality, but while the relationship between pastor and congregant/client is held together nicely with this concept it is less clear what God's role has in this relationship. The concept of the living human document is worth drawing into dialogue with relational ontology so that God's presence is a defining dynamic in all the relationships ministering persons find themselves in. It is relationship that provides the possibility for ministering to serve others faithfully and effectively in the interplay between the being of God and situations of ministry.

From its inception relationality was an important part of the concept of the living human document. As John Patton discusses Boisen's contribution to the field of pastoral theology he observes,

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[93] See Gerkin, *The Living*.
[94] See Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting."

> What the pastor offers in the vast majority of her or his general pastoral work and in pastoral counselling is not answers or cures but relationship to who the pastor is and what he or she represents. The pastor's call is to break into the loneliness of whatever the parishioner is going through with a ministry presence. Boisen's contribution to the development of a mental hospital chaplaincy was motivated primarily by his awareness of this need.[95]

The prioritizing of relationship over pastoral answers and cures is an important move for the practice of perichoresis. Boisen knew, from his own experience of mental illness, that what patients need from ministering persons is not diagnostic expertise, clinical attention, or even theological rational. They need relationship. Placing the concept of the living human document at the centre of pastoral theological concern was for Boisen a relational move. What he left underdeveloped is more clear articulation of God's role in this development.

A relational ontology that is rooted in the doctrine of perichoresis provides the theological context for an understanding of the concept of the living human document. This is an important development in the practice of perichoresis because, once again, it shows that a robust Trinitarian theology enhances rather than hinders the relational concern for human persons inherent to the discipline of pastoral theology.

Such a development advances the move from experience to relations in two ways. First is a critique of the functional individualism that often is present in the concept of the living human document. Gerkin's explanation of the life of the soul reveals this concern.[96] The second development focuses on the inability of the living human document to effectively work out the communal and personal dimensions. The concept of the living human document has not been developed in a manner that appreciates the interpersonal and social dynamics that are inherent to human life. Miller-

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[95] Patton, "Physicians of the Soul," 167.
[96] Gerkin, *The Living*, 97–117, for his full discussion of his articulation of the life of the soul.

McLemore has responded to this concern especially in light of the postmodern turn. Her

development of "the living human document within the web" moves in the direction of a

relational understanding of personhood that respects both the communal and personal.[97]

It is these two elements which will be brought into dialogical relationship with

perichoretic relationality.

The Lonely Living Human Document

Charles Gerkin in his book *The Living Human Document* sought to draw on

psychological, philosophical and theological developments to provide a fresh vision for

pastoral care and counseling in what he calls the "hermeneutical mode."[98] In this book,

Gerkin offers an explanation of the life of the soul.[99] Here Gerkin offers an

understanding of the core dynamics which influence the life of the soul. Gerkin's

argument is well informed but, in this case, lacks adequate theological engagement. The

main problem is that Gerkin does not include God in his explanation of the key

dynamics that influence the life of the soul.[100] As this dissertation seeks to move from

experience to relationship it is necessary to be explicit about God's role in the

understanding of the self.

In his development of the life of the soul, Gerkin affirms the interrelation of

terms like ego, self, soul and identity to understand what constitutes the human

person.[101] He even chooses these terms in an effort to draw on both psychological and

theological thought. However, Gerkin intentionally resists speaking of "God's activity

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[97] Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting the Living."

[98] Gerkin, *The Living*, 35, where he describes his task as, "developing a hermeneutical explication of the paradigmatic image of the living human document."

[99] Gerkin, *The Living*, 102.

[100] Gerkin, *The Living*, 102. He includes: self ego, faith and culture and social situation as making up the "dialectics of the Self's hermeneutics."

[101] Gerkin, *The Living*, 97–100.

or the relationship to God as a separate directing action on the life of the soul."[102] Gerkin admits that his articulation of the dynamics of the life of the soul assumes God.[103] The practice of perichoresis is careful to not do what Gerkin is attempting here. Gerkin is explaining the soul in terms which exclude God. In this case, he speaks of the soul in isolation from God. By engaging with relational ontology Gerkin's articulation of the life of the soul can be drawn into a more theological realm.

Gerkin shows that the life of the soul exists in the dialectic between one's "(1) interpretations of faith and culture, (2) self/ego and (3) social situations."[104] Each of these elements of a person's life is in dialectic relationship with the others. Gerkin notes "the constant interactional process that makes up the flow of life in which the life of the soul is embedded and nurtured and/or kept in bondage."[105] Gerkin's articulation and development of the life of the soul is creative and informed but by his own admission lacks one crucial element: God.

Perhaps due to his epistemological concern, Gerkin ignores the being of God in his understanding of the life of the soul. He writes, "[p]astoral theologians will notice at once that I have not included the force/meaning power of God's activity or the relationship to God as a separate direction acting upon the life of the soul."[106] Gerkin admits that he does this for two reasons. On the one hand, he asserts that God is present in all the "force/meaning influences upon the life of the soul."[107] Here it seems God is part of the process but is dissolved with his immanence in the process of self

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[102] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.

[103] Gerkin, *The Living*, 105, writes, "This view of the life of the soul assumes a God who is active in the world, incarnate in created life, and purposeful in history."

[104] Gerkin, *The Living*, 102 where he offers of diagram of "The Dialectics of the Life of the Soul."

[105] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.

[106] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.

[107] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.

understanding. On the other hand, Gerkin asserts that God is also "wholly other from creation."[108] Now it seems God is eclipsed by his transcendence and distant from the process of self understanding. Gerkin acknowledges that God's presence is a mystery. A mystery he nevertheless affirms that the Christian faith seeks to hold together through the language of the Trinity.[109]

Gerkin's understanding of the life of the soul can be more explicitly theological through engagement with Trinitarian relational ontology. As was seen in chapter two, it is John Zizioulas who articulates such a pervasive relational ontology that would necessarily include relationship with God in all aspects of human personhood. The relational implications of Zizioulas' thought have proven to be transformative for an understanding of personhood. Such a relational ontology argues that the human person cannot be understood individualistically. In philosophy,[110] theological anthropology[111] and pastoral theology[112] the human person is to be construed in relational terms. [113]

Zizioulas's conception of personhood always includes the relationality that is inherent to the triune God. He teaches that it was through the pastoral and theological work of the patristic fathers that relationality became a philosophical concept that redefines "being as communon."[114] Zizioulas believes that "communion becomes an ontological concept in patristic thought."[115] This development is decisive for Gerkin's construct of the life of the soul for two reasons. First, Zizioulas' approach resists the

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[108] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.
[109] Gerkin, *The Living*, 104.
[110] See Burber, *I and Thou*.
[111] See Grenz, *The Social God*; Pannenberg, *Anthropology*.
[112] See Cooper-White, *Many Voices*.
[113] Grenz, *Rediscovering*. In his survey of the contemporary resurgence of Trinitarian thought he highlights three theologians under the title "the triumph of relationality," 117. They are: Leonardo Boff, John Zizioulas and Catherine Mowry LaCugna.
[114] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* is the title of his seminal work.
[115] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

kind of theological imprecision that is inherent in this part of Gerkin's work. Zizioulas writes that, "nothing in existence is conceivable in itself, as an individual."[116] If relations are ontological, this means that Gerkin's approach should not merely assume the influence of God. God's relations are what define personhood. It is necessary to be precise about the relationship with God for an accurate pastoral theological articulation of the life of the soul. Secondly, Zizioulas establishes communion as an ontological reality that impacts all things. Zizioulas argues, "the ancient world heard for the first time that it is communion which makes beings 'be': nothing exists without it not even God."[117] Zizioulas affirms that being is not individual differentiation but being is understood in and through communion. This means that Gerkin's articulation of the life of the soul is not missing an element but the most important element. The life of the soul is a dimension where it is most important to provide a theological understanding.

What is mystifying about Gerkin's approach is that he does seem to want to develop just such a relational understanding of God that impacts his construal of the life of the soul. After he defines the life of the soul apart from God, he works to reaffirm God's relational place in the process. Gerkin's ambiguity on the matter seems to be because he is avoiding the view that "the life of the soul does not have to do with some isolated 'spiritual' relationship to God separate from the life of the self in the world."[118] This is fair enough, but the language of relational ontology does a better job of articulating God's place in defining the life of the soul than omitting God's presence in order to avoid a misguided spiritual understanding of the soul. The move from experience to relations begins in the soul. It is only in relationship with God at the centre

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[116] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

[117] Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

[118] Gerkin, *The Living*, 105.

of being that personhood is enhanced and brought graciously by God to its most abundant form.

Perichoretic relational ontology gets specific about who God is and the implications this has for human beings made in God's image. Colin Gunton carefully sketches why the doctrine of perichoresis suits its application to understandings of human personhood and this would include Gerkin's life of the soul. He argues,

> To speak of divine perichoresis is to essay a conceptual mapping, on the basis of that economy, of the being of God: God is what he is by virtue of the dynamic relatedness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The question now is whether we can make significant moves in the reverse direction. Can we use the concept of perichoresis not only analogically but transcendentally, to lay to view something of the necessary notes of being? If, as I am suggesting, the concept of perichoresis is of transcendental status, it must enable us to take a third step and begin to explore whether reality is on all its levels 'perichoretic,' a dynamism of relatedness.[119]

It is being argued here that the 'necessary notes of being' that Gunton eludes to allow for a perichoretic understanding of human personhood. This would allow Gerkin to explain the theological dimensions of the life of the soul. As it stands, Gerkin misses the 'dynamism of relatedness' in his articulation of the dynamics of the life of the soul. In its place, Gerkin articulates a version of the life of the soul that skirts around the theological implications of this dimension of personhood. A perichoretic relational ontology speaks more confidently of the triune God as a relational being which sets the context for a relational understanding of all facets of human existence.

Gerkin's life of the soul is enhanced by Zizioulas's relational ontology and Gunton's perichoretic rationality. With Zizioulas it is communion which makes beings be, which highlights why Gerkin's depiction of the life of the soul is in need of precise theologically articulation. With relational ontology there is no reason to either dissolve

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[119] Gunton, *The One*, 165.

God in his immanence or eclipse God in his transcendence. The practice of perichoresis believes with Hunsinger's that "in true fellowship the identity of each is not effaced but enhanced."[120] Being precise about God's influence of the life of the soul enhances human understanding.

With Gunton, Gerkin is confronted with a 'dynamism of relatedness' which informs the life of the soul. Understanding the life of the soul in relation to God allows an ontology of relatedness that emphasizes that "in the beginning is the relation."[121] In this case, not only is God's influence on the life of the soul crucial but the fact that God is perichoretic being also should influence this aspect of personhood. Perichoretic relational ontology can help advance Gerkin's depiction of the life of the soul by showing how there is ongoing interplay between unity and diversity that is part of being a human being.

With this critique in mind, bringing Gerkin's life of the soul into dialogue with perichoretic relational ontology is generative for the field of pastoral theology. It respects the immanence and transcendence of God in understanding the human person, but provides a way for relational ontology to contribute to a theological articulation of the life of the soul. Such an ontological understanding of the human soul reflects the perichoretic being of God and encourages a view of personhood that is framed in theological relational terms throughout.

Gerkin's proposal is easily augmented in a way that is consistent with the doctrine of perichoresis. Gerkin dialectics of the life of the soul have three realms which can be related to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the Father who influences the life

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[120] Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's," 187.
[121] Buber, *I and Thou*, 69.

of the soul in the realm of a persons "social situation."[122] God's providence and love for the world are relational dynamics operative in all social situations. Jesus offers a relational connection with "the interpretations of faith and culture."[123] The incarnate son of God can relate to people in their cultural context in a manner that encourages faith to mature. The Holy Spirit relates to people at the level of their self/ego. It is the Spirit who is Jesus' promised counsellor who will guide people into all truth (see John 15:26-16:15). The life of the soul can be understood in terms of relationship with God at all levels. It is perichoretic in that the one God is working in all the areas that influence the life of the soul but the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be discerned to have a particular resonance as was shown above. Understanding the dynamics of the life of the soul in this way aids ministering persons to use the concept of the living human document to see how God is present and working at all dimensions of existence.

Communal and Personal Dynamics of the Living Human Document

The postmodern turn has also forced pastoral theologians to wrestle with the individualistic and therapeutic bias of the concept of the living human document. While not rejecting the concept entirely, Bonnie Miller-McLemore suggests that the discipline is due for a more relevant metaphor. The model she initially offered is that of the "living human web." [124] Ultimately she finds this concept unsatisfying as well and proposes the idea of "the living human document within the web."[125] The living human document within the web, as Miller-McLemore calls it, takes into consideration the personal and communal dimensions inherent to human life. In offering this she highlights the

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[122] Gerkin, *The Living*, 102.
[123] Gerkin, *The Living*, 102.
[124] See Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting the Living."
[125] Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting the Living," 4

importance of moving beyond simplistic, individualistic approaches in pastoral theology.

It is through the image of the web that the communal and personal dimensions of the living human document are brought together in Miller-McLemore's development. Miller-McLemore shows that "the 'web' is less contained and more expansive as a metaphor than 'document.'"[126] What she argues for, however, is an understanding of both the communal dimensions of human existence (the web) as well as an understanding of the individual human being (the living human document) who exists *within* the complexities of one's social and political context. She is careful to show "the interconnection between person and web and the need to focus on both."[127] The unity (the web) and the diversity (the humans) are to be considered as a mutuality. Miller-McLemore is moving in the direction of relationship.

While Miller-McLemore does not guide the discussion in a Trinitarian direction, the connections with the practice of perichoresis are fruitful. A relational ontology insists that the unity (the one God) is diversity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the tensions between unity and diversity are held together relationally. To echo Zizioulas, for God to be, means that God exists in relationship (communion). The practice of perichoresis sees the metaphor of a "living human document within the web" as a resonant articulation that encourages the move from experience to relationship. The fecundity of this approach is seen doxologically and ecclesially.

Doxologically, Miller-McLemore's description of pastoral practice can, with a Trinitarian perspective, become an act of worship. It reflects back to God his own being

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[126] Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting the Living," 10.
[127] Miller-McLemore, "Revisiting the Living," 11.

and in so doing ascribes worth to him. The practice of perichoresis affirms there is a connection between God's being and action.[128] God's actions in the world are consistent with who he is in eternity as the triune God. Understood in relationship with the triune God, pastoral ministry is done as an expression of who God is. The balance Miller-McLemore has found between the communal and personal dimensions of pastoral practice when drawn into conversation with relational ontology is a doxological reflection of God's triune being. To value and relationally hold together the personal and communal dimensions inherent to Christian ministry is a means of ascribing worth to the triune God.

The concept of the living human document within the web is also helpful for understanding the personal and communal dimensions of ecclesial life. Drawing on perichoretic relationality, Stanley Grenz shows the communal and personal dimensions of what he calls the "ecclesial self."[129] In describing the *imago dei* in light of contemporary psychology and Trinitarian theology, he articulates his vision of what being human means. Following a careful theological explication of the ecclesial self he concludes,

> The Christian identity, therefore, is more than personal; it is shared identity. This identity is bound up with the human destiny to be the *imago dei*, to reflect the character of, and to exemplify the pattern of life that characterizes the triune God. Because the triune life can be represented only within a relational context, the self is truly ecclesial; the self of each participant in the new humanity is constituted through the relationality of the community of those who by the Spirit are 'in Christ.'[130]

Grenz shows the importance of the personal and communal dimensions of the ecclesial self. Miller-McLemore's concept of the living human document within the web shares

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[128] For a full discussion see Gunton, *Act and Being.*
[129] Grenz, *The Social God,* 312-31.
[130] Grenz, *The Social God,* 331.

this personal and communal dimension. This move is vital not just because of the postmodern context, but even more so because the triune God as a relational being is understood to be and to act in the interstices between these personal and the communal dimensions. In this way, to understand oneself is intimately bound to one's understanding of God and to participation in the community of faith.

The developments that embrace the personal and communal dimensions of contemporary culture, the being of God and human existence are vital for the move from experience to relationship. These developments all can serve ministering persons to appreciate the relationality that is inherent to all ministry. This helps to inform what a ministering person is. A ministering person is not understood as an individual professional clergy member executing pastoral care to those in need of insight, inspiration or care. The ministering person in view here is one who is: (1) in relationship with the triune God and is seeking by the Spirit to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry in the world; (2) in relationship with the local church where they are a member of a larger body of believers who together seek to represent the eschatological in-breaking of God's reign; (3) in relationship with the world as a part of the social and culture milieu in which they live and serve as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in these three areas that the practice of perichoresis embraces relationality and moves from experience to relationship.

Relational Integration the Example of Prayer

The move from experience to relations is ultimately a movement toward God in prayer. In prayer the complexities, tensions and challenges of human experience are brought to God. Three prayers will be offered in an effort to show how prayer integrates

the many dynamics discussed in this chapter into relationship with the triune God. The

three prayers are from the Apostle Paul, Anton Boisen and Karl Barth.

In Eph 3:14-21 Paul prays,

> For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
>
> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more that all we ask and imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Anton Boisen prays,

> Our Father in heaven, we thank thee that amid the trials and discouragements of this our earthly life we may find support in the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us to watch with him and with him to draw upon the sources of power and insight which thou dost place at our disposal that we may also stand with him strong and serene in the face of danger and ready for effective service when the time for action comes. Amen.[131]

Karl Barth prays,

> O sovereign God! You have humbled yourself in order to exalt us. You became poor so that we might become rich. You came to us so that we can come to you. You took upon yourself our humanity in order to raise us up into eternal life. All this comes through your grace, free and unmerited; all this through your beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
>
> We are gathered here for prayer in the knowledge of this mystery and this wonder. We come to praise you, to proclaim and hear your word. We know that we have not strength to do so unless you make us free to lift our hearts and thoughts to you. Be present now in our midst, we pray. Through your Holy Spirit open for us the way to come to you, that we may see with our own eyes your light which has come into the world, and then in the living of our lives become your witnesses. Amen.[132]

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[131] Quoted in Nouwen, "Anton T. Boisen," 63. Originally published by Boisen in the Chicago Theolgical Seminary Register, March, 1932.

[132] Barth, *Prayer*, 67.

Prayer is the relational movement toward God that begins in the depth of one's soul, includes all of one's situations and joins in with the dance of perichoresis that invites human participation. Prayer is the most authentic movement from experience to relationship and is the defining practice in the practice of perichoresis.

Summary

Human experience is central to pastoral theology. The living human document has been a pivotal concept to keep this human dimension central to the discipline. In dialogue with perichoretic relationality, theologies of experience advance theoretically, methodologically and practically. Theoretically, Boisen's theology of experience needs to be held in creative tension with Barth's relational theology of revelation. Methodologically, the method of correlation is drawn into transformative dialogue with a more relational interstitial method and Trinitarian hermeneutics of Bernard Nausner. Practically, all pastoral understandings of human personhood must include relationship with God as well as the personal and communal dynamics of life. The practice of perichoresis draws on each of these developments in the effort to serve ministering persons to move theoretically, methodologically and practically in cadence with the triune God. This cadence is not only relational it is also participative and that is the focus of the next chapter where the move from pastoral concern to presence will be explored.

CHAPTER FOUR
PERICHORETIC PARTICIPATION: FROM CONCERN TO PRESENCE

Introduction

Pastoral concern is a central ingredient in pastoral theology. Pastoral concern

speaks of the general disposition of ministering persons who want to care for others.[1]

This care is often directed toward those who are suffering. Drawing pastoral responses

to human angst into dialogue with the doctrine of perichoresis allows for a move from

concern to presence. As the cross of Calvary reveals, the dance of perichoresis has a

sorrowful movement—in Christ God suffers. This opens up the possibility that human

angst can be understood participatively—the triune God understands and is attentive to

human angst and offers compassion. As ministering persons move from concern to

presence they are able to help people discover the participative connection between their

own suffering and Christ's suffering. It is through compassionate presence that

ministering persons open up the dynamics of perichoretic participation even in the most

perplexing situations of human experience.[2]

The move from concern to presence is necessary because it articulates how

ministry practice participates with the triune God. Key points of reference will need to

be understood as this movement unfolds. A discussion of what is meant by perichoretic

participation, pastoral concern and participative presence will be offered to orient the

journey forward. With these points of reference in place the dialogue will begin between

human angst and the doctrine of perichoresis. The discussion will begin by showing the

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[1] Closely linked with pastoral care I have chosen not to use that term. Pastoral concern includes all aspects of Christian ministry and in this chapter focuses on being attentive to situations of human angst.

[2] See Zylla, *Virtue*, 103, where he articulates a pastoral theology of virtue for the experience of suffering. Zylla shows that presence is crucial for compassionate ministry. He argues, "[t]he roots of the word compassion in Latin are *pati* 'to suffer' and *cum* 'with.'" Compassion means to suffer with. Zylla sketches three images of ministry: the attentive poet, 113–20; the weeping prophet, 120–24; the good shepherd, 124–28.

pastoral limitations of traditional forms of theodicy and by highlighting the value of what John Swinton calls "practical theodicy."[3] In light of such practical theodicy, a Trinitarian understanding of lament will be articulated. With the help of a pastoral encounter recorded in Henri Nouwen's *The Wounded Healer* the contours of participative presence will be considered. The discussion will continue by articulating the perspective and posture of this approach to pastoral theology.[4] It takes the perspective of the wounded healer and the posture of cruciformity which both inform what it means to participate in the ongoing ministry of Christ in the church and world. The chapter will come to a close with a pastoral theological reading of the narrative of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The move from concern to presence serves ministering persons to live and serve in cadence with God even in the face of the most perplexing experiences.

Perichoretic Participation, Pastoral Concern, Perichoretic Presence

Perichoretic Participation

Perichoretic participation speaks of both God's essence (that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit participate in one another) as well as the invitation for Christ's followers to participate in the divine life. At the creaturely level, this invitation is expressed most clearly through Jesus' prayer to his Father, "may they also be in us" (John 17:21). Jürgen Moltmann shares a vision of such perichoretic participation when he says, "[w]hen God is known face to face, the freedom of God's servants, his children and his friends finally finds its fulfillment in God himself. Then freedom means the unhindered participation in the eternal life of the triune God himself, and in his inexhaustible

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[3] Swinton, *Raging*, 79–89
[4] Gustafson, *Christ*, 242.

fullness and glory."[5] Such a description shows that perichoretic participation is a profound possibility for God's friends and is eschatologically oriented, offering a most profound freedom.

The idea of perichoretic participation is rooted in the mutual indwelling of the three divine persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The oneness of the triune God is a participative unity that is dynamic and relational.[6] Miroslav Volf articulates divine participation in this way,

> [f]or *perichoresis* suggests a dynamic identity in which 'non-identity' indwells the 'identity' and constitutes it by this indwelling. The Father is the Father not only because he is distinct from the Son and the Spirit but also because through the power of self giving the Son and the Spirit dwell in him. The same is true of the Son and the Spirit.[7]

Volf clarifies that this indwelling is not a dissolving of the divine persons in each other, but their identity is constituted in their mutual participation. Volf shows that, "the distinctions between them are precisely the presupposition of that interiority, since persons who have dissolved into one another cannot exist in one another."[8] Volf concludes, "[t]he unity of the triune God is grounded neither in the numerically identical substance nor in the accidental intentions of the persons, but rather in their *mutually interior being*."[9] The Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist as one God in three persons through their perichoretic participation in one another.

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[5] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 222.
[6] Buxton, *The Trinity*, 133.
[7] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 181.
[8] Volf, *After*, 209.
[9] Volf, *After*, 210. Emphasis original.

With proper respect for the distinction between creator and creature,[10] perichoretic participation is a transformative concept for Christian life and ministry. This is because the triune God has invited creaturely participation in the life and mission of God. It is an invitation to perichoretic participation in the triune God that reframes Christian ministry in relational, participative and spiritual terms. It is the invitation to perichoretic participation with God that allows for a vision of ministry that is not done in light of God, not done for God, but is done as participants *with* God. Such a participative understanding of ministry has been articulated in recent years and it is helpful to survey these developments with the goal of showing why it is necessary to engage perichoretic participation more carefully with one of the key issues of pastoral theology—human angst.

Stephen Seamands has provided a clear and articulate vision of perichoretic participation as it relates to ministry. As was noted earlier in this dissertation, Seamands articulates his participative understanding of ministry as "the ministry we have entered is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and world."[11] Seamands explains, "[t]he Trinitarian circle of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is therefore an open, not a closed, circle. Through faith in Christ, through baptism *into* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), we enter into the life of the Trinity and are graciously included as partners."[12] With Seamands, ministry flows out of such a participative union in and with the triune God. It is participative and perichoretic throughout.

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[10] Volf argues in *After* that "there can be no correspondence to the interiority of the divine persons at the human level. . . even the divine persons indwell human beings in a qualitatively different way than they do one another" 210–11.

[11] Seamands, *Ministry*, 9–10. Emphasis original.

[12] Seamands, *Ministry*, 12. Emphasis original.

Seamands sketches a vision of ministry that consistently emphasizes human participation in Christ's ongoing ministry in the world. This theocentric perspective emphasizes that ministry is done in and through union with Christ. This approach allows Seamands to distinguish between being productive and being fruitful in ministry. Fecundity in ministry comes through intimate participative union with Christ. Seamands argues, "[n]o doubt through our sincere religious self determination we can make things happen in ministry; we can be productive. But there is a world of difference, as was noted earlier, between being productive and being fruitful."[13] It is by abiding in him that Jesus assures his disciples that they will bear fruit that will last (see John 15). Seamands concludes, "[t]he exchanged life where Christ dwells in us even as we dwell in him is the key to participating in the ongoing ministry of Jesus."[14] Seamands appreciates the relationality that is inherent to perichoretic participation.

Seamands' articulation of perichoretic participation emphasizes the practical relevance of his theology of ministry. Seamands' approach is theocentric and ensures God's being and action is paramount in active ministry. With Seamands, ministry flows from the triune God through human beings into the church and world. It is a perspective on ministry that values relationality and spirituality as the Spirit draws human beings into union with Christ to the glory of the Father. The relevance of the being of God as triune to the practice of ministry is the strength of Seamands' understanding of ministry and a helpful example of perichoretic participation.

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[13] Seamands, *Ministry*, 149.
[14] Seamands, *Ministry*, 149.

Seamands' book is a helpful introduction to "the Trinitarian shape of Christian service."[15] What the book lacks is a deeper integration of Trinitarian theology with pastoral theology. For the most part, the discussion stays on the surface of the issues and does not move into the complexities of integrating perichoretic participation into the practice of ministry. Seamands shows that one practical out-working of perichoretic participation is a transformed understanding of prayer. He displays the value of participative prayer explaining that "when we intercede for others, then, we are not so much called to pray *to* Jesus on their behalf as we are called to pray *with* Jesus for them."[16] Yet he fails to articulate this in a thoroughly perichoretic participative manner. He offers examples from Amy Carmichael and Scripture that inspire the promise of such a view of ministry and prayer but not a pastoral theology of prayer that views intercession as participating with Christ, for instance, in Jesus cry of forsakenness on the cross or his prayer of delight on the mount of transfiguration. Perichoretic participation does demand a deeper integration with pastoral theology for its full potential to begin to be realized.

Paul Fiddes seeks to articulate a more theological and pastoral understanding of divine participation as it relates to ministry. His is an in-depth and highly nuanced discussion of perichoretic participative pastoral practice. Fiddes seeks to articulate a pastoral doctrine of the Trinity.

One of Fiddes' primary contributions is to offer a perichoretic understanding of the triune God *as* relations. He argues, "there are no [divine] persons 'at the end of a

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[15] Seamands, *Ministry*, this is the subtitle to this book.
[16] Seamands, 152. Emphasis original.

relations,' but the 'persons' are simply the relations."[17] Fiddes believes that this

explanation of the triune God leads to participative understanding of the Trinity. He

argues, "[t]alk about God as 'an event of relationships' is not therefore the language of a

spectator, but the language of a participant."[18] In making this move, Fiddes hopes to

keep ontology and epistemology together in his version of perichoretic participation. He

explains, "[i]dentifying the divine persons as relations brings together a way of

understanding the nature of *being* (ontology) with a way of knowing (epistemology).

The being of God is understood as an event of relationship, but only through an

epistemology of participation: each only makes sense in the context of the other."[19] He

argues that it is in participative relationship that human beings are able to know the

triune being of God. Fiddes believes his approach is distinct from more social

understandings of the triune God, but also offers that those who "prefer to adopt a more

social doctrine of 'persons in relationship' will nevertheless still feel that the rest of the

book concerns them."[20] Fiddes wants to emphasize that God is known by means of

participation rather than mere observation. Knowing God participatively allows human

beings to know God personally and not merely conceptually—to actually participate

(relationally and spiritually) in who God is and what he is doing.

The practice of perichoresis, however, does adopt a more social understanding of

the triune God as "persons in relationship."[21] Fiddes' book, as he assures, does still

prove helpful to this discussion. This is because he seeks to articulate a pastoral doctrine

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[17] Fiddes, *Participating*, 34.
[18] Fiddes, *Participating*, 37.
[19] Fiddes, *Participating*, 38. Emphasis original.
[20] Fiddes, *Participating*, 50.
[21] Fiddes, *Participating*, 50.

of the Trinity and his concern to present God "as relation" does not hinder the pastoral

relevance of his book.

The value of Fiddes' articulation is his insight that participation in God is a

perichoretic participation. He affirms that, "[t]he image of the perichoresis of the Trinity

as movements of a dance—not as a group of dancers—accords well with the

identification of the divine persons as relations."[22] He also states, "[l]anguage of the

Trinity, as I have been stressing, is not that of observation but participation. Perhaps no

concept better expresses this than that of *perichoresis*."[23] Fiddes' pastoral doctrine of the

Trinity embraces and articulates a vision of perichoretic participation.

Fiddes' *Participating in God* advances the contemporary understanding of

perichoretic participation by engaging in an in-depth pastoral discussion about the

reality and implications of the perichoretic being of God. Perhaps his most crucial

contribution to this discussion is Fiddes' insistence that God be understood

participatively. By this he means that to know God at the epistemological level is not to

observe the divine being and so come to an accurate understanding of God. Rather,

Fiddes asserts, to know God is to participate in the relations of the Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. An important facet of this participation is that human beings are drawn into the

movements of worship and mission that exist within the being of God. Fiddes helpfully

presses for a theology of perichoretic participation that reaches beyond modeling God,

but relies on the experience of participating in God to inform pastoral doctrine.

Fiddes' assertion that the triune God is best understood as "persons as relations"

rather than "persons in relations" does not have to be taken forward into the practice of

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[22] Fiddes, *Participating*, 81.
[23] Fiddes, *Participating* 71.

perichoresis. If it is accepted that participation facilitates knowing God, this understanding of God as relations does not need to be pressed for as hard as Fiddes does. Bernard Nausner's interstitial method is helpful to hold together the tension Fiddes tries to overcome. Nausner's method enables an embracing of the tension between God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit together with perichoretic understandings of God's unity.[24] It is being argued here that the persons of the Trinity have personal identity that transcends the notion of relations or even "movements of relationship."[25] In Fiddes' assertion of God "as relations," it is difficult to understand how relations do not overwhelm distinction within the one God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This dissertation affirms a social doctrine of God understood as 'persons in relations.' In moving from concern to presence, perichoretic participation will engage dialogically with pastoral responses to human angst. Fiddes' perichoretic reflections remain helpful to this project, especially, as will be shown below, as it relates to the issue of human angst and suffering.

Perichoretic participation is understood as a spiritual and relational reality that exists within the triune God. In its most pure form perichoretic participation speaks of the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The persons of the Godhead live in a participative unity which enhances their divine personhood.[26] At the creaturely level, to use Volf's designation, perichoretic participation means participating in the life of the triune God. It is abiding in Christ and being indwelt by Christ. It is being filled

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[24] Nausner *Human Experience* comments, "God cannot even reveal himself if he is regarded as pure relationality," 270. See also Nausner's specific comments in light of Fiddes on 270 n18.

[25] Fiddes, *Participating*, 37.

[26] Deborah Van Duesen Hunsinger in *Pray*, 4, writes, "The Trinitarian fellowship they enjoy is one of mutual indwelling. Even in there irreducible differences, they remain an indivisible unity, one God. Their fellowship does not diminish but rather enhances the personal integrity of each."

with the Spirit and moving in step with the Spirit. It is receiving the love of God and living in the love of God. For ministry and for pastoral theology it means moving in cadence with the triune God into worship, mission and communion.

Perichoretic participation includes all aspects of the life of faith. Worship is then understood as human participation in the defining movement of the dance of perichoresis—the Son's delight in the Father by the Spirit. As was seen above, James Torrance defines worship as, "the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father."[27] The mission of the church is likewise best understood participatively. This realization is a key contribution of the missional church movement. In *Missional Church* the contributors argue, "'[m]ission' is not something the church does, a part of its total program. No, the church's essence is missional, for the calling and sending action of God forms its identity. Mission is founded on the mission of God in the world, rather than the church's effort to extend itself."[28] The community of faith is also understood participatively. Immersion in the community through baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eugene Peterson articulates the participative dynamic this creates for the community of faith. He explains, "[w]hen we are baptized into the community in the name of the Trinity we are freshly defined as participants in the work and being of God . . . the more we understand God as Trinity the more we realize that we are welcomed as participants in everything God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is up to."[29] Perichoretic participation serves ministering persons to see all of life and ministry participatively. It is important to consider what perichoretic participation means in view of human angst. Such a participative understanding of

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[27] Torrance, *Worship*, 30.
[28] Guder, *Missional Church*, 82.
[29] Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 306.

ministry does not stop with pastoral concern but moves toward a presence that discloses the experience of God's care and concern. As this occurs ministering persons are learning to move in cadence with the triune God.

Perichoretic participation always holds together the personal and communal aspects of the Christian life and resists separating them into discrete compartments. In practice this means that there is a movement toward God in worship, love and obedience. There is also a movement into the world to bring the good news of the kingdom of God to a hurting and broken world. Included in these movements is yet another movement toward the church community where all God's people live, love and serve in communion. Perichoretic participation is sharing in the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and learning to live in a cadence of delight, mission and communion that moves from the triune God into the church and the world.

Pastoral Concern

In this chapter the move is from pastoral concern to presence. Pastoral concern is an inherent dimension of all pastoral work. In the context of being pastorally responsive to human angst, pastoral concern prompts pastoral actions of all kinds—sermons, pastoral counseling, visitation, spiritual direction, small groups, mission etc. These actions are done to support and aid those persons and communities who are suffering to bear their traumatic and troubling situation. An important dimension of the discipline of pastoral theology is to equip ministering person to care for those who are enduring such suffering.

As a discipline, pastoral theology has generally recognized the value of Seward Hiltner's paradigm of 'healing, sustaining and guiding' as central to the practice of

pastoral care.[30] However, these concepts of care have been adapted, added to and expanded. One concerned pastoral theology states, "Seward Hiltner, who had much more influence on pastoral theology in America, did not even include 'reconciling' in his list of essential functions."[31] A more recent articulation of the essential functions of pastoral theology expands the list dramatically. Pamela Cooper-White teaches that "the classic pastoral functions . . . immerse the pastoral theologian in this open wound, through a commitment to ministries of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, empowering and liberating."[32] Such an expanded list of pastoral functions highlights the complexity of pastoral practice but also affirms that there is an essential pastoral concern for human beings in their particular circumstances that underlies these expressions of ministry.

Carrie Doehring offers a postmodern articulation of the practice of pastoral care. She roots her approach in the caring relationship which includes empathy, listening, self-reflection and theological reflection. The value of her perspective is that it is integrative and dynamic, meaning that it carefully seeks to understand all the dynamics of the caregiving relationship in order to respond helpfully to the one receiving care. Her vision is for a caring relationship that requires both the caregiver and careseeker to be actively engaged. She explains, "[p]astoral caregivers must listen to careseekers stories

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[30] Seward Hiltner articulates healing, sustaining and guiding as the content of pastoral theology and expressions of Christian shepherding. Pastoral activity in his vision moves in the direction of offering healing, helping people to become whole or "the process of restoring functional wholeness," *Preface*, 89. Sustaining refers to the pastoral activity of "standing by" when one is in need of "support and encouragement through standing by when what had been a whole has been broken or impaired and is incapable of total situational restoration, at least not now" *Preface*, 116. The shepherding act of guiding is carefully articulated by Hiltner to avoid any type of coercion but involves "concentrating on the welfare of this person or this smaller group (short of the whole church and society) in terms of immediate need," *Preface*, 147. Healing, sustaining and guiding have come to inform the content of pastoral theology, but this does not imply that as a discipline, pastoral theology has been content with Hiltner's vision.
[31] Van Deusen Hunsinger, *Prayer*, 157.
[32] Cooper-White, *Many Voices*, 35.

as if they are reading a well-written novel, and prompt the careseeker to elaborate aspects of their stories that are hard to put into words."[33] The value of this approach for the practice of perichoresis is the relational engagement that she encourages between the caregiver and careseeker.

This relational engagement becomes clear as the seven dynamics of care are laid out. Doehring says the relationship of care begins by "listening empathetically to the careseeker's story."[34] The caregiver then reflects on "the helpful and unhelpful ways in which one's own story is engaged."[35] The "contract of care" is then established which assess issues such as confidentiality, psychological needs, role conflict, expertise and availability.[36] With the framework for the caring relationship now established, attention turns to "assessing psychological issues" and the "strengths and liabilities of the careseeker's" context.[37] This leads to theological reflection and "proposing theological norms."[38] The last element of the caregiving relationship is "developing strategies for seeking healing and justice."[39] Doehering articulates a relational engaged, contextual and cautious approach to pastoral care.

Pastoral concern is paramount in Doehring's articulation. Her approach serves the relationship of care and presses for an informed and committed journey toward healing and justice. What her approach is less specific about is presence. Doehring hints at the value of God's work in the process of care but it remains muted in her discussion.

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[33] Doehering, *The Practice*, 120.
[34] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.
[35] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.
[36] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.
[37] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.
[38] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.
[39] Doehering, *The Practice*, 10.

In the "seven moments of pastoral care"[40] it is difficult to see how God is explicitly drawn into the relationship—let alone the being of God as triune. Despite this, Doehering notes the importance of something like sharing with God in the pursuit of healing and justice. She states "a collaborative style of coping, in which careseekers see themselves as active partners with God, is associated with positive psychological and spiritual outcomes, like stress-related psychological and spiritual growth."[41] How this can be worked into the pastoral care relationship is not developed in Doehring's relationship of care.

While a contemporary approach like Doehring's emphasizes concern it does not move adequately toward presence. The practice of perichoresis suggest that pastoral concern is crucial but that it serves a higher calling to create a context for participative presence. The challenge here is to articulate how ministering persons can be present to those who are suffering in a way that discloses God's presence.

Participative Perichoretic Presence

Participative perichoretic presence views all of Christian ministry in relationship with the triune God. This is doing ministry as participants *with* God. The God revealed in and through Christ and experienced by the Holy Spirit is a God of compassion. The God of the Old Testament is "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6b)."[42] Jesus' life and ministry was marked by compassion, "[w]hen Jesus was moved to compassion, the

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[40] Doehering, *The Practice*, 9.

[41] Doehering, *The Practice*, 88.

[42] Along with Exod 34:6b see also Neh 9:17 and Jonah 4:2. What is impressive about each of these biblical affirmations of God's compassion is the profound pastoral context of the narrative they are found in. Each of these accounts displays God's revelation and action in healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling Moses, the nation of Israel and Jonah respectively.

source of life trembled, the ground of all love burst open, and the abyss of God's immense, inexhaustible, and unfathomable tenderness revealed itself."[43] The Holy Spirit "helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Rom. 8:26). Participative perichoretic presence affirms that the triune God is graciously and actively engaged in compassionate ministry. This reality coupled with the doctrine of perichoresis allows ministering persons to understand ministry in participative terms. This prompts the move from concern to presence because they are not content to simply offer their own concern to people who are hurting, but seek to be relationally and spiritually present to persons who are suffering—a presence which discloses the mystery of God's compassionate presence.

Compassionate presence awakens faith, hope and love even in the face of suffering. This presence is rooted in the hope of the eschatological promise of "unhindered participation in the eternal life of the triune God."[44] Presence encourages a freedom to believe, to hope and to love. For ministering persons it means to be present to others through the grace of Jesus Christ, with the love of God and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The move toward presence is a tangible expression of: participative faith, eschatological hope and freeing love.

It is now necessary to articulate what the move from concern to presence looks like for the practice of perichoresis. This will be done by drawing human angst into dialogical relationship with perichoretic participation. It will be argued that both the

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[43] Nouwen, McNeil and Morrison, *Compassion*, 15.
[44] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 222.

depths and the heights of human life are touched by the unrelenting perichoretic love of the triune God.

Human Angst and Perichoretic Participation

Human angst is a central concern of the discipline of pastoral theology. Therapeutic, mission, liberation and theological tradition pastoral theologies each hope to serve ministering persons to be responsive to human angst, albeit from their particular perspective. Each of them displays the pastoral concern that is the starting point of this discussion. The move from concern to presence is done in an effort to serve ministering persons to live and serve in cadence with God even in the midst of affliction.

Beyond Theodicy toward Participative Presence

Philosophical and theological explanations of human suffering—theodicy—are proving inadequate in pastoral theology. For those who are in throes of suffering and for those who are seeking to be pastorally responsive to the suffering, such intellectualized approaches to this issue prove to be out of place, offer little consolation and can even increase the suffering of the afflicted. Pastoral theologians have begun to respond to evil and suffering in a manner that emphasizes compassion, practices and presence. It is such 'practical theodicy' that is resonant with participative presence as ministering persons deal with human angst, suffering and evil.

From the pastoral theological perspective, John Swinton, in his book *Raging with Compassion* encourages a move from theodicy to practical theodicy.[45] Swinton is precise in his rejection of traditional theological and philosophical approaches to theodicy. Swinton critiques these traditional approaches to theodicy because they can: "(1) justify and rationalize evil; (2) silence the voice of the sufferer; (3) become evil in

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[45] Swinton, *Raging*, 17–29.

themselves."[46] Swinton is adamant that evil is evil and it is improper to ever minimize or

spiritualize its putrid reality. He argues, "[e]vil is tragic, awful, painful, and personal,

and it should be acknowledged as such. If a theodicy urges us to forget or ignore that

fact, it loses its relevance for addressing the relentless pain of the world."[47] Swinton is

concerned that placing the blame for evil through doctrines like original sin on the

sufferer silences them.[48] He claims, "[s]uffering is always scandalous, and a theodicy

that attempts to ameliorate that scandal by simply shifting blame from God to humans is

inevitably pastorally problematic. . . Theodicies that use the doctrine of original sin to

explain evil and suffering silence the voice of the innocent victim and choke the cry of

lament."[49] It is important to emphasize that Swinton's concern here is not with the

doctrine of original sin. He believes this doctrine "may well provide useful insights and

revelation."[50] His concern is how this doctrine is used in theodicy. This is problematic

when it is used, "as a way of explaining what is happening to particular individuals in

quite specific circumstances. This was not Augustine's intention when he defined

original sin, but it is clearly the way in which theodicists use his thinking."[51] Swinton

then shows the damaging effects of this type of theodicy from the pastoral perspective—

it itself becomes evil. He argues, "[i]f theodicy blocks people's access to the loving

heart of God and the hope of experiencing God's redemptive power, goodness and

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[46] Swinton, *Raging*, 17.

[47] Swinton, *Raging*, 21.

[48] Zylla in *The Roots*, 47, teaches that a pastoral theological response to suffering is to move from silence to lament. Rather than silencing the sufferer with theological answers, "the aim of lament is not full theological explanation of the suffering situation. It is more an experience-near language or psalmic language which gives authentic expression to the conditions of suffering in all of its dimensions."

[49] Swinton, *Raging*, 25–6.

[50] Swinton, *Raging*, 21n19.

[51] Swinton, *Raging*, 21–22 n19. See *Raging* 21–29 for Swinton's development of this important discussion.

mercy as a living reality, then it functions in a way that can only be described as evil."[52]

If the intent of evil is to ruin human beings relationship with God, and if a theodicy

corrupts one's view of God and obstructs this relationship, then, in Swinton's view, the

theodicy contributes to the evil it is trying to explain. Pastorally the problem with this

kind of theodicy is that it does not offer practices that draw the sufferer toward the

loving heart of God.

Phil Zylla is also concerned about the pastoral implications of theodicy. In his

book *The Roots of Sorrow,* he argues that suffering does not need to be explained so

much as to be confronted. He explains,

> A theology of suffering must move beyond speculative thinking about God and
> suffering so that the reality of suffering as a lived experience is fully
> acknowledged. It is from this lived reality that we must learn to speak of God in
> the midst of suffering . . . *we must not approach suffering as a problem to be
> solved or as a riddle to be explained but rather as a reality to be confronted in
> cooperation with God's own expressed intentions in the world.*[53]

Zylla contends that suffering should be responded to with compassionate protest. Zylla

argues "[t]he church is to enact this paradigm and live in compassionate protest against

suffering. God suffers with us, but God is ultimately making all things new."[54] Zylla

finds theodicy unsatisfying because, "it is removed from the reality of suffering itself."[55]

Compassionate protest suffers with the afflicted and cooperates with God to resist

suffering. Zylla explains "to participate in God's own protest against suffering by

aligning ourselves with the spiritual posture of resisting suffering . . . and actively

seeking to overturn the root causes of suffering in the world."[56] Zylla encourages a

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[52] Swinton, *Raging*, 28.
[53] Zylla, *The Roots*, 43–44.
[54] Zylla, *The Roots*, 126.
[55] Zylla, *The Roots*, 43.
[56] Zylla, *The Roots*, 107.

participative compassionate presence as ministering persons respond to situations of suffering; a response that enables ministering persons to suffer *with* those in affliction.

The inadequacy of theodicy for pastoral theology is that these approaches suffer from what the philosopher Gabriel Marcel calls "constancy."[57] As Marcel seeks to discover what a "faithful friend" might be, he asserts that constancy in friendship is not the creative fidelity he is pursuing. For Marcel, constancy is a part of, but never the essence of fidelity. Left on its own, constancy flows out of duty or conscience. It may well prompt one to respond when the friend is in need, but this should not be confused with being a 'faithful friend.' Marcel observes, "but how could this correctness of behaviour be confused with fidelity strictly speaking?"[58] The key question for Marcel in the quest for faithful friendship is "how does the situation seem to X?"[59] One cannot be a faithful friend by holding to principles, following steps and abiding by objective criteria. Marcel notes that one can get a diploma this way but following such obligations does not engender faithful friendship. Faithful friendship occurs when there is receptivity to the presence of the friend; the friend is there for us. Marcel states, "I am *present* for the other . . . of making me feel he is *with* me."[60] It is not the constancy of appropriate action which creates the context for faithful friendship it is the relational presence where a connection matures between two human beings.

Marcel illumines the importance of presence for Christian ministry. Ministering persons should not be satisfied with constancy—to offer appropriate pastoral response to their situation. Ministry is rooted in *presence*—to be relationally and spiritually engaged

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[57] Marcel, *Creative*, 154–55. I am indebted to Pembroke's drawing on Marcel's thought in his discussion of suffering in *Renewing*, see especially pages 98 and 102.
[58] Marcel, *Creative*, 154.
[59] Marcel, *Creative*, 155.
[60] Marcel, *Creative*, 154. Emphasis original.

with suffering persons in a manner that discloses God's presence. With presence the hope is to be personally available to the other in a way that awakens their faith, hope and love of God. As Marcel shows it is the other, the one who is suffering, who determines if the encounter has moved toward presence.

Neil Pembroke draws on Marcel to show that God's involvement with human suffering moves beyond constancy to participation. Pembroke argues against the God of constancy saying, "this image of a God who does what is good for us without also participating in our suffering is not an especially attractive one. Such a God is available to us through good works but not through a *personal, participative* engagement with our experience."[61] Pembroke argues in light of the cross and resurrection of Christ that, "God feels our pain but is not paralysed by it. Profound empathy and decisive action are not mutually exclusive realities."[62] Participative presence creates the context for a form of creative fidelity that moves beyond theodicy.

The move from concern to presence is rooted in the grace and love of God. It is through the life, death and resurrection of the incarnate Son that God is present to human angst. As the Apostle Paul says, "while we were sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom 5:8b). This is why a participative understanding of ministry is essential. In situations of human angst concern does not go far enough. Ministering persons cannot rest in the perspective of constancy, believing, through some kind of objective criteria that they have responded correctly to one who is suffering. What is needed is creative fidelity that ensures that the suffering person affirms the reality of presence—a presence that also discloses God's presence. The practice of perichoresis serves ministering

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[61] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 102, emphasis added.
[62] Pembroke, *Renewing*, 103.

persons to develop a theology of suffering that affirms that God suffers with others as

Trinity and to employ practices that disclose the presence of God even in the midst of

affliction.

God Suffers as Trinity

Paul Fiddes appreciates the profound nature of the problem of suffering as it is

dealt with theologically and pastorally.[63] He is convinced that when faced with the

problem of suffering "the way pastors act and react in this situation *will* be guided by the

image of God that they hold."[64] Fiddes' participative understanding of the triune God is

an image of God that ministering persons might find helpful as they move toward those

who are suffering. He argues, "it will be influenced by what they believe can become

possible through participation, or deeper participation, in the triune God."[65] Also

acknowledging the limits of all theodicy, Fiddes' offers a perichoretic response in the

service of ministering persons to the theological dilemma of suffering and evil.

Fiddes' argument is that God suffers as Trinity. He does so in contrast with

popular theological notions that God cannot suffer. These perspectives contend that it is

only through Christ, and specifically through Christ's humanity, that there can be any

experience of 'divine' suffering. In response, Fiddes emphasizes God's choice to suffer

with and for his creation as Trinity. Fiddes argues, "A God who exists from nothing but

God's self can still choose to be fulfilled in the manner of that existence through

fellowship with created beings, to be open to being affected and changed by them."[66]

This is the free choice of God, he desires to be affected by his creation and to relate with

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[63] Fiddes has taken up the problem of suffering theologically in his book *The Creative Suffering*. I am engaging with him in his more pastoral and participative response through his book *Participating*.

[64] Fiddes, *Participating*, 153, emphasis original.

[65] Fiddes, *Participating*, 153.

[66] Fiddes, *Participating*. 182.

human beings. For Fiddes, the Divine choice to suffer does not imply that God can or will be overwhelmed by suffering, nor will he be degraded by it. When it comes to God and the dilemma of evil and suffering, Fiddes shows that God chooses to be relationally responsive to it as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The dance of perichoresis is beautiful and sorrowful. Fiddes explicates the sorrowful movements of the divine dance as it relates to suffering. In contrast with ancient times where patripassianism was used to emphasize distinction between the Father and the Son in an effort to combat the monarchian heresy, today "it is *only* in speaking about the suffering of the Father and the Spirit as well as the Son that we can discern the true nature of the relationships within God."[67] Fiddes clarifies, "[w]ithin the divine perichoresis, all three persons suffer, but in different ways according to the distinction of their relations."[68] Fiddes teaches that the dance of perichoresis reveals that each person of the Trinity suffer precisely as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Consistent with their mode of being, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit suffer with and for creation. Fiddes teaches that the Father experiences the rejection of his creation but "such is the fatherly love of God that God will suffer *with* a human son or daughter."[69] In Christ, as the Son, God identifies with human beings and "God will suffer *as* the human son or daughter does."[70] As the Father suffers *with* humanity and the Son suffers *as* human beings do, so too the Spirit also suffers. The Spirit suffers *in* creatures. Fiddes argues, "God as Spirit will then suffer *in* creatures . . . crying out in the

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[67] Fiddes, *Participating*, 184.
[68] Fiddes, *Participating*, 184.
[69] Fiddes, *Participating*, 185. Emphasis original.
[70] Fiddes, *Participating*, 185. Emphasis original.

birth-pains of creation (Rom 8:22-3)."[71] Within the perichoretic dance of the triune God

the sorrowful movements flow as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each suffer with

creation.

Fiddes goes on to show that this experience of suffering by the triune God

intersects most profoundly with human suffering at the cross of Christ. Fiddes states that

"God has never been drawn further into flesh than here, giving God's own self without

any reserve at all."[72] Fiddes understands the reality of the cross to mean that human

beings "can lean our sufferings upon those of the Son, so that God suffers not only

'with' but 'as' and 'in' us in the interweaving relationship of the divine dance."[73] It is

such a relational connection in the context of suffering that informs what is meant by

participative perichoretic presence.

Before moving forward, Fiddes emphasizes one more aspect that is relevant to

the move toward presence. This is the importance of faith when dealing with suffering.

Fiddes concludes his chapter on the reality of suffering with these words, "[t]he belief

that God suffers with us may help us to say that the making of persons is worth all the

tears. But only faith can answer the question 'is it worth it?' after all reasonable

arguments have fallen silent."[74] It is the presence of God in the midst of human angst

that might encourage the faith of those in the midst of affliction. Pastoral responses to

suffering should also respond with a presence that seeks to excite faith, inspire hope and

foster love. It is the sorrowful movements of the dance of perichoresis that may well

inspire such pastoral presence even in the face of suffering and affliction.

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[71] Fiddes, *Participating*, 186. Emphasis original.
[72] Fiddes, *Participating*, 186.
[73] Fiddes, *Participating*, 186.
[74] Fiddes, *Participating*, 187.

Practices of Presence

The practice of perichoresis moves toward presence in order to equip ministering persons to respond to situations of human angst. The practices of presence and protest flow out of this discussion. They are both articulated in an effort to move beyond theodicy in the sense of treating suffering as a riddle to be solved or intellectual conundrum to be figured out. Rather participative presence is seeking to minister as the faithful friend Marcel is in search of. It seeks to be responsive to those who are suffering in a manner where they would realize that God is *with* them, Christ suffers *as* they do, the Holy Spirit is *in* them articulating their very groans. A faithful friend is present in a way that reveals the intimate presence of the triune God in the experience of suffering.

Clearly such a pastoral pursuit is beyond the ministering person's ability. The ministry of presence is a participative presence. When faced with affliction ministering persons can only seek to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ. They become a tangible expression of the grace of God as they bring themselves to the suffering other. The hope of the ministering person, then, is to bring to the suffering person an awareness of God's concern, care and hope. Presence seeks to show that God is not indifferent to their suffering, but that their suffering somehow participates in the suffering of the triune God. The practices of presence help ministering persons to creatively touch the suffering persons so that they might appreciate that the Father suffers with them, that Christ suffered as they do, and that the Spirit suffers in them. In doing so this reframes the context of suffering from: guilt, "did I bring this on myself?"; fear, "has God abandoned me?"; to relationship, "God in Christ suffers as I do, the Father is with me, the Spirit is within me." While the reality and mystery of suffering remain, participative presence

assures that God is near and that in the face of suffering faith, hope and love are also at work.

Participative presence also moves with Swinton and Zylla beyond theodicy toward practice and protest. Both Swinton and Zylla encourage the practice of lament as a means to protest suffering. Swinton argues that lament has been lost in much of the church and it must be recovered at the personal, communal and political levels as a response to evil and suffering.[75] Swinton argues, "[l]ament enables individuals and communities to move from silence into transformative speech, speech that rages at God, but which ultimately has the capacity for and the goal of reconciling the suffering community to find healing, hope, and the ability to love God in spite of the presence of evil."[76] Zylla also highlights the importance of lament. He teaches that one of the movements of a pastoral theology of suffering is from silence to lament. Lament is used by Zylla to seek God from within the situation of suffering. He explains, "[t]he fundamental aim of the lament is to seek help from God and to seek God's intervention in the situation of suffering."[77] With lament one of the deepest mysteries of the practice of perichoresis is understood—even in the absence of God one can still seek to be moving in cadence with Christ.

The move from concern to presence uses lament as a means to participate in the sorrowful movements of the dance of perichoresis. This kind of practice has a particular biblical resonance. Lament is a biblical expression of those perplexed by suffering and evil and working this out in relationship with the triune God. The presence of the psalms of lament in the Bible suggest an intrinsic relationship between the practice of lament as

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[75] Swinton, *Raging*, 129.
[76] Swinton, *Raging*, 129.
[77] Zylla, *The Roots*, 76.

a response to present day suffering and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament affirms that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16). The doctrine of inspiration of Scripture affirms that it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the psalms of lament. This can encourage those in anguish to realize that the Spirit of God is *in* them and may well be forging their anger and anguish into a prayer of lament.[78] Protest and lament were also Jesus' response to the cross. While it is clear that Jesus was perfectly faithful in fulfilling his Father's will, he still resisted the suffering he endured ultimately crying out to his Father, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46b). Jesus' example creates solidarity with those who are suffering. Jesus' suffered *as* they did and he protested. The practice of perichoresis encourages those in the midst of affliction to protest with Christ and in the Spirit to their heavenly Father.

Ministering persons move toward the suffering offering a participative presence that originates in the triune God. The movement from concern to presence seeks to strengthen faith by disclosing that God suffers with those who are in the most perplexing situations of human angst. It is also a movement toward God—even within God—that protests the experience of suffering and seeks relief. This kind of pastoral presence includes a movement of protest and lament that is not outside but actually participates within such sorrowful movements of the dance of perichoresis.

From Pastoral Concern to Participative Presence

It will be helpful to speak about the move from concern to presence in the context of an actual situation of ministry. The move toward participative presence will

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[78] Swinton provides instruction for how to write a psalm of lament. He offers six parts to writing a psalm of lament: 1. They are addressed to God. 2. They contain a complaint. 3. There is an expression of trust. 4. There is an appeal or petition. 5. There is an expression of certainty. 6. The conclusion is a vow to trust. The community assures God of its love. See *Raging*, 128 for the complete description.

engage with Henri Nouwen's discussion of pastoral leadership/care in *The Wounded Healer*.[79] In particular, Nouwen's reflections on the pastoral encounter between John, a clinical pastoral education intern, and Mr. Harrison, a farm labourer who is awaiting surgery, will be drawn into dialogue with perichoretic theology towards articulating a vision of perichoretic presence.[80]

In *The Wounded Healer*, Nouwen shares and reflects on this pastoral encounter.[81] It is clear that John, while trying to care, remains distant from Mr. Harrison. John displays constancy and even concern but does not become present to Mr. Harrison. Mr. Harrison presents an extreme case. He is totally alone in the world. He says at one point that he has "nothing and nobody. Just hard work."[82] As Mr. Harrison faces the prospect of life threatening surgery, John may be the only person who can be present to him. The poignancy of their interaction is made more acute by the fact that Mr. Harrison does not survive his impending surgery and this account is his last real conversation. Nouwen observes, "[t]he response which might have been within the reach of human possibility is a personal response in an impersonal milieu, by which one man can wait for another in life as well as in death."[83] Nouwen believes that John could have provided Mr. Harrison with a reason to live by being personally present to him and letting him know that someone was waiting for him after the surgery. Nouwen provides three

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[79] Although Nouwen refers to this as Christian leadership. *The Wounded*, 51–2.

[80] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 52–4. See Appendix 1 to read this entire pastoral encounter.

[81] What Nouwen shares is a verbatim report that is a common part of Clinical Pastoral Education. Verbatim reports continue to be an important part of pastoral theology. Doehering affirms their use in her approach to pastoral care. See Doehring *The Practice*, 33–34.

[82] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 54.

[83] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 63. See *The* Wounded, 62, where Nouwen does seem critical of the "nondirective counseling which he learned in class. It is academic, awkward, and obviously filled with feelings of fear, hesitation, confusion, self-preoccupation and distance."

perspectives that inform this waiting: (1) waiting as a personal response; (2) waiting in life; (3) waiting in death.

Nouwen's use of this pastoral encounter can help to illustrate the move from concern to presence. John's pastoral work in this encounter suits the description of pastoral concern—it remains at the level of constancy. John became another voice seeking clarification and information in the impersonal milieu of the modern hospital. Through the motif of waiting, Nouwen skillfully shows how John could have become more personally present to Mr. Harrison.[84] By engaging with perichoretic theology, this encounter, and Nouwen's pastoral theological reflections on it allows for consideration of the move from concern to presence that is rooted in the actual practice of ministry.

Waiting as a Personal Response in the Spirit

The interaction between John and Mr. Harrison confirms that this pastoral encounter remained at the level of constancy. For example when the subject of death comes up John simply clarifies what he is hearing Mr. Harrison say:

> Mr. Harrison: Yeah. Course I don't want to die during the operation. I'd rather die a natural death than die through anesthesia.
> John: You know the possibility of death is present during the operation, but the only way to get well is to have the operation.[85]

John is not touching the core of Mr. Harrison's concern.[86] Nouwen suggests that the way that John could become present to Mr. Harrison is for "John to become a person."[87]

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[84] There are many resources in pastoral care that encourage a more appropriate pastoral response to this situation. See especially Woodward, *Befriending Death* and *Valuing Age*; Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 291–310, Lester, *Hope*, Thomson and Jorden, "Depth Oriented Brief Therapy," Lyon, *Toward*, Nouwen and Gaffney, *Aging*.

[85] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.

[86] Woodward speaks of the spiritual importance of helping people to retain a sense of wholeness while the body might be diminishing. He states in "The Spirituality," 91, "[i]f spirituality consists of the response of the whole person to God, that response must come from the depth of one's being, from one's unique humanness, which is moving to integrity and wholeness, even while the body may be diminishing."

[87] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 64.

Rather than relating personally with Mr. Harrison's about the fear of death, John simply clarifies his remarks. Clarity does have benefit but needs to lead toward personal presence to have value. John and Mr. Harrison missed the opportunity for fellowship, for the two of them to share their mutual fear of death and to begin the journey of "befriending death."[88]

Nouwen articulates the personal response that John could have offered Mr. Harrison.[89] Nouwen observes that Mr. Harrison was in an impersonal milieu. The hospital he was in treated him impersonally, as a problem to be solved. Mr. Harrison's need was for personal presence, he needed a faithful friend. To connect with a friend, a brother, one who was with him in life and in the fear of death. John, however, became part of the impersonal apparatus of the hospital. He dealt with Mr. Harrison dutifully and clinically. This is further evidence that John was working at the level of constancy.[90]

Turning to the doctrine of perichrosis, it was shown above that Fiddes believes that the Holy Spirit suffers in creatures.[91] Is there evidence that this was the case for Mr. Harrison? The answer is yes. As John and Mr. Harrison continue to interact, Mr. Harrison can be heard groaning:

John: You got much waiting for you when you leave the hospital?

Mr. Harrison: Nothing and nobody. Just hard work.[92]

John's response is, again, to clarify: "Just a lot of hard labour."[93] Nouwen reflects on this, "[t]he emptiness of the past and the future can never be filled with words but only

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[88] Woodward in *Befriending*, 2, explains, "the way we embrace our dying within our living is fundamental to our well-being, our hopes, our fears, our loves and our salvation."

[89] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 63–65.

[90] Doehring would encourage John to assess his own response to Mr. Harrison's situation and discern how this was helpful or unhelpful to the situation. See *The Practice*, 25–33.

[91] Fiddes, *Participating*, 186.

[92] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 54.

by the presence of a man. Because only then can hope be born, that there might be at least one exception to the nobody and nothing of his complaint—a hope that will make him whisper, 'maybe, after all, someone is waiting for me.'"[94] Mr. Harrison's groaning does affirm his need for "the presence of a man" but it also shows evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in this situation. The move toward presence in this case is that John might meet Mr. Harrison in his groaning. Paul teaches that the Spirit of God is present to people "with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26b). Paul teaches that fellowship is one of the gifts the Holy Spirit creates. If John could recognize the presence of the Spirit even in the groaning of Mr. Harrison's complaint he could transform the impersonal hospital and the two of them might share in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

John's encounter with Mr. Harrison can lead from concern to presence. John comes to Mr. Harrison as a *charism*, a tangible means of God's grace. From the perspective of the practice of perichoresis, John can learn to be attentive to the Spirit because he moves toward Mr. Harrison as one who is participating in the triune God's mission and ministry in the world. As John is present to Mr. Harrison, the sorrowful movements (groanings) of the dance of perichoresis result in spiritual union that allows faith, hope and love to be seen even in the impersonal, clinical environment of the hospital.

The presence of the Spirit in Mr. Harrison and in John creates the possibility that these two men might experience fellowship. Their interaction opens up the possibility for participative perichoretic presence as they realize the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit,"

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[93] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 54.
[94] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 65.

(2 Cor 13:13c).[95] This is transformative for both Mr. Harrison and John. Mr. Harrison would receive from John the faithful friend he needs as he is surrounded by the impersonal world of the hospital. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit would transform Mr. Harrison's 'nothing and nobody' to, as Nouwen shows, the hopeful and life-giving "someone is waiting for me."[96]

For John, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit can clarify his chaplaincy. He does not come to Mr. Harrison as one small voice amidst a world of pain, suffering and angst. He would come as one who is participating in the triune God and is seeking to keep in step with the Spirit. Now John would be moving from concern to presence and work toward creating a friendly communion in the Holy Spirit with Mr. Harrison. It is the Holy Spirit who creates fellowship even when the suffering and agony of the world is exposing loneliness and threatening death. Phil Zylla explains, "[d]espite suffering, the Spirit persists in the enabling and interceding action that frees and sustains us even in the bleakest experiences of life."[97] With the presence of the Holy Spirit, John and Mr. Harrison's encounter can be seen to move toward a presence which is redefined by the cross of Christ.

A Trinitarian theology of the cross illumines the participative nature of the encounter between John and Mr. Harrison. Jürgen Moltmann's reflections on the Trinitarian dynamics of the crucified God speak to the importance of the Spirit for a robust theology of the cross. Moltmann highlights the suffering of both the Father and the Son on the cross. In this godforsaken moment the question may well be asked: what becomes of the unity of the Trinity at the suffering of the cross? Moltmann points to the

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[95] The word is *koinonia* and is translated communion, or fellowship.
[96] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 65.
[97] Zylla, *The Roots*, 142.

Holy Spirit. He explains "[i]n the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender. What proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit. . ."[98] Later Moltmann clarifies, reflecting on Heb 9:14 which speaks of Jesus offering himself "through the eternal Spirit." "The surrender through the Father and the offering of the Son take place 'through the Spirit'. The Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining the bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation."[99] Even as Jesus experienced the god-forsakenness of the cross, the Holy Spirit is the one who keeps the fellowship from being lost. So the Spirit is active in maintaining fellowship even where the darkest and deepest groans of creation are heard.

In all that separates Mr. Harrison and John, the Spirit is able to create community between them, a communion which participates in the drama of the cross of Jesus Christ. It is in the Spirit that such a communion can participate in that event of the cross and transform through participative presence the loneliness and angst of the modern hospital. Pastoral concern moves toward perichoretic presence as it moves forward *in* the Spirit.

Waiting in Life with the Father

Mr. Harrison's loneliness dominates the encounter between he and John. Mr. Harrison's admission that he has 'nobody and nothing' means in essence that he has nothing to live for. For John to become present to Mr. Harrison, he will have to find a way to be present to Mr. Harrison's loneliness. The love of the Father can reframe the encounter between these two men. With John there, Mr. Harrison has the possibility to

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[98] Moltmann, *The Crucified*, 244.
[99] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 82.

love. There is the possibility for Mr. Harrison to have *some*body and *some*thing.

Nouwen articulates this as John waiting for Mr. Harrison in life. The move toward

presence advances as John waits in life for Mr. Harrison with the love of the Father.[100]

Nouwen articulates the intensity of Mr. Harrison's struggles with the observation

that, "[t]here is no reason to live if there is nobody to live for."[101] Mr. Harrison lives a

loneliness that is difficult to comprehend. Nouwen comments, "[w]hen tomorrow only

meant the tobacco crop and hard labor and a lonely life, Mr. Harrison could hardly have

been expected to cooperate with the surgeon's work."[102] In all areas, Mr. Harrison

speaks of a helplessness and a loneliness. The first attempt at the operation was

abandoned because "they thought it might be too risky to go through with it."[103] His

view of the future is guarded, "I think I can make it [through the operation]"[104] and "I

don't want to die."[105] Spiritually he is pessimistic, "if this is the end, this is one who is

gonna be lost."[106] Finally, he is confronted with his barren life and admits that he has

"nothing and nobody. Just hard work."[107] Physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially

and intellectually Mr. Harrison displays a helpless loneliness. Is he a lost soul?[108]

Nouwen's response clarifies that Mr. Harrison needs a reason to live, someone to

live for. Nouwen says, "[John] might have saved Mr. Harrison's life by making him

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[100] Fiddes, in *Participating*, 185, comments "in Fatherhood God suffers with created persons."
[101] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 67.
[102] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 67.
[103] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[104] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[105] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[106] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[107] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[108] Doehring in *The Practice*, 121, offers insight to help discern the state of a person soul. She states, "[i]n order to discern a person's soul, the pastoral caregiver listens for how the careseeker refers to the sacred part of her life."

realize that returning to life is a gift to him who is waiting."[109] Mr. Harrison had nothing

to live for and John was one of the only people present who was concerned to relate to

him. To survive the operation Mr. Harrison needs someone to relate to after the

operation. Nouwen notes, John could "have given the doctor a helping hand."[110] In his

loneliness, Mr. Harrison was deprived of one of life's basic elements, the personal

presence of a loving human being.

Nouwen is optimistic that in such a short conversation between John and Mr.

Harrison love can redefine the situation.[111] Nouwen believes that it is the nature of love

to transform such situations, "[l]ove not only lasts forever but needs only a second to

come about."[112] It is love that Mr. Harrison needs and it is love which John has to offer,

but the two men are not left to themselves to conjure up love on their own.

In the move from concern to presence love is fundamental. In light of the

doctrine of perichoresis, John's care for Mr. Harrison is to be a tangible expression of

God the Father's love for him. John can wait in life for Mr. Harrison, yes, but he is to

wait in life *with* the love of the Father. For all that he lacks in life, Mr. Harrison needs

faith, hope and love to reframe his situation. John can participate in the Father's love for

Mr. Harrison by encouraging him to attend to "the subtle persistence of hope."[113]

Mr. Harrison needs help to attend to the love of his Father in heaven. In the

words of Paul in 2 Cor 13:13b, Mr. Harrison needs to receive the "love of God." A love

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[109] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 67.
[110] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 67.
[111] Depth Oriented Brief Therapy (DOBT) is proving helpful for counselors who are experiencing shortened lengths of stay in hospice care. In *Depth*. 222, Thomson and Jordan explain "in the DOBT approach patients are invited to appreciate and experience the non-conscious meanings and purposes of their symptoms and problems." This is a counseling strategy that appreciates the time constraints that are obvious to Mr. Harrison's situation.
[112] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 67.
[113] Zylla, *The Roots,* 165.

that is mindful of him and his life and a love that waits for him in life. Paul Fiddes teaches that, irrespective of the creaturely "no" that is given to God, the Father loves by suffering with his children. He explains, "such is the fatherly love of God that God will suffer *with* a human son or daughter, just as a human parent enters with sympathy into the pain of a child."[114] What is most troubling for Mr. Harrison is that he assumes God's concern for him is as barren as the rest of his life. He says "if this is the end, this one is going to be lost."[115] John can help Mr. Harrison experience his concern as a tangible expression of the Father's loving presence.

The move from concern to presence seeks to participate in revealing God's love in situations of human angst. John could love Mr. Harrison by "carefully and sensitively articulate what is happening"[116] to him. He could participate in God's love for Mr. Harrison by relating to him and simply letting him know that he will be waiting to continue their relationship after the operation. Nouwen describes this as "waiting in life."[117] By choosing to enact the Father's love through participative presence before and after the operation, John would have been waiting in life and with the Father's love. To do this John will see Mr. Harrison, not as a lonely and lost man facing a grim outcome, but as an object of the Father's love. Participating with the Father, John can show Mr. Harrison that he is worthy of love. The value of participative presence is that it is opens up a greater presence—the presence of the triune God. As John is able to extend love to Mr. Harrison they will be able to discern the Fatherly love of God in this situation. This is how presence can wait in life with the love of the Father.

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[114] Fiddes, *Participating*, 185.
[115] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 53.
[116] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 39.
[117] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 39.

Waiting in the Death of Christ

The reality, however, is that Mr. Harrison did not survive the operation. Mr.

Harrison was in need of a hope that goes beyond death. In his death, Mr. Harrison was

lead where he did not want to go. The reality of his death puts into perspective the

inadequacy of all situations of care. John cared for Mr. Harrison in the manner in which

he was taught—non-directive and clinical. He helped Mr. Harrison clarify what he was

thinking but he did not become one who could wait with him in death. Participative

perichoretic presence waits even in the death of Mr. Harrison with Christ. In this

perspective, John could understand himself to be a tangible expression of the "grace of

the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 13:13).

With Christ's grace, participative presence moves into situations of care with the

audacity to affirm that even in death John can wait for Mr. Harrison. Fiddes shows that

God in Christ suffers *as* his sons and daughters do. The grace of Christ is a grace of

presence. Fiddes argues, "in the filial movement of love, God will be identified with

human sons and daughters . . . God will suffer *as* the human sons and daughter does,

damaged as they are by their own refusal of love and by the sins of others."[118] Christ's

identification with human beings is so profound that it touches and transforms death

itself. The move from concern to presence is bold enough to wait with Christ even in

death.

Nouwen illumines the solidarity that both John and Mr. Harrison share in the

face of death. He points out that they both will die, the only difference between the two

of them is the matter of time.[119] Mr. Harrison voiced a fear of dying and displayed

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[118] Fiddes, *Participating*, 185–86.
[119] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 68–69.

concern that, in Nouwen's words, "[he] was afraid to die, because he was afraid of condemnation, of an eternal prolongation of his isolation."[120] The fear of death, obviously more real for Mr. Harrison than for John in this situation, nevertheless allows them to fear death together, to protest it together, and to realize that by the grace of Christ, death has been overcome. Nouwen remarks, "life is eternal and cannot be made futile by a biological process."[121] James Woodward comments on the reality that the fragility of life in the face of death. He argues, "[t]he gospel . . . demands that we are drawn out of the tyranny of certainty and that we hold together the paradoxes and contradictions between life and death, faith and fear, hope and despair, love and hate, alienation and relationship, fragmentation and connectedness."[122] This is an apt description of many of the contradictions Mr. Harrison is facing. His need is for someone to be present with him in these vulnerabilities who can point to a hope that transcends them. Nouwen believes that John can wait for Mr. Harrison on either side of life or death because Jesus has been crucified, died and buried *and* that the gospel proclaims he has been raised to new life. Even in death, through Christ's resurrection there is hope. Jesus has been raised from the dead so there is hope even in the face of death. Woodward comments, "[t]rue love is a love that suffers—the love of God, which is the passion of Christ—a suffering love, which millions have found to be the source of life. Here is a death worth living for."[123] John's presence to Mr. Harrison could disclose Christ's grace by affirming that together they can live in the hope of the resurrection of

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[120] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 69.
[121] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 69.
[122] Woodward, *Befriending*, 13.
[123] Woodward, *Befriending*, 14.

Jesus Christ. To identify the presence of Christ in their midst would help Mr. Harrison

to know the one who has gone through death but has been raised to life.

The eschatological implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ reframe this

encounter with hope. In view of the doctrine of perichoresis John could understand his

presence with Mr. Harrison as an eschatological waiting with Christ. John can become

present to Mr. Harrison with the hope of the gospel. Participating in Christ, John

becomes a means of God's grace and as such is not limited by the biological experience

of death. As John offers to Mr. Harrison the grace of the crucified and resurrected Lord,

John can wait with Christ even in Mr. Harrison's death. As the two men explore the fear

of death together[124] they can encounter Christ's presence in and through their

fellowship. The transforming dynamic of this encounter is that participative presence

can reveal the presence of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's presence allows

this encounter to be meaningful even in the fear and the reality of the death of Mr.

Harrison.

John and Mr. Harrison are two men whose encounter can be transformed by the

presence of the triune God. They have all that is needed for the two of them to

legitimately encounter Christ and receive grace. Jesus teaches "[f]or where two or three

gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matt 18:19).[125] John and Mr. Harrison's

fellowship, which is a gift of the Spirit, and their love, which is a gift of the Father,

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[124] Woodward in *Befriending* discusses how to prepare for and face death, 41–51. See especially the exercise on page 51 called "seeing my own death."

[125] I am using this verse cautiously and do not want to take it out of its context. As I use it here I am following Volf's use of this it in defining the church as an assembly. See his discussion of the verse in *After* 137 ff., especially n37. J.M. Boice in commentary on *Matthew*, 393, shows the encouraging nature of this verse. He writes, "[s]uch a statement should be an encouragement to Christians, for however small the group or however insignificant we may think we are, we can know that the very God of the universe, even Jesus, is present with us. What can be more encouraging or more comforting than that?" It is this hopeful presence that I believe John and Mr. Harrison can experience.

creates the context for these two men to experience the grace of Christ's transformative presence. It is here and through the grace of the Lord that union with Christ also becomes a communion of believers. A communion that allows both men to appreciate that even in the face of death they are also participants in Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus' presence gives hope for new, eternal life. The movement from concern to presence serves ministering persons to live and minister in cadence with the triune God and with a hope that transcends death.

John and Mr. Harrison can realize the eschatological potential of human communion. Moltman articulates his vision of what communion looks like within the life of the triune God. He shares, "[t]he persons of the Trinity make one another shine through that glory, mutually and together. They glow into perfect form through one another and awake to perfected beauty in one another."[126] John and Mr. Harrison, through grace, love and fellowship, can help each other awake to the beauty that the triune God is creating in each of them and together receive a glimpse of the resplendent glory of the triune God.

Nouwen, himself, agrees that the spiritual vibrancy of John and Mr. Harrison's encounter is rich with potential. Nouwen asks, "[h]ow could we speak about Christian leadership without mentioning Jesus Christ, His life, His crucifixion and His resurrection?"[127] Nouwen answers, "He has been here from the first page of this chapter. The understanding of Mr. Harrrison's condition and the search for a creative response were based on God's revelation in Jesus Christ."[128] In the move from concern to presence, the search for a creative response to Mr. Harrison is done "with," "as," and

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[126] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 176.
[127] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 70–71.
[128] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 71.

"in" participation with the triune God. The move toward presence occurs as John and Mr. Harrison meet, not to clarify the reality of Mr. Harrison's condition, thoughts or emotions, but to move toward each other and in so doing discover the triune God who is working in their encounter. Participative perichoretic presence is waiting together in the faith, hope and love of the triune God.

The move toward presence transforms the act of waiting itself. In this context waiting is not merely passing time, but is full of perichoretic relationship and eschatological hope. Waiting is transformed by the hope that God is working into the present from the future.[129] Waiting is often a time of deepening relationship with God and with others. The move toward presence also encourages this dimension of waiting by being attentive to God's presence in the situation. The potential to wait in community and to wait in eschatological hope were there for John and Mr. Harrison.[130] The move from concern to presence would assist John to discover how waiting with Mr. Harrison was the most potent Christian practice available for him. Through the ministry of presence, John could participate in Christ's care for Mr. Harrison. The practice of perichoresis sees times of waiting as opportunities to continue to live and minister in cadence with the triune God.

The Perspective and Posture of the Move toward Presence

The journey from concern to presence participates in the triune God's life and ministry in the world. They are disciplined movements that are clarified as the perspective, the wounded healer, and the posture, cruciformity, are explained. The importance of perspective and posture was articulated by James Gustafson and these two

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[129] See Lester, *Hope*, 57–71.
[130] See Zylla *The Roots*, where he discusses "hope as solidarity," 156–59 and "resurrection as protest," 159–62.

features will help clarify the discipline of learning to live and minister in cadence with

the triune God.[131] The practice of perichoresis is a participative journey with Christ into

the cadent rhythms of the dance of perichoresis. The wounded healer and crucifomity

shed light on what it means to participate with Christ in the triune God

Perspective of the Wounded Healer

In his book *The Wounded Healer* Henri Nouwen shares his insight that one's

own wounds are a source of healing and ministry to others. Nouwen learned this lesson

from Anton Boisen. Michael O'Laughlin writes, "[f]rom Anton Boisen Henri Nouwen

drew direct inspiration for his own ministry. He learned from Boisen that one's own

psychological troubles and weaknesses could be a source of inspiration and a path to

God, something that would become a hallmark of his spiritual writing and speaking."[132]

Part of Nouwen's relevance was his ability to take his own personal struggles and make

them accessible to others in a pastoral way. As he writes to Christian pastors in *The*

Wounded Healer he is able to show how touching the depths of human experience with

careful articulation of one's own experiences is at the heart of pastoral ministry.

Nouwen writes,

> In this context pastoral conversation is not merely a skillful use of conversational
> techniques to manipulate people into the Kingdom of God, but a deep human
> encounter in which a man is willing to put his own faith and doubt, his own hope
> and despair, his own light and darkness at the disposal of others who want to find
> a way through their confusion and touch the solid core of life.[133]

In Nouwen's spiritual pastoral theology his disarming vulnerability makes way for deep

integration of personal experience, the being of God and the situation of ministry. In

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[131] See Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral*, 242, where he teaches that perspective refers to "the point from which things are seen and observed determines what is seen what is not seen," and posture refers to "where one stands in life."

[132] O'Laughlin, *Henri Nouwen*, 51.

[133] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 39.

keeping these realities in conversation, the perspective of the wounded healer

encourages the move from concern toward presence.

As Nouwen reflects on the pastoral encounter between John and Mr. Harrison he

observes,

> [t]he beginning and end of Christian leadership is to give your life for others. Thinking about martyrdom can be an escape unless we realize that real martyrdom means a witness that starts with the willingness to cry with those who cry, and to laugh with those who laugh, and to make one's own painful and joyful experiences available as sources of clarification and understanding.[134]

The posture of the practice of perichoresis is not to touch weakness with strength, but to

see fellowship, grace and love emerge by meeting others in the painful and joyful

experiences that are encountered, clarified and endured in love. In this perspective

Christian community becomes a place to be present to one another and to identify where

the triune God is present as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The practice of perichoresis

remains attentive to human angst by acknowledging one's own woundedness and

offering them as a source of healing for others. Nouwen's own life and ministry

exemplifies a ministering person who lives from the perspective of a wounded healer.[135]

The move toward presence is also advanced by the integrative nature of

Nouwen's pastoral theology. In his book *The Living Reminder* Nouwen addresses the

themes of 'healing, sustaining and guiding.' He uses Hiltner's themes to articulate an

understanding of ministry "to be a living memory of Jesus Christ."[136] Nouwen moves

beyond Hiltner by articulating a robust spirituality for pastoral ministry. In this

development Nouwen connects the vocation of ministry with one's relationship with

God. He writes, "[t]he great vocation of the minister is to continuously make

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[134] Nouwen, *The Wounded*, 72.
[135] See Higgins and Burns, *Genius* and Hernandez, *A Spirituality* for accounts of Nouwen's life.
[136] Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 25.

connections between our story and the divine story. We have inherited a story which

needs to be told in such a way that the many painful wounds about which we hear day

after day can be liberated from their isolation and be revealed as part of God's

relationship with us."[137] Nouwen also articulates an understanding of ministry that is

reliant upon the active presence of God. In speaking about the ministry of absence,

Nouwen argues that this is done so that those who are receiving ministry discover the

presence of God. He writes, "[t]he more this creative withdrawal becomes a real part of

our ministry the more we participate in the leaving of Christ, the good leaving that

allows the sustaining Spirit to come."[138] The perspective of the wounded healer assists

the practice of perichoresis to pursue the kind of integration reflected in Nouwen's

thought.

Nouwen's wounded healer offers the perspective needed to help ministering

persons move from concern to presence. It is a perspective that seeks to stay in

relationship with and reliant on the ongoing work of God in the world. It also embraces

an authentic approach to ministry where weakness, brokenness and woundedness

become not obstacles to be overcome but sources of healing in ministry. The move from

pastoral concern to presence is clarified by the perspective of the wounded healer

because it creates a participative communion with Christ that informs the vocation of

ministry.

A Cruciform Posture

The practice of perichoresis is rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

Christ. It is in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the posture of cruciformity

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[137] Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 24.
[138] Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 48.

is understood. The spiritual union that is inherent in the practice of perichoresis is a union in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This union is spoken of by the Apostle Paul who says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me," (Gal 2:20). Jürgen Moltmann articulates what the cross means for the being of God. Moltmann develops a Trinitarian theology of the cross that affirms a cruciform shape that reflects the being of God from all eternity.[139] The heavenly vision of Revelation 5, of the lamb which looked like it had been slain, reveals the eternal impress the cross has on God in eternity.[140] It is such a cruciform understanding of the triune God that is the posture of the move toward presence.

God's trinitarian and cruciform essence informs the shape of Christian ministry. Since the move toward presence is rooted in the action and agency of God, its expression will be consistent with the triune God—it will be cruciform. Michael Gorman teaches that God is the "cruciform God."[141] Gorman's understanding of the cruciform nature of the being of God comes from his study of Pauline theology and spirituality. Gorman explains, "[i]n Paul's experience, God's will and person are known through the cross of Jesus the Messiah and Lord. In other words, cruciformity is the character of God."[142] Gorman argues for a family resemblance that exists between Jesus and God the Father. The cross reveals something about both Father and Son. Gorman

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[139] In *The Crucified*, 243, Moltmann explains, "To understand what happened between Jesus and his God and Father on the cross, it is necessary to talk in trinitarian terms. The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son."

[140] This does not mean that God is a helpless victim who endured the cross but that God chose to suffer with and for creation in this way. Moltmann in *The Crucified*, 278, highlights that God endured the cross so as to open up the life of the triune God to the fallen and sinful. He argues, "[God] humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and godforsaken, so that all the godless and godforsaken can experience communion with him."

[141] See Gorman, *Inhabiting* and *Crucifromity*.

[142] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 18.

explains, "[i]f on the cross Christ conformed to God, then God 'conformed' to the cross. *The cross is the interpretive, or hermeneutical, lens through which God is seen; it is the means of grace by which God is known.*"[143] In light of the cross of Christ, the dance of perichoresis is cruciform in shape.

Like the sign of the cross used most commonly in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox spirituality, ministry practice has a cruciform shape. Moving toward participative presence is done in cadence with the cruciform dynamics that occur within the triune God. This means that the cadence of death and life are a constant part of the shape of ministry. Through union with Christ, ministering persons become expressions of the Father's compassion, they are tangible gifts of Christ's grace and attentive listeners to the Spirit's groaning in the suffering persons. Such a cruciform shape allows ministering persons to follow Christ in opening up their own wounds, brokenness and loss to others so that they might become a means of Christ's presence in the midst of suffering.

The cruciform shape of Christian ministry is most clearly expressed in Christ—his death and resurrection. The cruciform nature of ministry includes the dynamic of death and life. Andrew Purves introduces his vision of cruciform ministry with the dramatic question, "has God killed your ministry yet?"[144] He hopes to bring good news with this question by articulating a vision of ministry that relieves ministers from the pressure that "it is all up to me."[145] Purves' argument is that all Christian ministry is unified with Christ's ministry. He argues, "[w]e should expect that our ministries too

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[143] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 17. Emphasis original.
[144] Purves, *The Crucifixion*, 11.
[145] Purves, *The Crucifixion*, 11.

should die, even be killed, that they may be raised with Christ."[146] Purves teaches that as

ministers experience God's crucifixition of their ministry they can find new hope in

Christ. He argues, "[e]verything is now to be rebuilt on this foundation. Jesus Christ

stands in for us. As in faith and worship, so now in ministry, he does for us what we

cannot do for ourselves."[147] Purves makes clear that the source of ministry is Jesus

Christ and that this assumes a cruciform shape for ministry. Purves argues for a

participative understanding of ministry that moves in cadence with the love of God, the

grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.[148]

Ministry originates and flows out from Jesus Christ and thus takes the same

cruciform shape of his life and ministry. Ministering persons are caught up in the

movements of love and mission that flow from the triune God. An essential element of

cruciform ministry is that it participates in the perichoretic and cruciform ministry of

Christ that continues in the world. It is an understanding of ministry that seeks to move

in cadence with Christ. This means it is always perichoretic in origin and cruciform in

expression. Life and death, then, are constant elements of the practise of perichoresis.

Ministry entails a dying to one's own competence, vision, and idolatries, if ministry in

cadence with Christ is to be realized.[149] It is vital to establish that such a perspective

does not foster a passive approach to ministry but actually excites a passion for

ministry—a suffering and dying to all things for the sake of the Gospel and God's will.

In union with Christ participative presence takes a cruciform posture.

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[146] Purves, *The Crucifixion*, 14.

[147] Purves, *The Crucifixion*, 26.

[148] Purves, *The Crucifixion*, 70–71, where he argues, "Instead, more radically, the Christian life is participation in Christ's righteousness, holiness and mission through the bond of the Holy Spirit." See also his discussion of the grace of Christ, the love of God, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit on 65–72.

[149] See Nouwen, *In the Name*, for a discussion of these kind of temptation in ministry.

The move toward participative presence advances as the Spirit facilitates the

telos of ministry which is eschatological union with God understood as *theosis*. Gorman

creatively adapts the common biblical phrase, "you shall be holy for I am holy" to "you

shall be cruciform, for I am cruciform."[150] Gorman argues, *"[t]heosis is transformative*

participation in the kenotic, cruciform character and life of God through Spirit-enabled

conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ, who is the

image of God."[151] It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows for ministering persons' to

experience, in the present, the anticipated reality of life in full participation with God.

Stanley Grenz speaks of this reality when he argues that the "ecclesial self" has an

"eschatological character" that is bestowed through a "pneumatological-trinitarian

context."[152] It is the Spirit of the cruciform God that enables the move toward

participative perichoretic presence.

Part of the participative character of this understanding of ministry in the world

is that it anticipates the *telos* of creation and moves in cadence with such eschatological

dynamics. Seen in this way, *theosis* is not simply a distant hope or goal but defines the

present ministry context. This means that the ministry of presence is done in light of the

resurrection and fulfillment of God's plans for creation. In this way *theosis* is an

eschatological reality that redefines the present. Andrew Lester observes that,

"Christians have 'hope beyond hope' and are not unduly threatened when their finite

hopes do not materialize."[153] The great eschatological hope of *theosis* is union with the

triune God. Viewing the sufferings and trials of the present in the confident hope that

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[150] Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 105.
[151] Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 125. Emphasis original.
[152] Grenz, *The Social*, 326.
[153] Lester, *Hope*, 67.

nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39b).

The perspective and posture of the practice of perichoresis take seriously the concern of human angst. The perspective of the wounded healer is that human brokenness and sinfulness can be used graciously by the triune God. The posture of the practice of perichoresis is cruciform. Perichoretic presence takes the shape of the cross, it suffers-with and does so in light of the hope of the coming kingdom of God. Such dynamics are illumined by the resurrection journey ministering persons find themselves on. It is into this journey that the perspective of the wounded healer and the posture of cruciformity help ministering persons to move in ever-deepening cadence with God.

The Resurrection Journey of Prayer

A pastoral theological reading[154] of the Emmaus narrative illumines the journey toward presence.[155] This reading of the Emmaus story suggests that prayer is the mystery, context, and fulfillment of the practice of perichoresis. On the road to Emmaus the human angst of these two disciples is touched by the mysterious presence of the risen Christ and reorients the disciples toward a redefined future. While they walk disillusioned toward Emmaus, in the end, they race back in hope to Jerusalem.

Human angst clarifies the usefulness of any given pastoral theology. If a pastoral theology fails to be a source of healing and hope in this midst of affliction, it fails in its aim to touch the brokenness, disillusionment and confusion people face in life. Yet how

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[154] This reading is done in conversation with Nouwen, *With Burning.*
[155] The Emmaus narrative is found in Luke 24:13–35. Morris in *Luke*, 367, comments, "This charming story is one of the best loved resurrection narratives. There is something very moving in one of the Lord's few appearances being given to these humble quite unknown disciples. The story, moreover, has something so vivid about it that some hold that it must have come from one of the participants, perhaps even that Luke was the unnamed disciple." For a discussion of the historicity of the Emmaus story see Liefeld, *Luke*, 1054–55.

can human articulations of pastoral theology ever meet the needs that confound a fallen world? The practice of perichoresis reminds ministering persons of the need for the triune God to be an active agent in any response to human angst.

The Emmaus story illumines how the risen Christ is present in situations of angst. These two disciples who journey toward Emmaus are losing hope. Henri Nouwen comments, "[a]ll had come to nothing. They had lost him [Jesus]. Not just him, but, with him, also themselves . . . They had become two lost human beings, walking home without having a home, returning to what had become a dark memory."[156] Their angst was very real but the presence of Christ, the stranger, who walked with them transformed their experience. This narrative provides hope that participative presence actually moves in cadence with the mission and ministry of the triune God in the world.

The Emmaus narrative is connected with human angst because the two disciples were walking away from Jerusalem. They were leaving the rest of the disciples who were together still trying to come to terms with the crucifixion of Jesus. The demeanour of the disciples as they walk and conversed is made clear by Luke when he informs that "[t]hey stood still, their faces downcast" (Luke 24:17b). It appears the disciples were disoriented and disillusioned by Jesus' death on the cross; they were broken and heading for home. Nouwen shows the importance of recognizing such grief. He states, "[t]o grieve is to allow our losses to tear apart feelings of security and safety and lead us to the painful truth of our brokenness."[157] From this perspective brokenness can be a hope producing reality. It is through brokenness that Christ's presence is realized. It is in brokenness that the mystery of prayer begins.

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[156] Nouwen, *With Burning*, 23–24.
[157] Nouwen, *With Burning*, 30.

While the disciples were walking away from Jerusalem they were actually moving closer to the resurrected Lord, "but they were kept from recognizing him," (Luke 24:16). This is the mystery of prayer. At the height of the disciple's angst they were engaged in prayer and did not even know it. The resurrected Christ was present with them in their brokenness. He engaged with them where they were at and touched their hearts as he, in hiddenness, engaged them in conversation. This is a profound portrayal of prayer—it occurs even when the disciples are unaware. This is also why presence is vital in the face of human angst. Anxieties so often ask for full attention and it is easy to become dominated by them and become "still and downcast." The Emmaus narrative shows that this is where Christ meets people touching them at the point of need and engaging them in prayer before they even realize that communion with God was occurring.

The disciple's hearts were burning within them as this stranger opened the scriptures up to them; this is the context of prayer—having one's heart and mind illumined by Christ. This "stranger" rekindled hope in the disciples' hearts. They shared with the stranger their loss of hope saying, "we had hoped that he was the one . . .," (Luke 24:21a). Even at the articulation of their disillusionment, Jesus was present to them. Paradoxically, Jesus moves closer to the two by hinting at his absence. As the trio neared Emmaus Jesus acted as if he was going to continue on his journey. While the disciples' hearts were awakening, "Jesus continued on as if he were going farther," (Luke 24:28b). The two disciples could not let him go and urged Jesus "[s]tay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over," (Luke 24:29). Prayer draws people into deepening intimacy with Jesus through his presence and his absence. Nouwen

comments, "[o]nly with an invitation to 'come and stay with me' can an interesting encounter develop into a transforming relationship."[158] The disciples, who in brokenness were moving away from Jerusalem, were now urging Jesus to stay with them. The disciples were beginning to pray, but they still had yet to recognize him. The move toward presence trusts that Jesus will meet people even as their disillusionment. As the presence of God begins to be realized, their burning hearts would not let Jesus walk on, the invitation is made for greater intimacy and the encounter moves toward a transforming relationship.

It is when the two disciples participate in Christ's brokenness that they recognize him as Jesus their resurrected Lord. This is the fulfillment of prayer. Participation was the means by which these two disciples discovered that Jesus was alive. Jesus meets the two disciples in their brokenness, relates to them in their invitation but it is not until Jesus participates with them in the breaking of bread that they recognize him. Nouwen explains, "[t]he whole long history of God's relationship with us human beings is a history of ever-deepening communion. It is not simply a history of unities, separations, and restored unities, but a history in which God searches for ever-new ways to commune intimately with those created in God's own image."[159] Luke describes it as, "Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him," (Luke 24:30b-31a). It is in the common brokenness of the bread and the body of Christ that creates the gift of being aware of Christ's presence to be seen for what it is—the resurrected Christ. When this occurs, prayer is fulfilled. Brokenness and disillusionment are touched and hope transforms the

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[158] Nouwen, *With Burning*, 69–70.
[159] Nouwen, *With Burning*, 86.

two disciples. Perichoretic presence is the gift of discovering Christ in the brokenness and angst of daily life and realizing that his presence is what reconciles people to God, heals their relationship with God, sustains their walk with God and guides them to life in God.

The move toward presence desires to move in cadence with the triune God. This means its practice and fulfillment is always intimately related to prayer. Jesus presence is often mysterious and prayer is experienced not as an earnest plea to a dispassionate God, but as something that occurs before one is even aware that Christ is present, matures as one asks for more of Christ and is fulfilled through union with Christ. As presence and prayer disclose God presence in situations of angst ministering persons are moving in ever-deepening cadence with God.

Summary

The practice of perichoresis participates in God's ongoing ministry in the world. It is compassionate ministry—it suffers with those in the midst of affliction. The ministry of compassionate presence is understood perichoretically. The move from concern to presence is a move into communion with God. It is a communion that develops between the caregiver and careseeker, but is a communion that awakens those involved to the mysterious presence of the triune God. The practice of perichoresis serves ministering persons in the hope and promise that God is at work bringing the world toward its eschatological hope. Ministering persons are invited to live and serve in cadence with God as history moves toward this goal. The rhythms of the dance of perichoresis are relational and participative, in the next chapter it will be discovered that it is also spiritual.

CHAPTER FIVE

PERICHOERETIC SPIRITUALITY: THE MOVE
FROM COMPETENCE TO COMMUNION

Introduction

The unity of the three persons in the one God is a spiritual union. As Jesus states, "God is spirit" (John 4:24a). Perichoretic spirituality will be brought into conversation with pastoral theology's concern for situations. Pastoral theology is a situationally attentive discipline. Bonnie Miller-McLemore cites Mary McClintock Fulkerson, a systematic theologian, who values the situational attentiveness as an essential part of pastoral theology.[1] Miller-McLemore states, "[d]issatisfied with the cognitive captivity of her home discipline of systematic theology, she [Fulkerson] is grateful for the situational attentiveness of practical theology."[2] The dialogue between perichoretic spirituality and pastoral theology's situational attentiveness will be seen as a movement from competence to communion.

This polarity serves ministering persons to pursue communion with God, the community of faith and the world as an essential dynamic of all ministry. With this spiritual polarity it is necessary to re-affirm that it is co-operational. Competence in ministry is an important dimension ministering persons are encouraged to cultivate. This polarity affirms that competence is a good thing but serves a higher goal in ministry which is communion. This will help ministering persons to understand that authentic ministry is not only rooted in acquiring competence (proper skills and techniques for ministry) but in pursuing communion (practicing ministry in spiritual communion with God and with others).

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[1] See Fulkerson, "Theology and the Lure."
[2] Miller-Mclemore, "Also a Pastoral," 818.

To explore this movement, perichoretic spirituality will be drawn in to constructive dialogue with pastoral theology's situational attentiveness. This attention to situations will focus on three key areas: interpretation of situations,[3] theopoetics[4] and the pastoral cycle.[5] A perichoretic spirituality of illumination and giftedness helps to unify perichoretic spirituality with these constructs in pastoral theology. As the practice of perichoresis serves ministering persons to live and minister in cadence with God, this is done in cooperation with the Holy Spirit who both illumines and graces people to join with their unique contribution to the dance of perichoresis.

What this constructive conversation yields is a perichoretic spirituality of situations. A perichoretic spirituality of situations affirms that the Holy Spirit enhances the desire in pastoral theology to be situationally attentive. While the discipline has exerted much effort to discover how to competently deal with situations, pastoral theologians have begun to address the lack of spirituality for this task.[6] The move from competence to communion seeks to provide a spirituality that fosters a kind of perichoretic attentiveness to situations that is rooted in the Spirit's guidance and gifting.

One of the important benefits of the move from competence to communion is that it is able to navigate the communal and personal dynamics that are always at play in situations of ministry. Concern for competence becomes unhealthy in ministry when it becomes an individualistic focus on skills and techniques one can obtain and use in *his*

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[3] See Farley, *Practicing Gospel,* 37–40.
[4] See Zylla, "What Words," 129–43.
[5] See Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology,* 81–87.
[6] Ballard and Pritchard in *Practical Theology* call for a spirituality equal to the task, 177. Richard Osmer in *Practical Theology* integrates a spirituality into each of the four tasks he envision for the discipline. See for example his "a spirituality of sagely wisdom," 81–96.

or her ministry.[7] Perichoretic spirituality, with its intrinsic concern for communion, always works to keep the personal and communal dimensions of situations together. There is a constant spiritual interplay between the communal and the personal that is inherent to perichoretic spirituality.

Pastoral theology has been seeking to sort out the communal and personal dimensions of its work. Bonnie Miller-McLemore has adapted Charles Gerkin's living human document to the "human document within the web" to help the discipline to navigate this delicate balance.[8] A perichoretic spirituality roots the interplay between the personal and the communal in the triune being of God and in the ongoing ministry of God in the world made possible by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality becomes vital to integrate the personal and the communal in a manner that reflects the persons-in-communion that is part of the doctrine of perichoresis. This entails a turn in pastoral theology from the technical to the spiritual. Paul Ballard and John Pritchard declare that it is not their desire to develop theological technicians as they articulate their practical theology. Their hope is to "enable those involved in ministry to come to an informed pastoral wisdom based on the knowledge of God."[9] Developing a spirituality that incorporates the situational concerns of the discipline is essential. The practice of perichoresis will move from competence to communion by sketching just such a perichoretic spirituality of situations. This journey will begin by exploring the contours of perichoretic spirituality.

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[7] See Pattison, "Management," 286, who challenges the uncritical adoption by Christians of "management practices," which are "wildly overoptimistic, narrow in its view of human nature and relationships, Pelagian (i.e. ignorant of the fallen, sinful and harmful nature of human being and endeavour), utopian, exploitive, and trivializing of the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the world." See also my "Participants" which argues for a perichoretic theology of leadership.

[8] Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology*, 46–48.

[9] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 177.

Contours of Perichoretic Spirituality

Spirituality is difficult to define.[10] It refers to a realm that is illusive, unseen and easily ignored. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit is like the unseen wind "[t]he wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). By its nature spirituality is unseen, but is recognizable, like the wind. Spirituality is inclusive of all of life, but is most often used to speak of the deepest most personal elements of a person, a community, or an epoch.[11] Spirituality is also communal and for Christians this communal spirituality is expressed *ecclesially*. The unseen nature of spirituality has a deeply personal connection with the inner life of people and churches. In what follows, the contours of perichoretic spirituality will be offered. This will be done from the perspective of Christian spirituality and affirms that the triune being of God is the impress for the contours of perichoretic spirituality.

Wil Hernandez laments the challenge of defining what is meant by the spiritual life. He observes, "[a] general survey of Christian spirituality contained in both old and current literature only yields elaborate features that belie an easily integrated summarization."[12] It is important to accept the limits of any exhaustive definition of spirituality. [13] With its personal, communal and unseen nature the general contours of

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[10] Wil Hernandez in *Henri,* 63, defines spirituality as "the experiential way we live out our life in Christ through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit." John Westerhoff in *Spiritual,* 1, states, "[t]he spiritual life, as I understand it, is ordinary, everyday life lived in an ever-deepening and loving relationship to God and therefore to one's true and healthy self, all people and the whole of creation." Holder in *The Blackwell,* 5, contends Christian spirituality is "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship.".

[11] Spirituality is also used to speak of greater historical realities such as in the phrase "spirit of the age."

[12] Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen,* 63.

[13] For a helpful critical survey of spirituality from a Christian perspective see Bloesch, *Spirituality.* Here Bloesch considers three types of spirituality: classical mysticism, Biblical personalism and the new spirituality. He concludes, 150, "[t]rue spirituality begins and ends with God. False spirituality begins and

perichoretic spirituality will be offered to set the context for the move from competence

to communion. The rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity over the past century is

proving fruitful in helping to define Christian spirituality.

Trinitarian Spirituality

Trinitarian spirituality is increasingly informing the discussion about Christian

spirituality. A variety of scholars from a host of denominational perspectives all point to

the doctrine of the Trinity as the grammar by which Christian spirituality should be

understood. The doctrine of the Trinity is informing the shape of Christian spirituality.

Trinitarian spirituality's growing voice in the field of Christian spirituality is

seen in the following definitions. Mark McIntosh speaks of "the Trinitarian rhythm of

Christian spirituality" explaining,

> [t]he Trinitarian rhythm of self-sharing abundance is far more deeply and
> graciously operative within Christian spirituality than can always be discerned. I
> do sense, however, that many common marks of Christian spiritualities become
> especially intelligible and luminous when considered in terms of a journey in the
> Spirit into the ever-greater freedom, love and generosity of Jesus's relationship
> with the one he called Abba.[14]

McIntosh's 'rhythm of self-sharing abundance' and 'ever-greater freedom, love and

generosity' show the divine and human dynamics that inter-relate in his articulation of

Christian spirituality. Eugene Peterson also promotes Trinitarian spirituality. He states,

"'Trinity' is the theological formulation that most adequately provides a structure for

keeping conversation on the Christian life coherent, focused and personal."[15] Simon

Chan highlights the value of perichoresis for Trinitarian spirituality stating, "Trinitarian

spirituality is not only modeled after the separate functions of the Father, Son and Holy

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ends with the self. We do not find the will of God by probing into the searchings and yearnings of the self. We find hope and promise for the self by reflecting on the depth of God's love for us in Jesus Christ."
[14] McIntosh, "Trinitarian Perspectives," 178–81.
[15] Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 6.

Spirit but also after the inner life of the Trinity itself. The term *perichoresis* designates the relationship between the persons in which their distinct identities are defined."[16] Glen Scorgie also affirms a Trinitarian spirituality, defining it as, "Christian spirituality is the domain of lived Christian experience. It is about living all of life—not just some esoteric portion of it—before God, through Christ in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit."[17] Hans Urs Von Balthasar comments on the 'Trinitarian life arguing, "but this finding is to be a spiritual and personal encounter in which, by faith, we become aware of that 'life' which God gives to the believer objectively in the form of grace, i.e. in the form of a participation in the divine nature, with its triune exchange of life and love."[18] Each of these theologians emphasizes the fact that 'Trinity' informs Christian spirituality in a manner that (at minimum) ensures that it is thought of as personal inter-relation between the being of God and (at maximum) as "participation in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

These articulate expressions of Trinitarian spirituality encourage the move toward communion. Communion is inherent to the perichoretic being of God and as such becomes fundamental to Christian life and ministry. The doctrine of the Trinity provides Christian spirituality with relational and participative elements that create the context for communion with God and with others. Communion is not optional in Trinitarian spirituality it is essential to and expressive of Christian spirituality.

The doctrine of perichoresis emphasizes the relational and participative dimensions that contribute to a Trinitarian understanding of spirituality. A definition of perichoretic spirituality becomes apparent. *Perichoretic spirituality is the relational and*

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[16] Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 49.
[17] Scorgie, *Dictionary*, 27.
[18] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 177.

participative experience of living all of life by the Spirit in Jesus Christ's communion

(koinōnia) with the Father expressed in worship, community, ministry and mission.[19]

What follows in this chapter is an elaboration on what is packed into this definition as it

relates to pastoral theology's situational attentiveness.

Perichoretic spirituality is at all times relational and participative. It is a

receptive spirituality that depends on the triune God to touch the lives of people by the

Spirit. This does not create a sense of passivity; it rests sure that the Spirit is always

working to create communion with God and others through community, worship,

ministry and mission. This receptivity creates a freedom to actively engage in pastoral

theological work in the uniqueness of the ministering person's own personality, history

and giftedness. It creates a context for an authentic reliance on the triune God and the

community of faith as ministry is done relationally, participatively and spiritually.

The contours of perichoretic spirituality begin to highlight the importance of the

move from competence to communion in pastoral theology. The contours of this

perichoretic spirituality are seen through its Trinitarian shape, Christological focus and

Pneumatological expression. Perichoretic spirituality is rooted in the relational

abundance that exists in the triune God. The Father's delight in the Son by the Spirit

roots perichoretic spirituality in divine love. Perichoretic spirituality is centered

Christological because it is rooted in a theological and experiential understanding of life

lived in participation with Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul declares, "[f]or you died, and

your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Stanley Grenz argues, "those who

are 'in Christ' are the recipients in the Son of the eternal outpouring of the Spirit who is

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[19] This definition is influenced by James Torrance's definition of worship. See *Worship*, 30, where he writes, "worship is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father."

the love of the Father for the Son and the love the Son reciprocates to the Father."[20]

Perichoretic spirituality is Christ-centered which opens up the life and love of the triune

God. Perichoretic spirituality is pneumatological in expression. The Holy Spirit brings

God's people the grace and illumination that equips them for worship, community,

ministry and mission.

It is the pneumatological expression of perichoretic spirituality that will be

drawn into conversation with pastoral theology. In particular this will be developed

through a spirituality of giftedness. This is an important development in the practice of

perichoresis because of the conviction that the Holy Spirit gifts ministering persons in a

manner that encourages the move from competence to communion. An essential

dimension of the Spirit's gifting is that it creates communion—communion with the

triune God and communion within the community of faith. In what follows, it will be

necessary to show: (1) how grace, wisdom and integration are operative in the working

of the Holy Spirit; (2) develop a spirituality of giftedness that clarifies how the Spirit

uses giftedness to create communion with God and within the community of faith. This

will require a questioning of the "conventional view" of spiritual gifts;[21] and (3),

integrate these developments of perichoretic spirituality with pastoral theology's

concern for situations. The focus here will be on interpreting situations, theopoetics and

the pastoral cycle. As these three parts of the journey are made it will be discovered how

perichoretic spirituality informs the move from competence to communion.

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[20] Grenz, *The Relational*, 327.
[21] See Berding, *What are Spiritual*, 27–30.

The Spirit of Integration, Grace and Wisdom

The Holy Spirit integrates God's grace and wisdom into situations of ministry.

The integrative nature of the Spirit is seen theologically and biblically. The Holy Spirit

holds together and in tension some of the most perplexing theological problems. One

relevant example is the tension between God's immanence and transcendence in

theology. It has become a mark of good Christian theology to keep the tension between

God's immanence and transcendence.[22] As Stanley Grenz explains, "[t]he identity of the

third Trinitarian person as the eschatological creator Spirit provides the link from the

economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity."[23] In the biblical narrative the Holy Spirit can

be seen navigating this tension. The Holy Spirit can be seen integrating God's

immanence and transcendence in two key areas for this discussion: the giving of grace

and the transfer of wisdom.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, the Holy Spirit graciously gives

gifts to the body of Christ. The apostle Paul teaches that the gifts are given, "so that the

body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge

of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of

Christ" (Eph 4:12b-13). These *charisms* come from the ascended Lord (transcendence)

but these gifts are offered "to each one of us" (Eph. 4: 7) (immanence). It is through the

Holy Spirit that the gifts of grace of the transcendent Lord are given to believers

gathered together in local churches.

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[22] See Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century* for a survey of contemporary theologies through the lens of God's immanence and transcendence. They assert, 11, "[a]t its best Christian theology has always sought to balance between the twin biblical truths of the divine transcendence and the divine immanence."
[23] Grenz, *Theology*, 378.

The Apostle Paul offers a similar perspective on the Holy Spirit's integrative nature in terms of wisdom. It is by the Spirit that the reception of wisdom from God occurs. The Spirit moves from the heights of the transcendent God to the immanent depths of human introspection. Paul teaches,

> [t]he Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us (1 Cor 2:10b-12).

Once again this biblical example reveals that it is the Holy Spirit who searches the deep things of God (transcendence) but is able to bring that wisdom "so that we may understand what God has freely given us" (immanence). Both the grace gifts (properly understood) and the Spirit's work in bringing the wisdom of God into the situations of ministry help ministering persons to live and serve in cadence with God. It is through communion with the triune God by the Holy Spirit that the move from competence to communion is made. It is the Holy Spirit who brings the grace of Christ and the wisdom of God to ministering persons. This aspect of the Spirit's work is reflective of the perichoretic life of the triune God displayed at the cross of Calvary.

For Jürgen Moltmann the cross of Christ can only be understood in Trinitarian terms.[24] At the cross the most vivid example of perichoretic spirituality is glimpsed in both its poignancy and practicality. The Holy Spirit's role in this drama signals that the Spirit is able to integrate and bring communion to situations riddled with tension,

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[24] As was noted above, Moltmann teaches in *The Trinity*, 82, that at the cross, "[t]he Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation." At the cross, as the heart wrenching agony of the Son and the Father was experienced, Moltmann shows that it is the Spirit who preserves the link between the Father and the Son. Moltmann explains, 83, "[t]he common sacrifice of the Father and the Son comes about through the Holy Spirit, who joins and unites the Son in his forsakenness with the Father."

suffering and forsakenness. As the biblical narrative unfolds, not only is the Spirit integrating the sonless-Father and the fatherless-Son, the Spirit is the Spirit of life and it is by the power of the Spirit that Jesus is raised from the dead. The Spirit is able to sustain the communion of the trinity even when faced with the forsakenness of the cross. This should give confidence to ministering persons that the Holy Spirit provides them with the grace and wisdom to minister in the complexities of a fallen world. To live and serve in cadence with God means that ministering persons will be drawn in to communion as the Holy Spirit equips them to serve a hurting world with wisdom and grace.

The Spirit's work of integration is an invitation into communion. From the perspective of the ministering persons, the Holy Spirit leads people towards communion as he gifts them for ministry. The gifts of the Holy Spirit need to be carefully understood because while biblically they serve this constant move towards communion, practically they have been used to assert spiritual competency. A spirituality of giftedness which engages the biblical narrative will be explained to show how giftedness may well be the most practical way the Holy Spirit draws ministering persons into communion with God and within the community of faith.

The Spirit's Gifts of Grace

Spiritual giftedness integrates the personal and communal dimension of the practice of perichoresis. Giftedness allows for the interplay between the relational, participative, and spiritual dynamics that are constantly operative in this pastoral theology. The New Testament concept of spiritual gifts can be understood as a movement of grace that begins within the triune God and flows by the Spirit into the

lives of ministering persons for the building up of the body of Christ. The gifts of grace bring a relational and participative dynamic that holds in tension a concern for the communal and personal. With giftedness interdependence is a good thing. Giftedness is essential to the movement from competence to communion because it unites ministering persons with the triune God and within the community of faith towards relational participation in the *missio Dei*.

Such a theology of giftedness can aid pastoral theology to be situationally attentive. It provides the spiritual resources to rely on God's wisdom and grace to deal with situations while also doing so interdependently at the ecclesial level. It will be necessary to explore what is meant in this perichoretic spirituality of giftedness so that the relational and participative dynamics inherent to it are understood.[25] A biblical and perichoretic spirituality of giftedness serves the move from competence to communion by emphasizing the spiritual communion giftedness creates with God and within the church. It actually changes the question concerning giftedness from, "which one of the gifts do I have?" to the more relational and participative question, "how do I participate in making God's grace tangible in the church and world?" This is an understanding of giftedness that moves from competence (my gifts are for my ministry) to communion (gifts are tangible expressions of God's grace).[26] Seen this way, giftedness is a primary means by which ministering persons are equipped by the Holy Spirit to live and serve in cadence with God.

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[25] This perichoretic Spirituality of giftedness differs from the 'conventional view' of spiritual gifts popular in churches today. The conventional view has come under scrutiny recently. On example of this is Berding, *What are Spiritual,* 25–35, where he questions the conventional view of Spiritual gifts as "special abilities."

[26] See my "Participating" for a discussion of giftedness as it relates to pastoral leadership.

Defining a Perichoretic Spirituality of Giftedness

In moving toward a definition of a perichoretic spirituality of giftedness, it will

be noticed that the term 'spiritual gift' is not being used. The conventional notion that

spiritual gifts are a distinct category of spiritual abilities is being questioned by biblical

scholarship.[27] The concern focuses on if Paul had a technical meaning in mind when he

used the term *charismata*, a term often equated with 'spiritual gift.'[28] Clarifying what

Paul meant with the term *charismata* and considering what he taught about the grace

gifts will help to lead toward the definition of perichoretic spiritual giftedness.

Contemporary biblical scholarship is suggesting that the word *charismata* is not

equivalent to the phrase 'spiritual gifts'—understood as a distinct category of gifts. This

means that the words 'spiritual gift' or *charismata* is not a technical term in Paul's

usage. Schatzmann states, "Paul employed [*charisma*] in a 'nontechnical' general

sense."[29] The evidence for questioning this assumption is twofold. First, the New

Testament does not use the term *charismata* in a technical sense. Second, the gift lists

Paul articulated appear to be simply examples of 'giftedness' and are not attempts to

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[27] The conventional view is commonly seen in evangelical and church growth oriented literature. See Bugby, *What You Do Best*, 59–63 and Warren, *The Purpose-Driven*, 365–93. The conventional view of spiritual gifts comes with an assumed definition. One example of such a definition is articulated by Bugbee in *What You Do Best*, 52, states, "Spiritual gifts are divine abilities distributed by the Holy Spirit to every believer according to God's design and grace for the common good of the body of Christ." Scholars, however, have begun to question the assumptions such a definition brings. See Stott, *Romans*, 329. In the conventional view spiritual gifts are thought to be special abilities that the individual believer has to discover and put into use. In this perspective, spiritual gifts are assumed to be (1) a distinct category of abilities (2) given by the Holy Spirit that (3) are used to build up the body of Christ. In the conventional view the thinking is that the New Testament speaks of spiritual gifts as a technical term.

[28] Gordon Fee comment in *Paul*, 163, "One of the fads among evangelicals in the final decades of the twentieth century has been that of finding your spiritual gift. There was hardly a church or youth group that did not have such a conference or seminar . . . nonetheless the New Testament scholar in me winced on more than one occasion. *I could not imagine Paul understanding what was going on at all!*" Emphasis added.

[29] Schatzmann, *A Pauline*, 4.

define precise categories of gifts.[30] These two issues will help open up a biblical understanding of spiritual giftedness.

For Paul, the word *charismata* is used for a spectrum of things graciously given by God. Paul uses *charismata* 17 times in the New Testament, for a variety of realities, from the "gift of God is eternal life" in Rom 6:23 to "we have different gifts" in Rom 12:6. With this in mind, Kenneth Berding argues, "[t]he difficulties for those who try to defend a technical use by Paul are significant. To be considered a technical or somewhat technical term, a word must be used consistently in related contexts with more or less the same meaning. But this is precisely the problem with the word [*charisma*]."[31] Paul employs the word *charisma* not just in reference to spiritual gifts, what a technical use would require, but for such diverse things as "salvation" (Rom 5:15, 16), "eternal life" (Rom 6:23), "marital status" (1 Cor 7:7), his own visit to Rome (Rom 1:11),[32] among others.[33] The New Testament evidence indicates that a technical use of *charismata* is to say the least, problematic.

What further confounds the technical use of *charismata* is that, at times, Paul does not even use the term in his teaching on giftedness. In Eph 4, Paul refers to – 'grace' (*charis*, v. 7) and 'gifts' (*edoken*, v. 11) but not *charisma*. If Paul had in mind a technical use of *charismata* one would expect him to use this word consistently and with the same general meaning whenever he employs it. This is precisely *not* the case in Paul's writings.

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[30] Stott, *Romans*, 338, "all the lists emphasize the *variety* of the gifts, each seeming to be a random selection of them."

[31] Berding, "Confusing Word," 5.

[32] This is the only place the Greek words equivalent to "spiritual gift" ("*pneumatikon charisma*") is used.

[33] Schatzmann in *A Pauline*, 4–5 identifies the variety of the use of *charismata*.

The non-technical use of *charismata* is supported by the variety of gifts in the New Testament gift lists themselves. Paul provides a listing of "gifts" in three different contexts. In 1 Cor 12 -14, Paul provides four lists of "gifts." The first is in 1 Cor 12:8-11, then 1 Cor 12:28 and another in verse 29, and still another in 14:26. Paul also includes a list in Eph 4:11 and Rom 12:6-8. It is important to note that each of these passages contains a different listing of gifts. Not one gift is listed in all the lists and none of the lists follow any sort of identifiable pattern. In fact, what Paul offers is quite the opposite. In 1 Cor 12:28, where contextually it might be assumed that Paul is speaking of the more supernatural kinds of gifts, he lists "helps" and "administration" right along with "healings" and "miracles." Also in Rom and Eph where Paul is not dealing with specific concerns over the *charismata* as he is in 1 Cor, the lists remain diverse both in number and content.

What seems clear from this evidence is that Paul did not use the Greek word *charismata* in a technical way meaning spiritual gift. If he did, there would be a consistency of terminology and agreement in what he identifies as spiritual gifts in the spiritual gift lists. The biblical data suggests that, for Paul, spiritual gifts are not something he could categorize and say, "these are the spiritual gifts, discover which one you have." As is shown below, it seems that when it comes to spiritual gifts, Paul had something more relational and participative in mind; something this dissertation believes is consistent with perichoretic spirituality.

What, then, is a perichoretic spirituality of giftedness? For Paul giftedness always has to do with grace. The close relationship between the words grace and gift in Paul's usage shows this. In Greek, the word for grace is *charis*, while the word Paul *at*

times uses for gifts is *charismata*. With Paul, there is etymological link between the two words. Even in Eph, where Paul does not choose to use the word *charismata* for 'gifts' he is still careful to emphasize that *charis* (grace) has been *doreas* (given) in 4:7. In Rom 12:6, Paul does bring the two words together saying, "[w]e have different *charismata* according to the *charis* given us." In light of these exegetical considerations it is suggested that grace and giftedness are part of one relational and participative movement originating in the triune God which ministering persons participate in through their unique giftedness. In this view, giftedness can be understood as anything that makes God's grace tangible in the church and world. It is being argued here that for Paul giftedness means particular persons are being expressions of God's grace. It is the relational, participative and spiritual means by which ministering persons make God's grace real in concrete situations of ministry. This is why Paul could point to specific tasks like serving, teaching or encouragement and identify these as expressions of *charismata*. Not because they are special in and of themselves, but because they are expressions of Christ working through ministering persons by the Spirit to be tangible expressions of God's grace.

A perichoretic spirituality of giftedness is more of a relational, participative, and spiritual encounter with the triune God. Giftedness is the movement of grace—from the Father, through the Son by the Holy Spirit—into ministering persons who become tangible expressions of grace in service of the *missio Dei*. Berding suggests that viewing spiritual gifts as ministries is a helpful corrective to the conventional view. He states, "[a]ll ministries are concrete ways in which God works his grace among his people."[34] A more trinitarian definition of a perichoretic spirituality of giftedness is offered. The

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[34] Berding, "Confusing Word," 11.

definition is perichoretic in that it respects the tension between unity and diversity and is an expression of the triune God's desire for mutual interdependence in the community of faith. *A perichoretic spirituality of giftedness is any ability, capacity, circumstance, relationship, or experience (diversity) in the life of the ministering person when it is viewed from the perspective of coming graciously from God (unity) as the Holy Spirit's means of equipping believers to fill the unique role he intends for them as they participate in the ongoing ministry of Christ in the church and world.* What this definition emphasizes is that the triune God is graciously working in the church and world through his people in a manner that reflects God's own unity and diversity. The emphasis is on God and his grace not on individuals and their gift(s). This perichoretic spirituality of giftedness affirms the relational and participative impulse of the doctrine of perichoresis and this emphasis contributes to the move from competence to communion.

In a perichoretic spirituality of giftedness there is an appreciation for communion that is rooted in unity and diversity. Ministering persons do have particular, diverse gifts, just as Paul could point to local churches in Rome, Corinth and Ephesus and identify them. The point is that Paul seems to understand these particular gifts as all being rooted in the ministering person's spiritual communion with God. In a perichoretic spirituality of giftedness there is a spiritual interplay between the unity of spiritual gifts in God's grace and the diversity of these gifts in the lives of ministering persons. It is the diversity of gifts that creates a communion within the community of faith. It is together as a communion of graced persons that local churches can learn to move in cadence with the triune God. With this definition of a perichoretic spirituality

of giftedness in place, attention will turn to Trinitarian theological reflection about the

charismata in an effort to continue to explore the move from competence to

communion.

Trinitarian Charismata[35]

The promise of the New Testament teaching about giftedness has not escaped the

notice of Trinitarian theologians. Paul Fiddes, Jürgen Molman and Miroslav Volf all

seek to articulate how New Testament giftedness flows from its Trinitarian source and

finds expression in the body of Christ. Each of the three theologians' teaching about

spiritual gifts will be surveyed in an effort to show how giftedness contributes to the

move from competence to communion.

Paul Fiddes

Paul Fiddes discusses spiritual gifts in his book *Participating in God*. Consistent

with the discussion on giftedness above, Fiddes shows that the gifts unite ministering

persons with the triune God. Fiddes adds to this discussion through his development of

the Holy Spirit as the source of gifts as well as reflection on how the gifts foster true

spiritual power. Fiddes moves into his discussion of spiritual gifts as part of his broader

discussion about the Holy Spirit. His teaching on gifts flows out of his pneumatology. In

doing so, he emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the source of the gifts. Fiddes explains

how the Spirit draws persons into the perichoretic dance of the triune God and this

becomes the source from which the gifts are actualized. Rooted in a pnuematology of

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[35] Each of the theologians discussed below use the term "*charismata*" as a shorthand way to refer to the New Testament concept of giftedness. It is necessary to emphasize again here what was explained above: this is not the only way Paul uses the word *charismata* nor is it the only way that he refers to giftedness. Moltmann, Volf and Fiddes' theology of spiritual gifts, while diverse, also resists the conventional understanding of giftedness argued against above. This along with their Trinitarian approach helps to inform the perichoretic spirituality of giftedness being developed here. They understand the gifts in a non-technical way and encourage a Trinitarian understanding.

giftedness, Fiddes shows how the gifts contribute to a proper understanding of spiritual power. Fiddes understands spiritual gifts to flow from the Spirit through ministering persons as servants of the triune God.

In Fiddes articulation of giftedness, the Holy Spirit has the defining role. Fiddes argues, "[a]ll these gifts will be *charismata*, as the Spirit seizes hold of different areas of our lives and personalities, making them playgrounds for charismatic activity, places where the wind blows."[36] With Fiddes, giftedness comes through union with the Spirit. As the Spirit blows through areas of a person's life they are caught up in a movement of grace and become gifts to others. Fiddes identifies such movements as the fellowship between persons that the Holy Spirit creates, stating, "[t]here is a whole level of interaction between persons that happens too deep for words, and we have already seen that we need spirit-language to evoke this."[37] Fiddes teaches that in practice this is often experienced as a unique connection between people. He asserts that there is "a particular role for the Spirit as the bridge of communication, the spark of electric charge, between people at hidden, non-conceptual levels of experience."[38] This communion between others that the Spirit creates is "felt in the sudden breaking down of barriers between what we usually hold apart as the conscious and the unconscious."[39] It is such a connection of persons *in* the Holy Spirit that creates the bond of love between people that is truly a gift of grace that flows from the triune God into the church and world. It is this communion which also guides the proper function of the gifts.

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[36] Fiddes, *Participating*, 270.
[37] Fiddes, *Participating*, 271.
[38] Fiddes, *Participating*, 272.
[39] Fiddes, *Participating*, 272.

Fiddes teaches that the Holy Spirit also informs the proper function of spiritual power. Just as the Spirit works though persuasion and influence, so too do those who are exercising the Spirit's gifts.[40] Fiddes speaks to two realities which hinder the "'wildness' of the Spirit"[41] as it relates to giftedness. The first is to control the gifts through organization. This is when the diversity and spontaneity of the gifts are simplified and reduced most often by the clergy in an effort to fit within "ecclesial plans."[42] The second is for a leader to dominate others with their own *charismata*.[43] This is where a person's unique giftedness so dominates the community of believers that the diversity of the gifts is lost. It is notable that in both cases communion is lost at the expense of competency—be it a bureaucratic or spiritual competency.

Fiddes identifies what true spiritual power is when expressed through giftedness. Fiddes explains that spiritual power is to be understood as something that is always to be used graciously—in the service of others. His vision is that "[t]rue spiritual power is the power of increasing the faith of others, guiding their prayer, stimulating their service and making liturgy a sacred drama through which people can live in the glory of the new creation. The greatest power is that of persuasion and influence."[44] Too often a focus on one's own organizational or spiritual competence creates the context for a misuse of spiritual power and the atrophying of grace in the community.[45] The gifts create true spiritual communion with God and with others.

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[40] Fiddes, *Participating*, 274.
[41] Fiddes, *Participating*, 273.
[42] Fiddes, *Participating*, 273.
[43] Fiddes, *Participating*, 273.
[44] Fiddes, *Participating*, 274.
[45] Henri Nouwen speaks to such temptations Christian leaders face in his book *In the Name of Jesus*. Based on Jesus temptations he identifies the temptations to be relevant, popular and powerful as significant obstacles faced in Christian ministry. He suggests these temptations are resisted through a complimentary kind of spiritual communion to what is being argued for here. That is communion with

It is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which guides Fiddes' understanding of giftedness. Giftedness flows into people's lives through a spiritual union with the perichoretic God by the Holy Spirit. The communion with the Holy Spirit creates a communion within the charismatic community. The gifts are designed not to promote individual competency but to create a spiritual community unified in grace and diversified in expressions in gifts. A community in spiritual communion with the triune God that as each person shares their giftedness, the body of Christ is built up in love.

Jürgen Moltmann

Jürgen Moltmann presents a Trinitarian theology of the *charismata* in his book *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. For Moltmann the *charismata* refer to "the overflowing wealth of spiritual powers (charismata)."[46] He offers an understanding of 'spiritual gifts' from a Pauline perspective.[47] In his view, New Testament giftedness "is a crystallization of the gospel."[48] Moltmann contributes to this perichoretic pastoral theology of giftedness by clarifying the theological origin, historic expression and eschatological character of the charismata. For Moltmann the 'spiritual gifts' are necessarily Trinitarian because they flow from and depend on an intimate union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rooted in the triune God, the charismata have a historical expression which unites them with the resurrected Christ in the messianic community.

Christ through his love. Nouwen identifies this as being rooted in Christ's love through prayer, ministry and being led.

[46] Moltmann, *The Church*, 294.

[47] In his discussion Moltmann uses the Pauline phrase charismata throughout. It is clear, however, that he does not use it in the technical sense argued against above. He comments in *The* Church, 295, "The New Testament knows no technical term for what we call 'the church's ministry.'" Moltman refers to the charismata as: eternal life, spiritual powers and suffering. Nor does he limit giftedness to only Paul. Moltmann says in *The Church*, 298, "Paul's outline of a charismatic common order is not the only one in the New Testament. Another picture is traced by Luke and in the Pastoral Epistles. There does not seem to be much point in weighing up these concepts against one another or in linking them with the history of the tradition."

[48] Moltmann, *The Church*, 298.

Moltmann also links the gifts with the in-breaking of the new creation—this is their

eschatological character. Moltmann's Trinitarian, historical, and eschatological

explanation of 'spiritual gifts' aids the move from competence to communion by

emphasizing the divine intimacy and eschatological rhythms in the Pauline theology of

giftedness.

Moltmann believes that the concept of giftedness *must* be understood in

Trinitarian terms. The tension between diversity and unity inherent to Trinitarian

theology is also essential for a healthy theology of giftedness. He explains,

> Paul's outline is founded on his acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ, is
> evolved out of his experience of the powers of the Spirit, and is developed in the
> perspective of the eschatological history of God's dealings. Wherever the church
> loses this justification, this experience and this perspective, the diversity of the
> charismata and the unity of the charismatic community is lost.[49]

Moltmann links the diverse-unity of the being of God with the unity-in-diversity that is

Paul's vision of the Church. It is the grace gifts which both help to express the being of

God and actualize this in the local faith communities. It is as the community of faith

lives the lordship of Christ, experiences the Holy Spirit and perceives history as God's

history that allow for the gifts to foster the kind of ecclesial and personal perichoretic

spirituality that is in view in this dissertation. This justification, experience and

perspective are received by the church as a gift from God. Moltmann asserts, "[t]hey are

the gifts of grace springing from the creative grace of God."[50] Seen in this way, pastoral

competence itself is a grace gift which is caught up in a higher calling to create

communion with God and within the believing community.

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[49] Moltmann, *The Church*, 298–99.
[50] Moltmann, *The Church*, 295.

In Moltmann's understanding, the gifts are marks of the messianic community. In the messianic community there is common interdependence that the gifts of grace sustain. Moltmann explains the delicate balance that the gifts of grace create, "[t]he widow who exercises mercy is acting just as charismatically as a 'bishop.' But there are functional differences, for there is no equality in the sense of uniformity. The powers of the Spirit in the new creation are just as protean as the creation itself."[51] The diverse gifts are from Christ, by the Spirit, for the flourishing of the messianic community. Moltmann argues, "[they are] founded and forged by Christ through the present gathering and sending forth of the messianic community."[52] Suggesting that "we might formulate the principle: to each his own; all for each other; testifying together to the world the saving life of Christ."[53] Reflecting a Trinitarian mutuality that relational diversity enhances the other, Moltmann's understanding of giftedness resists an impersonal uniformity and a demeaning hierarchy. His vision insists on disciplined mutuality. The discipline is marked by a healthy balance between the unity and diversity of the gifts.

Moltmann extols the eschatological character of Pauline gifts of grace. For Moltmann this eschatological character illumines how the gifts fit in the eschatological history of God. He appreciates that the gifts of the Spirit are rooted in prophetic

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[51] Moltmann, *The Church*, 298.

[52] Moltmann, *The Church*, 298.

[53] Moltmann, *The Church*, 298. This "principle" is more emphatic in the original German. In Moltmann, *Kirche*, 325, it says, "*Jedem das Seine! Alle füreinander! Gemeinsam der Welt das rettende Leben Christi bezeugen!*" It is also worth noting that "*Jedem das Seine*" is an idiomatic phrase in German with a controversial history. It is commonly used in German meaning "to each his own" as Margaret Kohl translates it here but also "to each what he deserves." It is this later translation that seems to have lead the Nazi's to have this phrase inscribed on the gates of the Buchenwald concentration camp. It is its use there that has lead to its controversy. Moltmann's use of this phrase pulls a sentiment familiar in German culture into his discussion on spiritual giftedness. Given this context it is clear to this reader the Moltmann is using this phrase in a manner to express Paul's thought in Eph 4:7 "to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." A German translation of Eph 4:7 is, "*Jedem einzelnen von uns aber ist die Gnade gegeben nach dem Maß der Gabe Christi*" (Schlachter, 1951).

promise. He highlights that, "[a]ccording to Old Testament prophecy the spirit counts as being the gift of the last days (Isa. 44.3; 63.14; Exek. 36.27; Zech. 4.6)."[54] So the gifts function in the interplay between the fulfillment of the past and the promise of the future. The gifts help to realize in the present the promise of the eschatological future. The eschatological promise of the Spirit's gifts also reveals their distributive character. The gifts are not set apart for the spiritual elite but are for all God's people. Moltmann observes, "[i]n the messianic era not only the chosen prophets and kings but the whole people of God will be filled by the living force and newly creating power of God."[55] The equality of distribution is eschatological in character. It anticipates the new creation. Moltmann argues,

> As the power of resurrection, the Spirit is the reviving presence of the future of eternal life in the midst of the history of death; he is the presence of the future of the new creation in the midst of the dying life of the world and its evil state. In the Spirit and through the Spirit's powers the eschatological new thing – 'Behold I make all things new' – become the new thing in history, reaching, at least in tendency, over the whole breadth of creation in its present wretchedness.[56]

It is the eschatological character of giftedness that informs their function in the local church. They are not to be used simply as a means to gaining human competence but are the present expression and manifestation of the promised communion with God in the *eschaton*. The eschatological character of the *charismata* informs the move from competence to communion by showing that it is not the competent use of gifts that is their fulfillment but the union with God and others that anticipates the eschatological fulfillment of creation.

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[54] Moltmann, *The Church*, 294.
[55] Moltmann, *The Church*, 294.
[56] Moltmann, *The Church*, 295–96.

Moltmann helps to clarify key elements of this perichoretic pastoral theology of giftedness. While his reference to the *charismata* as "spiritual powers" can be misinterpreted as a non-relational understanding of the charismata, his overall development compliments a perichoretic understanding. The being of God as Triune, the nature of the church as a messianic community and the eschatological character of the gifts of grace are all vital to Moltmann's articulation of giftedness. Each of these elements contributes to and informs a move from competence to communion. Specifically, as it relates to Moltmann's discussion, his contribution suffers neither from "enthusiasm" or "the quenching of the Spirit."[57] Moltmann offers a way forward that encourages an understanding of giftedness that is rooted in the triune God, oriented to the messianic community and eschatological in character yet results in "ready, courteous service."[58] Moltmann reflections encourage this perichoretic theology of giftedness to move toward communion.

Miroslav Volf

The *charismata* also figures prominently in Miroslav Volf's ecclesiology. In working out the Trinitarian implications for ecclesiology in his book *After our Likeness*, Volf draws on the concept of spiritual gifts to advance his discussion of the structures of the church. Volf's overall concern is to provide a Trinitarian ecclesiology for the Free Church tradition. In so doing he aids this discussion by showing how spiritual gifts fit with the Trinitarian ecclesiology he develops. Volf offers a Trinitarian theology of giftedness that is participatory, confessional and interdependent. Here, like with Moltmann, these elements of giftedness are rooted in Volf's doctrine of the Trinity and

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[57] For his discussion of these two concerns see Moltmann, *The Church*, 299–300.
[58] Moltmann, *The Church*, 295.

are helpful to this discussion because they offer some precision as to how the gifts create communion with the triune God and within the community of faith.

Volf believes that giftedness is a means of human participation with God and within a local church. Volf teaches that the concept of participation is constitutive for the church. He argues, "[t]he church lives through the participation of its members, that is, the laity and the office holders, and is constituted by them through the Holy Spirit."[59] He arrives at this through three theological convictions: (1) the church is a community of interdependent subjects; (2) all members of the believing community are mediators of salvation (not just the office holders); (3) the means by which the Holy Spirit's constituting the church through "communal confession in which Christians speak the word of God to one another."[60] Volf concludes, "it follows that the life and structure of the church cannot be episcopocentric. The church is not a monocentric-bipolar community, however articulated, but rather fundamentally a *polycentric community*."[61] The church is a polycentric community because in the church all are gifted by the Holy Spirit to minister and thus all are graced as "mediators of salvation."[62] It is the polycentric nature of the church which, for Volf, emphasizes a participatory understanding of the *charismata*.

The question becomes, how do church members actually participate as the church? Volf points to the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther for his answer. From Paul Volf teaches, "Paul seems to envision such a model of ecclesial life with a polycentric participative structure when he tries to reestablish peace within the enthusiastic and

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[59] Volf, *After Our*, 222.
[60] Volf, *After Our*, 224.
[61] Volf, *After Our*, 224. Emphasis original.
[62] Volf, *After Our*, 224.

chaotic congregation in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 14:33)."[63] Volf teaches that Luther's

universal priesthood of believers has a significant ecclesiological dimension.[64] With

these observations, Volf clarifies that the church is not the church because of the 'one'

(the office holder) but the 'many' (the many members who the Holy Spirit constitutes as

the church). The charismata are essential to Volf's ecclesiology because they are the

means of participation. He argues, "the charismata are empowerments for pluriform

service in the church and in the world, empowerments which come from God's grace

and which can change and overlap."[65] Adding, "[c]ommensurate with their calling and

endowment by God's Spirit, all the members of a church are stewards of God's

manifold grace through their deeds and words (see 1 Pet 4:10-11), and all have

something to contribute in worship and in the entire life of the church."[66] Such an

understanding of participative polycentric ecclesiology shows that it is not the

competence of office holders that lead to maturing healthy churches, but the communion

of each member serving as the Spirit gifts and graces each of them.

In Volf's ecclesiology "spiritual gifts" also foster relationship with Christ. He

teaches that there is a spiritual union established with Christ that is inherent to the

gracious function of the spiritual gifts. Volf argues, "[b]ecause the church is born

through the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit, the thesis that the church is constituted

by way of the entire called and charismatically endowed people of God presupposes that

the exalted Christ himself is acting in the gifts of the Spirit."[67] In Volf's understanding

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[63] Volf, *After Our*, 224.
[64] Volf, *After Our*, 225.
[65] Volf, *After Our*, 226
[66] Volf, *After Our*, 226.
[67] Volf, *After Our*, 228.

the gifts are Christ's gifts graciously given to the people of God for the ecclesial intent that the Spirit is working toward.

From an ecclesial perspective, Volf helps to clarify two salient features of giftedness. First, he shows that there is a spiritual union which must exist between the triune God and those who exercise giftedness. Volf teaches this spiritual union is made concrete as the practice of the *charismata* and confession of Christ is held together.[68] This highlights the importance of confession of Christ in the move from competence to communion. The communion that the Spirit creates is the kind of communion which confesses Jesus Christ as Lord. Second, Volf's development of the interrelation between Christ and the gifts offers insight into the concept of participation. Ministering persons are involved in the use of the *charismata* participatively. Through the gifts of grace they participate by the Holy Spirit in the ongoing ministry of Christ. The move from competence to communion advances as spiritual gifts create a spiritual union between persons who confess Christ and participate by the Spirit in *his* ongoing ministry in the world.

Interdependence is a mark of the proper use of giftedness. The vision is that of an inter-dependant Christ centered community being built up in love—communion. Practically this means that all members of the church have gifts. Volf argues, "[a]ll members have charismata, but not every member has all charismata. The fullness of gifts is to be found in the entire (local) church."[69] Just as God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perichoretic unity, the gifts are to function in the church as a mutuality. Volf clarifies, "[t]he church is not a club of universally gifted and for that reason self-

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[68] Volf, *After Our*, 228–29.
[69] Volf, *After Our*, 231.

sufficient charismatics, but rather a community of men and women whom the Spirit of God has endowed in a certain way for service to each other and to the world in anticipation of God's new creation."[70] The gifts themselves create the communion that is both their source and goal.

Participation, confession and communion inform Volf's understanding of giftedness. The move from competence to communion is excited by each of these dimensions of giftedness. Volf helps to show how local churches might actually be structured in a view of this understanding of giftedness. This creates polycentric communities that confess Christ, embrace unity and diversity and move toward communion.

Giftedness holds together two essential elements of perichoretic spirituality: communion with the triune God and communion within the community of faith. Giftedness creates interdependence as ministering persons depend on God and each other in the practice of ministry. Fiddes, Moltmann, and Volf each contribute to this perichoretic spirituality of giftedness because they offer perspectives on giftedness that holds the theological, ecclesial and personal dimensions together. Fiddes offers insight into the experiential aspects of giftedness. Through communion with the Holy Spirit ministering persons participate in the flow of God's grace and serve others through persuasion and influence. Moltmann speaks of the eschatological character of giftedness. Volf explores the practical importance of giftedness for the church. He teaches that they influence the structure of the church to the extent that it can be understood as a polycentric community. Experientially, eschatologically and practically

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[70] Volf, *After Our*, 231.

giftedness highlights the vital communion between the triune God that is created within the *ecclesial* community. It is this biblical and Trinitarian understanding of giftedness, rooted in perichoretic spirituality, which will be drawn into conversation with pastoral theology's attention to situations.

Grace-full Situations

The discipline of pastoral theology is concerned with situations. It strives for a textured understanding of the complexities and multivalent factors of situations. It has developed approaches that seek to get at these dynamics. Interpreting situations, theopoetics and the pastoral cycle each aid pastoral theology to be situationally attentive.[71] In the ensuing discussion it will be shown how pastoral theology is enhanced by perichoretic spirituality in these three areas. For ministering persons to learn to move in cadence with God they will have to integrate their spirituality into every aspect of life and ministry. Pastoral theology's situational attentiveness helps this integration to be done thoroughly and consistently.

Interpreting Situations with Eschatological Grace

In Edward Farley's thought, 'interpreting situations' helps to salvage the term practical theology.[72] In his view it is a way to guide the discipline out of the clerical and applied paradigms and to ensure it stays in close proximity with the Gospel.[73] He argues,

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[71] Pedagogically these three areas can be related to the knowing, being and doing paradigm popular in Seminary education. See Cahalan in "Reframing," 343,where she engages with the knowing, being and doing paradigm seeking to answer "[h]ow can we create classrooms, in every discipline, that strive to integrate knowing, being, and doing toward the goal of forming student with pastoral imagination who can make sound judgments and act with integrity in the concrete realities of ministry?" The ensuing discussion can speak to a move from competence to communion in the teaching of pastoral theology as well.

[72] For Farley's discussion on the challenges of understanding what is meant by the term "practical theology" see *Practicing Gospel*, 29–35 and *Theologia*.

[73] For this part of the discussion I will be using the terms practical and pastoral theology interchangeably. At times it is necessary to distinguish between these interrelated terms, but for the development of the

"[t]o study pastoral activity in the context of the church's situation is surely a valid and necessary discipline and pedagogy. However, to interpret these studies as posttheoretical and posttheological ('applied') isolates them from the Gospel and allows them to be controlled by their satellite disciplines."[74] Farley believes the way forward for pastoral theology is to view its vocation as the interpretation of situations.[75]

Farley considers the interpretation of situations is necessary because it demands careful theological attention. Farley explains, "[w]e human beings tend to exist in our situations in an oblivious way. Most of the elements in situations are experienced as background. Situations and their elements get our attention when they become problematic, pose crises, require decision."[76] It is the discipline of pastoral theology that can offer theological interpretations of situations. Farley explains, "[t]he thesis I am arguing is that the interpretation of situations should be self-conscious, self-critical and disciplined."[77] Farley considers this a unique theological contribution that pastoral theology can offer because, "faith and participation in the community of faith inevitably shape the interpretation of situations. The fact creates a special hermeneutic task, differentiable from the other hermeneutics or interpretative dimensions of theology."[78] Farley promotes the theological interpretation of situations as practical theology.

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argument here they share of the same general meaning of referring to the discipline of pastoral and practical theology. For consistency with the bulk of this dissertation I will use the term pastoral theology but am aware that both Farley and Ballard and Prichard do use the term practical theology work.

[74] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 35.

[75] Farley compares the importance of interpreting situations with the value the other theological disciplines place on interpreting texts. In *Practicing Gospel*, 37, he writes, "[t]he Christian community typically has assumed that if the interpretation of the authoritative texts is done properly, all other interpretations will take care of themselves. It is just at this point that the believer (and the community of believers) falls into uncritical and even idolatrous paradigms of the use of texts.

[76] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 36.

[77] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 36.

[78] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 38.

Farley defines a situation as "the way various items, powers and events in the environment gather together to evoke response from participants."[79] He explains that situations in the faith community are unique because its faith commitments influence its perception of reality. Farley offers four tasks in the interpreting of situations: (1) "identifying the situation and describing its distinctive and constituent features"; (2) dealing with "the situation's past"; (3) "correct the abstraction committed by the focus on a single situation. . . Situations occur within situations"; (4) "discerning the situations' demand." [80] Room allows for only the first of these tasks to be drawn into constructive dialogue with the perichoretic spirituality of giftedness introduced above.

In the first task Farley is focused on describing the general features and characteristics of the situation. This is not as simple as one might think because human beings inevitably read situations through their own worldviews, knowledge and idolatries.[81] Farley teaches that this stage demands discernment through serious theological self criticism and careful consideration of the layers and genre the situation entails.[82] The kind of discernment Farley calls for is best done in humble cooperation with the Spirit of God.[83]

Spiritual giftedness contributes to the interpretation of situations by rooting it in community and reframing it eschatologically. As ministering persons seek to identify

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[79] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 38.

[80] All four tasks are explained in full in *Practicing Gospel* 38–40.

[81] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 38.

[82] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 38–39.

[83] I do not want to create the impression that Farley omits the working of God in the interpretation of situations. I think there is good evidence that he does appreciate God's work in these tasks, however, he does not speak specifically to the ways in which God's agency and action are at work in the interpretation of situations. For the practice of perichoresis articulating the triune God's working in the interpreting of situations enhances the discernment of the situations demand. Seeking the Holy Spirit's action in situations does add a layer of complexity to the interpretation of situations and should be done carefully and critically so as to not short step the process or diminish involvement.

the features of a situation a theology of giftedness encourages them to see this as a complementary task. No one person will arrive at the right interpretation of the situation, but giftedness affirms that the diversity of the body can lead toward a mature understanding. Giftedness draws on all the resource of the community of faith toward a full understanding of the features of the situation. To borrow Volf's phrase, interpreting situations is a poly-centric endeavour. It approaches this task with the confidence that the diversity of perspectives, qualifications, maturity and aptitudes found in the local church are the means by which the Holy Spirit will guide them toward discerning the features of the situation. The perichoretic interplay between unity and diversity is also operative as the local church is unified in its desire to explore the features of the situation but does so through the diversity of gifts that are relevant to this task. This frees the believing community to engage all that is required in order to discern the situation as fully as is possible.[84]

Farley's concern is to discern the features of the situation more than simply providing an overview of it. The element of discernment is important because it roots the task in communion with God. To discern the features of a situation is a spiritual task that relies on God's gracious help. A spirituality of giftedness is comfortable with this kind of humble dependence as fundamental to the practice of ministry. As ministering persons seek to interpret the features of a situation prayer is crucial. It is a spiritual practice that joins in the prayer already occurring within the divine life as well as intentionally clarifying their perceived points of need. In prayer, ministering persons set

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[84] This might include a variety of disciplines from congregational studies, sociology, psychology and of course theological perspectives. Of importance is to use these discipline in cooperation with the Spirit toward a full understanding of the situation. Used in this way these disciplines do not only provide a competent understanding but communion with the triune God as they move into a robust understanding of the situation.

themselves in communion with God to be lead graciously by the Holy Spirit to discern

the features of the situation. Prayer then pervades the entire process as the situation is

explored in humble perichoretic communion with God. This, of course, does not

diminish or by pass any of the difficult intellectual effort required to interpret situations,

but is careful to root all of this work in communion with God.[85]

A spirituality of giftedness also reframes the interpretation of situations

eschatologically. As Moltmann showed above, the gifts of the Spirit are eschatological

in character. This is important because Farley is relentless in his pursuit to access the

complexities of the situation. He amplifies the difficulty of this task when he says,

> Discerning these components is a difficult task . . . A situation is not like a
> basket of fruit, so that discerning the situation is merely enumerating what fruits
> occupy the basket. The components of a situation are always different kinds of
> things, things of very different genre: human beings as individuals, wordviews,
> groups of various sorts, the pressures of the past, futurity, various strata of
> language . . . Some of these things reside in deep, invisible strata while others are
> more or less on the surface . . . 'Reading a situation' poses the double task of
> probing these layers and of identifying the genres of things that constitute the
> situation.[86]

The eschatological character of giftedness reframes this task by asking two important

questions in order to help manage the complexity of the task. The first question is what

resource (i.e. giftedness) is available to contribute to the probing of the layers and the

identifying of the genres? The answer to this question rests in the confidence that the

Holy Spirit gifts the community of faith to be and do what God desires them to be and

do. This will guide how the community of faith approaches interpreting the situation.

The second question is how does eschatological hope illumine what demands attention

in the situation? If the gifts of the Spirit are a foretaste of the flourishing of creation in

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[85] Richard Osmer speaks of "Priestly Listening" and offers some practical helps in the "descriptive-empirical task." See his *Practical Theology*, 58–64.

[86] Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 38–39.

the *eschaton*, how might this hope guide the discerning of the features of the situation? It is from this eschatological hope that situations might "become a new thing in history."[87] Giftedness will aid ministering persons to see the fertile ground of new creation which will in turn guide their probing of the layers and identifying the genres of situations. Discerning the rhythms of new creation will help ministering persons to identify where Christ is already at work in the situation and participate with him in his ongoing ministry there.

Interpreting situations is a complex task. A spirituality of interpreting situations makes this task even more complex. This approach is not meant to ease the challenge of interpreting situations but to learn to do so relationally, participatively and spiritually. Rooted in a perichoretic theology of giftedness, the community of faith interprets situations in communion with the triune God and in communion within the community of faith. In practice, this spirituality of interpreting situations brings the Gospel as close as possible to the interpretation of situations as it seeks to keep in step with the Holy Spirit, to discern the mind of Christ and to know the will of God in the situations it is seeking to discern.

As Farley shows, interpreting situations is a distinctive task of pastoral theology. This theology of giftedness enhances the discipline by ensuring that the perichoretic interplay of communion with God and within the community of faith is operative. This enables interpretations of situations to not simply be done by competent interpreters or eager leaders but engages in this task in inter-dependant gifted communion. Farley says

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[87] Moltmann, *The Church*, 296.

the goal of interpreting situations is to discern the situation's demand.[88] Perhaps the

communion that is established between the triune God and the people of faith as they

journey together to interpret the situations is suggestive of an even greater goal.

Giftedness is a way to ensure an eschatological communion that is attentive and

responsive to the most complex situations.

Theopoetics

Theopoetics is another means by which pastoral theology is situationally

attentive.[89] Theopoetics moves beyond the cognitive dimensions of knowing into the

mysterious dimension of experience, feeling and response—it leads into the interstices.

Similar to biblical poetry, theopoetics expresses realities that prose cannot.[90] It is not

studying the physiological and psychological dimensions of love. Theopoetics is finding

words that evoke the experience of *being* in love. Theopoetics dares to give voice to the

inexpressible. Theopoetics thrives in the interstices, where all is not defined and there is

room for mystery, wonder and hope. Theopoetics awakens the soul. In the move toward

a perichoretic pastoral theology, theopoetics is crucial because it critiques competency

and awakens communion.[91]

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[88] Discerning the situations demand is the fourth and final task of Farley's interpreting of situations, *Practicing Gospel*, 39–40.

[89] Matt Guynn explains the genesis of the term theopoetics in "Theopoetics," 107n6,"The term *theopoetics* emerged from conversations within the Society for Art and Religion in Contemporary Culture (founded 1960), and received attention via the work of Amos Wilder . . . Wilder attributes the term's genesis to Stanley Romaine Hopper." See also Miller, "Theopoetry," and Holland "Theology," for introductions to theopoetics.

[90] Zylla in *Virtue*, 84, states "[t]he power of the poetic word-form, then, promises to break through in ways that other word-forms will fail. The poem has the potential to release words in such a way as to let the reader be confronted by the first Word."

[91] Guite in *Faith*, 3 (quoting Thomas Sprat), speaks of the loss of the poetic as the Enlightenment hardened into something like a quest for absolute competence understood as a "mathematical plainness." Guite goes on to argue, 4, "[t]he new philosophers and scientists had declared war on the imagination, and the consequences of that war was a kind of cultural apartheid: the entire realm of 'objective' truth was to be the exclusive terrain of *Reason* at its narrowest – analytic, reductive, atomizing; and the faculties of *Imagination* and *Intuition*, those very faculties that alone were capable of integrating, synthesizing and

Theopoetics embraces the in-betweenness of all human situations. Rubem Alves is a theologian with a theopoetic vision. His theology evokes the need for the interstices, a place he believes lies beyond exegetical precision. He writes, "[e]xegetes and hermeneuts are at a loss . . . Their job is to find a meaning that a voice *has*. They hear, they read and they say: 'this is the meaning of the words!' But now if the poet is to be believed, 'there is another voice' which lives in the 'interstices': the silence of the text."[92] For Alves this other voice is the Holy Spirit, "Hermeneuts were to be silent, so that the believer could hear the voice of the Stranger: the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit."[93] Theopoetics and perichoretic spirituality have natural affinity in seeking to hear the voice of the Spirit.

As pastoral theology seeks to be attentive to situations it will often have to abandon the modern over emphasis on explanations, explications and conclusions.[94] The negative aspect is that explanations flatten, explications make bland and conclusions shut down. Alves argues that it is poetry that allows for contour, contrast and freedom. Words, Alves teaches, are not meant to be understood but eaten, savored, enjoyed and experienced. It is the poet that embraces the interstices in order to experience the relational poignancy of theological reflection. Phil Zylla highlights the pastoral value of theopoetics, "the poem's task is not only to 'open our eyes,' but also radically alter our moral posture in the world, to undo our prefabricated answers to life's ultimate questions, and to reform our character."[95] Human words are limited in their ability to

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making sense of our atomized factual knowledge, were relegated to a purely private and 'subjective' truth." Emphasis original.

[92] Alves, *The Poet*, 99.
[93] Alves, *The Poet*, 102.
[94] Alves, *The Poet*, 8–9.
[95] Zylla, *Virtue*, 87.

speak to the mystery that is inherent to situations. Pastoral theology is wise to accept this reality and value theopoetic expression. Paul Fiddes shows that spiritual gifts possess a similar ability to touch people in ways that are beyond the conceptual. He articulates "the Spirit as the bridge of communication, the spark of electric charge, between people at hidden, non-conceptual levels of experience. The wild, untamed quality of the Spirit in the *charismata* is felt in the sudden breaking down of barriers between what we usually hold apart as the conscious and unconscious."[96] As pastoral theology embraces a poetic cadence in its work, it will engage situations in a manner that allows the Spirit to move guiding ministering persons to move from competence toward poetic evocations of eschatological communion.

The dynamic nature of theopoetics integrates well with perichoretic spirituality. A theopoetic cadence of ministry is more like the movement of a poem. Ultimately it is moving in cadence with the perichoretic dance of the triune God. The apostle Paul says in Eph 2:10, "[f]or we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The word for "handiwork" in Greek is *poiema* which speaks of the poetic artistry of God in all his creation.[97] There is a poetic element to God's work and it is the people of God who are expressions of this divine creativity. Giftedness is part of the poetic cadence of this divine creativity. Seeing pastoral situations as occasions for the creative handiwork of God to become apparent resonates with theopoetics. This kind of expression excites the move from competence to creative communion with the triune God.

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[96] Fiddes, *Participating*, 272.
[97] Stott, quoting Bruce, in *The Message of Ephesians*, 84, says *poiema is* "'his [God's] work of art, his masterpiece.'"

Poetic communication is able to awaken an eschatological hope while remaining engaged with the present context. Alves suggests that theopoetics has an ability to awaken a yearning for the ultimate. Like the gifts of the Spirit theopoetics help to awaken anticipation of God's eschatological intentions. Alves describes this as first fruits. In his book *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body*, Alves awakens a desire for what seems to be the eschatological hope of bodily resurrection. He writes,

> Imagine that before the abundance of flowers and of fruits, nature should send us, beforehand, samples of that which is to come. First fruits, messengers. And so we can, in anticipation, taste the good taste of that which is coming. They don't nourish us. They awaken the appetite. They make us desire with more intensity. That's the way it is too, with the aperitif which does not satisfy hunger but prepares the body for the food.[98]

In this way theopoetics shares with perichoretic giftedness the ability to anticipate through some measure of realization the eschatological new creation. Concerning giftedness Moltmann explains, "[t]he Spirit of the last days and the eschatological community of the saved belong together. The new people of God see themselves in their existence and form as *being* 'the creation of the Spirit', and therefore as the initial fulfillment of the new creation of all things and the glorification of God."[99] In this light, the gifts themselves are best viewed as a kind of first fruits that awaken but do not completely satisfy the longing for the eschatological communion God's people hope for.

From this perspective, theopoetics becomes a source of communication that expresses ultimate hope while appreciating that it is yet to be realized. Theopoetics allows for the handiwork of God to be expressed as the community of faith awaits eschatological fulfillment. Theopoetics and giftedness can move together into the hard work of situational attentiveness. Together they allow for an eschatological hope to be

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[98] Alves, *I Believe*, 75.
[99] Moltmann, *The Church*, 294. Emphasis added.

articulated in the context of real situations. Moltmann asserts, "[t]he assurance of the Spirit does not lead to a dream of worlds beyond this world; it leads ever more deeply into Christ's sufferings and into earthy discipleship."[100] Theopoetics themselves become expressions of the Holy Spirit's giftedness as ministering persons use them to hold "earthy discipleship" together with the community's eschatological hope.

Theopoetics speaks of a hunger for communion with the triune God which is not yet fully satisfied. The gifts of the Spirit work to bring this longed for new creation into the present by building up the body of Christ in love. Theopoetics and gifts aid pastoral theology to be situationally attentive by providing the ability to evoke a reality that, while not fully present, redefines the situation. They both serve ministering persons to evoke a sense of God's concern for the situation from an eschatological perspective. Such expression increases the faith, hope and love of the believing community as they move together toward perfect communion with the triune God.

The Pastoral Cycle

The pastoral cycle is a tool to help ministering persons to thoroughly and consistently deal with the situations of ministry. In pastoral theology it is most commonly a four step process based on the action reflection theory. Paul Ballard and John Pritchard in their book *Practical Theology in Action* point to the pastoral cycle as a "heuristic tool; that is, it provides a means of understanding and using a process of discovery and action."[101] The pastoral cycle will be drawn into dialogue with the spiritual gifts to show their mutually interdependence.

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[100] Moltmann, *The Church*, 299.
[101] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 87.

Ballard and Pritchard teach that pastoral theological tools like the pastoral cycle require spiritual integration. They explain, "[t]heological activity cannot be separated from the life of faith, prayer and worship. The process of critical reflection and discovery is part of the pilgrimage of the people of God. This is true in the life of the congregation in the community. It is also true in the more formal context of academic study or structured enquiry."[102] Ballard and Pritchard also explain that the pastoral cycle needs Christian spirituality. They argue, "[t]he purpose of the pastoral cycle is not to make theological technicians. . . the true aim, however, is rather different: it is to enable those involved in ministry to come to an informed pastoral wisdom based on the knowledge of God."[103] Ballard and Pritchard's language is reflective of the move from competence to communion. The goal is not competence (theological technicians) but communion (pastoral wisdom based on the knowledge of God). Pastoral wisdom, however, requires a spiritual communion with the triune God and it is precisely this that perichoretic spirituality brings to the use of the pastoral cycle.

Ballard and Pritchard teach that the pastoral cycle is normally a fourfold process.[104] It begins with (1) experience, (2) exploration, (3) reflection and (4) action. Ballard and Pritchard are careful to note that the "cycle, however, does not stop."[105] The situation of new action allows the cycle to begin again in an ongoing process of reflection and action. The ongoing movement of the pastoral cycle resonates well with the eternal movement of love in the triune God inherent to perichoretic spirituality. In

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[102] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 93–94.

[103] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 177.

[104] Ballard and Pritchard provide a concise version of the pastoral cycle. See Cameron et al., *Theological Refelction*, 5–7, for a more expansive version of the pastoral cycle.

[105] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 86.

this small way the pastoral cycle can be seen to help ministering persons to move in cadence with the triune God.

A perichoretic spirituality of giftedness provides the spiritual integration the pastoral cycle requires. The Holy Spirit's gifting of ministering persons enhances the pastoral cycle by rooting it in "a spirituality equal to its task."[106] The pastoral cycle also enhances the practice of giftedness by showing where specific expressions of God's grace are needed. The harmony of this mutual relationship comes through the common desire of the pastoral cycle and the spiritual gifts—they both seek to bring the body of Christ to maturity. Paul explicitly states that the gifts function in the community of faith "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of God" (Eph 4: 12-13). Integrated with a perichoretic theology of giftedness the pastoral cycle becomes a practical tool to be used by ministering persons toward the maturing of the body of Christ.

The pastoral cycle begins with *experience*. This means that something occurs within the community of faith that can no longer be ignored. The healthiest way for such an experience to be drawn into the cycle is through honest communication rooted in healthy relationships. The perichoretic relations of the triune God are the paradigmatic vision for these kinds of relationships. As the community of faith learns to function as a community of graced persons the problems and concerns of ministry will be able to be discussed and explored openly without fear of judgment or competition. It is as the cycle is immersed in a spirituality that is committed to cultivating communion that it usefulness to the discipline is maximized.

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[106] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 177.

The pastoral cycle naturally guides people into their areas of giftedness. It bears reminding that the perichoretic spirituality of giftedness articulated above sees all abilities, experiences, talents and expertise as a means of making the grace of God tangible. The pastoral cycle aids in guiding graced people to use their giftedness in the best way for the given experience that ministering persons are guiding through the cycle. Some people in the community of faith will have gifts of grace that allow them to contribute in the different movements of the pastoral cycle. Those in leadership and others who are discerning will express their giftedness as they discern which *experiences* should use the pastoral cycle. As the situation is *explored* those gifted at investigating and articulating what is going on in the experience can use these skills as gifts of grace to come to a thorough understanding of the situation. *Reflection* requires another cluster of gifts.[107] Here those with spiritual wisdom or theological training can use these dimensions of giftedness to engage the situation with the Christian tradition and integrate the information gleaned toward an appropriate theological response to the situation. Finally when it comes to *action* those with skills in strategic planning, administration and particular concern for the situation can be re-engaged in the action of ministry with greater insight, maturity and spiritual wisdom. The gifts of grace enhance the use of the pastoral cycle by creating the spiritual communion and freedom required for its use to move toward communion.

The spiritual integration of giftedness with the pastoral cycle creates the perichoretic unity- in-diversity that contributes to the move from competence to

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[107] Theological reflection is a salient feature of pastoral theology. See for example, Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*; Graham, Walton and Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* and *Theological Reflection: Sources*; Mudge and Poling eds., *Formation and Reflection*; Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*.

communion. It is a communion with the triune God as ministering persons discover that the Holy Spirit has graciously given them particular gifts to be used in practical areas. It also excites communion within the community of faith as the members of the body experience each other as "members one of another."[108] The pastoral cycle and spiritual giftedness function mutually to move the discipline of pastoral theology from competence to communion.

Ministering persons can use the pastoral cycle to attend to situations thoroughly and consistently. It is an important tool that pastoral theology has developed to help ministering persons to keep theology and the practice of ministry engaged in an ever maturing rhythm of action and reflection. It is necessary to ensure that ministering persons root the pastoral cycle in a robust spirituality. Ballard and Pritchard explain, "Christian people need the mental resources of something like the pastoral cycle, and the spiritual resources of a life 'hidden with Christ in God.'"[109] Perichoretic spirituality integrates both the mental resources of the pastoral cycle with the spiritual resources of spiritual gifts towards the hope of serving ministering persons to live and minster in an ever-deepening cadence with the triune God.

Summary

Perichoretic spirituality guides pastoral theology into communion as it also enhances the pastoral theological concern to be situationally attentive. The relational and participative dynamics of perichoretic spirituality clarify that communion with God is vital to all dimensions of the practice of ministry. The Holy Spirit enhances the interpretive, theopoetic and practical dimensions of the pastoral theological endeavour.

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[108] See Pickard's development of this phrase based on Paul's body metaphor in Rom 12:1-8, in *Theological Foundations*, 144–47.
[109] Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology*, 190.

The Spirit does this by gifting the community of faith with ministering person's who in community and by God's grace interpret situations, evoke theopoetical and eschatological hope, and reflect on the practice of ministry. More important, however, is the reality that the Spirit creates communion with the triune God and communion within the community of faith through these gifts of grace. As the Father opens up relationship, and as the Son invites participation, the Holy Spirit spiritually integrates ministering persons into the divine life and the *missio Dei*. Such perichoretic movements of love and grace require one more movement, which introduces the subject of the next chapter, the move from practice to prayer.

CHAPTER SIX
MINISTRY IN CADENCE WITH GOD: FROM PRACTICE TO PRAYER

Introduction

This dissertation has traced the integration of pastoral theology and the doctrine

of perichoresis through three interrelated movements: from experience to relationship;

from concern to presence; and from competence to communion. Each of these

movements is part of the one controlling movement of this pastoral theology—from

practice to prayer. This chapter explains how the integration of prayer and pastoral

theology will help ministering persons to live and minister in cadence with the triune

God.

The last three chapters have shown that a perichoretic pastoral theology is

relational, participative and spiritual. The way ministering persons integrate these

perichoretic dimensions into their life and ministry is through prayer. Prayer is already

an important dimension of pastoral theology. Pastoral theologians use prayer carefully in

pastoral care and counseling.[1] Henri Nouwen was a pastoral theologian who offered the

discipline what is perhaps the most developed integration of prayer and pastoral

theology.[2]

Nouwen's approach is the kind of spiritual integration of prayer that the practice

of perichoresis is seeking. Nouwen's theology and practice of prayer is the means by

which he integrates ministry, spirituality and theology. Nouwen's vision of prayer

encompasses all of life and ministry. He states, "Prayer is not preparation for work or an

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[1] See Wimberly, *Prayer in*, 15–21 and Hunsinger, *Pray*, 92–94.

[2] While Nouwen does not speak of the doctrine of perichoresis specifically he does draw on the doctrine of the Trinity to explain a participative understanding of prayer. See *Reaching Out*, 125 and *Behold*, 30–42, for examples of his engagement with the doctrine of the Trinity and prayer. Nouwen's teaching on prayer also have a rhythmic relationship with ministry. In *Lifesigns*, 35, he writes, "[a]s prayer leads us into the house of God and God's people, so action leads us back in the world to work there for reconciliation, unity and peace."

indispensable condition for effective ministry. Prayer is life; prayer and ministry are the same and can never be divorced."[3] While Nouwen does not specifically develop his understanding of prayer in perichoretic terms his thought and practice does have a trinitarian rhythm. The move from practice to prayer will be explored in light of Nouwen's integration of prayer and pastoral theology but it will be developed as an overt perichoretic spirituality of prayer.

The Trinitarian rhythm of Nouwen's theology of prayer comes into sharpest focus as he explains how prayer participates in the intimacy of the triune God. It is God, in Christ, who initiates prayer. Nouwen teaches, "[i]n Jesus Christ, God has entered into our lives in the most intimate way, so that we could enter into his life through the Spirit."[4] Nouwen adds, "[b]y giving us his Spirit, his breath, he became closer to us than we are to ourselves."[5] This means, "[p]raying in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, therefore, means participating in the intimate life of God himself."[6] Here Nouwen shows the Trinitarian dynamics of his understanding of prayer. Prayer is understood as participation in the divine life. Christ touches human lives personally by the Spirit and leads them into the love of God. For Nouwen, the rhythm and movement of prayer are thoroughly Trinitarian.

Nouwen's ability to incorporate a pervasive and disciplined understanding of prayer into his pastoral theology sets the trajectory for this perichoretic spirituality of prayer. The doctrine of perichoresis encourages an understanding of prayer that is relational, participative and spiritual. Understood in this way, prayer helps ministering

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[3] Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*, n.p.
[4] Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 125.
[5] Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 125.
[6] Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 125.

persons to move in cadence with the perichoretic rhythms of the triune God. It is in

prayer that ministering persons are able to integrate their own weakness, brokenness,

experience and sinfulness into the movement toward God. Nouwen will continue to be a

conversation partner as the relational, participative and spiritual dynamics of the move

from practice to prayer are discovered. Nouwen helps to show the relevance of this

perichoretic spirituality of prayer as he shares about his own prayer life being "as dead

as a rock."[7] Nouwen's experience teaches that even when it is beyond our emotional

perception the dance of perichoresis continues to lead people toward freedom in prayer.

A Perichoretic Spirituality of Prayer

Nouwen's reflections on his prayer life anticipate the importance of a

perichoretic spirituality of prayer. As he admits to the disconcerting state of his prayer,

that it was 'dead as a rock,' he was not driven to despair. Nouwen explains in his journal

that such an experience did not define his prayer life. Nouwen was confident that it is

God who defines his prayer life more than he does. Nouwen asks, "[i]s the death of my

prayer the end of my intimacy with God or the beginning of a new communion, beyond

words, emotions, and bodily sensations?"[8] His underwhelming experience

notwithstanding, Nouwen understands his prayer life to be guided by the Holy Spirit. He

explains,

> [t]he year ahead of me must be a year of prayer, even though I say that my
> prayer is as dead as a rock. *My* prayer surely is, but not necessarily the Spirit's
> prayer in me. Maybe the time has come to let go of *my* prayer, *my* effort to be
> close to God, *my* way of being in communion with the Divine, and to allow the
> Spirit of God to blow freely in me . . . But I trust that it is just not I who have to
> do the work. The Spirit of God joins my spirit and will guide me as I move into
> this blessed time.[9]

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[7] Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, 6.
[8] Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, 6.
[9] Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, 6.

Nouwen shares the freeing hope of allowing the Spirit to guide his life of prayer—
despite his experience. Nouwen's ability to integrate prayer into *all* his experiences in
life and his pastoral theology will aid the practice of perichoresis to do the same.
Perichoretic theology suggests that prayer is a movement that joins in the perichoretic
dance of the triune God. The practice of perichoresis learns from Nouwen how, in the
here and now, prayer is guided by the Holy Spirit toward living all of life in cadence
with God.

The perichoretic rhythms of prayer are relational, participative and spiritual. The
one act of prayer then has three movements. It is a *relational* movement as prayer
immerses ministering persons in the love of God. It is a *participative* movement as
ministering persons learn to pray and minister in the name of Jesus. It is a *spiritual*
movement as ministering persons learn to let the Holy Spirit guide their prayer and to
live in cadence with God. The relational, participative and spiritual movements of prayer
will be discussed in an effort to show how they interrelate and so become the practice
that enables ministering persons to live in cadence with the triune God.

Perichoretic Relationality and Prayer

In light of perichoretic theology, prayer is learning to move in relational cadence
with the triune God. Prayer is the closest way human beings come to sharing in the
perfect communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is from the Father that the
relational movements of prayer flow. In the perfect rhythms of the perichoretic God, the
Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father.[10] It is this relational context that ministering

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[10] The point here is to emphasize that the Father is from all eternity the source of the Son and the Spirit. Moltmann makes an important relational connection between the Spirit and the Father. In *The Trinity*, 184, he argues, "he [the Holy Spirit] does after all issue from the fatherhood of God, which is to say from

persons enter into as prayer becomes the means by which they find the rhythm to move in ever increasing cadence with the triune God.

At its core prayer is relational. Paul Fiddes describes perichoretic prayer as, "[w]e enter into the life of prayer already going on within the communion of God's being; we pray to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit."[11] Such a relationally fertile context appreciates the complex challenges ministering persons face in prayer and reframes them relationally. Prayer, then, is not done to rouse God's attention to situations of concern, but to join in with God's concern over the situation. A perichoretic approach to prayer is learning to move in relational cadence with God in the situations in which one is ministering. Perichoretic prayer is seeking to do the will of God, with Christ, by the Spirit—in its full relational vibrancy. The vibrancy will be described through three relational motifs: child, (minor) partner, and friend. In prayer, God desires ministering persons to be relationally engaged with him. In this view, ministering persons do not pray to serve God, but pray to serve with God. The question then is how does these three relational motif's inform perichoretic prayer?

Children ~ Praying to the Father

Ministering persons pray to the Father. As was mentioned above, it is from the Father that all the relational movements of God originate. To pray to the Father is to enter into the relational rhythm that is inherent to the perichoretic life of God. Hans Urs von Balthasar describes this as being "afloat like a ship above the immense depths of an

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the Father's relationship to the Son. This makes the inner-trinitarian relationships clear. The two 'processions' are simultaneous and in common." Moltman in *The Trinity*, 184, adds, in light of the *filioque* controversy, "it is erroneous to conclude from this that the Spirit proceeds from the Father 'and the Son' we must none the less adhere to the fact that the Spirit proceeds from the Father in the eternal presence of the Son, and that therefore the Son is not uninvolved in it."
[11] Fiddes, *Participating*, 123.

entirely different element . . . namely, the unfathomable love of the Father."[12] He goes

on to share that "the creature's very existence seems to be a latent prayer—the creature

only needs a certain degree of awareness of what it really is, and it will break forth into

prayer."[13] Prayer is a move into the immense depth of the love of the Father, who is

open and desires to receive his children with abounding relational joy.

Minor Partners ~ Praying with God

Fiddes teaches that prayer allows persons to share in God's care and concern in

the world as minor partners. The classic theological dilemma concerning prayer deals

with God's sovereignty.[14] The dilemma between God's sovereignty and prayer is largely

overcome when the emphasis is on relationality. Fiddes understands that the relational

movement of prayer affirms God's sovereignty while leaving relational room for human

influence through intercession. He argues,

> [t]he view I am proposing affirms sovereignty in God, but not in the sense of
> unilateral activity. Rather, God takes the initiative in the project of influencing
> the world toward the flourishing of life and the maximal creation values. Our
> prayer is not needed to get God started, after which we stand back; God always
> draws near to people with persuasive love, with or without us, and God's grace
> will be the major factor in transforming human life; but our intercession still
> makes a difference to what God achieves, though we be a minor partner.[15]

The idea of being a minor partner, rooted in relationship with God, moving toward

human flourishing in prayer balances the proper relational cadence that exits between

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[12] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 44.

[13] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 44.

[14] Sanchez, "Praying to," 275-78, discusses how a Trinitarian/participative practice of prayer navigates through the issues of God's sovereignty expressed by what he calls the "theisms" (classical theism and open theism). He concludes, 278, "The God of 'theisms' either makes prayer seem superfluous and insignificant in the face of God's transcendent sovereignty (the classical sort) or makes God seem weak and somewhat susceptible before the power of our prayers (the open sort). One hopes it is possible to leave the God of 'theisms' behind and move towards the 'triune' God of the Biblical narratives and their witness to God's threefold self-revelation in the economy of salvation, particularly as this pattern become evident in the Son's life of prayer to God the Father in and by the Spirit."

[15] Fiddes, *Participating*, 138.

human beings and the triune God. This perspective aids in seeing that prayer is first about relationship with God and then about partnering with God in pursuit of "transforming human life."[16] In this way, prayer does not begin or end with the human persons. Prayer is how ministering persons move in cadence with God and intercession is the relational response to God in the trials and triumphs in the situations of ministry. By emphasizing the relational dimensions of prayer, ministering persons can engage with these relational rhythms. Prayer is done in step with the Spirit, in the name of the Jesus, according to the will of the Father as ministering persons become minor partners in advancing the Kingdom of God.

Friends and Freedom in Prayer

Jürgen Moltmann suggests that the motif of friendship helps one to grasp the relational dynamics of prayer. Moltmann suggest that there is a relational maturing with God that is illuminating for the practice of prayer. Moltmann, reflecting on Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of John, insists that friendship is the mature context of prayer. Jesus says to the disciples, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you," (John 15:15). The way "friends" relate to God is through prayer. Moltmann teaches,

> [f]riendship with God finds its pre-eminent expression in prayer. In obeying God's command a person feels himself to be the Lord's servant. In faith in the gospel he sees himself as being the child of his heavenly Father. As God's friend he talks to God in prayer, and his prayer becomes a conversation with his heavenly friend. Friendship with God means the assurance that his prayer is heard . . . The prayer of the friend is neither the servility of the servant nor the importunity of the child; it is conversation in the freedom of love, that shares and allows the other to share.[17]

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[16] Fiddes, *Participating*, 138.
[17] Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 220–21.

Moltmann uses friendship in a manner that agrees with perichoretic prayer. It is about the relationship—conversation in the freedom of love. The purest expression of this is the perichoretic relations of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the privilege of prayer that Christian's can share in such a relational exuberance. The motif of friendship helps ministering persons to realize prayer as something that enables them to live and minister in cadence with the triune God.

The move from practice to prayer is expansive and specific. It is a move in prayer into the expansive love of the Father. This love has a perichoretic rhythm by which ministering persons can learn through prayer to move in cadence with. Andrew Purves argues, "[t]he love that flows between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit reveals that God is a God of love within the communion of the Holy Trinity."[18] Perichoretic prayer is also specific. The actual concerns, fears, and hopes of ministering persons are brought to God in prayer. Prayer is done in the relational freedom that these personal situations are already a part of God's concern and intercession is made participatively (with Christ) and spiritually (through the Spirit). This is the relational privilege of moving from practice to prayer. It is moving at God's invitation into the communication already going on between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer allows people to experience God's personal care and concern and to learn to move with God in the dance of perichoresis.

Perichoretic Participation and Prayer

If the relational God is the context for perichoretic prayer, participation with Christ is its essence. It is the gift of the triune God to welcome sons and daughters to

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[18] Purves, *The Resurrection*, 68–69.

participate by the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father. The move from practice to prayer is a participative move. Prayer is praying in the name of Jesus and is understood as personally, participating with Christ in his communication with the Father by the Spirit. The biblical narrative reveals why praying in Jesus name is particularly relevant to ministering persons. This is because Christian ministry is also understood to be done in the name of Jesus. Both prayer and ministry are done in Jesus name. Prayer and ministry are interdependent as they are the means by which ministering persons participate in Christ. Like prayer, ministry is participating by the Spirit in Christ's ongoing ministry in the world according to the Father's will. Prayer and the practice of ministry are dynamics that come together in Christ. To pray and to minister is to learn to live and minister in cadence with Christ.

Ministering persons are invited to pray in the name of Jesus. Such an invitation into prayer is an expression of God's gracious movement toward humanity in Christ and Christ's movement toward God with human persons. James Torrance argues, "[t]his double movement of grace, which is the heart of the 'dialogue' between God and humanity in worship, is grounded in the very perichoretic being of God."[19] Praying in the name of Jesus is an expression of participation in Christ's sonship—with Christ human persons can cry "Abba Father." Prayer is learning to move in cadence with the triune God as a co-heir with Christ.

Living in cadence with the triune God is at the heart of Jesus instruction to pray "in my name" (John 14:13). Jesus gives his disciples the almost outlandish claim that, "[y]ou may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it," (John 14:14). This instruction is best understood in the Trinitarian context in which it is given. 'In my

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[19] Torrance, *Worship*, 32.

name' unites the disciples' prayer with Jesus' desire to bring glory to the Father (John

14:13) and Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17). 'In my name,' then, is not

the disciples' technique to get Jesus to answer their prayers according to their will.

Rather 'in my name' expresses that it is as they are moving in cadence with the Father,

Son and Holy Spirit that they now can ask for anything and Jesus will do it. The

implication is that the prayer would be in relational, participative and spiritual harmony

with God's will. Praying in Jesus name then is not a technique to manipulate God to do

the will of the petitioner. Praying in the name of Jesus is participating in the divine life

in a way that engages relationally as a child of God in the perfect communion and

communication that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoy. It is participating in Christ's

prayer to the Father that is already occurring within the Godhead.

Praying in the name of Jesus is participating in Christ's movement toward the

Father. Moving toward the Father in cadence with Christ is participative and personal.

Balthasar argues, "[b]ut Christ, having dwelt among the forms of the world which are

perceived by sense and intellect, returns to the Father, and in doing so he opens the real

path of contemplation."[20] For Christ's disciples this is not a generic or general

movement but is understood participatively. Balthasar explains, "[g]race has not

imparted some general, vague, 'supernatural elevation' to us, but a participation in the

personal existence of the eternal Word of God, who became 'flesh' like us so that we

should become 'spirit' in him."[21] To know God and hear the word of God is to

participate in Christ. As the ministering person comes to hear the word of God in Christ,

this is the rhythm which leads to prayer.

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[20] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 54.
[21] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 58.

Praying in the name of Jesus is personal. There are prayers only specific persons can pray. Each person is invited into the dance of perichoresis to move with a cadence unique to them. It is through participation in Christ that people find their most authentic self. Balthasar points to the Apostle Peter as an example of this, "Simon the fisherman could have explored every region of his ego prior to his encounter with Christ, but he would not have found 'Peter' there; for the present, the 'form' summed up in the name 'Peter', the particular mission reserved for him alone, is hidden in the mystery of Christ's soul."[22] Peter finds himself in Christ. To participate in Christ is to discover one's self. It is one's true self hidden with Christ in God that informs the personal and participative dimension of praying in the name of Jesus.

Praying in the name of Jesus is a participative and personal movement in Christ to the Father by the Spirit. Leopoldo Sanchez articulates a personal and relational approach to prayer in terms of participation in Jesus sonship. He explains, "prayer is instance—a historical expression—of filial life (the life of sonship) both for Jesus and for the followers of Jesus because both pray to the same Father in and by the same Spirit."[23] He emphasizes that the locus of participative prayer is in the common cry of Jesus and his disciples of "Abba Father."[24] Sanchez argues, "[t]o speak of prayer as an expression of sonship, of filial trust (both Christ's and ours), we must ground prayer in the triune God."[25] Sanchez aids the move from practice to prayer by emphasizing that 'in Christ' prayer is an expression of filial trust. It is as maturing children of God who are able to pray and minister in cadence with the triune God.

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[22] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 60.
[23] Sanchez, "Praying to," 287.
[24] Sanchez, "Praying to," 287–91.
[25] Sanchez, "Praying to," 291

In the practice of perichoresis participation is the perichoretic integration of practice and prayer. Prayer and ministry are inherently interrelated. In Christ they exist mutually. The New Testament shows that Jesus' disciples were taught by Jesus to pray in his name. The book of Acts reveals that they understood their ministry to flow out of this same source. Their ministry was done participatively—in the name of Jesus. They baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). They healed in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6). They preached in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). Christian ministry is done in the name of Jesus. The move from practice to prayer helps to ensure that ministry and prayer are always kept in participative communion.

Jesus invites people to participate in his life, prayer and ministry. Each of these is a gift of grace from the triune God to the church and the world. Prayer helps ministering persons to discover their own unique voice for ministry that is hidden with Christ in God. Nouwen teaches that it is "in the silence and solitude of prayer that the minister becomes a minister."[26] It is only in the restful participation of Christ's movement to the Father—prayer—that ministering persons will have the grace, wisdom and endurance to minister in Jesus name in a tragic world.

Perichoretic Spirituality and Prayer

Perichoretic spirituality informs the communal and eschatological dimensions of prayer. The Holy Spirit is the relational and participatory means through which Christians pray. Paul Fiddes teaches that Christians pray "in the Holy Spirit."[27] The Spirit is the context in which people pray to the Father through participation with Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that enhances prayer by giving wisdom, creating fellowship and

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[26] Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 51.
[27] Fiddes, *Participating*, 123.

initiating new creation. Such a spirituality of prayer is rooted in the doctrine of perichoresis and enables ministering persons to live in cadence with the triune God by providing the spiritual intimacy such a life demands.

The Holy Spirit enables creaturely cadence with God. Balthasar points to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as one of the distinctive marks of the Christian faith. The Holy Spirit enhances human life and in doing so brings it toward fulfillment. Balthasar argues that the Spirit "is able to adopt created subjectivity, refashioning, inhabiting and irradiating it until, in the medium of the Spirit of God, it blossoms forth in a mode of being and produces acts and states which were not even present in the germ of the creature as such."[28] Helping ministering persons to move in cadence with the triune God is the artistry of the Holy Spirit. This work of the Spirit is an act of grace. As Balthasar explains, it is incredible that God can indwell human beings in a manner that actually enhances personhood. He teaches, "[i]n Christianity this indwelling is a serious and radical feature, without needing to explode and annihilate the finite self; on the contrary, here, in the most mysterious way, the self comes to fulfillment beyond itself in God."[29] It is prayer—relational, participative and spiritual prayer—that is the means for the finite self to begin to cooperate with and seek such fulfillment. This journey with the Holy Spirit into prayer allows the ministering person to move with the triune God practically, communally and eschatologically.

Practically, the Holy Spirit transforms religious practice into communion with the triune God. Praying in the Spirit is transformative because it unifies all of life and ministry with God. Balthasar explains,

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[28] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 75.
[29] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 75.

> I have the conviction that my inadequate attempt to understand is supported by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, that my acts of worship, petition and thanksgiving are borne along and remodeled by the Spirit's infinite and eternal acts, in the ineffable union by which all human doing and being has been lifted up and plunged into the river of eternal life and love.[30]

Balthasar teaches that it is the Holy Spirit who compensates for human failings and futilities. With the Holy Spirit human frailty does not prevent prayer. Even when ministering persons do not know what to pray, the Spirit intercedes for them in their weakness with wordless groans (see Rom 8:26). Phil Zylla speaks of the implications of this for those who are suffering. He explains, "[p]rayer in the situation of suffering is not initiated by the sufferer but by God the Spirit . . . This moves us into the realm of divine protest against suffering."[31] It is the Holy Spirit who assists ministering persons, in their futile attempts to pray, to nevertheless keep time with the cadent rhythms of the triune God. Practically the Holy Spirit immerses all practice into the love, light and language of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Communally, the Holy Spirit guides all ministering persons to pray and serve in community. Praying in community is another means by which the Holy Spirit brings ministering persons to fulfillment. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger argues, "[h]uman flourishing requires human community—people bonded together in mutual giving and receiving."[32] The Holy Spirit's task is to create communities of mutually interdependent people who together are learning to live life in cadence with the triune God. The church, then, is a community of prayer in the Holy Spirit. Prayer becomes the means for and expression of the kind of community the Spirit is forming. Such communities of the Spirit are described by Luke in the book of Acts as communities who "devoted

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[30] Balthasar, *Prayer*, 76.
[31] Zylla, *The Roots*, 143.
[32] Hunsinger, *Pray*, 6.

themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to

prayer" (Acts 2:42). Each of these four elements encourages an ever-deepening

communion with God and with each member of the community. It is such a community

learning to pray together in the Holy Spirit that also is discovering how to move together

in cadence with the triune God. Such movements anticipate the eschatological

fulfillment of the people of God.

Eschatologically, the Holy Spirit brings the new creation into the present through

prayer. Stanley Grenz calls this the cry for the kingdom.[33] To move in cadence with the

triune God is to move in prayer toward the eschatological promise of the future. Grenz

argues, "[a]s in other areas of the Christian life, through prayer, God's people sense

God's presence among them. In this way they not only cry for the kingdom but also

come to enjoy a foretaste of the eschatological kingdom in the midst of the brokenness

of this present age."[34] This cry for the kingdom defines the community of faith to such

an extent that what the Spirit is forming in the community increasingly reflects the

triune being of God. As this occurs the church is graciously realizing in the present its

eschatological hope. Volf explains,

> [t]his twofold activity of the Spirit in unifying and differentiating prevents false
> catholicity of either church or persons from emerging in which the particular is
> swallowed up by the universal. The Spirit of communion opens up every person
> to others, so that every person can reflect something of the eschatological
> communion of the entire people of God with the triune God in a unique way
> through the relations in which that person lives.[35]

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[33] Grenz, *Prayer.*
[34] Grenz, *Prayer*, 30.
[35] Volf, *After our*, 282.

Praying in the Spirit is both the means and expression for such a communal and eschatological realization. It is to this end that the move from practice to prayer is made in the hope of living and ministering together in cadence with the triune God.

Praying in cadence with the triune God draws all of life and ministry into relational, participative and spiritual communion. It is learning to pray by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the love of God and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is perichoretic prayer which means it has a personal and communal dimension that is not easily distinguished. The move from practice to prayer is a move into the rhythms of the life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This rhythm creates expressions of ministry that also learn to move in an ever deepening cadence with the triune God.

Ministry in Prayerful Cadence with the Triune God

The practice of perichoresis is ministry done in relational, participative and spiritual cadence with the triune God. The enveloping context of this ministry is prayer—life lived in relationship with the triune God. The personal context of this ministry is prayer—bringing one's own questions, wounds, concerns and hopes into conversation with God. The move from practice to prayer therefore includes each of the movements discussed in this dissertation. It is a movement from experience to relations. It is a move from concern to presence. It is a movement from competence to communion. In proper perichoretic fashion, the three movements are actually one movement—the move from practice to prayer. So it is in the integration of prayer with pastoral theology that the practice of perichoresis actual serves ministering persons to live and minister in ever-deepening cadence with the triune God.

To move from practice into prayer awakens the ministering person to God's concern in ministry while also enhancing their engagement in ministry. Prayer and practice are no longer viewed as distinct elements but as mutual expressions that aid the ministering person to live and serve in cadence with God. As a pastoral theology it helps the discipline to discover the importance of knowing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; this is a pastoral theology that is immersed in the triune God. The practice of perichoresis also affirms that pastoral theology is done "from below"—to allow the situations of ministry to have a voice in theology. The Holy Spirit enhances ministering persons to be attentive to these situations of ministry. The practice of perichoresis also informs pastoral theology of the communal and relational dynamics that are essential in the practice of ministry. As each member of the community moves in cadence with God the whole community is choreographed toward the perichoretic rhythms inherent in the eschatological vision for the local church. The practice of perichoresis is a movement of prayer that immerses ministering persons in God, in their situations and in the community of faith. As a pastoral theology, the practice of prayer is theocentric, engaged in situations of ministry and deeply personal and communal. The move from practice to prayer helps to sustain the tensions between the doctrine of perichoresis and the discipline of pastoral theology.

Theocentric

The move from practice to prayer is a continual, deepening immersion in the life and ministry of the triune God. This is crucial for pastoral theology because of the prevailing cultural ethos of independence and technological optimism. In view of the exaggerated promise of leadership techniques, Stephen Pattison warns, "Christians,

however, should perhaps be wary of uncritically adopting a set of practices that embody a world view that could be characterized as wildly overoptimistic, narrow in its view of human nature and relationships, Pelagian . . . , utopian, exploitive, and trivializing of the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the world."[36] Pattison's call is for Christians to be discerning in the application of management techniques, for they carry with them their own set of assumptions that can be at odds with the Christian faith. The practice of perichoresis speaks to this concern by seeking to ensure that all aspects of ministry are theocentric. The importance of the move from practice to prayer is that it emphasizes the relational, participative and spiritual dimensions of this theocentric approach to pastoral theology.

The practice of perichoresis ensures that God is essential to all the workings of pastoral theology. The one necessary thing is not numerical growth, healthy budgets or building plans, but to move more deeply into the love of God which is revealed in Christ. Pastoral theology aids ministering persons to keep the Gospel close to all that they are doing. The practice of perichoresis helps to show how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the source, direction and *telos* of all ministry. To move in cadence with God is to move toward greater immersion in the dance of perichoresis. Such an invitation to this dance is defined by the relational exuberance of one caught up in the grace and love of God. Here ministry is not done for God, or on behalf of God, but in cadence with God. It is move from practice to prayer into the receptive love of God.

Edward Wimberly works to draw prayer and pastoral counseling together in his book *Prayer in Pastoral Counseling*. Rooted in therapeutic pastoral theology he senses the need to help pastoral counsellors to integrate prayer into their practice. Wimberly

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[36] Pattison, "Management," 289.

assures his readers that this is a very delicate process but that "prayer can be a smooth part of the ongoing counseling relationship, when the proper foundational work has been done with meaning making."[37] He suggests that even at the initial meeting prayer is possible as long as the following steps are followed:

1. Explore the importance of prayer
2. Gain permission to pray
3. Pray at the end of the session, as a general rule
4. Pray specifically for the issues raised in the session
5. Ask for God's revelation of where God is working in the midst of the person's life to bring healing and wholeness
6. Give thanks to God for God's interest and care in the whole counseling process[38]

The practice of perichoresis can help root Wimberly's approach to prayer in pastoral counseling in a theocentric manner.[39] The doctrine of perichoresis displays the relational concern God has to sensitively draw people toward his healing love. To borrow Balthasar's imagery introduced above, the doctrine of perichoresis views such a counseling relationship as floating upon the ocean of God's love. It is God who is already at work within the person as they are turning to the counsellor and seeking help. The counsellor can wisely use prayer to open up to the counselee the loving concern God has for them. The practice of perichoresis views such relational sensitivity as being rooted in the Father's love. In this context the doctrine of perichoresis supplies a theocentric basis for the counsellor's sensitive use of prayer.

Prayer aids in the counselling process by providing something of a perichoretic glimpse into God's loving concern for the counselee. Wimberly states, "important at this stage is the need to glimpse how God is at work in the person's life to bring healing and

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[37] Wimberely, *Prayer*, 17.
[38] Wimberely, *Prayer*, 18.
[39] See Pembroke *Theocentric*, 237–57, where he offers a theocentric and therapeutic approach to preaching.

wholeness. This may not be revealed, however, until well into the counseling process."[40]

The practice of perichoresis helps to discern where God is working in a person's life by alerting ministering persons to the relational, participative and spiritual realms which express God personal and attentive care in the world. Prayer can help the counselee to understand, experience and respond to God's loving concern. Such a theocentric approach to prayer in pastoral counselling frees the counsellor to find the most appropriate ways to use prayer to move toward the relational, participative and spiritual healing that God is working into this situation of care. This offers a hint of what therapeutic pastoral theology might look like moving in cadence with God.

Engaged in Situations of Ministry

The practice of perichoresis remains engaged in actual situations of ministry. It does pastoral theology from below, but never in a manner that is independent of God.[41] The practice of perichoresis begins in situations of ministry *with* God. Using the interstitial method, it simply steps around any dichotomy that hopes to keep experience and theology independent from each other. Rather the practice of perichoresis affirms that the Holy Spirit enhances the ability of ministering persons to probe the dynamics of a given situation. What the practice of perichoresis is careful not to do, however, is apply pre-fabricated theological solutions to the situations of ministry. The Holy Spirit, led Christ to do the Father's will by ministering incarnationally. This is true for the practice of perichoresis as well. It relies on the Spirit to so help ministering persons to

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[40] Wimberly, *Prayer*, 18.
[41] Ballard and Pritchard in *Practical Theology*, 89, teach that in pastoral theology "from below" has two connotations. First, it refers to pastoral theologies starting point—it begins with "present experience." Second, it indicates a preference for the poor, commenting "the suffering of the poor is a sign of everything that contradicts the will of God in history," 90. So engaging in theology from below begins with God in the situations of ministry. This dissertation argues that God enhances the understanding of situations as the theological conversation develops.

understand situations of ministry and to prompt an appropriate and theologically informed response.

Elaine Graham offers a helpful description of the integration of practice, the Divine and the Christian community. She argues,

> [c]an we regard authentic pastoral practice, therefore, as that which draws us into encounter with the 'Other', towards a deeper understanding of our own identity-in-relation? Pastoral theology is an interpretive discipline enabling faith-communities to give a public and critical account of their performative truth-claims. It attempts to capture glimpses of Divine activity amidst human practice. Pastoral theology aims to put to the test the conviction that the imperatives of hope and obligation are enshrined in transformative practice that seeks to realize a larger vision yet to come.[42]

In response to Graham, the practice of perichoresis believes that the 'glimpses of Divine activity' in human practice is more precise than she suggests here. God wants to be known in the situations of ministry and this can be received as a gift. The Spirit graciously enhances the ability for ministering persons to relate to God in their situations of ministry. It is in relationship with God, participation with Christ and spiritual union with the Holy Spirit that human practice is most fully understood. The move from practice to prayer then is not a move to control situations of ministry with theology, but to move into a full understanding of the situations of ministry.

Perichoretic prayer reframes Graham's perception of divine activity in situations of ministry. Instead of capturing a glimpse of divine activity, ministering persons can discern the relational, participative and spiritual rhythms that are apparent in the situation. This retains the mystery of how God is working in a situation, but roots it in the perichoretic being of God. Prayer is a way for ministering persons to participate in the bi-directional movement of grace that is crucial to pastoral theology. It discerns with

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[42] Graham, "Practical Theology," 113.

God's help how he is working in the situation but also pleads with God to work in the situation as they perceive necessary. This is the nature of perichoretic prayer. Rather than wondering if God is working in the situation it seeks to graciously discern how God is working in it. This provides a hint of how liberation theology might look moving in cadence with the triune God.

Margaret Whipp offers an insight to how such perichoretic overtones apply to the actual practice of ministry. Commenting on the ministry skill involved in taking care of others with words, she points to the experience of how one's words actually participate in something beyond oneself. She observes, "[f]rom this Trinitarian source we continue to draw fresh words which, whilst always of our own composition, are never entirely of our own begetting."[43] To draw on Whipp's example, in the practice of perichoresis there is an ongoing interplay between one's own words and God's word. Practically, this encourages ministering persons to pray continually as a means to participate in the words that God is begetting from within their situation of ministry. It is through participating in the ministry of human beings that God speaks into situations of ministry contextually and personally. Through their spiritual union with Christ —a union nurtured by prayer—ministering persons participate in the situational specific ministry that Christ is doing there.

The example of a ministering person offering a word of encouragement to another will help to show the practical dimensions operative in perichoretic ministry and prayer. A word of encouragement is full of perichoretic rhythms. A ministering person who is naturally encouraging understands this as a spiritually gift and with God's help learns to discern through prayer who might need to hear a word of encouragement.

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[43] Whipp, "Taking Care," 348.

Prayer continues as they seek Christ's wisdom on how to encourage the person. Having chosen words by which to offer the encouragement, these too are rooted in prayer to further discern what is to be said. These words are then offered to the person as a tangible means of God's grace (the context will indicate whether or not this needs to be made explicit). Having practiced the ministry of encouragement, prayer continues with the hope that the one who received the words of the ministering persons might actually hear what God is saying to them. There are three interrelated dynamics operative in this example: (1) the prayer of the ministering persons, (2) perichoretic theology and (3) the situation of ministry. These three elements are in constant and ongoing conversation toward participating in the ongoing ministry of the triune God in the world. This is an example of the move from practice to prayer.

Deeply Personal and Intentionally Communal

The practice of perichoresis elevates the personal and communal dimension of life and ministry by keeping them in constant interaction. It affirms that the personal and communal are expressive of God's being as triune and are reflected in creation, especially in the *imago Dei*. Stanley Grenz observes, "[t]he community forms the context for all humans, male and female, to come together in harmonious creative relationships of various types."[44] Perichoretic prayer contributes to this personal and communal interplay by fostering relationship with God and within the community of faith.

As ministering persons move toward God in prayer they come to a deeper understanding of themselves. David Benner teaches that "[d]eep knowing of God and deep knowing of self always develop interactively. The result is the authentic

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[44] Grenz, *The Social*, 303.

transformation of the self that is the core of Christian spirituality."[45] This deep knowing

of self is a journey towards true authentic life that relates with God, participates in

Christ and is filled with the Spirit. Prayer is essential to this pursuit because in prayer all

of one's life is opened up to God. This is an uncomfortable but essential part of the life

of prayer, but it ultimately leads to freedom.

This freedom comes in part through self-acceptance and self-understanding. At

the personal level, the knowing of self that comes through the knowing of God frees one

to become themselves in prayer. Prayer is the most personal thing a human being can

do. As Nouwen teaches, it is not always sweet and easy but it participates with Christ's

love for the Father which assures people that they are accepted by God. Benner teaches

that authentic Christian spirituality leads one to their true self. Benner says, "we do not

find our true self by seeking it. We find our true self by seeking God."[46] The doctrine of

perichoresis serves this end because it asserts that human beings participate in the love

that exists within the divine life. It is not a love that has to be earned or protected.

Benner teaches that one of the marks of the true self is that its "[s]ecurity and

significance achieved by being deeply loved by God."[47] The doctrine of perichoresis

encourages prayer that leads ministering persons to their true self because it is roots

them in the pure, authentic, loving relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here

ministering persons learn to pray as the beloved, to pray in light of the eschatological

hope that "then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12b).

The move from practice to prayer is also a move toward community. It is the

body of Christ, worshiping the Father in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that is the

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[45] Benner, *The Gift*, 30.
[46] Benner, *The Gift*, 92.
[47] Benner, *The Gift*, 92.

most mature expression of the practice of perichoresis. Prayer is the communal delight of participation together in the divine life. Stanley Grenz expresses the intimacy that exists between the church and the perichoretic God. He states, "the indwelling Spirit shapes the fellowship of Christ's followers after the pattern of the love that pre-exists in the triune life. In this manner, the Spirit-fostered mutuality of unifying love—the perichoretic life—within the ecclesial community marks a visual, human coming-to-representation of the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity."[48] The communal nature of the practice of perichoresis is reflective of the divine life which it seeks to live in cadence with.

The personal and the communal dimensions of perichoretic prayer are worked out within in the local church. The practice of perichoresis understands all followers of Christ to be "graced persons" who find their true self in relationship with God and in fellowship within the church. The church gathered in prayer is an essential mark of the practice of perichoresis because here the relational, participative and spiritual dynamics are all operative as the body of Christ joins in the triune life and shares in the *missio Dei*. These personal and communal dynamics offer a hint of what missional pastoral theology might look like moving in cadence with God.

Summary

The practice of perichoresis is a move from practice to prayer. The rhythm of the dance of perichoresis is felt as the relational, participative and spiritual dynamics of prayer mature. The practice of perichoresis is the eternal quest toward discovering how to live all of life in cadence with the triune God. In the move from practice to prayer, the ministering persons realize the heights of their relational, participative and spiritual

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[48] Grenz, *The Social*, 336.

potential. They begin to pray in cadence with the triune God. Prayer is addressed to the Father in the *relational* delight of one welcomed into the life of the triune God. Prayer is done in the name of Jesus in the *participative* confidence of being co-heirs with Christ. Prayer is done in *spiritual* communion with the Holy Spirit who integrates prayer into the spiritual vitality of the perichoretic God. This is why prayer is the most appropriate creaturely practice because it enables people to live and minister in cadence with the triune God.

The practice of perichoresis is a movement toward God in prayer. Prayer is the way ministering persons learn to move in cadence with the triune God. With Henri Nouwen it understands that prayer is the pervasive context of the entire Christian life. It also encourages the perichoretic nature of prayer as the relational, participative and spiritual movement of ministering persons toward God. In his reflections on Andrew Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity, Nouwen states, "[t]he movement from the Father toward the Son and the movement of both Son and Spirit toward the Father become a movement in which the one who prays is lifted up and held secure."[49] Nouwen describes the mystery, security and wonder of the move from practice to prayer. This is life lived in cadence with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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[49] Nouwen, *Behold*, 32.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND NEW BEGINNINGS

Conclusion

In this dissertation the doctrine of perichoresis has been drawn into dialogue with contemporary pastoral theology. This conversation has been constructive because it yields a fresh approach to pastoral theology that seeks to serve ministering persons to understand how ministry can be done in cadence with God. This approach to pastoral theology is being called 'the practice of perichoresis.'

The practice of perichoresis comes out of the dialectic that exists between: the doctrine of perichoresis, contemporary pastoral theology and the doctrine which informs ministering persons in the practice of ministry. The doctrine of perichoresis contributed a relational, participative and spiritual understanding of the being of God. This is reforming for Christian practice because, as has been argued, the way God acts in the world is consistent with who God is. God's act and being belong together in theology and ministry. Contemporary pastoral theology contributed theologies of human experience, concern for human angst and situational attentiveness to this discussion. It is the essence of pastoral theology to deal with persons and situations in all of their complexity. The practice of perichoresis is a pastoral theology that helps ministering persons to navigate how their ministry practice can be done participatively (with God), attentively (in situations of ministry) and authentically (personal life and ministry). The constructive elements of this conversation were seen through the lens of four spiritual polarities.

Each of the four polarities are co-operational. This means they are not seen in conflict but as moving toward a maturity. The first three polarities were: (1) the move

from experience to relationship; (2) the move from concern to presence; (3) the move from competence to communion. The move toward relationship, presence and communion are all rooted in the Pauline conclusion to the book of 2 Corinthians: "may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Relationship is a move in and toward the love of God the Father. Presence is a move in and toward the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Communion is a move in and toward the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As ministering persons learn to live in and move toward these perichoretic rhythms—from within their situations of ministry—they are beginning to live and minister in cadence with God.

The fourth polarity deserves special consideration. The move from practice to prayer encompasses the other three spiritual polarities. This polarity is where the struggle to find language to express the mystery of perichoretic thought breaks down. The move from practice to prayer does not begin with practice and move toward prayer. The language of moving from practice to prayer speaks of an eternal movement going on within the life of the triune God. Prayer is the way ministering persons join in on God's relational, participative and spiritual life. Understood this way, prayer certainly precedes practice. The move from practice to prayer speaks of an ongoing pervasive reality and not only the particular experience where one is encouraged to move from practice to prayer—although it certainly includes such a movement as well. The move from practice to prayer seeks to integrate prayer into all dimensions of the practice of ministry.

As was mentioned in chapter one, this dissertation is done from the perspective of pastoral theology in Christian tradition. The doctrine of perichoresis provides this

dissertation with a robust theological perspective that is proving relevant to pastoral theology. This helps to inform the practices that were developed in this dissertation. They are practices that draw on the doctrine of perichoresis, pastoral theology and the experience of ministering persons to: (1) become alert to God's active presence; (2) be attentive to fundamental human needs; and (3) come out of Christian history and community.[1] The way ministering persons integrate these dynamics into effective and faithful ministry occurs through prayer. The practice of prayer is where the perichoretic rhythms of God are experienced, it is where attention to human need is discerned and it is where communion with God and within the community of faith matures. Praying by the Spirit, in Jesus name, to the Father, is the first and last practice of the practice of perichoresis.

New Beginnings

Ministering in cadence with God is participating relationally and spiritually in God's eschatological promise that "I am making everything new" (Rev 21:5). Through Christ and by the Spirit this transforming work has begun. The practice of perichoresis serves ministering persons to see each new day and each new situation of ministry with this hope. It is a pastoral theology that is confident that God is present and active in the world, gathering and sending his church and working with ministering persons in patient pursuit of this eschatological promise. In this way, each moment of life can be understood as a new beginning filled with the eschatological promise of God.

Some future directions that the practice of perichoresis might explore emerge through reflection on the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a sacrament of the Christian church that unites believers participatively with the triune God. Out of trinitarian reflection on

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[1] Dyksta and Bass, "A Theological," 18.

the Lord's Supper emerges an understanding of personhood that is enhanced through union with Christ. Holy Communion also helps believers to experience a spiritual continuity that unites them (perichoretically?) with people of faith through the ages. Each of these is an area that is full of perichoretic and pastoral theological resonance that will aid ministering persons to continue to live in cadence with God.

The Eucharist, Personhood and Spiritual Continuity

Many of the perichoretic and pastoral themes that have been developed in this dissertation are illumined through the practice of Holy Communion. Perhaps the most notable of these is that the Eucharist (communion) creates the kind of perichoretic communion championed above. The Eucharist is a participative practice that creates communion *with* the triune God and *within* the community of faith. By focusing the minds and bodies of Christian believers on the symbols which represent the body and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper creates communion with the triune God. Participants are confronted by the love of God, they are confounded by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and they are comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The practice of Eucharist also creates communion within the community of faith. The symbols used for the body and blood of Christ are common symbols—bread and wine. The community of faith, with all its diversity, is united in its common confession of Jesus as Lord and its common partaking of the bread and wine. Communion that reflects unity with diversity is part of all Eucharistic practice.

From the pastoral theological perspective this common confession and practice encourages a Christological understanding of personhood. This means that participation in Christ, a participation that the Eucharist embodies, enhances personhood. During the

holy meal, by the Spirit, God meets human beings through Christ, person to person.

Stated more personally, by the Spirit, God meets human beings through Christ, broken

person to broken person.[2] The celebration of Holy Communion offers solidarity with

Christ in his humanity and his divinity that draws believers into the relational,

participative and spiritual rhythms of the triune God. A fruitful new direction for the

practice of perichoresis is to reflect on the perichoretic rhythms of the Lord's Table.

Such reflection might define personhood Christologically, understanding that Jesus as

the first born of new creation desires to guide human beings into the abundant life. Such

pastoral theological reflection might also consider the healing dimensions of Eucharistic

practice and find creative expression of this in pastoral care and counseling.[3] It is

through the celebration of Eucharist that the community of faith practices participation

in the communion of the triune God.

From the perichoretic perspective Holy Communion reflects the simplicity and

mystery of the triune God. Speaking of the "holy meal," Gordon Smith comments, "the

significance and experience of this event are polyphonic—multiple meanings, voices,

and perspectives coming together in one event."[4] Perichoretic theology enhances the

'polyphonic' significance of the Eucharist. Each of the persons of the Trinity contributes

to the event of Holy Communion in a distinct manner. The Father is the one to whom

the community of faith gives thanks and praise. He is the creator of all things and the

one who sent his Son for the salvation of the world.[5] The incarnate Son, the obvious

focus of the holy meal, is the one whose sacrifice on the cross—giving his body and the

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[2] See Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 131–47 for a discussion of how the two natures, human and divine, are crucial to understand Christ's person and work.
[3] See Pembroke, *Pastoral Care in Worship*, 133–50, where he discusses the sacraments.
[4] Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 113.
[5] Smith, "The Sacraments," 188 –89.

shedding his blood—that believers are called to remember. This remembrance of Jesus sacrifice is a personal reflection. Jesus sacrifice is personal because, as Calvin teaches, there is an "extraordinary exchange" occurring that the Eucharistic elements embody— "Christ takes what is ours (our broken humanity) and cleanses us with his life, which he offers back to the Father."[6] It is the Holy Spirit who draws the community of faith into the drama and wonder of this salvation which is the gift of God through Christ. It is through the *epiclesis* that the symbols of bread and wine become symbols that reflect the spiritual reality that the people of faith are drawn into the life of the triune God.[7] The perichoretic rhythms of the celebration of Holy Communion are all there: relationality, participation and spirituality. The Eucharist becomes a practice that enables ministering persons to live in cadence with the triune God. Moving forward, the practice of perichoresis can reflect on how the practice of Eucharist actually nourishes ministering persons holistically—body, soul, mind and spirit. The Eucharist can help ministering persons to experience—to see, touch and taste—the love and grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Lord's Supper offers contemporary believers a practice that has a spiritual history that literally goes back to Jesus and the disciples at the last supper. This historical and spiritual continuity can help root the practice of perichoresis in this long and rich spiritual tradition. As it relates to the sacrament of Holy Communion, believers in the early centuries of the church were likewise challenged to understand that the Eucharist is about participation. John Chrysostom preaches, "Our participation is not a matter simply of having or getting a share; it is a matter of participation by union. For as

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[6] Smith, "The Sacraments," 190.
[7] Smith in *A Holy Meal*, 117, states, "the *epiclesis* is not so much that the Spirit would be present in the elements as that the Spirit would descend on us as a people who gather for Word and Sacrament."

that body is united to Christ, so we are also united to him by means of this bread."[8] Such a historical resonance with the concept of participation adds to the contemporary relevance of the practice of perichoresis. Moving forward the practice of perichoresis can draw on 2000 years of Christian practice to serve ministering persons to discover spiritual practices that will enable them to live and minister in cadence with God.

The Lord's Supper is a Christian practice that draws believers into an ever-deepening communion with the triune God and within the community of faith. It is a sacramental practice that enhances personhood, discloses participative presence and encourages spirituality continuity. All of this is rooted in communion with God and within the community of faith. These new directions and yet to be discovered perspectives are integrated into a relational, participative and spiritual perichoretic pastoral theology by prayer.

Ministering persons can learn to live and minister in ever-deepening cadence with God. This dissertation serves ministering persons by encouraging a move into the cadent rhythms of the dance of perichoresis. A fitting end to this dissertation is the vision of ministry and prayer that James Torrance offers:

> The first real step on the road to prayer is to recognize that none of us knows how to pray as we ought. But as we bring our desires to God, we find that we have someone who is praying for us, with us, and in us. Thereby he teaches us to pray and motivates us to pray, and to pray in peace to the Lord. Jesus takes our prayers—our feeble, selfish, inarticulate prayers—he cleanses them, makes them his prayers, and in a 'wonderful exchange' . . . he makes his prayers our prayers and presents us to the Father as his dear children crying: 'Abba Father.'[9]

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[8] Chrysostom, "Homilies on 1 Corinthians," 198.
[9] Torrance, *Worship*, 45-46.

APPENDIX

The full account of John and Mr. Harrison as recorded in Henri Nouwen's book *The Wounded Healer*.

"This is John's second visit to Mr. Harrison. The patient sits in a wheelchair in the middle of the ward; other patients are present, some of them talking with each other. The following conversation takes place:

John: Mr. Harrison, I'm . . . I came by . . . to see you the other day.

Mr. Harrison: O yes, I remember.

John: How are things going?

Mr. Harrison: Well, I'll tell you. They were supposed to operate on me last week. They got me drugged, took me up there and my heart flew up. They decided they'd better not try it then. They brought me back down here and I'm supposed to have the operation tomorrow.

John: You say your heart flew up?

Mr. Harrison: Well, I'm not ready to die. But I think the operation is necessary or I'll lose my legs.

John: your're not ready for the end, but you want something to be done if possible so you won't lose your legs.

Mr. Harrison: Yeah [nodding]. If this is the end, this is one who's gonna be lost.

John: You feel the cause is lost if you don't make it through the operation.

Mr. Harrison: Yeah! Of course they tell me there's not too much to the operation. They're gonna dope me up right here and keep me here until it's time for the operation. They said they're going to put some plastic tubes inside me and that oughta save my legs. You see my foot here [takes shoe off and shows his foot]. This toe here gets blue when I stand on it. They could amputate here by the ankle, but this way they might save my legs.

John: It's worth the operation if you can use your legs again.

Mr. Harrison: Yeah. Course I don't want to die during the operation. I'd rather die a natural death than die through anaesthesia.

John: You know the possibility of death is present during the operation, but the only way you can get well is to have the operation.

Mr. Harrison: Yeah, that's right.

Pause

John: you got much waiting for you when you leave the hospital

Mr. Harrison: Nothing and nobody. Just hard work

John: Just hard labor.

Mr. Harrison: Yeah, that's right. Course I got to gain my strength back. I figure I'll be ready about the time tobacco crop is ready.

John: You'll be working with the tobacco crop?

Mr. Harrison: Yeah, picking starts around August.

Pause

John: Well, Mr. Harrison, I hope things go well for you tomorrow.

Mr. Harrison: Thank you. Thanks for coming by.

John: I'll be seeing you. Good-by.

Mr. Harrison: Good-by.

John did not speak to Mr. Harrison again. The next day, during the operation, Mr. Harrison died."

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