

A PNEUMATOLOGICAL VISION OF GOD: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND
CLASSICAL THEISM'S DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

by

Andrew K. Gabriel, B.Th., M.A.

A dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2010

Doctor of Philosophy
Hamilton, Ontario

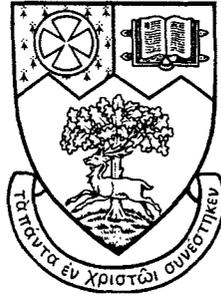
McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

TITLE: A Pneumatological Vision of God: The Holy Spirit and
Classical Theism's Doctrine of the Divine Attributes

AUTHOR: Andrew K. Gabriel

SUPERVISORS: Steven M. Studebaker
James C. Peterson
Clark H. Pinnock

NUMBER OF PAGES: viii + 341



McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee, this dissertation by

ANDREW K. GABRIEL

is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Primary Supervisor

Secondary Supervisor

C. P. Mueh

Secondary Supervisor

External Examiner

Academic Dean

Date: January 22, 2010

ABSTRACT

“A Pneumatological Vision of God: The Holy Spirit and Classical Theism’s Doctrine of the Divine Attributes”

Andrew K. Gabriel
McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

Historically, pneumatology has had little influence on the Christian doctrine of God. In particular, although Christians throughout the ages have defended the deity of the Spirit, they have not adequately taken the economic activity of the Spirit into consideration when formulating the doctrine of the divine attributes. In an effort to correct the historical lack of influence that pneumatology has had on the doctrine of the divine attributes, this book advocates and explores the potential of a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes by presenting pneumatological revisions to classical theism. The thesis of this book is that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God recovers an emphasis on divine immanence, which has been marginalized by classical theism’s imbalance toward divine transcendence. After the introductory chapter, chapter two illustrates how classical theism neglects the doctrine of the Trinity (and pneumatology in particular) in its formulation of the doctrine of the divine attributes and how classical theism privileges divine transcendence. Chapter three provides a review of how process theologians, evangelical theologians, and trinitarian theologians critique and revise classical theism and displays how contemporary theologians have only begun to develop a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of

the divine attributes. Chapter four continues by recommending a pneumatological approach to the divine attributes. The remainder of the book illustrates how pneumatology provides a way to revise the classical accounts of divine impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence. In contrast to classical conclusions regarding these doctrines, pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of the divine attributes portray God as suffering, changing his presence, and exercising his omnipotence kenotically.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL THESIS	1
The Thesis	
Classical Theism	
Transcendence and Immanence	
Divine Immanence in the Holy Spirit	
Methodology and Context	
A Brief Outline of the Book	
2. CLASSICAL THEISM	15
Introduction	
Classical Theism	
The Attributes of God According to Classical Theism	
Characteristics of Classical Theism	
Conclusion	
3. CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO CLASSICAL THEISM	69
Introduction	
Process Revisions of Classical Theism	
Evangelical Revisions of Classical Theism	
Trinitarian Revisions of Classical Theism	
Conclusion	

Chapter	Page
4. RECOMMENDING A PNEUMATOLOGICAL APPROACH	140
Introduction	
Hindrances to a Pneumatological Approach	
The Growing Place for Pneumatology in Doctrine	
Rationale for a Pneumatological Approach to the Doctrine of God	
Defending the Pneumatological Approach	
Conclusion	
5. PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF IMPASSIBILITY	190
Introduction	
Pneumatological Advantages in Discussions of Impassibility	
The Holy Spirit Suffers in Relationship to People	
The Spirit Suffering in Creation	
Clarifications and Qualifications of Divine Passibility	
Conclusion	
6. PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF IMMUTABILITY	234
Introduction	
The Mutable Spirit: The Changing Presence of God	
The Immutable Spirit: The Faithful Presence of God	
Conclusion	

Chapter	Page
7. PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF OMNIPOTENCE	278
Introduction	
The “Spirit” and “Power” in Theology and Scripture	
The Kenotic Power of the Spirit	
More Pentecostal Perceptions of the Spirit’s Power	
The Spirit’s Holy Power of Love	
Liberation Theology on the Power of the Spirit	
An Idealistic Pneumatology?	
Conclusion	
8. A PNEUMATOLOGICAL VISION OF GOD	311
The Pneumatological Vision	
Potential Areas for Further Research	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	318

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL THESIS

1. The Thesis

What do we understand by the word ‘God’? What comes spontaneously to mind when we hear this term? Most likely the answer will be: *Father*. Or perhaps even more emphatically: the *Super Father*, who transcends the world and to whom we pray. What is sure, however, is that the word ‘God’ does not lead us *in the first place to think of the Holy Spirit*. This discloses a quite fundamental deficiency of our conscious faith and of our piety.¹

Heribert Mühlen’s words express the background of and motivation for this book.

Historically, pneumatology has had little influence on the Christian doctrine of God. In particular, although Christians throughout the ages have defended the deity of the Spirit, most have not adequately taken the economic activity of the Spirit into consideration when formulating the doctrine of the divine attributes. Few theologians have realized, as Jürgen Moltmann has, that “an understanding of the unique personhood of the Spirit is . . . decisive for the understanding of God in general.”² Those who have realized this have begun to develop the implications of this notion. In many cases however, pneumatology has been treated as an appendage to or separate from the doctrine of God and separate from the doctrine of the divine attributes in particular. In an effort to correct the historical lack of influence that pneumatology has had on the doctrine of the divine attributes, this

¹ Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 11 (original emphasis).

² Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 286.

book advocates and explores the potential of a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes by presenting pneumatological revisions to classical theism. In advocating for this approach, I seek to extend and develop the revisions to classical theism that many contemporary theologians are already proposing. The thesis of this book is that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God recovers an emphasis on divine immanence, which has been marginalized by classical theism's imbalance toward divine transcendence. This is of great significance because a person's concept of God shapes not only how they live and worship, but also their whole worldview. This chapter begins to set the context for the proposal of this book as it explains what is meant by classical theism as well as transcendence and immanence and then notes how pneumatology naturally serves as a corrective to classical theism's privileging of divine transcendence over divine immanence. This chapter continues by explaining the methodology and context of this project and, lastly, it provides a brief outline of the chapters that follow.

2. Classical Theism

Classical theism is a common description of God found in systematic theology textbooks. It describes God as infinite, simple, perfect, immutable, impassible, timelessly eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient. Along with affirmations of these attributes of God (which are considered in detail in chapter two), classical theism understands that there is only one God (in contrast to polytheism),³ who is the creator and sustainer of everything,

³ Hence, Dalferth contrasts classical theism with polytheism, which posits numerous gods ("The Historical Roots of Theism," 15–43) and Owen emphasizes the unity of God according to classical theism, in contrast to polytheism (*Concepts of Deity*, 4–8).

and presents this God as the proper focus of worship.⁴ In addition, classical theism ascribes some form of necessity to God's existence and presents God as a personal being.⁵

Many, like Stephen Parrish, regard classical theism as “the traditional theism of the West, and the traditional concept of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.”⁶ As Parrish's comment indicates, Christian forms of classical theism fall within the classical theistic tradition of the Abrahamic faiths and Western philosophy. However, Christian presentations of classical theism are unique in that they include descriptions of God as triune as well as the attributes of this triune God. Throughout this book, when I refer to classical theism, I am referring particularly to Christian classical theism.

3. Transcendence and Immanence

Some might question why I frame my thesis in terms of transcendence and immanence. Pointing to a possible concern, Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson speak of “the now discredited spatial metaphor of transcendence and immanence.”⁷ These theologians are rightly concerned that the metaphors should not be taken as referring to *space*. However, the metaphors do not have to be taken this way; hence, immanence and

⁴ Swinburne, *Coherence of Theism*, 1 and Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 17. With respect to creation, Hartshorne and Reese regard classical theism as expressing God as “knowing but not including the world” (*Philosophers Speak of God*, 17). Cf. Dalferth, “The Historical Roots of Theism,” 15.

⁵ Parrish, *God and Necessity*, 3 and 6. Owen describes God according to classical theism as the “the archetype of personality” (*Concepts of Deity*, 42).

⁶ Parrish, *God and Necessity*, 3. Cooper likewise posits, “Classical theism is not the exclusive property of traditional Christianity. Traditional Jewish and Islamic theologians endorsed it as well” (*Panentheism*, 15). Accordingly, Hartshorne and Reese include Muslim and Jewish philosophers in their presentation of classical theism (*Philosophers Speak of God*, 76–164).

⁷ Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology*, 309.

transcendence can still serve to express the difference between classical theism and the results of pneumatological perspectives on the divine attributes. Even Grenz and Olson continue to use the metaphors of transcendence and immanence (although not spatially) in their descriptions of contemporary theologians throughout their *Twentieth-Century Theology*.⁸ Beyond their book, discussions regarding the transcendence of God and the immanence of God are prevalent in contemporary doctrines of God. Some theologians who write on the doctrine of God even include a specific chapter devoted to this issue.⁹ So, what is meant by ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’?

Immanence must be defined together with its counterpart, transcendence. As noted above, these ideas can present spatial images, depicting God as being either above and beyond the world, or close to the world. However, in theological terms transcendence does not refer simply to space, but primarily to the Creator/creation distinction. That is, God is ‘beyond’ the world in as much as he is other than it. Shirley Guthrie explains, “God’s transcendence, then, means that he is ‘wholly other,’ beyond all human knowledge and all human moral and religious capacities, ‘above us, above space and time, and above all concepts and opinions and potentialities.’”¹⁰ God’s transcendence is especially seen as one contrasts the attributes of God with those of creation. Many theologians speak of God’s infinity, eternity, immensity, omnipresence, aseity, simplicity, immutability, and impassibility. These are all generally considered

⁸ The terms ‘immanence’ or ‘transcendence’ appear in the titles for almost all of the chapters.

⁹ For example, Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 79–102; Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 256–77; Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 103–17; Henry, *God, Revelation, Authority*, 6:35–51; and Mascal, *He Who Is*, 126–49. Though not unbiblical or non-trinitarian notions, there are also many discussions concerning transcendence and immanence that take the approach of philosophical theology (e.g. Robertson, *The Loss and Recovery of Transcendence* and Farley, *The Transcendence of God*).

¹⁰ Guthrie, “The Nearness and Distance of God,” 33, who is quoting Barth, *The Knowledge of God*, 28.

expressions of God's transcendence.¹¹ Immanence may, to a very limited extent, be considered the opposite of transcendence, however, it is important to realize that God is able to be immanent to creation precisely because he is transcendent from it.

Immanence also pertains to God's interaction with the world, often with respect to the providence of God. Those who discuss God's immanence are sometimes responding to deism, which sees God as the Creator but nothing more. In this manner, Borden Bowne defines immanence with respect to providence: "We mean that God is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity. The world . . . continually depends upon and is ever upheld by the ever-living, ever-present, ever-working God."¹² This again is a reminder that transcendence and immanence are not opposites. Rather, they should be thought of as correlates.¹³ If God did not transcend creation, God could not be immanent to creation.

In as much as the attributes that express and support the notion of divine transcendence have historically won out in doctrines of God, theologians have neglected God's immanence. Colin Gunton's observation that the historical tradition is overwhelmed by negative theology when it comes to the doctrine of God exemplifies this. He remarks, "Negative theology has in effect driven out the positive, so that the God

¹¹ These topics are among those discussed in chapter 4, "Transcendence and Immanence" of Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 79–102.

¹² Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, 3, cf. v. Similarly, Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 207 and Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 41.

¹³ Expressing this correlation, Frame (though in more narrow terms than providence) describes divine transcendence as God's covenant headship and immanence as God's covenant involvement (*The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 14). To help avoid the possible conclusion that transcendence and immanence are opposites, Gunton prefers to speak of the otherness and relation of God instead of the transcendence and immanence of God (*The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 170-1).

who makes himself known in scripture has been turned into one who cannot be known as he is.”¹⁴ Many theologians seem most comfortable talking about what God is not, thinking that this somehow best expresses the transcendence of God. The truth, however, is that even negative theology falls short of describing God. As Guthrie recognizes, terms like in-finite, time-less, un-changing, and un-limited are

still definitions of God in terms of man, since they think of God as what *man* is not. . . . If God is really transcendent, he cannot be grasped by *any* human language, biblical or philosophical, ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative,’ pious or secular. To fall back on the classical negative language we have said will not do to describe his transcendence (and thus to confirm the very point we are making), God is unknown and unknowable, undefinable, incomprehensible, incomparable.¹⁵

Such radical remarks might appear to imply that we can know nothing of God at all. On the contrary, God can even transcend his transcendence, so to speak, and reveal himself for who he is.¹⁶ This takes place as God is immanent to creation. In the end, on the one hand, divine transcendence implies that philosophical descriptions of God are not adequate and that all language, whether negative or positive, in some sense falls short of describing God. On the other hand, given that God has revealed himself, all language can convey truth about who God is.¹⁷ Recognizing this one can turn to God’s immanence in creation to state in positive terms who God is.

¹⁴ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 17. Similarly, with respect to God’s transcendence (explicitly) and his ability to reveal himself see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 13.

¹⁵ Guthrie, “The Nearness and Distance of God,” 35 and 36 (original emphasis).

¹⁶ Guthrie, “The Nearness and Distance of God,” 37, cf. 39.

¹⁷ Although God does not have a gender, I follow the historic practice of using masculine pronouns in reference to ‘God’ and the ‘Spirit.’ This poses numerous difficulties; however, using impersonal or feminine pronouns is also problematic (Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 15–17, cf. 251, n. 20). Unfortunately, it is not always possible to avoid using personal pronouns in reference to God. For example, there is some precedence for using the cumbersome term ‘Godself’ in reference to God (in place of ‘himself’), but none that I am aware of for speaking of the Spirit ‘Spiritself.’

4. Divine Immanence in the Holy Spirit

Pneumatology naturally serves as a corrective to classical theism's privileging of divine transcendence over divine immanence. Theologians frequently emphasize the immanence of God through the Holy Spirit. Without consideration of the Spirit, God can seem distant or in the past.¹⁸ In contrast, although the Spirit is often thought of as elusive, the Spirit is 'God with us' today. As Clark Pinnock expresses it, "Most wonderfully, the Spirit is God's face turned toward us and God's presence abiding with us, the agency by which God reaches out and draws near, the power that creates and heals."¹⁹ In the Spirit God draws close to the world in mutual relation with it. Michael Welker recognizes this and therefore writes, "The Holy Spirit brings about intimacy with God. Indeed the Spirit of God is this intimacy."²⁰

Kilian McDonnell most eloquently expresses the immanence of God in the Spirit when he refers to the Spirit's contact function and when he speaks of the Spirit as the touch of God—one of the two hands of God (as Irenaeus would say) reaching out to creation.²¹ In the Christ event the Spirit touches Jesus as the Spirit affects the incarnation, anoints Jesus at his baptism, and empowers him for ministry. Beyond this, Christ sends the Spirit from the Father and the Spirit comes and empowers the Church. The Spirit also leads people to the Son and to return praise to the Father. The Spirit is the touch of God upon Christ, and similarly, upon the Church. McDonnell clarifies, "Without the Spirit

¹⁸ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:34 and Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 862–3, cf. 879.

¹⁹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 14.

²⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 331.

²¹ See especially chapter 10 "God Beyond the Self of God" and chapter 12 "The Spirit is the Touch of God" in McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 91–7 and 109–20. Compare Pinnock who speaks of the Spirit as God "touching people" (*Flame of Love*, 188) and LaCugna who states, "The Holy Spirit is God's outreach toward the world" (*God For Us*, 297).

God remains a private self, an isolated glory, an island apart. In this sense the Spirit is sovereign and all inclusive, the universal horizon, the exclusive point where we touch God and God touches us from within.”²² Though McDonnell’s discussion focuses on ecclesial life, Molly Marshall extends this notion to the cosmological level as well: “The Spirit is the point of contact between the life of God and the world that is yet coming to be. Described as ‘divine nearness,’ the Spirit makes possible the universal contact between God and history, between God and all creation.”²³ The Spirit is clearly immanent to humanity and creation at large. Given this, Hendrikus Berkhof remarks, “So intimate is the Spirit to man’s life that we sometimes feel ourselves on the brink of pantheism.”²⁴ As described in pneumatologies, God looks somewhat different (i.e. more immanent) than the God of classical theism.

By suggesting that a consideration of the Spirit highlights the immanence of God, I do not mean to suggest that the Spirit is not transcendent. As affirmed above, God’s immanence presupposes God’s transcendence. As a divine person, this is true of the Spirit. One must affirm both the immanent transcendence of the Spirit as well as the transcendent immanence of the Spirit.²⁵ Accordingly, balancing his affirmation of the immanence of the Spirit, Pinnock correctly states, “Most essentially Spirit is transcendent and divine, not mere flesh; it is the energy of life itself.”²⁶ Too often though, transcendence is taken to refer to much more than the Creator/creation distinction.

²² McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 119.

²³ Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 13. Similarly, Mühlen describes the Holy Spirit as the “nearness of God in ‘person’” (*Der Heilige Geist als Person*, v).

²⁴ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 95.

²⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 31 and 47 and Johnson, *She Who Is*, 147.

²⁶ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 14.

Further, God is seen to be unaffected by the material world and that which happens in it.²⁷ A renewed emphasis on the Spirit in the doctrine of God overcomes this misunderstanding of divine transcendence.

5. Methodology and Context

To show that the above is the case, this book combines historical, systematic, constructive, and dogmatic theological methods. First, it presents a historical account of classical theism and the marginalization of pneumatology with respect to the doctrine of God. Second, its pneumatological reinterpretation of the divine attributes and revitalization of divine immanence reflects the method of systematic theology. Overall, the pneumatological approach follows in the footsteps of contemporary and constructive trinitarian revisions to the doctrine of God, in that being more pneumatological makes one more thoroughly trinitarian. In applying this pneumatological (read: trinitarian) approach, this book is an exercise in dogmatic theology in that it assumes that the dogma of the Trinity is coherent and a correct interpretation of God, and applies this to understanding the doctrine of God.

As far as my ecclesial aims and context are concerned, this book also aims to be a work in ecumenical theology in the sense that I try to draw on theologians from across the Christian traditions. At the same time, it is a work in evangelical theology, in as much as I am an evangelical writing from within an evangelical context and in as much as my proposals are consistent with and build upon the revisions to classical theism that many evangelicals are already making. More specifically, while much of contemporary

²⁷ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 17.

pneumatology ignores Pentecostal theology, this book is, at least in part, a contribution to Pentecostal theology.²⁸ This complements my intention to do ecumenical theology because, although some denominations bear the label ‘Pentecostal’ today, Pentecostalism has always been an ecumenical movement that spans across denominational boundaries, even those of East and West.²⁹

Thus far, Pentecostals have done little to develop the doctrine of God, and have primarily borrowed from the wider evangelical community. The lack of development in this area of theology is not surprising. Historically, Pentecostals have tended to distrust academic theology³⁰ with the result that, as Néstor Medina observes, “Pentecostalism’s theological content remains in the faith *experience* of the people manifest in their oral traditions, and from which theological discourse is yet to emerge.”³¹ When Pentecostals write systematic theologies—and some would question if one may properly use the designation ‘Pentecostal’ here—they have generally been written for an audience of lay people or as introductory text books for students in theology and they are often written exclusively for Pentecostals.³² As a result, most theologians would agree with David Bundy who claims, “It is clear that the genre of [Pentecostal] systematic theology is still

²⁸ Consider Coakley’s review of Rogers where she critiques him for neglecting Pentecostal theology (“Review of *After the Spirit*,” 432). Pentecostals consistently voice this same concern in book reviews published in the journal *Pneuma*. As a recent example see Studebaker’s review of Cole (“Review of *He Who Gives Life*,” 147).

²⁹ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 176–87.

³⁰ As an illustration of this, Pentecostals have only one school in North America (Regent University) that offers a Ph.D., and this has only been a recent development.

³¹ Medina, “Jürgen Moltmann and Pentecostalism(s),” 103 (original emphasis).

³² For a general discussion (i.e. not specifically with reference to the doctrine of God) of Pentecostal systematic theologies (including numerous non-English language works) see Bundy, “Systematic Theology in Pentecostalism,” 89–107.

in its earliest phase.”³³ Terry Cross affirms this specifically with respect to the doctrine of God, suggesting that “Pentecostals have been deficient in crafting a doctrine of God.”³⁴ Outside of the doctrine of God, however, contemporary Pentecostals (such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Amos Yong, and Frank Macchia) have taken great strides to develop theological loci from a pneumatological perspective. This book takes a cue from these theologians by extending the pneumatological approach to theology into the doctrine of God and thereby makes steps toward correcting the deficiency that Cross identifies.

Pentecostals are currently struggling to define just what it means to do Pentecostal theology. However, given the growing awareness of the diversity of global Pentecostalism (including theological diversity), there will probably never be just one way of doing Pentecostal theology and there may never be one clear Pentecostal theology.³⁵ Nevertheless, this book is a work in Pentecostal theology in the sense that it is ecumenical (as Pentecostalism is ecumenical) and in the sense that it draws on Pentecostal theology and arises from my Pentecostal experience. Throughout the book I do consider the typical theological issues that Pentecostals have a particular interest in—Spirit Baptism, speaking in tongues, and spiritual gifts—and I draw on insights from Pentecostal theologians. Even though these theologies and theologians are not my primary focus, this book is also a Pentecostal contribution to the doctrine of God in as much as I find myself within, and have been raised in, a Pentecostal tradition and my

³³ Bundy, “Systematic Theology in Pentecostalism,” 101. Cf. Pinnock who writes “There is not at present a full-blown Pentecostal systematic theology, although work is underway on it” (“Divine Relationality,” 3).

³⁴ Cross, “The Rich Feast of Theology,” 46.

³⁵ On the diversity of global Pentecostalism see Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 10. On the struggle to define ‘Pentecostal’ see Anderson, “When Is a Pentecostal Not a Pentecostal?” 58–63.

Pentecostal experience shapes all of my thinking and worldview. More than any doctrine or theological metaphor (e.g. Spirit Baptism) that might be distinctive of Pentecostalism, the experience of the Spirit holds Pentecostalism together.³⁶ As Amos Yong remarks, “The ties that bind Pentecostals around the world are their experiences of Jesus in the power of the Spirit.”³⁷ There is no doubt that my Pentecostal experience has led to the thesis of this project. If it had not been for the influence of Pentecostalism, I probably would not have even pursued this particular topic. Gunton notes that Western theology “has notoriously neglected the work of the Spirit in our life and thinking, and that is why there have been outbreaks of Pentecostal church life and belief which serve as a just reproach to the one-sidedness of the Western tradition.”³⁸ This is the case with this project in as much as this work arises from within Pentecostalism. In this sense (as well as those mentioned above) it is a contribution to Pentecostal theology.

6. A Brief Outline of the Book

As noted above, the thesis of this book is that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God recovers an emphasis on divine immanence, which has been marginalized by classical theism’s imbalance toward divine transcendence. In order to support this thesis, the next chapter further describes classical theism and shows that it neglects pneumatology in its doctrine of God and privileges divine transcendence. Classical theism has expressed many important truths about the reality of God.

³⁶ Macchia chronicles the attempts that theologians have made to express what makes Pentecostalism distinct. Macchia himself proposes that the metaphor of Spirit baptism is the central distinctive of Pentecostal theology (*Baptized in the Spirit*, 19–60).

³⁷ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 145.

³⁸ Gunton, “The Holy Spirit,” 79.

Nevertheless, even classical theists should realize, with Eric Johnson and Douglas Huffman (who are classical theists), that “any discussion” of the attributes of God “is open to improvement.”³⁹ Hence, chapter three places the contribution of this book within the context of contemporary attempts to revise classical theism. More specifically, the chapter provides a review of how process theologians, evangelical theologians, and trinitarian theologians critique and revise classical theism and displays how few contemporary theologians have begun developing a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. Chapter four continues by recommending a pneumatological approach to the divine attributes. It notes hindrances to such an approach, provides the rationale for this approach, and responds to potential objections.

The remainder of the book illustrates how pneumatology provides a way to revise the classical accounts of divine impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence. I limit myself to discussing these attributes primarily because they are key attributes in classical theism as well as in contemporary discussions concerning the doctrine of the divine attributes. Chapter five argues that the Holy Spirit is passible; the Holy Spirit is not beyond (transcendent) the possibility of suffering. Rather, the Holy Spirit is immanent in such a way that he suffers in various ways in relationship with people and creation at large. Chapter six continues by questioning whether or not the Spirit is transcendent in such a way that he does not change. The chapter argues that the divine Spirit is mutable with respect to his presence in creation. That is, the presence of God changes as the presence of the Spirit intensifies in relationship to Jesus Christ, the Church, individual believers, and creation at large. Chapter seven argues that the omnipotence of God is not

³⁹ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 36.

a transcendent general cause of all things. Rather, the power of God displayed in the person of the Spirit suggests a reciprocal theology of divine power and presents divine omnipotence as a kenotic and liberating power of holy love.

The closing chapter largely summarizes the argument of this book. The proposed revisions to classical theism are consistent with classical theism's affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They are also consistent with contemporary trinitarian theology in that they are based on the fact that the identity of God is Father, Son, *and Holy Spirit*. In contrast to the general historical neglect of pneumatology in the doctrine of the divine attributes, as this project progresses it will become apparent, as Elizabeth Johnson observes, that "so comprehensive are the operations of the Spirit and so vast the corresponding human experiences by which the Spirit's presence is known that one might think that speaking of God had exhausted its material once the Spirit had been considered."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 149. This quotation is meant to be emphatic. The words "one might think" qualify this statement.

CHAPTER 2

CLASSICAL THEISM

1. Introduction

In order to demonstrate that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God recovers an emphasis on divine immanence which has been marginalized by classical theism's imbalance toward divine transcendence, it is first necessary to understand classical theism. This is the burden of the present chapter. As noted in chapter one, although classical theism encompasses the Abrahamic faiths and much of Western philosophy of religion, this dissertation dialogues specifically with Christian classical theism. Hence, I begin by describing the Christian expression of classical theism, I then exposit the way that classical theism defines the divine attributes and, finally, I note key characteristics of classical theism. It will become clear that classical theism does indeed emphasize the transcendence of God. This chapter also demonstrates how a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God is not present in classical theism.

2. Classical Theism

a) A Historic Expression of Christian Theism

Like in many other contexts, the 'classical' of 'classical theism' simply means that this is something that has endured through time and that this has been a significantly

influential expression of the doctrine of God. In support of the use of the term ‘classical,’ Barry Callen observes, “An early interpretive tradition arose among some of the church fathers and came to be viewed by many as ‘classic’ for all future generations of Christians.”¹

Many theologians today present classical theism as the standard doctrine of God within the history of Christian theology. Recognizing the long history of classical theism, historical theologian Gerald Bray suggests that “classical theism can be equated with the orthodoxy of the creeds and councils of the early Church, which have been universally accepted by all branches of Christendom.”² Bray proposes that the classical theistic portrayal of God was assumed throughout the patristic period, was articulated in medieval scholasticism, “and in different guises it has remained part of Christian theology ever since.”³ Even more emphatically, H. P. Owen claims that classical theism more or less moved in an unbroken line from its beginnings with the Apologists, through the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers to its climax in Aquinas.⁴ John Cooper agrees that classical theism has been “the standard mainstream doctrine of God in the Christian tradition from earliest times until the twentieth century.”⁵ Similarly, John Feinberg observes that “this model of God has *dominated* Christian thinking throughout most of church history.”⁶ Those Protestants who critique classical theism for being unbiblical might think that the Protestant Reformers challenged classical theism (due to their

¹ Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 62.

² Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 106.

³ Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 106.

⁴ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 1-2.

⁵ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 14.

⁶ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 62 (emphasis added).

emphasis on *sola scriptura*), but, many theologians claim, they too accepted classical theism with minimal qualifications.⁷

The above view of the dominant place of classical theism in the history of Christian theology is not held by everyone, however. Historical theologians continue to debate the predominance of classical theism in the history of Christian theology, and within patristic theology in particular. The classical doctrine of impassibility serves as one example. On the one hand, Thomas Weinandy claims that “the Fathers, almost universally, Justin and Clement being somewhat the exceptions, attributed impassibility to God.”⁸ On the other hand, an increasing number of theologians are following the conclusions of Paul Gavrilyuk, who argues that “the picture of an essentially impassibilist account of God in patristic theology, varied only by the minority voices that advocated divine suffering, is incorrect.”⁹ And then some historical theologians have reached conclusions inbetween Weinandy and Gavrilyuk. Amuluche Nnamani, for example, makes similar conclusions to Gavrilyuk regarding the first two centuries of Christian theology, but, in contrast to Gavrilyuk, Nnamani concludes that by the fourth and fifth century “the axiom of divine impassibility is a basic assumption, to an extent that, all

⁷ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 4 and 22; Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 74–5; and Ward, *Images of Eternity*, 135.

⁸ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 111, cf. 109-10. Also, Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, 127. Though reaching different conclusions than Weinandy in his own doctrine, McWilliams makes the same diagnosis of early Christian theology (*The Passion of God*, 13).

⁹ Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 20. He argues that among patristic theologians “divine impassibility functioned as an *apophatic qualifier* of all divine emotions and served to rule out those passions and experiences that were unbecoming of the divine nature” (*The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 16). While other theologians agree with Gavrilyuk’s conclusions, among those affirming Gavrilyuk’s recent publication (2004) specifically are Keating and White, “Divine Impassibility in Contemporary Theology,” 6 and Sanders, “Divine Providence and the Openness of God,” 200.

theologies . . . unanimously refuse the predication of passibility to God.”¹⁰ Clearly disagreement exists regarding the prominence of the doctrine of impassibility within the Christian tradition. Similar historical disagreements could be found regarding other theological positions that are associated with classical theism. I do not aim to sort out these historical debates in this chapter. I note these disagreements simply to highlight that classical theism may not be the near unanimous testimony of the Christian tradition, as some theologians claim.

Despite the debate regarding the extent to which classical theism has prevailed within the history of the Christian doctrine of God, a general consensus does exist (among both classical theists and non-classical theists) that classical theism has had a long tenure within Christian theology and that it has had a significant influence in the history of the Church. Hence, when I use the term ‘classical theism’ I am referring to an expression of the doctrine of God that arose in the early church (though not affirmed by everyone) and that continued to prominently endure in its different expressions throughout the remainder of church history. Theologians will continue to debate the extent of its historical prevalence—classical theism might (or might not) be the standard historical expression of the doctrine of God—however, regardless of what historical theologians conclude, classical theism has certainly been an important theme in the history of Christian doctrine.

¹⁰ Nnamani, *The Paradox of a Suffering God*, 98.

Some theologians might wonder if classical theism refers only to a Reformed type of theology. This is not the case.¹¹ No doubt, some contemporary authors do speak of ‘classical theism’ primarily in reference to Reformed type of theology. For example, Allan Coppedge identifies classical theism as “the traditional view of God articulated throughout the history of Western Christianity by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin.”¹² Likewise, when describing classical theism Clark Pinnock expounds the theology of Augustine, Aquinas, and a number of contemporary (primarily) Calvinist Evangelicals.¹³ Among Protestant theologians, Reformed thinkers have indeed illustrated a particular interest in the doctrine of God and have published on this doctrine more so than their non-Reformed counterparts. Nevertheless, the notions of impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence (the classical attributes I focus on in this book) are certainly not unique to Reformed thinking. Hence, Norman Geisler correctly notes that classical theism is expressed by “both classical Arminians and Calvinists.”¹⁴ Classical theism includes diversity, as I explain further below.

Given its place in the history of Christian theology (along with its place in Western philosophy and the Abrahamic religious traditions in general), classical theism is variously referred to as traditional theism or the traditional view of God (note the definite

¹¹ A further indicator that I am not thinking exclusively of ‘Reformed’ theology when I think of classical theism is that I observe (in the next chapter) how much of contemporary evangelical theology (including Reformed) is moving beyond or revising classical theism.

¹² Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 16. At the same time however, Coppedge does not claim that classical theism refers to the whole of the Christian tradition on the doctrine of God. Rather, he describes it as “one of the major influences in Western Christianity” (320 [emphasis added]).

¹³ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 68-79.

¹⁴ Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man?* 25.

article),¹⁵ conventional theism,¹⁶ historic Christian theism,¹⁷ and even simply as theism¹⁸ or Christian theism.¹⁹ Many authors use these terms interchangeably with ‘classical theism.’²⁰ When referring to this understanding of God, it is most helpful to include a modifying term (e.g. ‘classical’) with ‘theism’ rather than simply referring to ‘theism’ because the term ‘theism’ is sometimes used to include alternative views of God. For example, Parrish suggests that process theology (which is distinct from classical theism) could be considered a form of theism because process theologians hold to a personal God.²¹ In as much as this and other contemporary forms of theism (e.g. open theism) are indeed still forms of theism, and if theism is defined as “the belief in the existence of a supreme and beneficent being who is the creator and sustainer of the universe,”²² then it seems necessary and helpful to use the term ‘classical’ to refer (more specifically) to the form of Christian theism that is under discussion here. The use of the term ‘classical’ is

¹⁵ Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, xvii; Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 62; Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 8; Nash, *The Concept of God*, 11; Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 89; Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God*, 1; and Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” 11. Writing in 1943, before the term ‘classical theism’ was popular, consider the subtitle of Mascall’s *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism*. The term is also in the title of Andersen, ed., *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*.

¹⁶ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 8.

¹⁷ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 28.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249; Geisler and House, *Battle for God*, 17; Johnson, *She Who Is*, 19–22; Meckenstock, “Some Remarks on Pantheism and Panentheism,” 117; and Dalferth, “The Historical Roots of Theism,” 17 and 43.

¹⁹ The title of Owen’s, *Christian Theism*.

²⁰ This is true of many of those cited above. In addition, for example, see, Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 1 and Van der Veken, “The Historical Roots of Anti-Theism,” 49.

²¹ Parrish, *God and Necessity*, 3–4. Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 49 (two process theologians), who describe God as “personally present and active in the world.”

²² Dalferth, “The Historical Roots of Theism,” 15.

not meant to be pejorative in any way, but is simply meant to identify a prevalent historic expression of the doctrine of God among the Christian traditions.

b) Classical Theism: A Tainted Term

While the content of classical theism has a long history, the term itself is relatively recent in theological discussions. As a result, one might inappropriately view the concept as suspect. Bray describes the history of the term:

The concept of classical theism . . . originated in nineteenth-century Germany with men like Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) and August Neander (1789–1850). Later on, it was picked up by Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889). But the most famous exposition of it was by Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), expressed most clearly in a series of lectures delivered in Berlin in 1900 and published in English as *What is Christianity?* Harnack’s thesis was developed further by Walter Bauer (1877–1960), which has gained wide acceptance.²³

From the list of names above, it is clear that the concept of ‘classical theism’ arose largely in the context of those who oppose it (and it continues to be used by those who oppose it). This should not pose a problem however. The fact remains that the concept is helpful for identifying a historically prevalent view of God among Christian theologians. The term itself does not imply that classical theism needs to be corrected. The context in which a term arises should not be cause for concern. Even the simple term ‘theism’ “was coined in reply to the rise of atheism in the Renaissance and early Enlightenment that had occupied thinkers since the middle of the 16th century,” as Ingolf Dalferth notes.²⁴ If one can accept the use of the term ‘theism,’ then one should also be able to accept the use of the term classical theism.

²³ Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 108.

²⁴ Dalferth, “The Historical Roots of Theism,” 15.

Sometimes classical theism is not defined by its own content but simply by contrasting it with other theologies. For example, for C. Fred Smith classical theism appears to be any theology (especially evangelical theology) that is not open theism or process theism.²⁵ Similarly, Nancy Frankenberry contrasts classical theism with what she suggests are (“at the greatest level of generality”) the other two conceptual models for God in Western thought, namely, panentheism and pantheism.²⁶ When faced with the academic theological literature on the doctrine of God, one quickly realizes that those who are involved with polemics regarding open theism and process theology are those who most frequently speak of classical theism. In fact, one might become suspicious that ‘classical theism’ is simply a term used as a rhetorical strategy by those who critique classical theism. That is, one might describe a non-existent position in order to create a straw man before showing how the straw man is wrong. John Feinberg has observed that “Process theologians love to use the classical model as their foil.”²⁷ Similarly, Millard Erickson recognizes, “A crucial part of the free will theists’ presentation is the explanation of the view to which they are offering an alternative, the classical view of God.”²⁸ That is, classical theism is sometimes described for rhetorical reasons. Nevertheless, theologians who defend classical theism do not themselves abandon the

²⁵ C. Fred Smith, “Does Classical Theism Deny God’s Immanence?” 23–33. Likewise, Geisler contrasts classical theism (or ‘theism’) with ‘neotheism’ (his preferred term for open theism) and panentheism (*Creating God*, 16–17 and 47–8).

²⁶ Frankenberry, “Classical Theism, Panentheism, and Pantheism,” 29–46. Also, Meckenstock, “Some Remarks on Pantheism and Panentheism,” 117. Similarly, in the structure of Owen’s *Concepts of Deity* classical theism is set in contrast to the theology of Plato and Aristotle, Neoplatonism, pantheism, and process theology (process panentheism).

²⁷ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 67.

²⁸ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 69. ‘Free will theism’ here refers to open theism. This is discussed further in chapter 3.

notion of classical theism due to its use by their adversaries. For example, Erickson's concern is not that those critiquing classical theism themselves describe classical theism, rather, he is concerned that they offer a caricature of classical theism rather than a fair presentation.²⁹ In fact, Erickson himself continues to use the term classical theism despite its alleged misuse by other theologians. Furthermore, even those unrelated to such disputes and polemics continue to use the term 'classical theism' in reference to the classical understanding of the Christian doctrine of God.³⁰ Therefore, the fact that adversaries of classical theism frequently speak of this concept should not inhibit one from using the term.

Chad Owen Brand is one of a few theologians who prefers to make a distinction between classical theism and traditional theology. He

defines *classical theism* as that system of thought which, under the influence of or parallel to Aristotelian or Stoic thought, crystallizes such divine attributes as immutability and impassibility, and defines God in terms that do not allow for the possibility of having a genuine relationship with the world. . . . I will argue that 'traditional Christian orthodoxy' (or *traditionalism*), which I am distinguishing from classical theism, has preferred to allow the Bible to speak to these issues and so to produce a theology which sees God as relational though still in some sense immutable.³¹

Nevertheless, Brand concedes that "some scholars have used the term 'classical theism' to designate what I am calling 'traditionalism,' and vice-versa." In fact, the vast majority of scholars do use the term classical theism (or the related terms noted above) to denote

²⁹ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 88. Erickson clearly does not abandon the notion of 'classical theism.' For example, he writes, "Classical theism has some advantages over either process theism or free will theism" (288, cf. 289).

³⁰ For example, Peters, *God—The World's Future*, 88.

³¹ Brand, "Genetic Defects or Accidental Similarities?" 44, n. 1. Cf. Nash, "Process Theology and Classical Theism," 7. In contrast to Brand, though with the same intentions, Nash continues to use the term 'classical theism' (and 'traditional Christian theism') while distinguishing it from Thomistic theism (*Concept of God*, 30).

what Brand refers to as ‘traditionalism.’ Furthermore, Brand’s basis for separating (what he refers to as) ‘classical theism’ from ‘traditionalism’ is questionable given that (contrary to Brand’s claim) classical theism never denies that God has “a genuine relationship with the world.”³² Nevertheless, Brand’s concern to distance his version of traditionalism (i.e. classical theism) from certain theologies does raise an issue regarding the extent to which classical Greek philosophy has influenced classical theism. This will be discussed further below. Brand’s concern also points to the diversity of classical theism. It is to this issue that we now turn.

c) Diversity of Classical Theism

Classical theism is, as one may well expect, diverse. It would certainly be difficult to believe that there is only one way in which Christians have described God (or any other doctrine) throughout the lengthy history of the Christian Church (especially since beliefs that came to be viewed as heresies were originally held and promoted by leaders from within the Christian tradition). This fact might appear to be problematic for the use of the concept of ‘classical theism.’ Whenever academics attempt to label a school of interpretation, a group, or a movement, diversity frequently fights against such labels.³³ In general, scholars who speak of ‘classical theism’ are very aware of this. For example, recognizing this diversity, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen labels most post-biblical historical developments up to contemporary twentieth-century theology as “classical theistic traditions”³⁴ and he uses the term classical theism very broadly and “in a generic sense to

³² LaCugna, “The Relational God,” 650 and 655–6. This is discussed further below in a footnote at the end of part 4.a.

³³ Compare, for example, the present debate over how to define ‘Pentecostalism’ in light of its global diversity. See Anderson, “When Is a Pentecostal Not a Pentecostal?” 59–61.

³⁴ See his table of contents in Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 5.

refer to the way Christian theological tradition approached the doctrine of God in the past.”³⁵ Most importantly, Kärkkäinen explicitly affirms that classical theism “escapes uniformity” and that there is “no homogeneity in classical theism.”³⁶ Likewise, Roger Olson maintains that “classical Christian theism is not a monolithic belief system that admits no development or variation.”³⁷ The extent of the diversity within the tradition of classical theism is a matter for debate, but it does exist.

One can identify diversity within classical theism with respect to the basis for affirming the divine attributes. Hence, Cooper wishes to distinguish between *Western* classical theism and *Eastern* classical theism. The difference here primarily has to do with the basis for their respective doctrines of God. Both traditions may still be referred to as classical, however, because, as Cooper notes, both strands of classical theism affirm that God is self-sufficient, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, and omniscient. The difference is that Western theologians have done so primarily because they have viewed God as the “maximal Being” or perfect Being, while Eastern theologians have based their conclusions on their insistence that God is “*beyond* Being.”³⁸

Diversity also exists within classical theism with respect to the attributes themselves. Eric Johnson and Douglas Huffman suggest that there are certain attributes that are universally affirmed by classical theism, although dialogue still exists regarding how the attributes function.³⁹ For example, they suggest that according to classical theism

³⁵ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 53.

³⁶ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 53 and 99.

³⁷ Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, 214.

³⁸ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 14 (original emphasis).

³⁹ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 38.

God's omniscience means that God exhaustively knows the past, present, and future, however the manner in which God exhaustively knows the future is debated. By contrast, Owen's earlier (writing in 1971) expression of classical theism would have allowed for more diversity than this with respect to divine foreknowledge. Owen proposed that all classical theists "are bound to assert that the Creator knows all that can be known, but they may well differ in their assessment of what is intrinsically knowable, and of the manner in which knowable things are divinely known."⁴⁰ Those familiar with the arguments of contemporary open theists will recognize that Owen's definition would allow for an open theist's non-exhaustive view of God's foreknowledge to be included in classical theism.⁴¹ However, open theists (as well as those who oppose them) are some of the first people to distance themselves from classical theism.

Besides the clear diversity within classical theism, diverse opinion also exists regarding which attributes are essential to classical theism. It might be said that diverse opinions exist regarding how diverse classical theism really is. Those who defend classical theism are especially concerned with highlighting this. For example, Millard Erickson suggests that the rhetoric of the open theist critique of classical theism hinges on a caricature which presents classical theism as uniform. Erickson cautions, "the history of Christian thought does not follow this model [of classical theism] as uniformly as these [open theist] authors would lead us to believe."⁴² Erickson points to a number of

⁴⁰ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 47.

⁴¹ For example, open theist Clark Pinnock suggests that God is omniscient even though he does not exhaustively know the future because, "It is simply the nature of the creation project that its future is not altogether settled and, therefore, *not altogether knowable*" (*Most Moved Mover*, 100 [emphasis added]).

⁴² Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 88. In actual fact, open theists do recognize the diversity of classical theism (though they certainly do not highlight it). For example, Pinnock writes, "Conventional

contemporary evangelical theologians who he regards as classical theists, yet who have nevertheless critiqued attributes (namely divine impassibility and timelessness) that have generally been considered aspects of classical theism. Similarly, Kärkkäinen posits that some proponents of classical theism have debated some of the attributes of classical theism.⁴³ These suggestions might cause one to wonder if the theologians Erickson and Kärkkäinen are referring to are indeed still classical. Christopher Hall and John Sanders raise this very question. In direct contrast to Erickson, they suggest, “Some people who claim to be ‘classical theists’ affirm that God has changing emotions (e.g. grief) and that God is affected (passible) and influenced by humans. Some even reject divine timelessness. Those who make such changes are really not ‘classical’ theists.”⁴⁴ If Hall and Sanders are correct, then Erickson’s suggestion above simply shows that his understanding of an ‘orthodox’ doctrine of God goes beyond the classical tendencies in the doctrine of God. That is, this would mean that contrary to Erickson’s stated presupposition, ‘orthodox’ doctrine (as he views it) is not to be equated with a classical view of God.⁴⁵ Regardless of who is correct, this only serves to illustrate the fact that there is diversity even with respect to how diverse classical theism is.

The issue of divine providence is one particular area where there is diverse opinion with respect to the content of classical theism. Classical theism is most often regarded as those forms of theism that contrast with process panentheism, pantheism, and

theism is not a single model but comes in different versions. . . . These represent different priorities within a basically shared commitment” (*Most Moved Mover*, 8).

⁴³ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 55.

⁴⁴ Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* 143.

⁴⁵ Erickson equates the “the orthodox or classical view of God,” in *God the Father Almighty*, 88. At times, Nash seems to operate with a similar working definition of classical theism (e.g. *Concept of God*, 30). Compare also Brand’s comments above.

polytheism. However, in discussions regarding open theism, classical theism is sometimes equated with specifically Reformed versions of classical theism, along with the view of meticulous providence which is characteristic of Reformed theology. So, for example, Hall and Sanders suggest that according to classical theism, “God exercises unilateral power in creation, providence, and redemption. God takes no risks because he tightly controls every detail” and that “God knows the future because he determines the future.”⁴⁶ Hall and Sanders’ equation of Reformed theology and classical theism becomes even more clear when they compare and contrast “Classical,” “Freewill” (by which they mean Arminian) and “Open Theism.”⁴⁷ In contrast, Gregory Boyd includes both Augustinian/Calvinist views and Arminian views under the concept of classical theism.⁴⁸ Likewise, Cooper is of the opinion that “Classical theism can also acknowledge libertarian freedom,” which those who hold to meticulous divine providence would deny.⁴⁹ I have argued earlier in this chapter (part 2.a) that classical theism is not just a type of Reformed theology, therefore I agree with this latter view (of Boyd and Cooper) that classical theism allows for libertarian freedom. Nevertheless, the point remains that there is some diversity with respect to how classical theism is interpreted when it comes to the issue of divine providence.

⁴⁶ Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* 123. Elsewhere one reads, “Classical theism . . . rejects libertarian freedom in humans” (150), and teaches that “God exercises meticulous providence” (202).

⁴⁷ Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* 142–3.

⁴⁸ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 22–3. Grenz includes discussion of both Arminian and Calvinist theology under the “classical position” regarding divine providence (*Theology for the Community of God*, 116–18).

⁴⁹ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 332.

In spite of the diversity within classical theism, and even the diversity of opinion regarding what rightfully constitutes classical theism, Richard Rice defends his use of ‘traditional’ or ‘classical theism’ with reference to H. Richard Niebuhr’s typologies in *Christ and Culture*.

As Niebuhr points out, a ‘type’ is an artificial construct. It is never perfectly exemplified in any actual person or group. It only approximates the thinking or behavior of people. Nevertheless, a type is a useful interpretive device since the resemblances and differences among various viewpoints do fall into a general pattern.⁵⁰

According to Rice, it is appropriate to approach the concept of classical theism in an analogous way. Likewise, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen proposes that “in reality, the term ‘classical theism’ is a scholarly construction existing only in the minds of theologians, a generic concept drafted in hindsight to point out some dominant features in the development of the doctrine of God among Christian theologians.”⁵¹ The problem with this proposal, however, is that it indicates that there are no real examples of classical theism because it is only an “artificial construct” that exists in theologians’ minds. Rice and Kärkkäinen reach this conclusion based upon the false (and latent) presupposition that classical theism must be defined very specifically and in a way that can not include or allow for diversity. Rather, it is more appropriate to affirm that classical theism does admit diversity. There is, nevertheless, also significant continuity within classical theism. Hence, based on this recognition, one can affirm that there are indeed many examples of classical theism, even though they may not look precisely identical in all the details. Certainly, one is able to say that ‘humans’ or ‘snowflakes’ exist even though there is

⁵⁰ Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will*, 13, with reference to Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 43–4.

⁵¹ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 121. In spite of his appraisal of classical theism, Kärkkäinen is by no means advocating that theologians drop the concept, and he has no problem with using it himself.

much diversity among them! So too, Johnson and Huffman affirm that the idea of ‘classical theism’ is meant to point to the “significant continuity” regarding the doctrine of God in much of Christian history.⁵²

3. The Attributes of God According to Classical Theism

The doctrine of God espoused by classical theism is perhaps best understood by its presentation of the attributes of God. Accordingly, Kärkkäinen suggests, “If anything is characteristic of classical theism—up until the current times—it is the listing of attributes deemed essential to the Godhead and based on biblical revelation.”⁵³ In fact, when classical theism is defined it is most often defined by providing a list of divine attributes. For example, Owen defines classical theism as “belief in one God, the Creator, who is infinite, self-existent, incorporeal, eternal, immutable, impassible, simple, perfect, omniscient and omnipotent.”⁵⁴ An even more extensive list is provided by Geisler:

Classical theism is characterized by its belief in a personal, infinite, eternal, immutable God who created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and who has supernaturally intervened in the world from time to time. God has absolute unity (oneness), simplicity (indivisibility), aseity (self-existence), pure actuality, and necessity (rather than contingency). God is both eternal (non-temporal) and infinite (without limits). God is also omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere present). God is also fully omniscient, knowing the future perfectly and infallibly, including what free creatures will do in the future.⁵⁵

⁵² Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 28–9.

⁵³ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 57.

⁵⁴ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 1. Owen expands on his definition of classical theism by discussing the various attributes he includes in his definition (4–17). Cf. Cooper, *Panentheism*, 15; Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 64; and Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 33–8.

⁵⁵ Geisler, *Creating God*, 25–6. Hartshorne and Reese define classical theism by what it denies: “Classical theism denies relativity, temporality, passivity, of God; so of course it denies suffering. God is the absolute case of joy or bliss, which in negative aspect means the total absence of suffering” (*Philosophers Speak of God*, 152).

Such lists are generally not meant to suggest that some of these attributes are not found in non-classical presentations of the attributes of God, but only that this combination of attributes is characteristic of classical theism—these are the attributes, according to Henry Jansen, to which classical theism “demands adherence.”⁵⁶

It is beyond the scope of this work to survey the whole of the Christian tradition in order to display how the above attributes have been understood by classical theists. It is also beyond the purview of this work to prove which attributes are adequate to classical theism. However, in order to further describe the attributes, I will consider two main sources: the classical theism expressed by the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas and in the contemporary collection of essays in *God Under Fire*. When discussing classical theism it is more or less necessary to include Aquinas in the discussion. As Henry Jansen claims, “Any discussion of classical theism makes the treatment of Thomas’ views obligatory.”⁵⁷ One might wonder why such a relatively late theologian (from the Middle Ages) in the Christian tradition is so important for illustrating classical theism. This is due to the common recognition that Aquinas represents (according to Kärkkäinen) “the zenith of classical theism” and the “ablest proponent of classical theistic traditions”⁵⁸ and that (according to Keith Ward) classical theism “reached its paradigm formulation in the work of Thomas Aquinas.”⁵⁹ Ronald Nash even refers to classical theism as ‘Thomistic

⁵⁶ Jansen, *The Relationality of God*, 4.

⁵⁷ Jansen, *The Relationality of God*, 24.

⁵⁸ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 91.

⁵⁹ Ward, *Images of Eternity*, 135. Similar comments are made by Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 19; Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 62; Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 1–2; Geisler and House, *The Battle for God*, 33; Geisler, *Creating God*, 25. Cf. Kaiser, *Doctrine of God*, 72; and Van der Veken, “The Historical Roots of Anti-Theism,” 49–50. Aquinas is also a key theologian for explicating classical theism in Mascall, *He Who Is*, 116–25; and Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 41–62.

theism.⁶⁰ Though Aquinas is a relatively late theologian, his articulation of classical theism is considered to be an early articulation of what had not yet been systematically articulated within the Christian tradition.⁶¹ Unlike with Aquinas, there is no one author today who is widely regarded as the key exponent of classical theism. Hence, instead of focusing on one contemporary example of classical theism, contemporary examples of classical theism will occur with an exposition of the attributes of God expressed in the collection of essays *God Under Fire*. This collection self-claims to be an expression and defense of classical theism and draws on numerous theological traditions, including Reformed and non-Reformed Protestant traditions and the Catholic tradition.⁶² Though this is not my main concern, the exposition of Aquinas and the essays in *God Under Fire* demonstrate that, in spite of some diversity that may exist in classical theism, there are key characteristics to classical theism that have remained true in both the ‘zenith’ of classical theism and contemporary expressions of it and that, therefore, classical theism is not a hodgepodge or mishmash of historical theology, nor something that exists “only in the minds of theologians,” as Kärkkäinen suggests.⁶³ Furthermore, the exposition of the attributes as expressed in *God Under Fire* will be helpful in establishing continuity in

⁶⁰ Nash, *Concept of God*, 19 and 99 (in contrast, on page 30 he does make a distinction).

⁶¹ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 2 and Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 119. Cf. Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 106.

⁶² The book’s editors prefer the term ‘historical theism.’ Regarding the variety of traditions represented in *God Under Fire* see the introductory essay, Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 40.

⁶³ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 121.

classical theism due to the fact that the editors (and authors) recognize that classical theism includes more than just those who prescribe to Thomism.⁶⁴

Furthermore, since my pneumatological exposition of the divine attributes in the second half of this book focuses on the attributes of immutability, impassibility, and omnipotence, I focus on these attributes in my exposition of the divine attributes from the classical theistic perspective. For the sake of further clarifying the content of classical theism, I also, nevertheless, refer to other attributes that are found in classical theism.

a) Immutability

We begin with a description of what may be the most important attribute for understanding classical theism, namely, immutability, which affirms that God can not and does not change. Immutability is so central for classical theism that Bray suggests that if one is prepared to drop the doctrine of immutability from their list of divine attributes, then classical theism is no longer, and can no longer, be affirmed.⁶⁵

In support of the doctrine of immutability, classical theists appeal to such texts as Psalm 102:25, which states that the Lord remains “the same.” Even more explicitly, Malachi 3:6 puts the words in the very mouth of God, who says “I the Lord do not change” (cf. Jas 1:17).⁶⁶ Classical theists following Aquinas expand on what this might

⁶⁴ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 30. At the same time, the editors do find their project as largely agreeing with Aquinas. They write, “the understanding of God’s transcendence (*and* relationality) as expressed by people such as Augustine and Aquinas was largely accurate” (“Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 30).

⁶⁵ Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 107.

⁶⁶ All biblical quotations are from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

mean. There are three main things that lead Aquinas to suggest that God can not and does not change in any way: God's perfection, God's being pure act, and God's simplicity.⁶⁷

With regards to God's perfection, if God were to change then God would no longer be perfect. This is because God is eternally perfect. If God were to change from that perfect state, then God would have to change for the better or for the worse.

According to such thinking, the former option is not possible because it would presuppose that God is lacking something, and therefore not presently perfect. Hence, God would have to change for the worse and would no longer be perfect, which is also not possible. Where Scripture depicts God as changing in his position or changing the place where God resides, Aquinas argues that it is to be understood as a metaphor.⁶⁸ The same is true whenever Scripture depicts God as changing his will.⁶⁹

Divine immutability is also supported on the basis of God being pure act. That is, God must lack potentiality otherwise there would be something that would be posterior to God, upon which God would be dependent.⁷⁰ If God were to change, there would have to be potential for God to change, however, Aquinas argues (as seen above), God has no potentiality. Rather, God is pure act and not lacking any actuality. That is, God gives existence and does not receive existence. This is part of God's perfection, i.e., that God is not lacking actuality.⁷¹ Owen summarizes the idea well: "God, being self-existent, is pure act; he actualises all his potentialities simultaneously; hence there is no form or degree of

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.9, a.1.

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.9, a.1.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.19, a.7.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.9, a.1.

⁷¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.4, a.1.

being that he can either acquire or lose.”⁷² If God has no potentiality, then there is no potential (or possibility) for God to change in any way, hence God is immutable.

Aquinas also argues that God is immutable based upon the simplicity of God. Aquinas observes that when something is changed, or ‘moved’, it changes in part. However, God is simple—there is no composition in God—therefore, God has no parts that can be moved.⁷³ There can be no parts in God which have been composed because this would require a cause. Rather, God is the first cause, hence altogether simple, and therefore, altogether immutable.⁷⁴

While Aquinas argues that God is ‘altogether immutable,’ he does not discuss many specifics of what this might mean. In *God Under Fire*, Charles Gutenson delineates more specifically what God’s immutability means for classical theism. Gutenson argues that God does not change in his emotions, in his disposition toward people, metaphysically (God’s substance), in his knowledge, thoughts, or ethical standards, nor in his actions, experiences, plans, or will.⁷⁵ One might add that classical theism views God as immutable with respect to his attributes.⁷⁶ Gutenson argues that God’s relationality does not necessitate that God is mutable. Further, God’s stability in action does not mean that God is static. In fact, Gutenson suggests, the point of the doctrine of immutability for early Christians was to affirm the stability of God’s saving will.⁷⁷

⁷² Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 23.

⁷³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.9, a.1.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.3, a.7.

⁷⁵ Gutenson, “Does God Change?” 232–52.

⁷⁶ As noted by Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 65.

⁷⁷ Gutenson, “Does God Change?” 237.

Consistent with Aquinas's thought, Gutenson suggests that God's relationality and responsiveness to creaturely actions may be explained by viewing God's action toward creation as one single eternal act in which all of his 'responses' are included.⁷⁸ In the same volume, Paul Helm speaks of God having one eternal act of will as "one action, which has numerous temporally scattered effects."⁷⁹ Gutenson's argument occurs specifically in the context of the possible change in knowledge, will or disposition of God. So, for example, Gutenson would view God's knowledge of the world not as something that occurs in temporal succession, but rather as one single and eternal act (occurring outside of a temporal succession, thus having no beginning) of knowing all that has and will occur in history.

With respect to God's love, Gutenson responds to the potential of viewing God's love like human love, which contains elements of change, particularly with respect to desire and one's will to love. Gutenson argues that divine love never changes because it has no potentiality. There is no ignorance for God to overcome. Even if there was, this would not make a difference, for, Gutenson posits, God's love is totally uncaused and therefore there is nothing that would lead it to increase or decrease.⁸⁰ Overall we may conclude that for classical theism, God is all together immutable. This position is often described as 'strong immutability,' in contrast to 'weak immutability' which allows for certain types of change in God, particularly with respect to God emotions. This issue leads us to the next attribute, impassibility.

⁷⁸ Gutenson, "Does God Change?" 244–8.

⁷⁹ Helm, "Is God Bound by Time?" 132.

⁸⁰ Gutenson, "Does God Change?" 248–50.

b) Impassibility

The doctrine of impassibility, as affirmed by classical theists, states that God does not and can not have passions, at least not (and certainly not) in the sense in which humans have them. Most frequently, discussions of impassibility focus on questioning whether or not God can suffer. So, for example, Owen claims that “the word means particularly that he [God] cannot experience sorrow, sadness or pain.”⁸¹ However, suffering is not the only passion at issue when one discusses impassibility. So for example, Jürgen Moltmann equates God’s ability to suffer (*Leiden*) with God’s ability to have passion (*Leidenschaft*) in general, including love. Accordingly, Moltmann writes, “Were God incapable of suffering in any respect, and therefore in an absolute sense, then he would also be incapable of love.”⁸²

From the doctrine of immutability, it follows for classical theism that God is impassible. Accordingly, Owen refers to impassibility as an “amplification of immutability.”⁸³ This is because in order for God to have passions, one would suppose they would be changing passions. This is particularly true because God’s emotions would be (one would suppose, at least in part) dependent upon created beings. That is, God’s emotions would change in response to the changes found in creation. This possible change in emotions conflicts with the idea that God can and does not change.

The doctrine of impassibility is certainly one doctrine for which there has been some diverse opinion over the centuries. F. LeRon Shults has suggested that the original theological intuition behind the doctrine was simply that God can not be grasped by

⁸¹ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 23.

⁸² Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 230.

⁸³ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 23.

creaturely categories, and that, therefore, one can not say God is passible in the sense that humans have emotions.⁸⁴ The Greek Patristic theologians were also concerned with responding to Greek myths in which the gods were portrayed as possessing all of the passions of humanity, including negative passions. As such, the doctrine of impassibility was, as Colin Gunton notes, an “early Christian polemic against anthropomorphism.”⁸⁵ In light of these facts, Shults suggests that there is a stream in the Christian tradition that does not accept the complete impassibility of God. He points to Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Athanasius, who all accepted the proposition that God is passionate in some sense, while at the same time maintaining that God’s passion is “not dependent upon or modified by events in the world.”⁸⁶

While recognizing the diverse ways that theologians within the Christian tradition express the doctrine of impassibility, this doctrine is, nevertheless, still one doctrine that is characteristic of classical theism. To return to our first key proponent of classical theism, Aquinas suggested that God does love, and even that God loves all things, but that this is not a passion or feeling for God. Rather, love exists for God as an act of the will. That is, God does loving things, but not out of passions.⁸⁷ Similarly for Aquinas, God’s mercy also does not imply that God’s acts of compassion include affections. Similar to his discussion of love, Aquinas suggests that God’s mercy is seen in the effect of divine action. While humans are said to be merciful when they are “affected with

⁸⁴ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 269. Cf. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 83–112.

⁸⁵ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 125, cf. 39 and 62. Also, Gavriilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 48–51.

⁸⁶ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 269.

⁸⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.20, a.1 and Ia, q.20, a.2.

sadness” due to the misery of another (as Aquinas himself acknowledges), Aquinas explicitly states that God does not sorrow or experience sadness over the misery of another: “To feel sad about another’s misery is no attribute of God, but to drive it out is supremely his.”⁸⁸ If God is said to be compassionate, it is only from our perspective.

Anselm expressed such sentiments to God in *Proslogion*: “For, when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling.”⁸⁹ We see here again the distinction between the acts of God and the effects and affections of God, as well as between the acts of God and the creature’s experience.

Patrick Lee, a Catholic theologian, has written the representative essay in *God Under Fire* which explores the issue of impassibility to the greatest extent. Lee’s reflections exhibit how the doctrine of impassibility does not have as significant an impact in contemporary theology as it has throughout the Christian tradition. That is, Lee is willing to suggest that God does have emotions in an analogous way to humans, but that one can nevertheless speak of God as impassible because divine emotions differ from human emotions. He prefers to say that God has ‘spiritual affections.’⁹⁰ Lee posits that to assume God has emotions like us “is to compromise God’s transcendence.”⁹¹ In contrast to contemporary critiques of the doctrine of impassibility, Lee claims that when Jesus (as the Son of God) has emotions, they are emotions in his human nature.⁹²

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.21, a.3. Gutenson, writing on immutability, follows Aquinas’s line of argument with respect to divine compassion (“Does God Change?” 249–50).

⁸⁹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, chapter 8, cf. chapter 10.

⁹⁰ Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 219.

⁹¹ Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 212.

⁹² Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 213.

Lee also wants to emphasize that affirming the impassibility of God does not imply that God is aloof or indifferent (because that would also be a similarity with humanity). He views the term ‘impassibility’ as a negative term only—stating that God is *not* passible—rather than as a term that affirms something of God. That is, for Lee, saying that God is *not* passible, does not imply an affirmation of a supposed opposite of passibility, namely indifference.⁹³ In contrast to this possible conclusion, Lee argues that although God does not have emotions like humanity, one can still speak of God being pleased or angry with creatures. He affirms that in classical theism God does love and delight, but the key is that God is not changed by this.⁹⁴ Similar to Gutenson’s argument above with respect to immutability, Lee would agree with R. Douglas Geivett that God’s emotive response does not have to be coterminous with an event.⁹⁵ Rather, it could be viewed as one eternal act (again) with temporally scattered effects. With such sentiments in mind, James Spiegel goes to the extent of suggesting that classical theists consider reevaluating how they express divine impassibility and he proposes the idea that, similar to how God is omnipresent, God is also *omnipathic*. He explains, “God somehow is experientially acquainted with all creaturely feelings and passions without being limited by those feelings nor reduced to having any single overriding passion.”⁹⁶

This idea that God is, as Spiegel claims, “not limited by those feelings” points to another key aspect affirmed by classical theism’s doctrine of impassibility, which again

⁹³ Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 227. Regarding this point, Aquinas would agree because, even though God has no passions (according to him), he still affirms that God is loving and merciful, which means that God is not indifferent (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.20, a.1 and Ia, q.21, a.3).

⁹⁴ Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 229 and 214.

⁹⁵ Geivett, “The Existence of God and Suffering,” 181.

⁹⁶ Spiegel, “Does God take Risks?” 201.

relates closely with the doctrine of immutability. This is the frequent affirmation that any so called ‘passions’ that God *might* have are not dependent upon creaturely causes.

Cooper expresses this concern of classical theism well:

But God’s pleasure and anger are not *passions or emotions caused in him* by hearing my comment, the way humans acquire these feelings. Classical theism *denies* that God’s feelings are the *effects of creaturely causes* just as his knowledge is not learned by observing. Instead God’s feelings are *affections*—intentional affective attitudes that he eternally chooses to take toward his creatures.⁹⁷

That is, although God is ‘responding’ to creaturely actions (though, as seen above, the ‘response’ is not coterminous with the event), the ‘response’ is only a result of God’s action or will (perhaps it would be better to say that God’s passion is ‘related’ to creaturely action). That is, God is not dependent upon or limited by creaturely actions for his omnipathos (to employ Spiegel’s proposed term). This is because, if God were dependent, then this would then introduce a change (and even consistent changes) in God, and one could no longer affirm that God is immutable. Hence, if a classical theist affirms that God has certain emotions that are *analogous* to human emotions, the classical theist also affirms that these emotions are not caused by creaturely agents and that, therefore, any such emotions do not result in a change for God.

c) Omnipotence

Divine omnipotence is certainly another central attribute for classical theism. In support of the doctrine of divine omnipotence, classical theists appeal to such texts as Jeremiah 32:17, where the prophet proclaims to God, “Nothing is too hard for you,” and Matthew 19:26, where Jesus states, “with God all things are possible.” Classical theists also point to the frequent biblical reference (especially in the Old Testament) to God as

⁹⁷ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 332 (original emphasis, with additional emphasis added).

“the Almighty,” which is even referred to as God’s ‘name’ (Isa 47:4). The primary claim being made when one affirms the doctrine of divine omnipotence is that God is able to do all things. Aquinas makes what is now a familiar qualification by defining ‘omnipotence’ more specifically as the ability for God to do, or bring into reality, all things that are *possible*. So, for example, God is omnipotent even though it is impossible (i.e. logically impossible) for God to create a round square. As a further qualification, that which is ‘possible,’ for Aquinas, is not limited to what is possible for a created being, but rather, refers to all things that are possible absolutely. Therefore, Aquinas asserts, “Whatever does not involve a contradiction is in the realm of the possible.”⁹⁸ This basic understanding of omnipotence is what is usually meant when a lay person affirms that God is omnipotent. Certainly, this basic affirmation of omnipotence would be enough to distinguish one’s concept of God from other concepts, such as process theology. However, historically, classical theism also tends to discuss God’s power in connection with God’s will.

In relating the concepts of divine power and God’s will one can see the close relationship between one’s understanding of divine omnipotence and one’s doctrine of providence. This is particularly so because, for Aquinas, “With God . . . substance and power and understanding and willing and wisdom and justice are all identical.”⁹⁹ The power of God (divine omnipotence) is the execution of action, the will of God is God’s commanding something, and the intellect and wisdom of God are that which direct the action (toward its end). With respect to the will of God, Aquinas asks, “Is God’s will the

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.25, a.3.

⁹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.25, a.5.

cause of things?” and “Is God’s will always fulfilled?”¹⁰⁰ He answers, “yes,” to both of these questions.

One might point to Aquinas’s distinction between primary and secondary causation to suggest that divine power is working ‘along with’ creaturely causation, since God is the primary cause, and creatures are the secondary causes. However, the primary-secondary distinction that Aquinas makes relates to the distinction between infinite and finite causes. That is, the causes are not related to each other in a manner such that the two are added together. Aquinas clarifies this: “the same effect is not attributed to a natural cause and to divine power in such a way that it is partly done by God, and partly by the natural agent; rather, it is wholly done by both, according to a different way.”¹⁰¹ Both causes are genuine causes, but secondary causes can only produce effects on account of the power that God gives to them. This is not to say that God is going around making changes or modification to the way things are. That is, with respect to humanity, Aquinas is not suggesting that God forces people to do things against their will.¹⁰² Rather, as Brian Davies interprets Aquinas, God “is simply making things to be themselves.”¹⁰³ Davies provides an example of feeding his cat. Although Davies would be the secondary cause who feeds the cat on his own accord (apart from any compulsion), Aquinas would affirm that God is the primary cause of the cat getting fed; it is “truly God’s doing.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, the power of God is not expressed by force and in opposition to human power and

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.19, a.4 and Ia, q.19, a.6.

¹⁰¹ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3.70.

¹⁰² Not that he denies that this would ever happen.

¹⁰³ Davies, *Aquinas*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Davies, *Aquinas*, 78.

determination, but rather, God's omnipotence is that which causes all things to be the very way they are.

Contemporary expressions of classical theism also affirm the omnipotence of God as well as a connection between the doctrines of divine omnipotence and providence. Among these expressions of classical theism, one sometimes finds theologians presenting a unilateral view of divine omnipotence. This understanding of divine omnipotence is found throughout the collection of essays in *God Under Fire*. The book does not have a chapter dedicated to discussing omnipotence, but this is largely because in classical theism a discussion of God's omnipotence is often aligned with discussions of divine sovereignty and the doctrine of providence, and particularly in discussions concerning the problem of evil. This certainly does not imply that omnipotence is not an important attribute for contemporary classical theists. In fact, Mark Talbot even suggests that omnipotence is God's primary attribute on account of the fact that 'Almighty' is God's name (rather than, for example, love).¹⁰⁵ Further, Geivett suggests that if God is not omnipotent, then believers' faith in God is misplaced. This is because there is no hope of eradicating evil without God's help.¹⁰⁶ In the same collection of essays, James S. Spiegel discusses "the traditional understanding of divine omnipotence" with respect to God's control. Defending classical theism, Spiegel is critical of open theism because in open theism "God's power is restricted."¹⁰⁷ The problem with open theism, according to

¹⁰⁵ Talbot, "Does God Reveal Who He Actually Is?" 69. Talbot is contrasting himself with open theism, which, he thinks presents love as God's main attribute.

¹⁰⁶ Geivett, "The Existence of God and Suffering," 170.

¹⁰⁷ Spiegel, "Does God Take Risks?" 197.

Spiegel, is that God does not control (nor know) the outcome of some events. From Spiegel's perspective, God's omnipotence means that God does control all events.

It is debatable as to how prevalent this view of divine omnipotence is within classical theism. One's conclusion regarding the matter depends upon the context in which one defines classical theism. For example, it was noted above how classical theism is often considered forms of Christian theism that contrast with process panentheism, pantheism, and polytheism. By contrast, classical theism receives a more restricted definition when it comes to discussions which involve open theism. That is, in the former scheme, open theism would likely be considered a form of classical theism. Nevertheless, there are clearly differences between classical theism and open theism. Furthermore (as mentioned above), in discussions regarding open theism, classical theism is also often contrasted with freewill theism.¹⁰⁸ In such contexts, classical theism is certainly still depicted as expressing a unilateral concept of divine omnipotence. For example, Hall and Sanders portray 'classical theism' as proposing that "God exercises unilateral power in creation, providence, and redemption."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, John Feinberg observes that "According to the classical view, God is the absolutely sovereign monarch over the world. He has his will and way in all things. Very little, if any, power is donated to his creation."¹¹⁰ It is on account of such expressions of classical theism that Elizabeth Johnson makes the following observation:

¹⁰⁸ In some contexts freewill theism is a term used to refer to open theism, however, in others (as here) it refers to a Wesleyan/Arminian view of divine providence and is contrasted with open theism.

¹⁰⁹ Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* 123.

¹¹⁰ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 66, cf. 504. Nevertheless, on page 506 Feinberg does propose that both Calvinists *and* Arminians can subscribe to classical theism.

Modelled on the all-determining power of a patriarchal ruler, divine power is traditionally interpreted to mean that God is ultimately in control of whatever happens so that nothing occurs apart from the divine will. This ruler may well be benevolent but ‘his’ exercise of power is *unilateral* and brooks no opposition except what ‘he’ allows.¹¹¹

Whether one regards the above as the *only true* manner of expressing classical theism, or whether one regards the above as *only one* expression of classical theism (which is how I have defined classical theism), the point remains that there is a significant strand of classical theism that presents a unilateral view of divine omnipotence.¹¹²

d) Additional Attributes in Classical Theism

While the attributes of immutability, impassibility, and omnipotence are those which primarily concern us for the sake of this study (these are the attributes discussed in more depth in the coming chapters), there are certainly other attributes that are essential in expressions of classical theism. Hence, in order to best present classical theism, it is also necessary to consider the classical theistic expression of God as eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient.

The Scriptures regularly regard God as the ‘eternal’ one (e.g. Gen 21:33, Rom 16:26). While classical theists generally agree that the biblical terms translated in English as ‘eternal’ do not clearly define what ‘eternal’ means,¹¹³ all classical theists agree that God is (at least) eternal in the sense that God is everlasting—God had no beginning and will have no end. The majority historical view, however, has been that God is eternal

¹¹¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 247 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Olson writes, “It seems to me that conservative belief in classical Christian theism generally includes the idea that God is the all-determining reality” (*Reformed and Always Reforming*, 213).

¹¹³ For example, Helm, “Is God Bound by Time?” 123. For example, God is clearly ‘eternal’ in a different way than mountains are ‘eternal’, yet the same Hebrew word (*ōlam*) that describes God as ‘eternal’ (e.g. Gen 21:33), also refers to mountains in Gen 49:26. The NIV translates this text as “ancient mountains” while the KJV renders it “everlasting mountains.” Some more recent English translations (e.g. CEV and the Message) translate this as “eternal hills.”

more specifically in the sense of being outside of time.¹¹⁴ This view of God as ‘timeless’ or ‘atemporal’ is characteristic of classical theism.¹¹⁵ Time is viewed as a created thing, which God could not, logically, be limited by. As Anselm suggested, God is that which nothing greater can be conceived, hence nothing can contain God (such as time).¹¹⁶

For Aquinas, God’s eternity follows from God’s immutability.¹¹⁷ There must be movement in order to measure time (hence a ‘before’ and ‘after’), but God does not change and, hence, there is no temporal succession for God. Accordingly, Aquinas suggests that eternity is the measure of “abiding existence” whereas time measures change and movement.¹¹⁸ Paul Helm, a contemporary theologian, also argues that God is timelessly eternal. He accepts Aquinas’s argument with respect to immutability; God’s fullness or perfection means that God could not change, and time is a relation between changes in things.¹¹⁹ He argues further that if God were temporal, then God would be dependent upon time and have to wait for things to happen. A temporal view of God

¹¹⁴ As noted by, Ganssle, “Thinking about God and Time,” 12–13, esp. footnote 3, and Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 109.

¹¹⁵ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 19; Geisler, *Creating God*, 29; Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* 123 and 201; Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 65. Similarly, Cooper refers to those who deny God’s timelessness (e.g. Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and William Lane Craig) as “modified classical theists” (Cooper, *Panentheism*, 17, fn. 9. Cf. 342 and 344). Some theologians prefer the term ‘atemporal’ because they prefer to not define God by the created category of time (e.g. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 204). Cf. Helm, “Is God Bound by Time?” 125–6, who, while speaking of God as ‘timelessly eternal,’ emphasizes that one can only speak of eternity in negative terms, without providing a definition of what it actually is.

¹¹⁶ Anselm, *Proslogium*, chapters 13 and 19.

¹¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.10, a.3.

¹¹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.10, a.4.

¹¹⁹ Helm, “Is God Bound by Time?” 121. Cf. also the classical theist Geisler, *Creating God*, 30.

would also imply, according to Helm, that God did not create time.¹²⁰ It is this atemporal view of eternity that is characteristic of classical theism.

God is also omnipresent according to classical theism. This is one attribute that is not controversial among Christian theologians. Given that space is a created thing, classical theists suggest that God is not limited by space. This attribute is sometimes presented as a basis for belief in God's atemporal eternal existence. God is not limited to space, and therefore, since space-time is (according to modern physics) not two different things, God must be outside of time.¹²¹

With respect to God's omnipresence, Aquinas argues that God is everywhere based on his belief that God must be everywhere as the efficient cause of things, sustaining their existence, giving them being, power, and operation.¹²² Similarly, Wolfhart Pannenberg speaks of God's omnipresence as God's ability to act everywhere. That is, God's power has no limits.¹²³ Again, the legitimacy of God's omnipresence is not debated by Christian theologians.

The final key attribute discussed here is the classical understanding of divine omniscience. This means that God "knows everything" (1 John 3:20). According to classical theism, God's knowledge is exhaustive and includes all things past, present, and future.¹²⁴ Any ignorance on God's part would be an imperfection.¹²⁵ Support for divine

¹²⁰ Helm, "Is God Bound by Time?" 120.

¹²¹ Helm, "Is God Bound by Time?" 126–7 and Spiegel, "Does God take Risks?" 203.

¹²² Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.8, a.2 and Ia, q.8, a.3.

¹²³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:416. Bray suggests that this is the "only point" of the doctrine of omnipresence (*Doctrine of God*, 86).

¹²⁴ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 22–3. Boyd observes that although the manner in which God might know the future might differ according to classical theists, in any case, God does know the future exhaustively.

omniscience is frequently connected with an understanding of God as timelessly eternal. For example, Aquinas argues that since God is not limited by time, God is able to see all things together at once. He adds that God must perfectly know his own power, and hence, what his power extends to as well.¹²⁶ God's power, as seen above, extends to all things, therefore, Aquinas concludes, God is omniscient. Taking a different approach, Bray relates God's omniscience to his omnipresence. Since God is present to all things, he is able to know all things.¹²⁷

When the issue of divine omniscience is raised, contemporary North American Evangelicals are often particularly concerned with defending classical theism's affirmation that God has exhaustive knowledge of the future.¹²⁸ One issue they consistently raise is that God's ability to accurately predict future events in biblical prophecy seems to necessitate that God has exhaustive knowledge of the future. William Lane Craig, for example, proposes that if God had only limited knowledge of the future, then God could only know the very near future with certainty, because just one contingency could change many aspects of history.¹²⁹ Craig also suggests that exhaustive omniscience underlies God's direction of world history. That is, "God's knowledge of the course of world history and his control over it to achieve his purposes are fundamental to

¹²⁵ Craig, "What Does God Know?" 143.

¹²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.14, a.15.

¹²⁷ Bray, *Doctrine of God*, 89.

¹²⁸ In mentioning "contemporary North American Evangelicals" here in this chapter, I am not suggesting that all (or even most) of contemporary North American Evangelicals are classical theists (as discussed in the following chapter). Rather, I am only saying that many contemporary North American Evangelicals are concerned with defending the classical theistic view that God has exhaustive foreknowledge.

¹²⁹ Craig, "What Does God Know?" 141.

the biblical conception of history and are a source of comfort and assurance to the believer in times of distress.”¹³⁰ The conclusion that God is omniscient, and that this includes God’s exhaustive knowledge of the future, is characteristic of classical theism.

To conclude this exposition of classical theism from the perspective of how it presents the divine attributes, we may note that the God of classical theism is immutable, impassible, omnipotent, eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient. Now that the content of classical theism has been presented, we may observe some key characteristics of classical theism.

4. Characteristics of Classical Theism

a) Transcendence

One key characteristic of classical theism is that it emphasizes divine transcendence. The affirmation of divine transcendence is fundamental to classical theism. Jansen observes that classical theism “demands adherence to . . . the absolute transcendence of God.”¹³¹ Similarly, Elizabeth Johnson observes that classical theists have a “heavy stress on transcendence” and that while classical theists are “stressing divine transcendence . . . divine immanence tends to slip from view.”¹³² The construction of towering Gothic Cathedrals in the Middle Ages was symbolic of this stress on the transcendence of God.¹³³

¹³⁰ Craig, “What Does God Know?” 139.

¹³¹ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 4, cf. 6 and 13.

¹³² Johnson, *She Who Is*, 230 then quoting 19. Cf. Reynolds, *Toward a Process Pneumatology*, 148 and Schweitzer, “The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God,” 1.

¹³³ Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 80. On the one hand, one might suppose that the inside of these cathedrals symbolized God’s immanence by means of the prominence they gave to Mary, the mother of

Jansen notes that classical theists understand God's transcendence in both ontological and epistemological terms. God is ontologically transcendent in as much as God is distinct from the world and perfect in comparison to it, and, on account of this, God is epistemologically transcendent, meaning that God is beyond our ability to speak or think about him with full understanding.¹³⁴

Classical theists are themselves aware that they emphasize divine transcendence. Parrish (a classical theist), for example, depicts classical theism as a portrayal of "the infinite transcendent creator."¹³⁵ Similarly, Cooper affirms that God is "utterly transcendent."¹³⁶ Our contemporary exemplars of classical theism in *God Under Fire* are also explicit with respect to their stress on divine transcendence. The editors, Eric Johnson and Huffman, are clear that the purpose of the book is to emphasize the "transcendent God of historic Christianity"¹³⁷ and that, in response to some contemporary proposals, they "must assert God's vigorous, *transcendent* personhood."¹³⁸ Further, they "believe that the emphasis on God's transcendence that was the hallmark of the patristic, medieval, and Reformation periods is largely warranted by Scripture" and that "the understanding of God's transcendence ... as expressed by people such as Augustine and

Jesus. On the other hand, this devotion to Mary is not devotion to one of the divine persons themselves. As Comblin notes, for much of history "in Catholic tradition, both Western and Eastern, the cult of the Virgin Mary took the place of the cult of the Holy Spirit." He continues, "Mary is still a creature. Her spiritual motherhood is not enough; it does not reach into the very being of God" (Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 50).

¹³⁴ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 6 and 35.

¹³⁵ Parrish, *God and Necessity*, 4.

¹³⁶ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 14.

¹³⁷ Johnson and Huffman, "Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?" 24 and 40 (emphasis added).

¹³⁸ Johnson and Huffman, "Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?" 24 (original emphasis).

Aquinas was largely accurate.”¹³⁹ Given that Johnson and Huffman are inclined to think that “the most important distinction among God’s attributes for our day is that between his transcendence and immanence,”¹⁴⁰ it is easy to see how their stress on divine transcendence leads them to neglect an appropriate affirmation of divine immanence.

The emphasis on divine transcendence can be found throughout classical theism’s presentation of the divine attributes. Elizabeth Johnson summarizes, “Classical theism emphasizes in a one-sided way the absolute transcendence of God over the world, God’s untouchability by human history and suffering, and the all-pervasiveness of God’s dominating power to which human beings owe submission and awe.”¹⁴¹ With respect to immutability, God is portrayed as being transcendent in such a way that the world can not affect God. Events in the world do not change God; God does not allow them to change him, nor does he change in response to them.

Related to this, God is impassible in the sense that events in creation do not change God’s emotions. God can not and does not suffer, nor does God experience passions of joy and celebration. Even if God were to have emotions, they certainly are nothing like human emotions, and they are certainly not caused by any creaturely agents. Again, this understanding of impassibility is affirmed on account of the fact that God is transcendent from the world. For example, Lee takes divine transcendence as his

¹³⁹ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 30 (original emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ Johnson and Huffman, “Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?” 33.

¹⁴¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 21. Cf. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 66.

measurement of an adequate doctrine of God when he posits that to assume God has emotions like us “is to compromise God’s transcendence.”¹⁴²

For classical theism, God’s omnipotence displays God’s transcendence in that only God is omnipotent. God has all power, and could do anything consistent with his being. Beyond this, the unilateral view of omnipotence that is widespread in classical theism also displays God’s transcendence. God is not the sole source of power and agency in the world, but God’s power is that which makes sure that God’s will is always accomplished. Though not forcing creatures, God exercises his power in such a way that nothing will ever be able to resist it.

God’s transcendence is also demonstrated in the way that classical theists speak of divine eternity, omnipresence, and omniscience. If God’s eternal nature means that he is timeless, existing outside of time, then God is transcendent over a fundamental experience of created existence. The affirmation of God’s omnipresence supports the classical theist’s emphasis on divine transcendence in that God’s transcendence over space (another fundamental aspect of created existence) allows God to be able to be present everywhere. God’s omniscience, including God’s exhaustive knowledge of the future, presents God as transcendent in that (regardless of what enables God to know all things) God’s ability to know things is vastly beyond the ability of any creature. Emphasis on divine transcendence is clearly found throughout and enabled by classical theism’s portrayal of the divine attributes.

One can affirm with Jansen, “The classical concept of God . . . is well-suited to protecting the transcendence of God.”¹⁴³ However, this is not meant to deny that classical

¹⁴² Lee, “Does God have Emotions?” 212 and 214. Lee bases this upon his conclusion that the center of the teaching of Scripture regarding God is that God is transcendent.

theists believe in the immanence of God. Indeed, classical theists do not deny God's immanence.¹⁴⁴ In fact, as always, the transcendence of God is connected with, and allows for, God's immanence. One must not forget that, theologically, these terms are not mutually exclusive. The immanence of God is expressed in classical theism particularly with respect to divine omnipresence. God being present to all things allows God to be the cause of all things (as the doctrine of divine omnipotence frequently holds) and allows God to know all things (as the doctrine of divine omniscience posits). Cooper correctly observes, "In classical theism, God can be *absolutely immanent*—unconditionally omnipresent in creation—precisely because he is *absolutely transcendent*. It is simply false to suggest that classical theism denies or ignores the immanence of God."¹⁴⁵

While classical theism often expresses the transcendence of God by speaking of God as 'outside' or 'above' creation, one also finds contrary metaphors expressing divine immanence in Aquinas's doctrine of God. Aquinas declares outright that "God is said to exist everywhere in everything" in as much as "God is boundless and unlimited."¹⁴⁶ For Aquinas, "a thing is present wherever it is active," therefore, since God gives existence to all things and is the cause of all things, he must be *in all things*.¹⁴⁷ This is a classical expression of divine immanence.

It should be clear then, that in saying that classical theism emphasizes divine transcendence I do *not* mean that classical theism *denies* divine immanence. Rather, I

¹⁴³ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, "Does Classical Theism Deny God's Immanence?" 23–33 and Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 330, cf. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, introduction to Ia, q.7.

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.8, a.1; cf. Ia, q.8, a.3.

mean that classical theism neglects divine immanence and that there is an overemphasis on divine transcendence.¹⁴⁸ Further, I mean that classical theism presents the divine attributes in such a way that divine transcendence is clearly affirmed, while divine immanence is neglected, and it appears as though it is even forgotten at times.¹⁴⁹ One can (and should) affirm that God is transcendent and immanent with the same breath, but all too often classical theists save their breath only to say that God is transcendent. There is an imbalance here. It is quite possible that this imbalance occurs due to the fact that the definition and understanding of many of the divine attributes in classical theism derive from philosophy.¹⁵⁰

b) Philosophically Derived

Regardless of whether one views this as a positive or a negative thing, clearly another characteristic of classical theism is that the attributes as expressed by classical theism are largely derived from philosophy, particularly from Greek philosophies. This is so much the case that classical theism is also sometimes referred to as ‘philosophical theism.’¹⁵¹ This influence is particularly true when it comes to the attributes of

¹⁴⁸ In addition to the above reasons for affirming this, one might also argue that Aquinas (in particular) emphasizes divine transcendence since he (it might appear) denies that God is related to or involved in the world. After all, Aquinas states, “being related to creatures is not a reality in God” (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.13, a.7; cf. Ia, q.6, a.2). However, such a suggestion would result from ignorance regarding Aristotle’s teaching with respect to real and logical relations, which Aquinas employs here (LaCugna, “The Relational God,” 650 and 655–6). Essentially, by denying that God has a real relation to creation, Aquinas is denying that God is dependent upon creation, denying that creation constitutes God’s being, and, therefore, affirming that God would remain God without the existence of creation (a real relation would require an eternal being besides the divine essence).

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 147.

¹⁵⁰ Many have made this case, but it is beyond the scope of this work to consider whether or not this is the *cause* for the imbalanced emphasis on divine transcendence.

¹⁵¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 19.

immutability, impassibility, and eternity.¹⁵² Jansen suggests that, despite any diversity within classical theism, one thing that unites classical theism is the “classical metaphysical system which informs their concept of God.”¹⁵³ For example, classical theism is permeated with the presupposition, drawn from classical philosophy, that God is an immaterial substance, single subject, and first cause.¹⁵⁴ Utilizing these philosophical bases served the apologetic purposes of early classical theologians. Barry Callen notes that, by using Greek concepts to identify God with the source of being (as understood from philosophy), “the early church fathers, therefore, proclaimed that the ‘Father’ of Jesus was in fact the universal God, not merely an ethnic ‘god’ of the Jews.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, from the early development of Christian theology, the intention of aligning Christian theology with Greek philosophy was to show that the Christian understanding of God is compatible with the best thinking of the day.

This relationship between philosophy and the doctrine of God is explicitly clear with respect to Aquinas’s exposition of the divine attributes. He was responding to Aristotelian thinking. At the end of the twelfth century and in the early thirteenth century, Latin translations of Aristotle’s philosophy were becoming available throughout Europe, primarily by means of the Muslim population in Spain.¹⁵⁶ Previous to this, philosophical study in Europe focused on logic, but with these new translations of Aristotle,

¹⁵² Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 19–23.

¹⁵³ Cf. Jansen, *Relationality*, 20, cf. 8. Jansen uses Thomas Aquinas and Herman Bavinck as representatives of classical theism and suggests that “Despite distinct differences in their concepts of God, they also share the classical metaphysical system which informs their concept of God.”

¹⁵⁴ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 15–94.

¹⁵⁵ Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 69. Also, Pannenberg, “The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God,” 134. Cf. Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 1 and Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 141.

¹⁵⁶ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 228.

philosophical study broadened its horizons to topics (such as metaphysics) that were concerned with issues similar to Christian doctrine. At first ecclesiastical authorities were hostile to this ‘new’ philosophy, as it seemed to leave no room for Christianity. For example, Aristotle held to a naturalistic view of the world and believed that it was eternal. As a result, the Church forbid study of Aristotle’s metaphysics and natural philosophy in Paris and other universities. These prohibitions had little effect however, and by 1255 Aristotle’s works were officially included in the curriculum of the universities.¹⁵⁷

The effects of Aristotle’s philosophy on Aquinas are clear as Aquinas regularly refers to him throughout his works as ‘the philosopher.’¹⁵⁸ Aquinas operated within a philosophical framework which was common to both Christians and Muslims in order to make Christianity look rational and attractive. Alister McGrath summarizes Aquinas’s *Summa contra Gentiles* as such: “If you can agree with the Aristotelian ideas presented in this writing, then you ought to become a Christian.”¹⁵⁹ In the same work, Aquinas himself wrote,

Mohammedans and the pagans, do not agree with us in accepting the authority of any Scripture, by which they may be convinced of their error. Thus, against the Jews we are able to argue by means of the Old Testament, while against the heretics we are able to argue by means of the New Testament. But the Mohammedans and the pagans accept neither the one nor the other. We must,

¹⁵⁷ Copleston, *Thomas Aquinas*, 64–6 and Chenu, *Aquinas and His Role*, 64. At the time of Aquinas’s entrance, the University of Naples was the only university teaching the whole of Aristotle’s philosophy (McDermott, “What the *Summa* is About,” xix).

¹⁵⁸ Caution must be made, however, not to overstate the connection between Aquinas and Aristotle as Aquinas drew on many other sources as well. Indeed numerous ancient philosophers along with Church tradition—found in Christian theologians, the liturgy, his Dominican life and the Scriptures themselves—were sources of Aquinas’s theology. Torrell discusses these sources in *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 376–83. See also Davies, *Aquinas*, 14–15.

¹⁵⁹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 50.

therefore, have recourse to the natural reason, to which all men are forced to give their assent.¹⁶⁰

We have seen philosophical influence in classical theism's discussion of the divine attributes when it begins with an understanding of God that is perfect and also infinite. God's perfection leads to the affirmation that God is immutable, and hence impassible and timelessly eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient. Concepts of God's infinity, where God is not limited to time or space, further support affirmations of God's timelessly eternal nature and omnipresence.

In addition, classical theism, particularly in its Thomistic forms, clearly presupposes Aristotle's teaching on the four types of causes: the material, efficient, formal, and final. Jansen observes that for both Aristotle and classical theism "causality provides the final explanation for things that are."¹⁶¹ One place where one sees this philosophy influencing classical theism is in the doctrine of immutability. Everything must have a cause in order for it to exist the way it does. However, there must be a first cause. Since God is the creator, God is the first cause; and since God is the first cause, there must be nothing that causes him. Hence, by virtue of being the first cause, God is immutable: the Unmoved First Mover. Nothing causes God's existence in the sense that he has no material, efficient, formal, or final cause; hence, nothing moves or changes God. This idea of causation also has a significant impact upon the doctrine of omnipresence, where God is the cause that sustains the existence of all creation.

The influence of philosophy also appears in classical theism's focus on divine attributes that are, for the most part, foreign to the Scriptures. While God's holiness,

¹⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 1.2.

¹⁶¹ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 10.

patience, righteousness, and mercy are frequently described in the Scriptures, classical theism pays little attention to these attributes.¹⁶² Further, these attributes are rarely even included in lists of attributes that classical theists provide to describe the content of classical theism.¹⁶³ Rather, classical theism focuses on attributes which are more characteristic of philosophical discourse. The latter attributes are certainly important—Gunton notes that the philosophical attributes provide support for the ones emphasized in Scripture¹⁶⁴—however, this observation does provide a further illustration of how philosophical categories and discussions have influenced classical theism.

The influence of philosophy on classical theism is significant enough that it constitutes one common critique of the classical doctrine of God. The charge is that the God of the biblical narrative is forced (inappropriately) to fit into philosophical categories. The critique is reminiscent of Pascal’s claim that the God of the philosophers is not the God of the Bible.¹⁶⁵ This critique came to its height when Adolf von Harnack, and others in the history of dogma movement at the end of the nineteenth century, spoke of the “Hellenization” of Christianity.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Albrecht Ritschl alleged that the God depicted by the apologists of the second century was a “metaphysical idol.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Knowles, *Tell Me Your Name*, chapter 1 (forthcoming).

¹⁶³ Typical of descriptions of classical theism, see Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 62–7, and the description of classical theism in Geisler’s long list of attributes cited at the beginning of part three above.

¹⁶⁴ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 132–3.

¹⁶⁵ Pascal, *Pensées*, 178.

¹⁶⁶ See part 2, “Fixing and Gradual Hellenising of Christianity as a System of Doctrine,” in Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 169–378.

¹⁶⁷ Ritschl, *Theologie und Metaphysik*, 20.

Regardless of this critique, there is a general awareness among contemporary theologians that one can not simply dismiss classical theism (and other aspects of classical theology) because philosophical thought influences it. Classical theists generally will not deny the influence of Greek philosophy on classical theism. Some even admit that there are classical theists who are distorted by philosophy (particularly if they do not refer to Scripture).¹⁶⁸ More usually, classical theists suggest they are drawing upon various philosophical traditions to state clearly what they understand Scripture to teach about God.¹⁶⁹ However, contemporary theologians are more likely to nuance how they describe the relationship of the Christian doctrine of God to Greek philosophy and note that they must not be equated. Historically, Christians never simply blindly accepted Greek philosophy, nor wholly accepted it.¹⁷⁰ Rather, the pattern was to confront philosophy by restructuring it.¹⁷¹ For example, Pannenberg notes that Christianity moved well beyond the God of Greek philosophy who was only the origin of the world. He contrasts the Christian doctrine of God with that of Greek philosophy:

Such freedom on the part of God for ever new, as yet unheard of works in his world was beyond the scope of Greek philosophy [*sic*]. The origin that can be deduced by inference from present reality can never be conceived as the ground of something unheard of in comparison with all present reality. . . . God, as the

¹⁶⁸ Talbot, “Does God Reveal Who He Actually Is?” 54. Cf. Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 117.

¹⁶⁹ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 14. Cf. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 63, who observes, “Regardless of exactly how these ideas found their way into Christian theology, scholars agree that the Greek influence is undeniable in the classical model of God.” On account of this relationship, Kärkkäinen suggests that classical theism is “an example of a highly contextualized approach to the doctrine of God” (*The Doctrine of God*, 99).

¹⁷⁰ Aquinas, for example, did not, place doctrine and philosophy on the same level. Philosophy, as with other disciplines, was viewed as the handmaiden of theology (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.1, a.5).

¹⁷¹ Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 108. This is a frequent theme in Bray’s essay. Cf. Bray, *Doctrine of God*, 28–33 and 36–40.

origin, is never merely the invisible ground of present reality, but the free, creative source of the ever new and unforeseen.¹⁷²

Besides restructuring or going beyond Greek philosophical concepts of God, classical theists also resist numerous aspects of Greek philosophy. For example, as Jansen notes, Aristotle held that the world is eternal and Neoplatonism spoke of the world as an emanation from God whereas, according to classical theism, God created the world out of nothing.¹⁷³ Similarly, where the Neoplatonists thought of God as a thing and spoke of God as ‘that which is,’ classical theists thought of God in personal terms. For example, Aquinas suggested that God is most properly spoken of as ‘He who is.’¹⁷⁴ On account of this, it is probably not fair to speak of a ‘Hellenization’ of classical theism, because theology never lost its transforming power over its philosophical context.¹⁷⁵ Beyond this, Christian theology even had an influence on Greek philosophical thought. So, for example, Sanders (who is actually critical of classical theism) is willing to speak not only of a Hellenization of Christian theology but also a “Christianization of Hellenism.”¹⁷⁶ This is because philosophers sometimes felt pressured to adapt to Christian theology as the influence of Christianity spread.¹⁷⁷

Whether the relationship of classical theism to Greek philosophical thought amounts to inappropriate cultural accommodation or a valid expression of the Christian

¹⁷² Pannenberg, “The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God,” 138, cf. 178.

¹⁷³ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 18–19 and 60. Cf. Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.13, a.11.

¹⁷⁵ Pannenberg, “The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God,” 140.

¹⁷⁶ Sanders, “Historical Considerations,” 59. Cf. Geisler, *Creating God*, 96. In strange contrast to frequent cautions against the influence of Greek philosophy into classical theism, Parrish suggests that “The classical theistic concept of God was not developed by the ancient Greeks; rather it was *imported into philosophy* from an alien source, the Hebrew Scriptures” (*God and Necessity*, ix [emphasis added]).

¹⁷⁷ Bray, *Doctrine of God*, 30 and 32.

gospel in specific cultural terms and form, is beyond the immediate scope of this chapter.¹⁷⁸ Regardless, the point remains that Greek philosophical thought has been a significant influence upon classical theism. Even classical theists acknowledge this. This philosophical influence on the classical theistic account of the doctrine of the divine attributes likely steered classical theists away from trinitarian reflection on the divine attributes.

c) Lack of Trinitarian Reflection on the Divine Attributes

Another common characteristic found among classical theism is a neglect of trinitarian reflection with respect to the doctrine of the divine attributes. Often the triune reality of God is not even mentioned when classical theists describe exactly what classical Christian theism is. Consider again, for example, Geisler's lengthy description of classical theism:

Classical theism is characterized by its belief in a personal, infinite, eternal, immutable God who created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and who has supernaturally intervened in the world from time to time. God has absolute unity (oneness), simplicity (indivisibility), aseity (self-existence), pure actuality, and necessity (rather than contingency). God is both eternal (non-temporal) and infinite (without limits). God is also omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnipresent (everywhere present). God is also fully omniscient, knowing the future perfectly and infallibly, including what free creatures will do in the future.¹⁷⁹

There is no mention here of God being triune.¹⁸⁰ This is not unusual. Geisler and other classical theists certainly would confess that God is triune (though likely not in the context of the attributes of God). Hence, it would certainly not be fair to claim that the

¹⁷⁸ Theology is always influenced by philosophy and contemporary thought. Religious language is not pure language. Cf. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, 8.

¹⁷⁹ Geisler, *Creating God*, 25–6.

¹⁸⁰ One might think that a description of God as triune is missing because Geisler is discussing the broader tradition of classical theism, and not Christian classical theism specifically; however, this quotation occurs at the beginning of a chapter entitled “The Distinctives of Classical Christian Theism.”

classical doctrine of God as a whole is not trinitarian, for indeed it is within this same tradition that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was developed. Nevertheless, the pattern has been that classical theists have not adequately taken this confession into account when presenting the doctrine of God's attributes, which really is the heart of classical theism.¹⁸¹ That is, the persons of the Trinity, and their relation to the world as God for us (*pro nobis*), are not adequately taken into account when forming the doctrine of the divine attributes. The result is that the doctrine of God's attributes becomes a doctrine of the 'being of God' without respect for how this being acts in the manifestations of the divine persons, or what Wolfe Krötke refers to as the concretions (*Konkretionen*) of the divine reality.¹⁸² This lack of trinitarian reflection, of course, means that classical theism has also neglected to reflect on the attributes of God from a pneumatological perspective.

Within classical theism the doctrine of the divine attributes and the doctrine of the Trinity are essentially two separate doctrines. They certainly are both meant to describe the one God in whom Christians believe, but it generally appears as though the God described in discussions regarding the doctrine of the Trinity has little to do with the God discussed in the doctrine of the divine attributes (so to speak). That is, classical theism assumes that God is triune when the doctrine of the divine attributes is discussed, but it does not seem to make a significant difference for this doctrine.

Aquinas began the long history of separating the treatises 'On Triune God' and 'On One God.' His discussion of the doctrine of God in his *Summa Theologiae* begins

¹⁸¹ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 15–21 and 45–6.

¹⁸² Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 4, 6, 13 and 14. Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:308, who speaks of "the reciprocal self-distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit as the concrete form of trinitarian relations."

with a description of the attributes of God, or “what God is in himself,” which includes God as simple, perfect, good, infinite, omnipresent, and eternal.¹⁸³ He then discusses the attributes of God in his operations toward creatures, which includes God’s knowledge, will, love, and mercy (but in an impassible manner), justice, and power. Only after these presentations of the divine attributes does a mention of the doctrine of the Trinity come up. Separating the two doctrines Aquinas writes, “After discussing the unity of God’s nature it remains for us to discuss the trinity of persons in God.”¹⁸⁴ This separation of the discussions regarding the attributes of God and the doctrine of the Trinity, which includes Aquinas’s discussion of the divine persons, suggests that the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit tell us nothing of the mystery of God.¹⁸⁵

One reason for the split of the two treatises is epistemological. Aquinas saw the existence and attributes of God as falling within the category of natural theology; they were self-evident without recourse to a discussion of God’s revelation, that is, without recourse to revealed theology. In contrast, Aquinas held that the doctrine of the Trinity was something that could only be affirmed based upon faith and on account of God’s revelation. Consequently, Jansen notes, “In Thomas one arguably finds a two-stage process (first a philosophical treatment of God as a prelude to and in need of supplementation by the Christian understanding). For Thomas the two understandings of God have a somewhat loose relationship—they can be separated.”¹⁸⁶ And, in reality, it is not just that they *can be* separated, but that *they are separated* by classical theists.

¹⁸³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.12, preface.

¹⁸⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.27, preface.

¹⁸⁵ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 216.

¹⁸⁶ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 24. Cf. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 19.

Aquinas also had a metaphysical basis for his separation of the two treatises. When Aquinas discussed the attributes of God ‘in himself’ he did not mean ‘within the trinitarian relations of the divine persons.’ Rather, ‘in himself’ refers to God’s unique substance. This approach to the attributes of God illustrates yet another way in which classical theism is influenced by Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, particularly the philosophy of substance. A (primary) substance, for Aristotle, is that which distinguishes something from everything else, and that by which something is categorized into a species (e.g. cat) or genus (e.g. animal). So, for example, I am a substance which belongs to a species (human) and genus (animal). Further, my substance is that which may have accidents attributed to it (e.g. tall, male). Epistemologically, both Plato and Aristotle held that real knowledge pertains to that which is behind the accidents, namely, a substance. A substance is always defined by what it is in itself, as unique from all other things. Hence, when classical theologians approached the attributes of God they were largely concerned with what made God unique. Accordingly, on account of the above philosophical understanding of substance, the classical theistic tradition focused its discussion and began its discussion of the attributes of God by considering the substance of God, that is, what God was like ‘in himself.’¹⁸⁷ This manner of approaching the divine attributes cut off any consideration of God as immanently triune (i.e. the eternal relations of the divine persons to one another) and any consideration of God as triune in the economy of salvation (often referred to as the economic Trinity). This is so much so that Karl Rahner lamented, “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

¹⁸⁷ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 9–11.

unchanged.”¹⁸⁸ This is true with respect to classical theism’s doctrine of the divine attributes.

It is evident that Aquinas believed that all that he affirmed with respect to the divine attributes was true for each of the divine persons. For example, he states explicitly that each divine person is eternal.¹⁸⁹ However, when discussing the attributes, Aquinas does not discuss each divine person, but rather discusses ‘God’ in general. This is generally true of classical theism on the whole. Bray notes, “Where creedal theology is mainly concerned with the different persons of the Trinity, classical theism refers more to the nature and attributes of God that are common to all three divine persons.”¹⁹⁰ That is, classical theists affirm that the attributes are true of all three divine persons, but they do not affirm these attributes on the basis of an examination of the divine persons themselves. Since the trinitarian confession affirms that the divine persons are one substance (or being), classical theism is more concerned with the substance of God which is common to the divine persons. Consequently, classical theism neglects the triune reality of God.

On account of the lack of trinitarian reflection in classical theism, Moltmann feels justified to *contrast* classical theism with a trinitarian doctrine of God and Catherine Mowry LaCugna suggests that historically the Christian doctrine of God is in many respects secular.¹⁹¹ One symptom that the lack of a trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes has brought is the tendency to speak of God as a ‘person’ rather than

¹⁸⁸ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 10–11.

¹⁸⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.10, a.2.

¹⁹⁰ Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 106.

¹⁹¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249 and 252. LaCugna, *God For Us*, 3.

(more appropriately) as ‘personal’ or even ‘three persons,’ as the doctrine of the Trinity states.¹⁹² Walter Kasper refers to this idea of a unipersonal God as the “heresy of Christian theism.”¹⁹³ Such comments further point to the lack of trinitarian reflection within classical theism. As pneumatology is closely related to (if not an aspect of) trinitarian theology, the result, of course, is that this neglect hindered the development of a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God.¹⁹⁴

5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to define classical Christian theism, with an aim toward showing how classical theism emphasizes divine transcendence and neglects a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God. Classical theism refers to a common way that Christian theologians have traditionally described God. While there is certainly some diversity within classical theism, and even with respect to what exactly constitutes classical theism, all classical theists affirm that there is one God who is the creator of all things. At the heart of classical theism is a certain understanding of God’s attributes. We have seen that classical theists affirm that God is immutable, impassible, omnipotent, eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient. On the basis of classical theism’s depiction of God’s attributes, it became clear that classical theism emphasizes divine transcendence, that it draws from classical Greek philosophy, and that it lacks trinitarian reflection

¹⁹² For example, Carson refers to God as a ‘person’ (“The Love of God and the Transcendent Sovereignty of God,” 286). Bray speaks more appropriately of God as ‘personal’ (“Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 114).

¹⁹³ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 285, cf. 294–5.

¹⁹⁴ Among classical theists, Thomas Aquinas had minimal explicit reflection on the Holy Spirit at all in his *Summa Theologiae* (see Ia, q.36–8 and III, q.72).

(hence a neglect of a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes).

While there is nothing inherently wrong with some of these characteristics of classical theism, classical theism has in fact been criticized on account of them. Chapter three considers these criticisms.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO CLASSICAL THEISM

1. Introduction

The previous chapter noted that on account of neglecting trinitarian reflection in the doctrine of the divine attributes, classical theism has neglected a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. In connection with this, it also demonstrated that classical theism emphasizes divine transcendence and that it is influenced by classical Greek philosophy. These characteristics of classical theism have all led to critiques of classical theism. This chapter describes how contemporary process theologians, evangelical theologians, and trinitarian theologians raise critical responses to classical theism, and observes how a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes needs to be developed further.¹

2. Process Revisions of Classical Theism

a) What is Process Panentheism?

Process theologians primarily critique classical theism on account of the philosophical influences on classical theism, but also for its emphasis on divine

¹ Certainly there have been other responses to classical theism than those I discuss here. For example, pantheism and atheism could be viewed as responses to classical theism. However, they fall outside of the purview of this chapter because they are not markedly 'Christian' responses to classical theism (granted, some might not even consider process theology 'Christian').

transcendence. Process theologians do not, however, argue that all philosophical influence on the doctrine of the divine attributes is inappropriate. Rather, they suggest that there is a more appropriate philosophical basis on which a doctrine of God should be built.² This philosophical basis is process philosophy.

Process theologians are often labeled panentheists on account of their belief that all things are in God and God is in all things ('pan' stemming from the Greek word meaning 'all,' 'en' coming from the Greek word meaning 'in,' and 'theism' of course from 'theos' meaning 'God'). A common definition of panentheism states, "The Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe."³ It is more appropriate, however, to refer to process theology specifically as *process* panentheism (or dipolar panentheism), due to the fact that there are other forms of panentheism that are held by non-process theologians and that there are a variety of ways that theologians understand the idea of panentheism. The variety of ways that theologians understand panentheism is well illustrated throughout the recent volume *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. On account of this diversity, John Cooper correctly remarks that "theologians who endorse panentheism do not agree on what it is or should be."⁴ As a result, Cooper himself leaves the question open regarding

² Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 159.

³ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v., "Panentheism," 1213. Cooper affirms that this definition is "a commonly accepted generic definition" of panentheism (*Panentheism*, 27).

⁴ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 27.

whether revisions to classical theism, such as open theism, should be considered ‘panentheism’ or not.⁵

In the midst of the diverse understandings of panentheism, Niels Gregersen observes that there are “more or less shared” affirmations found in all versions of panentheism. Hence, following Gregersen, when I use the term panentheism throughout this book, I mean the notion that “there exists a real-two way interaction between God and the world, so that (1) the world is somehow ‘contained in God’ and (2) there will be some ‘return’ of the world into the life of God.” Gregerson adds, “the idea of bilateral relations between God and world may even be said to be distinctive for panentheism.”⁶ Based on this definition of panentheism, Gregerson outlines three varieties of panentheism. The first, soteriological or eschatological panentheism, proposes that the world is ‘in God’ only as a gift that comes through the redemptive grace of God. The presupposition is that everything does not automatically dwell ‘in God,’ for example, wickedness and sin. According to this view, “Only in the eschatological consummation of creation shall God finally be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28).”⁷ The second type of panentheism, revelational or expressivist panentheism, views God as expressing himself throughout the world and thereby experiencing and being enriched by world history through this expression. While attempting to overcome an anthropocentric view of God, this second type of panentheism differs from the first in that here the world affects God, whereas soteriological panentheists generally emphasize the divine presence in creation to

⁵ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 343–5.

⁶ Gregerson, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 20.

⁷ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 21. Clayton refers to this view as “eschatological panentheism” (“Panentheism Today,” 250).

transform and (for Kallistos Ware and Gregory of Palamas) to divinize the world.⁸ The third type of panentheism is, of course, process or dipolar pantheism. Gregersen writes, “Here God is assumed to be in some aspects timeless, beyond space and self-identical, while in other aspects temporal, spatial, and affected by the world.”⁹ While the first two types of panentheism do not necessarily conflict with classical theism, process panentheism has the critique of classical theism at its very heart.

Process panentheism, and process theology in general, is based on process philosophy, which refers to a school of thought based on the writings of Alfred North Whitehead, who wrote in the 1920’s and 1930’s. At the foundation of his writings is the idea that reality is a process, everything is in flux, and everything changes. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus proposed, you cannot step into the same river twice.¹⁰ Whereas most of western philosophical thought begins with the presupposition that the basic ontological categories are ‘being,’ ‘substance,’ or ‘essence’ (things which do not change), Whitehead proposed an ontology of relation, where the basic ontological category is relation. All reality is, for Whitehead, in process as these relations change. As an expression of this, Whitehead views the basic units of reality not as things or bits of matter, but rather as moments of experience, or ‘occasions.’¹¹ Along with this emphasis on the relations between things comes the process conclusion that interdependence is an ontological given, which nothing, including God, can escape.¹²

⁸ Ware, “God Immanent yet Transcendent,” 167.

⁹ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 21.

¹⁰ Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* 14.

¹¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27.

¹² Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 21.

b) God in Process Theology

The previous statement signals that process theologians privilege the immanence of God over divine transcendence. And yet, process panentheism differs from pantheism in that it maintains God's individuality. Mellert explains that God is thought of as "more than the structure and totality of the cosmos and that he is in one sense distinct from it."¹³ On the other hand, process panentheism differs from classical theism in that God is part of the process of change that occurs in all of reality. As Whitehead states, "God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification. . . . He is not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation."¹⁴

Process theology's view of God's relation to the physical world also exhibits an immanent view of God. In contrast to classical theism, for which God is in no way a physical being (with the qualified exception of Jesus Christ), Charles Hartshorne proposes that God is "both physical and spiritual and the divine body . . . is all-surpassing and all-inclusive of the creaturely bodies, which are to God as cells to a supercellular organism."¹⁵ Here Hartshorne depicts God as the divine soul of the cosmic body. As a result, some critics of process theism describe this theology as presenting God as "radically immanent."¹⁶

Process theology does still present God as transcendent over the world. However, the difference between God and the world is presented as a difference of degree, more so

¹³ Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* 61.

¹⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 521.

¹⁵ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 44.

¹⁶ Johnson and Huffman, "Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?" 23.

than kind.¹⁷ For example, God is temporal like humans are, but he is transcendent in his temporality in that he is everlasting. Further, Schubert Ogden describes God as “the eminently relative one;” suggesting that God is relational above and beyond any way that any creature could be.¹⁸ David Pailin explains that, overall, according to process theology, “Divine transcendence means that God is unsurpassable by any other. No-one can ever be more loving, more aware and more appreciative than God.”¹⁹ In addition, Hartshorne speaks of God’s “dual transcendence” meaning that “God contrasts with creatures, not as infinite with finite, but as *infinite-and-finite* (both in uniquely excellent ways, beyond all possible rivalry or relevant criticism) contrasts with the merely fragmentary and only surpassably excellent creatures.”²⁰

For the purposes at hand, the process doctrine of God is probably best (and perhaps most easily) understood when contrasted with classical theism. Hartshorne’s description of the supposed “theological mistakes” of classical theism provides a helpful summary. These ‘mistakes’ are that God is absolutely immutable, impassible, omnipotent and omniscient.²¹

i) Immutability

While classical theism affirms that God is immutable, process theology explicitly denies this claim. Process theists charge that classical theism’s account of divine immutability rests on the illogical idea of absolute perfection. That is, one of the primary

¹⁷ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 88.

¹⁸ Ogden, *The Reality of God*, 64.

¹⁹ Pailin, “Panentheism,” 111.

²⁰ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 44 (original emphasis).

²¹ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 2–4.

arguments Aquinas makes, and classical theists following him, is that God cannot change because any change from perfection is necessarily for the worse. Hartshorne argues that this idea of absolute perfection implies the idea of something that has been made complete (this idea itself, Hartshorne argues, is not possible to conceive). However, since God is said to be the maker of all, then this idea of perfection can not apply to God.²²

Process theologians respond to classical theism by proposing that God is relatively perfect.²³ That is, in relation to all other things, God is the most perfect being and is worshiped as “forever superior to any other being.”²⁴ This idea of relative perfection allows for the possibility of a positive kind of change for God—that God can grow in ways that are beneficial for God and even for the world.²⁵ As H. P. Owen expresses it, process “thinkers see in him (or at least an aspect of him) the supreme exemplification of the capacity for growth that characterizes creatures.”²⁶ In fact, if God lacked this ability for growth and relativity, God would lack “genuine perfection.”²⁷ For example, Hartshorne argues that God must be able to grow in divine enjoyment. If God were to experience new forms of aesthetic beauty in the world, God’s enjoyment must increase. To lack this ability, Hartshorne argues, would make God defective, for this

²² Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 2 and 6. As an analogy, Hartshorne asks “Consider the phrase ‘greatest possible number.’ It, too, can be smoothly uttered, but does it say anything?” (7).

²³ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 177.

²⁴ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 9.

²⁵ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 6 and 31.

²⁶ Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 75.

²⁷ Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 178. Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47.

would then mean that there is a way in which humanity, with their increasing aesthetic sense, would surpass God.²⁸

Discussions of divine mutability within process theology most frequently occur in the context of a discussion regarding the two natures of God (hence the other label for this form of theism as ‘dipolar theism’). As David Tracy understands the natures, one describes the absolute existence of God, whereas the other describes God’s relative actuality as in relation to others. Humans too are dipolar, but not absolute in any way.²⁹

There are two main ways of explaining the divine ‘natures’ among process theists: one following Hartshorne, the other following Whitehead. Hartshorne speaks of God’s abstract essence and God’s concrete actuality, while Whitehead speaks of the primordial and consequent natures of God. God’s abstract nature (Hartshorne) refers to the way in which God has absolute existence and is eternal (in the sense of existing forever), independent, and even unchangeable. John Cobb and David Griffin explain the abstract nature as including “those abstract attributes of deity which characterize the divine existence at every moment,” for example, omniscience.³⁰ Whitehead’s understanding of the primordial nature differs slightly from Hartshorne’s concept of the abstract nature. Although Whitehead refers to the primordial nature of God as “God in abstraction, *alone with himself*” and that in this nature God is “free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious,” Whitehead does not mean to suggest that this is an aspect of

²⁸ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 10.

²⁹ Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 179.

³⁰ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47 and Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 46.

God that exists (or even could exist) apart from creation.³¹ Rather, “God’s ‘primordial nature’ is abstracted from his commerce with ‘particulars.’”³² The primordial nature of God is the side of God that entertains all ideas and provides the initial aims to all of creation (that is, the divine persuasive influence toward certain goals). One might say that the primordial nature is the ground of the actuality of God. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, who develops her theology on Whitehead’s philosophy, writes, “God’s primordial nature is the vision of all possibilities whatsoever, harmonized in the very process of being known.”³³

Turning to the other nature of God, the concepts of the concrete actuality (Hartshorne) and the consequent nature (Whitehead) of God convey the same idea. Hartshorne understands the concrete nature or actuality of God as the sense in which God is temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing, as relating with the world.³⁴ Whitehead also expresses God’s experience of the world in the idea of the consequent nature of God. Whitehead writes that the consequent nature “originates with physical experience derived from the temporal world, and then acquires integration with the primordial side. It is determined, incomplete, consequent, ‘everlasting,’ fully actual, and conscious.”³⁵ In his consequent nature, Whitehead would say, God constantly prehends all occasions. That is, God experiences all that happens in the relations of the world as they happen.

³¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 50 and 524 (emphasis added).

³² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 50. Cf. Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* 45 and 46.

³³ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 73. Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 59 and 62.

³⁴ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 46 and Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47–8.

³⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 524.

To provide some final clarity regarding the distinction between the primordial and the consequent natures, Donald Sherburne explains, “In his primordial nature God prehends the infinite realm of possibilities; in his consequent nature he prehends the actualities of the world.”³⁶ This may be illustrated by considering divine knowledge. In God’s abstract nature, God is omniscient, knowing everything knowable at all times. By contrast, in God’s concrete actuality, God’s ‘concrete’ knowledge depends on decisions that are made by creatures.³⁷

So how does the process articulation of the dipolar nature of God present God as mutable? One finds in it, particularly the consequent nature of God, a picture of a God who relates with the world and is *changed by* the world, as God prehends the changes in the world.

ii) Impassibility

The concept of God’s consequent nature also clearly illustrates how process theism differs with classical theism with respect to the issue of divine impassibility. While classical theists reject that God can feel (especially suffer) because these (changing) feelings would introduce changes in God, Whitehead famously spoke of God as “the great companion—the fellow sufferer who understands.”³⁸ In fact, process theologians argue that God feels *everything*. As Suchocki explains, in God’s consequent nature, “Every actuality that comes into existence is felt in its entirety, as it felt itself, by

³⁶ Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead’s ‘Process and Reality’*, 227. Mellert senses here an expression of the transcendence (primordial nature) and the immanence (consequent nature) of God (*What is Process Theology?* 48).

³⁷ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47.

³⁸ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 532.

God.”³⁹ According to classical theism, God appears to be compassionate from our experience of God, but God does not actually experience a feeling of compassion or sympathy. Cobb and Griffin claim that this classical theistic proposal regarding divine compassion means that the divine love is entirely creative. On account of this, they argue, God must love some creatures more than others, since he does not act in the same manner toward all creatures.⁴⁰ Hence, where classical theists have repeatedly⁴¹ rejected that God can feel in any way and perceive the idea of God feeling as a hypothetical weakness for God, process theologians maintain that God loves with divine sympathy for all things and view this as a positive aspect of God’s nature.

iii) Omnipotence

If immutability is not the main difference between classical theism and process pantheism, then one certainly finds it in their respective views on divine omnipotence. For Hartshorne, it seems the doctrine of divine omnipotence is the most significant theological mistake of classical theism. It has, in Hartshorne’s opinion, presented God in the image of a tyrant.⁴²

As with the process critique of impassibility, part of what is at stake here is an affirmation of God’s love. Cobb and Griffin note that psychologists affirm that if someone truly loves another person, they will not control them.⁴³ Hartshorne adds, “Wise parents do not try to determine everything, even for the infant, must [*sic*] less for the half-

³⁹ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 73. Hence, Pailin describes God according to process theology as “eminently passive” (“Pantheism,” 111–12).

⁴⁰ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 45–6.

⁴¹ As seen in chapter two, there is some diversity within classical theism on this point.

⁴² Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 11.

⁴³ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 53.

matured or fully matured offspring.”⁴⁴ This would, of course, be an issue particularly for select classical theists of the Reformed kind. They would respond and say that God does not control people in the sense of forcing people to do things; “It is determined exactly what the creature will do, but determined that he or she will do it freely.”⁴⁵ To this, Hartshorne responds saying that here ‘freely’ means nothing more than “liking it,” which would not (in his opinion) be a truly voluntary act.⁴⁶

Further, still related to the love of God, the issue of theodicy causes process theologians to reject the whole of the classical theistic tradition on divine omnipotence. The problem of evil is based on an apparent contradiction between divine omnipotence (a God who is able to stop all evil) and divine love (a God who would will to stop evil). In an attempt to overcome the problem of evil, process theology denies that God is omnipotent, therefore, process theologians argue, evil does not contradict God’s benevolence.⁴⁷

For process theology, the processes of the world are part of God’s being, indeed, even intrinsic to it. God is not an omnipotent, all-powerful being that stands in opposition to another reality (known as the creation), but rather, God is part of the same reality as the rest of existence. In fact, Cobb and Griffin emphasize, “God is not another agent alongside creatures. God only acts in them and through them.”⁴⁸ Moreover, God is subject to the metaphysical principles that govern creatures, and the whole world. This

⁴⁴ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 12.

⁴⁵ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 12.

⁴⁶ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 17.

⁴⁷ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 53. Compare, Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*, 251–310.

⁴⁸ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 157.

suggests that the rest of existence sets limits on God. By contrast, in classical theology, the understanding that God created the world out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) carries with it an implication that God, having created it, has the power to transform and mold the world in any way that is possible. Since process theologians deny the classical doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*,⁴⁹ it follows that God is not omnipotent; God does not have the ability to mold creation in any way that God wishes, for example, through miracles.⁵⁰

This does not mean that process theologians deny that God is very powerful. In fact, they readily affirm that God is the most powerful of all beings.⁵¹ It is just that God does not exercise his power in a way that is coercive, controlling, and overpowering, and that God, in fact, is *not even able* to do so. God acts only by divine persuasion through other creatures. God does not control every detail, but he does affect every detail. As persuading, God provides the initial aim for every occasion (each happening in the world), but creatures are always free to reject it; the creature provides the subjective aim for the occasion. Based upon this process understanding of divine power, Suchocki concludes that “what is actually seen as we observe the world is not the initial aim of God, but what has been done with that aim in the world’s own dealings with it.”⁵² From

⁴⁹ Ogden, *The Reality of God*, 62–3 and 213–14 and Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 65.

⁵⁰ Geivett also notes this connection between the rejection of *creatio ex nihilo* and the rejection of omnipotence (“How Do We Reconcile the Existence of God and Suffering?” 176). With respect to miracles, Cobb does believe that God can speed up the healing process, but he suggests that God is attempting to (by persuasion) heal every person. In his own words, “God does not choose to heal one and leave another to suffer” (*Process Perspective*, 17).

⁵¹ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 118. Also, Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 10 and 26. While Hartshorne does affirm that “God has the highest conceivable form or power and that this power extends to all things” he does explicitly state his preference that “the word [omnipotent] itself had better be dropped” because of how it has generally been defined (26).

⁵² Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 50. Similarly, Hartshorne writes, “The only livable doctrine of divine power is that it influences all that happens but determines nothing in its concrete particularity” (*Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 25).

this perspective Mellert (certainly with overemphasis) says that God “is powerless before the freedom of each individual moment.”⁵³ In process theology divine creative activity *must* be responsive to the world. Such expressions of divine power stand in stark contrast to classical theism, and especially forms of classical theism that present God’s unilateral power as the cause of all things.

iv) Eternity and Omniscience

While the above attributes are most pertinent for the thesis of this book, one can further understand process theology in its critique of classical theism with respect to what it means for God to be omniscient and eternal. In contrast to classical theism, where God is eternal in the sense of being outside of time or timeless, according to process theism, God is everlasting, or, one might say, temporal.⁵⁴ As was seen above, according to process theology, God is subject to the same metaphysical principles as the rest of creation, including the passing of time. However, as with the rest of the attributes of God, Hartshorne comments, “God is similarly both eternal and temporal in all-surpassing way; God alone has an *eternal individuality*, meaning unborn and undying, and God alone has enjoyed the entire past and will enjoy all the future.”⁵⁵ This affirmation of divine temporality allows process panentheists to affirm that God is mutable. That is, in order for God to experience change, God must be able to move (temporally) from one state to another state. This understanding of divine everlastingness and divine mutability also affects how process theologians understand divine omniscience.

⁵³ Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* 47.

⁵⁴ Cobb and Griffin prefer not to say that God is ‘temporal’ because they equate this with “perpetual perishing” (*Process Theology*, 122).

⁵⁵ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 44 (original emphasis).

Certainly, for classical theism, if God cannot change, then God's knowledge cannot change either. By contrast, along with process theology's affirmation that God is mutable, God's knowledge changes as well. Suchocki realizes that the doctrine of omniscience provides security and comfort in the face of the "ambiguity and terror of time."⁵⁶ She responds to this human anxiety of not knowing the future by emphasizing divine wisdom to respond to any future situation. This is her answer to the "terror of time," rather than divine knowledge of the future, which she believes is essentially a denial of time. Nevertheless, process theologians do affirm that God is omniscient;⁵⁷ God does still know all that can be known. God knows all of the past and present, but God knows the future as it is (from our perspective), namely, as possibilities and as partially indefinite.⁵⁸ Hence, in contrast to classical theism, according to process theologians, God's knowledge grows.

c) An Appraisal of Process Critiques

At the heart of process theology's critique of classical theism is their rejection of classical Greek philosophy which serves as one of the bases for classical theism. Instead, process theologians rely on the modern (some might say post-modern) process philosophy of Whitehead and Hartshorne, with their dipolar understanding of God. As it has become clear, they critique classical theism for an overemphasis on (in fact, even an incorrect understanding of) divine transcendence. In contrast to classical theism, process theologians argue that God is immanent in the sense that God is mutable, passible,

⁵⁶ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 70.

⁵⁷ Hartshorne denies God is omnipotent, but says that "the word 'omniscient' seems somewhat less badly tarnished by its historical usage than 'omnipotent'" (*Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 26).

⁵⁸ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 27.

powerful but not omnipotent, temporal, and growing in knowledge. Process theologians do not make this critique from a trinitarian (and in particular, a pneumatological) standpoint. In this respect, process theism is similar to classical theism. This is understandable given that, as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen observes, the topic of the Trinity “has not been studied in an intensive and systematic way among process theologians.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, when trinitarian reflections do occur, process theologians generally reject the doctrine of the Trinity as it is understood historically as an affirmation of one God as three persons.

Joseph Bracken is one trinitarian theologian who is significantly influenced by process thought and who attempts to merge orthodox trinitarian doctrine with process categories. He affirms an ontology of process and relativity over that of substance.⁶⁰ Summarizing Whitehead and using characteristically process vocabulary, he affirms that the world “is never the same from moment to moment. Our senses, to be sure, give us the picture of the world as an unchanging material reality. But this is illusory; all that really endures are the orderly patterns created by successive generations of momentary occasions.”⁶¹ Speaking of the Trinity, or “the divine community,”⁶² Bracken views the divine persons as having distinct consciousness though sharing a single will, purpose and agency. While relating the trinitarian doctrine with process thought, he views the Father as associated with the primordial nature, the Son as associated with the consequent nature, and the Spirit in association with the superjective nature of God (though he also

⁵⁹ Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 157.

⁶⁰ Bracken, *Triune Symbol*, 5.

⁶¹ Bracken, *Society and Spirit*, 135.

⁶² Bracken, *Triune Symbol*, 16 and throughout.

affirms that all three share in the primordial and consequent natures).⁶³ Whitehead defines this last ‘nature’ of God (the superjective) as “the character of the pragmatic value of his specific satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity in the various temporal instances,” or, in other words, the means by which God integrates the feelings of his primordial nature with his consequent nature.⁶⁴ Beyond identifying the divine persons with process understandings of God’s natures, Bracken affirms that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God by finding the unity of the divine persons in the interpersonal process of self-giving love that is their life in community.⁶⁵ With these trinitarian affirmations, however, Bracken himself recognizes that he has made a significant shift from the process thought of Whitehead; “I conceive God to be, not a single non-temporal actual entity, but rather a structured society of three subsocieties.”⁶⁶ Another sign of Bracken’s shift from traditional process thought comes with his acceptance of the doctrine of creation out of nothing.⁶⁷

Roger Olson and Christopher Hall note that in contrast to Bracken, “Many process theologians never developed a doctrine of the Trinity and seemed to care little

⁶³ Bracken, *Triune Symbol*, 44 and 86–8. In contrast, Reynolds identifies the Spirit with the consequent nature of God (*Toward a Process Pneumatology*, 149). Reynolds further distances himself from Bracken as he asserts “there is no need to posit separate persons in God” (153).

⁶⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 135. This is not a recurrent concept in Whitehead’s writings. Reynolds maintains that Whitehead “made only one reference to the superjective nature” (*Toward a Process Pneumatology*, 152).

⁶⁵ Bracken, “Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology,” 219–26.

⁶⁶ Bracken, *Triune Symbol*, 44.

⁶⁷ Bracken, “Creatio ex nihilo,” 246–9. One can see the implication of this in Bracken’s doctrine of the Trinity in that he views the Father, who is associated with the primordial nature of God, as the ground of all creativity, rather than, as Whitehead would suppose, viewing God as being dependent upon the principle of creativity.

about that project.”⁶⁸ Not only this, but, as noted above, many object to the doctrine as it has been traditionally understood. A significant reason for (or perhaps side effect of) their rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity is a process understanding of the incarnation. Process theologians do not see Jesus Christ as fully God.⁶⁹ Rather, they view the incarnation as something that occurs in various degrees throughout the world and in every experience. This is often referred to as degree Christology. Here, ‘incarnation’ essentially means divine influence in the world.⁷⁰ God is incarnated wherever actualities in the world, including humans, respond to the persuasion, or initial aims, of the primordial nature of God. Jesus Christ is a special incarnation of God in that in him, Suchocki explains, God’s “presence [is] *exemplified* supremely.”⁷¹ This is because he responds to the initial aims of God. Of course, with this rejection of classical Christology, loss of the distinction between the three divine persons follows closely behind, and with it the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Nevertheless, one might suppose that more traditional process theologians would follow a route similar to that taken by Bracken and argue that each of the divine persons should be identified with one of the natures of God, namely, the primordial nature, the consequent nature, and the superjective nature. Indeed, the very word ‘nature’ has a trinitarian ring to it. However, Whitehead meant nothing of the sort. Process theologians do not affirm that the natures of God refer to entities in God or even separate aspects;

⁶⁸ Olson and Hall, *The Trinity*, 102.

⁶⁹ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 106.

⁷⁰ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 23.

⁷¹ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 213 (emphasis added).

rather, they simply refer to how God relates to the rest of reality.⁷² Furthermore, the primordial and consequent natures are the primary natures of God, for Whitehead. The superjective nature is not a third nature that is brought alongside these two. Rather, as Mellert explains, the superjective nature is

an aspect of the consequent nature. That is, when considered in its fullest sense, the consequent nature not only gathers into itself all actual occasions that have emerged and perished, but it also makes those occasions available once more to the world in God's own loving way.⁷³

This superjective 'nature' is the means by which God provides the initial aims in the world.⁷⁴ In contrast to the possible expectation of finding a 'Trinity' in the 'natures' of God as they are understood by Whitehead, Cobb and Griffin suggest that it is a distortion to impose the concept of the Trinity onto process categories. Rather, they argue that "the main distinction to be made is that between the creative and responsive sides of the divine love."⁷⁵

At times process theologians continue to use trinitarian language, but the classical understanding of the doctrine is nonetheless still rejected. Even Cobb and Griffin are willing to speak of the consequent nature of God as the Holy Spirit. But they are quick to deny that they mean this in the traditional trinitarian sense.⁷⁶ On the surface, Suchocki might appear to be less critical of the doctrine of the Trinity. However, she too rejects the application of trinitarian language to the primordial, consequent, and superjective natures

⁷² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 134–5.

⁷³ Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* 49.

⁷⁴ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 215.

⁷⁵ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 110. Elsewhere Cobb writes, "I believe that this binitarian doctrine is more important than Trinitarian doctrine. Nevertheless, it does not exclude a trinity" ("The Relativization of the Trinity," 12).

⁷⁶ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 109.

of God.⁷⁷ Sounding very orthodox she claims, “the actions of God for us indicate the very internal nature of God. What God is for us, God is in the depths of the divine being.”⁷⁸ However, she continues by saying that “we push the word [‘trinity’] far beyond its traditional meaning of threeness.”⁷⁹ For Suchocki, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are only symbols that point to the complexity of God, *a complexity beyond numbers*, but not to the three notions of God’s natures expressed in process theology (namely, the primordial, consequent, and superjective natures). She writes, “If trinity can be expanded beyond its traditional use to indicate this mighty complexity in unity, then it retains a symbolic appropriateness in its designation of the inner nature of God.”⁸⁰ This differs significantly from the traditional understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, in which it is understood that even the very being of God is structured in a threefold way. In other words, process theologians who discuss the doctrine of the Trinity generally do so in somewhat of a modalistic fashion.⁸¹ Ted Peters has accurately observed, “process theologians, for the most part, find they can no longer embrace the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. If they

⁷⁷ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 215.

⁷⁸ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 213. It sounds orthodox because it sounds like she is affirming a correspondence between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.

⁷⁹ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 215.

⁸⁰ Suchocki, *God-Christ-Church*, 229. Cf. Suchocki, “Spirit in and through the World,” 189.

⁸¹ Similarly, regarding the process theology found in Pittenger’s *The Divine Triunity*, Olson and Hall conclude that “the best Pittenger can provide is a modalistic interpretation of the Trinity that falls far short of three distinct subsistences (persons) in God” (Olson and Hall, *The Trinity*, 147, cf. 103). Peters makes modalistic observations of process theologians Schubert Ogden and Lewis Ford (Peters, *God as Trinity*, 219, fn. 78). Further, despite O’Donnell’s mistakenly favorable evaluation of Ogden’s attempts at trinitarian theology (especially in light of Ogden’s existentialist Christology, which essentially takes a form of degree Christology), O’Donnell still concludes that “given the basic philosophical convictions of process philosophy, it is difficult for a process theologian to adopt any other model for trinitarian thinking than the modalistic one” (*Trinity and Temporality*, 195).

keep a version of the Trinity, it is so transformed that it is scarcely recognizable.”⁸² Given this fact, it is not surprising (it should not even be expected) that process theologians have failed to develop a pneumatological approach to the attributes of God.

3. Evangelical Revisions of Classical Theism

a) Open Theism and Other Evangelical Critiques

More conservative theologians have also provided critiques of classical theism. Specifically, I have in mind evangelical critiques of classical theism. Timothy Larsen describes Evangelicals as Protestant Christians who stand in the tradition arising from the “eighteenth-century revival movements associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield” and who continue to emphasize orthodox theology, conversion, biblicism, the salvation that comes through the cross of Christ, as well as living a life in obedience to God, including a duty to proclaim the gospel to all people.⁸³ Furthermore, in referring to Evangelicals, I have in mind theologians (primarily North American) who would label themselves (or have been identified by others) as somewhere on the spectrum between conservative or postfundamentalist Evangelicalism (or neo-Evangelicalism) and postconservative Evangelicalism. This includes figures from Millard Erickson and Wayne Grudem to Clark Pinnock and Stanley Grenz. Although it is possible to define ‘evangelical’ theology more widely to include authors such as Thomas F. Torrance, Helmut Thielicke, and Colin Gunton, the above understanding of ‘Evangelicals’ is the working definition of ‘Evangelicals’ employed by the authors that I discuss below. The

⁸² Peters, *God as Trinity*, 33. Similarly, Lindsey writes, “It takes quite a bit of imagination to speak of a divine Trinity in process theology” (“An Evangelical Overview of Process Theology,” 22).

⁸³ Larsen, “Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,” 1.

same understanding of ‘evangelicalism’ is found throughout many works on ‘evangelicalism.’ For example, in Olson’s *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology*, Olson outlines seven possible definitions for the term ‘evangelical’ and, in the end, also follows the characterization I am using here.⁸⁴ In discussions of the doctrine of God in particular, this understanding of ‘evangelical’ is also implicit throughout Kevin Vanhoozer’s essay that evaluates evangelical doctrines of God and in the two chapters on evangelical theology in Kärkkäinen’s *The Doctrine of God*, in which Kärkkäinen focuses on open theism and the theology of Erickson and Carl Henry.⁸⁵ Thus, when I refer to ‘Evangelicals,’ it primarily indicates the subgroup of conservative North American Evangelicals within broader Evangelicalism that includes a diverse group of theologians who share a commitment to the movements broader defining characteristics (e.g. orthodox theology, conversion, biblicism, the salvation that comes through the cross of Christ, as well as living a life in obedience to God, including a duty to proclaim the gospel to all people).

Like process theologians, those contemporary evangelical theologians who do not follow classical theism generally critique classical theism claiming that it has been too dependent on classical Greek philosophy. However, unlike process theologians, who are primarily concerned with correcting this apparent ill of classical theism by offering an alternative philosophy, most Evangelicals who critique classical theism are primarily concerned with presenting a doctrine of God which, they believe, would be more

⁸⁴ Olson, *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology*, 3–6. Cf. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, 7–31. The same definition is presented and followed throughout Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*. Dorrien chooses to refer to Torrance and Thielicke as “neoorthodox theologians” (p. 151).

⁸⁵ Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 17–34 and Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 186–98.

consistent with the biblical witness.⁸⁶ Hence, their focus is on how the attributes of God should be understood in light of the biblical text.

If any North American evangelical conversation in recent times has brought out the concern of being biblical, it is that of open theism. Pinnock suggests that open theists want to overcome “a pagan inheritance” (from Greek philosophy) found in the doctrine of the divine attributes.⁸⁷ As with process theologians, open theists emphasize that God is dynamically related to the world in a way that our relationships with him make a difference for both humanity and God. Also referred to as free-will theism and neotheism,⁸⁸ open theism is a contemporary exposition of the doctrine of God that is presented mainly by North American Evangelicals of the Arminian persuasion. Some of the main proponents of open theism include Pinnock, John Sanders, Richard Rice, William Hasker, and Gregory Boyd. Open theists (sometimes other evangelical theologians as well) generally regard themselves as finding the middle ground between process theology and classical theism.⁸⁹ These theologians challenge the way that classical theism describes many attributes of God. They do affirm, with classical theism, that God is infinite, necessary, uncaused, and both omnipotent and omniscient. However, like process theists, open theists challenge the notion that God is immutable, impassible,

⁸⁶ Process theologians at times do claim that they are more biblical than classical theism, but this is not a significant concern in most cases. For example, Hartshorne claims, “The new theism can come closer to biblical ideas than was possible in the Dark or Middle Ages” (*Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 43). Compare Cobb, *The Process Perspective*, 68–70. Overall, however, process theology takes one type of contemporary thought as normative, that is, process philosophy.

⁸⁷ Chapter 2, “Overcoming a Pagan Inheritance,” in Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 65ff.

⁸⁸ As found, for example, in the subtitles of Pinnock and Cobb, *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* and Geisler and House, *The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism*.

⁸⁹ Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will*, 33 and Pinnock, “Between Classical and Process Theism,” 309–27.

and timelessly eternal, and that God controls everything and knows the future exhaustively. Nevertheless, in contrast to process theism's view of God as part of the same process as the whole of the universe, open theists affirm the Creator/creation distinction (with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*—creation out of nothing) and, with it, God's ontological otherness in relation to creation.⁹⁰ Open theists also affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, as historically understood. Further, they emphasize God's self-limitation (or kenosis) in relation to the world, whereas process theologians argue that God is necessarily limited in the way that he relates to the world.⁹¹ That is, open theists argue that God's relationship with creation could have been otherwise, but that God chose to create the world in such a way that he would place limitations as to how he would be able to interact with the world. For example, they suggest that God hypothetically could have created the world so that he experienced it in a timeless manner, but that God did not do that, therefore, God experiences the world (by divine kenosis) temporally.⁹² As Rice summarizes open theism, by his own choice "*God enters* into relationships and genuinely interacts with human beings. He affects them, and they, in turn, have an effect on him."⁹³

⁹⁰ For an open theist's delineation of the similarities and differences between open theism and process theology see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 140–50.

⁹¹ On the kenosis of God see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 5 and 12. Sanders prefers the concept of divine "self-restraint" rather than "self-limitation" because the former concept portrays God as keeping himself from acting in certain ways at particular times, whereas "self-limitation" seems to connote an unending restraint of God (*The God Who Risks*, 227). However, it appears that this is exactly what Pinnock wants to portray when he writes, "God is not free to just 'delimit' himself at any time" (*Most Moved Mover*, 136).

⁹² Erickson (not an open theist) writes, "The issue is not the doctrine of God but the doctrine of creation, of the type of world God has created" (*What Does God Know?* 13).

⁹³ Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," 22 (emphasis added).

Of course, open theists are not the only Evangelicals who propose revisions to classical theism.⁹⁴ As in other areas of evangelical theology, there is much diversity within evangelical understandings of the doctrine of the divine attributes. In fact, every doctrine that the open theists wish to revise has received similar treatment by other evangelical theologians. Kevin Vanhoozer suggests that “most evangelical theologians embrace some form of classical theism.”⁹⁵ This may be true only if we emphasize the *some form*. In this respect, Pinnock goes so far as to claim that, “practically all evangelicals who work on the doctrine of God today (except maybe [Norman] Geisler) are suggesting revisions to classical theism just as open theists are.”⁹⁶ Even the critics of open theism critique classical theism in some of the same areas. Bruce Ware (an outspoken critic of open theism), for example, does not accept the classical view of immutability, impassibility, or the eternal nature of God.⁹⁷

As above with process theology, one can best understand evangelical critiques of classical theism through an examination of how Evangelicals have attempted to revise the doctrine of the attributes of God. Hence, I will proceed by presenting a revised version of

⁹⁴ Like open theists, Feinberg notes that he is attempting “to mediate between classical and process views” (*No One Like Him*, 73). For others noting evangelical revisions to classical theism see Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 88 and 154–5; Sanders, “Historical Considerations,” 91–8; Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 161–4; and Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 74–9.

⁹⁵ Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 19. Also, Olson, *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology*, 189.

⁹⁶ Pinnock, “There is Room for Us,” 213.

⁹⁷ Ware, “A Modified Calvinist Doctrine of God,” 76–120 and Ware, “An Evangelical Reformulation,” 431–46. Ware critiques open theism particularly in *God’s Lesser Glory*.

the attributes of God as understood by open theists as well as members of the wider evangelical community.⁹⁸

b) Key Attributes in Evangelical Revisions of Classical Theism

i) Immutability

A rejection of divine immutability is at the heart of the dispute over open theism. Most notably, open theists reject that God's knowledge is immutable. This is what makes open theists unique among evangelical theologians (so unique, in fact, that some Evangelicals consider open theism heresy).⁹⁹ Open theists do not reject the doctrine of divine omniscience; indeed, they do affirm that God knows all that can be known (logically or ontologically), in a manner similar to how classical theists affirm that God's omnipotence only means that God can do only that which is logically possible (for example, he cannot create a rock that is too heavy for him to lift). In fact, open theists readily affirm that God knows everything about the past and the present, and much (all that can be known) about the future.¹⁰⁰ The difference is that God's knowledge about the future is not exhaustive, according to this view. Again, they do assert that God knows much about the future. For example, God knows all that he has determined about the future (e.g. God's ultimate victory over Satan and evil) and all things that could possibly happen in the future. Boyd observes that the Scripture "reassures believers that however

⁹⁸ While also drawing on the work of other open theists, I will draw extensively from Pinnock's *Most Moved Mover*, since this is (to date) the most systematic and complete expression of open theism. By contrast, Boyd's *God of the Possible* focuses primarily on the issue of divine foreknowledge and the primary concern of Sanders' *The God Who Risks* is the issue of divine sovereignty and providence.

⁹⁹ House presupposes open theism's supposed heretical nature in the title of his *Charts on Open Theism and Orthodoxy*. Compare the comments by Geisler and House, *The Battle for God*, 302–303 and 311. Regarding the polemical language used in criticism of open theism see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 15–16.

¹⁰⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 99–102.

out of control the world may seem, the Lord is steering history toward his desired end. His overall purposes for creation cannot fail, and his eternal purpose for our lives is secure.” This, Boyd continues, “entails that much of the future is settled ahead of time and is therefore known by God as such.”¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, according to open theists, some things remain that God does not know about the future. In the Bible, God is said to regret things, to be surprised by things, and he tests people to see what they will do.¹⁰² Open theists point to texts like Jeremiah 3:6–7, in which the prophet gives an account of God saying, “I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not.” Such texts suggest, they propose, that God does not know everything about the future.

The open theist understanding of divine omniscience, as noted, has been the most controversial aspect of open theism. Much of the evangelical scholarly community rejects it, and, in a few cases, some evangelical denominations officially reject it. Nevertheless, the non-exhaustive view of divine omniscience is not completely unique to open theism. F. LeRon Shults, for example, also rejects exhaustive divine foreknowledge, though for different reasons. He argues that the word translated ‘foreknowledge’ (*prognosis*) in the Bible does not refer to “divine knowledge of future contingent propositions.” Rather, he argues, it is a relational concept that refers to “an acknowledging embrace of human creatures, calling them to a new life of knowing and being known in the Spirit of Christ.”¹⁰³ Further, Shults agrees with Arthur Peacocke who says “there just does not

¹⁰¹ Boyd, “The Open-Theism View,” 15.

¹⁰² Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 53–71.

¹⁰³ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 224.

exist any future, predictable state of such systems for God to know.”¹⁰⁴ Shults suggests that open theists err in that they seem to assume that the future *is* something that exists for God to know.¹⁰⁵ Further, he suggests that open theists incorrectly “retain the notion of God as a single subject, who knows objects, analogous to human knowing” instead of the trinitarian notion of divine knowing noted above.¹⁰⁶ From this perspective, Shults does agree with open theism that God does not know the future exhaustively, but he wishes to emphasize, in contrast to open theism, not that we (along with God) create our future, but rather that God freely gives the future to us as a gracious gift. In both of these perspectives of the mutability of God’s knowledge, God is presented as more immanent than in the classical perspective because here God is not somehow ‘above’ creation ‘seeing’ all that happens, has happened, and will happen simultaneously. Rather, God is presented as experiencing the coming of the future, or perhaps ‘creating’ the future, as creatures too experience its coming.

Open theists suggest that God is mutable in many other ways as well. They also affirm that God changes his intentions, thoughts, and plans.¹⁰⁷ For example, in Exodus 32:14 one reads, “Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.” It seems that God has changed his intentions. Hence, rather than saying

¹⁰⁴ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 84, quoting Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*, 155. It is not clear in his book that Shults agrees with Peacocke, but he has clarified this in Shults, “Is the Future Open?”

¹⁰⁵ Shults writes, “It seems to me that when some open theists say there is no future for God to know, they mean that God is with us on the time-line and that he (sic), like us, does not yet know what happens on the line ahead of us. On this model, ‘the future’ still has a mode of existence, a basis for coming to be that is not dependent on the Creator” (“Is the Future Open?”).

¹⁰⁶ Shults, “Is the Future Open?”

¹⁰⁷ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 77–85; Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” 26–35; and Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 66–75.

that God is immutable, open theists speak of God's "changeable faithfulness."¹⁰⁸ God's substance does not change, he is faithful to his word, and ethically unchanging, but he might change his mind as he interacts with creatures (hence also his will), and he obviously changes in his knowledge.¹⁰⁹ Pinnock proposes, God is "flexible in his dealings and able to change course, as circumstances require."¹¹⁰

Similar revisions to the understanding of divine immutability are not uncommon among the wider evangelical community.¹¹¹ For example, like open theists, Ware affirms that God is ontologically and ethically immutable. In the latter sense, God keeps his promises throughout Scripture. On the other hand, Ware proposes, "If we listen attentively to God as revealed in Scripture, it is clear that he changes in some very important respects."¹¹² Hence, Ware concludes that God is "relationally mutable."¹¹³ That is, God changes (and responds) in relationship to people as they change. Most

¹⁰⁸ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 85.

¹⁰⁹ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 85–8.

¹¹⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 85.

¹¹¹ Other Evangelicals who revise the doctrine of immutability include McClendon, *Doctrine*, 171; Nash, *The Concept of God*, 99–105; Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 112; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 304–308; Frame, *No Other God*, 175–8; Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," 191–3 and 210–13; Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 94–6; and Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 207–209. Throughout my discussion of non-open-theist evangelical theology, readers may notice that I discuss many Reformed theologians. This is because if one is to fairly represent what has been written by evangelicals on the doctrine of God, one by necessity has to be more focused on Reformed theology (even if the majority of evangelicals are not Reformed). When one looks at bibliographies on the doctrine of God, outside of open theists, one finds that Reformed theologians have written the vast majority of evangelical books on the doctrine of God. When it comes to systematic theologies, one again notes the significant Reformed presence, and so turning there for discussion on the doctrine of God does not help one much to be less focused on Reformed theology when discussing contemporary evangelical theology. Given that the current discussion regards evangelical revisions to classical theism, this only goes to show that Reformed theology is not identical to classical theism.

¹¹² Ware, "A Modified Calvinist Doctrine of God," 91. See also, Ware, "An Evangelical Reformulation," 431–46.

¹¹³ He also affirms that God's emotions change. Ware, "An Evangelical Reformulation," 444–6.

importantly, “God’s disposition toward us in our unforgiven sin is one of judgment, wrath, and condemnation,” however if one chooses the path of following Christ, God’s disposition changes, for “in Christ his disposition toward us is one of peace, acceptance, and fatherly love.”¹¹⁴ Among such evangelical expressions of the doctrine of God’s (im)mutability, God is presented as more immanent than in classical theism, where God is unaffected by the world and does not change in response to it.

ii) Impassibility

A growing number of Evangelicals also affirm that God’s emotions are mutable and that God is passible. Erickson notes that a “survey of recent evangelical literature would suggest that the traditional doctrine of impassibility is not the current one, even among conservative Protestant theologians.”¹¹⁵ They reject the doctrine of impassibility as understood in classical theism.¹¹⁶

Even though the open theist’s view of divine foreknowledge has been the center of debate regarding open theism, from an open theist’s perspective, their rejection of the classical doctrine of impassibility is probably of more significance. This is because, for open theists, as Rice claims, love (including its emotional aspects) “is the supreme divine

¹¹⁴ Ware, “A Modified Calvinist Doctrine of God,” 91.

¹¹⁵ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 155. Noted also by Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 23.

¹¹⁶ A number of Evangelicals who affirm that God has passions include Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 441 and 608–18; Frame, *No Other God*, 179–90; Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 325–30 and 332; Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:250–1; Ware, “An Evangelical Reformulation,” 444–6; Lewis and Demarcest, *Integrative Theology*, 1:236; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:428–9; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 320 (with respect to God’s love); Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 161; Knight, *A Future for Truth*, 152; McClendon, *Doctrine*, 171; Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 94–6; and Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 175–6 and 211.

attribute, the essential nature of God.”¹¹⁷ On account of this position, Pinnock posits, “Impassibility is the *most dubious* of the divine attributes discussed in classical theism, because it suggests that God does not experience sorrow, sadness, or pain.”¹¹⁸ In stark contrast to classical theism, open theists like Pinnock claim, “Events arouse joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath in him. Our deeds move, grieve, gladden, or please him. His nature is . . . characterized by pathos.”¹¹⁹ For example, the psalmist declares that “the Lord takes delight in his people” (Psalm 149:4). God’s response to the unfaithfulness of Israel is also expressed with emotional language; “My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused” (Hosea 11:8).¹²⁰ Open theists argue that these are not simply poetic descriptions of God, but that they express a real sense of divine passion.

Besides open theists, Evangelicals who reject impassibility are also implicitly rejecting the absolute understanding of divine immutability as found in classical theism (the latter is sometimes called ‘strong immutability’). For example, Grudem explicitly affirms the passibility of God with his statement that, “God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.”¹²¹ He does not provide an extensive argument, nor much hermeneutical reflection on these texts (as to whether or not they might be anthropomorphic), but he notes texts that support God

¹¹⁷ Rice, “Process Theism and the Open View of God,” 184. Cf. Pinnock who writes, “love rather than almighty power is the primary perfection of God” (“Systematic Theology,” 114). Other Evangelicals also take this position, for example, Grenz speaks of love being the “fundamental divine attribute” (*Theology for the Community of God*, 72).

¹¹⁸ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 118 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 55, cf. 56–9 and 88–92.

¹²⁰ Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” 22–5.

¹²¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 163. In affirming immutability he wishes to affirm that God is “unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises.” Compare also Feinberg’s affirmation of immutability, but rejection impassibility in his *No One Like Him*, 277.

rejoicing (Isa 62:5), as being grieved (Ps 78:40; Eph 4:30), and texts that note that God's "wrath burns hot" (Exod 32:10), God's pity (Ps 103:13), and God's love (Isa 54:8; Ps 103:17). Grudem qualifies his affirmation of divine passibility by proposing that God's passions are different from human passions in the sense that, for example, "God does not have *sinful* passions or emotions."¹²² Similarly, Pinnock cautions, "Surely God does not suffer in every way that we do as mortal, sentient creatures. . . . God experiences pathos, but not in exactly the same way that we do. . . . God certainly cannot lose control and become distraught."¹²³ Terrance Tiessen, adds a further common qualification regarding divine passibility as he proposes that, God's suffering "is never a suffering that is forced upon him by an inability to remove its cause even if that would entail the destruction of the creature."¹²⁴ Even with such qualifications, in contrast to the transcendent, impassible God of classical theism, such revisions to the doctrine of impassibility move evangelical theologians who follow them to present God as immanent to the world, as he experiences emotions and passions in response to the events of the world.

iii) Omnipotence

All Evangelicals would affirm the classical theistic understanding of omnipotence as far as the claim that God is able to do all things logically possible that are consistent with his will. However, some Evangelicals resist the significant strand of classical theism that presents a unilateral view of divine omnipotence and suggests that God controls every detail of reality. Among open theists, Pinnock claims that God's sovereignty is "partly unilateral and partly bilateral. God is not the only power in the universe; he

¹²² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 166 (emphasis added).

¹²³ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 91–2.

¹²⁴ Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 332.

created other powers.” Further, God is not “completely in control.”¹²⁵ To present biblical support for this view, Pinnock observes how creation, Israel, the nations, and individuals are presented as partners with God in the Bible.¹²⁶ For example, “In creating Adam, God showed himself willing to share his power. He did not insist on being the only power.”¹²⁷ In this instance, Pinnock proposes, Adam was able to act contrary to God’s purposes and to resist God’s will. With respect to creation, Pinnock observes themes of God being engaged with “powers of darkness” in creation as we await the new creation which will come in the future. Until that time, “God is not now in complete control of the world” and therefore “genuine evil, which God does not want, exists.”¹²⁸

In spite of their use of ‘partnership’ language, open theists do accept that God’s omnipotence allows him to sometimes ‘intervene’ in a situation and to act coercively, even overcoming the free will of a person, but that this is generally not how God acts.¹²⁹ Pinnock notes, “God is under no obligation to exercise all-controlling sovereignty if that is not what he wants to do.”¹³⁰

The above understanding of divine omnipotence is also found among those Evangelicals who hold to Arminian theology. As Olson notes, “The God of Arminian theology is a self-limiting God who does not exercise all the power he has. He does not control everything in a meticulous fashion but extends to human beings the power to

¹²⁵ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 53.

¹²⁶ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 35–47.

¹²⁷ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 42.

¹²⁸ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 36.

¹²⁹ Hasker, “A Philosophical Perspective,” 142 and Basinger, “Practical Implications,” 159.

¹³⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 53.

resist his will and his grace.”¹³¹ In support of this line of thinking, Henry Knight reasons that, “It makes little sense to speak of sin as a violation of God’s will if in fact on some higher level everything that happens is God’s will.”¹³² Nevertheless, all Evangelicals writing from this perspective would still affirm, with classical theism, that God is the most powerful being, and more so, that God is able to do anything that is consistent with his will and character.

These complete affirmations of God’s omnipotence stand in contrast to process theology’s presentation of the persuasive power of God in that these evangelical theologians suggest that God uses his power in this manner completely by his own choice. Pinnock explicitly states, “God limits himself with regard to power”¹³³—that is, God chooses not to control or cause all things by his own initiative. By contrast, Hartshorne, a process theologian, holds that God is intrinsically unable to overcome many forces in creation; “Not even God could make it otherwise.”¹³⁴

iv) Everlastingly Eternal

The above expositions of evangelical perspectives on the doctrine of God would be enough to illustrate instances of evangelical theologians making revisions to (and at times complete rejections of) classical theism. Nevertheless, at least one other area is worth considering, namely, evangelical understandings of God as eternal, especially since it is integral to understanding open theism. Many Evangelicals continue to hold on to the classical idea that God is timelessly eternal, however, others have suggested that God is

¹³¹ Olson, “The Classical Free Will Theist Model of God,” 165.

¹³² Knight, *A Future for Truth*, 166, cf. 172.

¹³³ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 93.

¹³⁴ Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 12.

everlastingly eternal, usually meaning that God has a past and a future, but no end and no beginning.¹³⁵ That is, God relates to creation in a temporal manner, even to the point of experiencing the passage of time in a manner similar to created beings.

The proposal that “God is a temporal agent” is foundational to the open theists’ view that God (nor any other being), on account of this, is unable to know the future exhaustively.¹³⁶ Pinnock claims that God “too operates from within time” since God is said to make plans and carry them out (Jer 18:11; 29:11), since God ‘remembers’ and anticipates future events.¹³⁷ Pinnock does not claim to understand what God’s eternity (apart from creation) is like, but, he argues, it seems clear that it “includes the possibility of time and the capacity to relate to us within time. . . . What is certain is that God has made a temporal creation and is able to act temporally in it. God is not timeless because he experiences a succession of events and faces a partially unsettled future.”¹³⁸

Again, some non-open-theist Evangelicals have proposed a variety of revisions to the classical doctrine of divine eternity. Unlike open theists, Erickson suggests that in relation to creation God is both supratemporal and omnitemporal, by which he means that God is both outside of (or over) time and within time.¹³⁹ Ware, with a slightly different perspective, suggests that God is timeless in himself (apart from creation) but omnitemporal in relation to creation. That is, in relationship to creation God chose “to ‘enter’ fully into both the spatial and the temporal dimensions of creation,” thereby

¹³⁵ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 378.

¹³⁶ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 96.

¹³⁷ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 32–3 and 96–9. Cf. Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 131–3.

¹³⁸ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 99.

¹³⁹ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 136 and 139–40. This would be one explanation, from his perspective, for how God is able to know the future.

‘filling’ all of time.¹⁴⁰ Other Evangelicals completely reject the understanding of divine timelessness, even more so than the open theists.¹⁴¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, for example, argues for “unqualified divine temporality.”¹⁴² Like others who revise classical theism, he observes that “God is represented in Scripture as One who has a history of acting and responding.”¹⁴³ Writing from a similar perspective, John Feinberg suggests that it would not be possible for an atemporal being to have fellowship with human beings (which, he believes, necessitates sequence) as is found in the Bible.¹⁴⁴

c) An Appraisal of Evangelical Critiques

Clearly, then, many Evangelicals critique classical theism and revise the attributes of God as classical theism understands them. While it varies which attributes of God that individual evangelical theologians revise, the overall picture of such critiques is a more immanent presentation of God. Open theists, who make the most sweeping critique of classical theism, present God as immanent as he suffers and responds to his creatures within the temporality of creation (rather than being impassible, immutable, or timelessly eternal) and as one who partners with creatures rather than causing all things (with respect to the doctrine of omnipotence). Pinnock remarks, evangelical theologians “have too often favored God’s remoteness in contrast to God’s intimate presence. It is time to

¹⁴⁰ Ware, “A Modified Calvinist Doctrine of God,” 89. Similar examples of evangelical theologians presenting alternatives to the classical understanding of eternity can be found in the collection of essays in *God and Time*. In particular, see Padgett, “Eternity as Relative Timelessness,” 92–110 and Craig, “Timelessness and Omnitemporality,” 129–60.

¹⁴¹ I say “more so than the open theists” because open theists are not that concerned with explaining God’s temporality (or lack thereof) apart from creation. In fact, they are open to the possibility that apart from creation God is atemporal.

¹⁴² Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” 187–213. Similarly, Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 428–33.

¹⁴³ Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” 187.

¹⁴⁴ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 430.

overcome the one-sidedness and give God's immanence its due."¹⁴⁵ This critique of evangelical articulations of classical theism results primarily from a concern to be biblical in the evangelical doctrine of God. The result, we will see, is that a trinitarian (and in particular, a pneumatological) critique of classical theism has not been well explored.

In revising the doctrine of God, the main concern of most Evangelicals is to have a doctrine of God that is consistent with the way God is presented throughout the Bible. Among open theists, Pinnock writes that "Tradition, philosophy and experience are important sources but of greatest importance is Holy Scripture and whether the model [of God one presents] is consonant with it."¹⁴⁶ Rice, also an open theist, claims, "agreement with Scripture is the most important test for any theological proposal."¹⁴⁷

This is not to say that open theists will not consider other theological sources.¹⁴⁸ Gregory Boyd, for example, reflects on the scientific context we find ourselves in as he considers the existential fit of the theology that he defends. Boyd finds support for his theology in the fact that contemporary quantum theory suggests that there is an element of indeterminism in the universe. Just as his openness theology contends, Boyd notes that at the quantum level, "the future is partly open and partly settled."¹⁴⁹ However, he concludes that if open theists were wrong and "if classical theology . . . was based on the Word of God, we would simply have to say, 'too bad'" if theology did not agree with

¹⁴⁵ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 35.

¹⁴⁶ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 25.

¹⁴⁷ Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," 16.

¹⁴⁸ Pinnock writes, "If the God of the universe and of truth is one, theologians should try to integrate all of the truth that they know from any quarter" ("Systematic Theology," 106).

¹⁴⁹ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 110. Also see, Boyd, "The Open-Theism View," 18–19.

science.¹⁵⁰ This displays that Boyd is first and foremost concerned with whether his theology is biblical, as the subtitle of his book suggests: *A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*.

From another perspective, evangelical theologians who critique open theism generally emphasize what they view to be its lack of biblical integrity, again showing that evangelical theologians are primarily concerned with whether or not their doctrine of God is biblical. John Piper, for example, claims that “legitimizing the ‘open view’ of God undermines the biblical foundation of historic Christian unity” and that imputing God with such a “massive ignorance . . . is unworthy of the biblical vision of God.”¹⁵¹ Some critics (like Erickson) are more generous and are willing to admit that among open theists “there is a genuine attempt to be biblical,” even though they may disagree with how open theists interpret the scriptures.¹⁵²

Speaking more broadly (outside of the issue of open theism) concerning Evangelicals who are willing to critique classical theism, Olson notes that although these Evangelicals value the tradition of the Church, their primary concern is that their doctrine is consistent with Scripture. He speaks of them having “a concern to be truly biblical” and working with the aim of discovering “a more biblical picture of God.”¹⁵³

The evangelical concern with being biblical should be lauded as an important impulse in attempts to revise the doctrine of the divine attributes. However, the extreme

¹⁵⁰ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 108.

¹⁵¹ Piper, “Grounds for Dismay,” 371 and 373.

¹⁵² Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 84.

¹⁵³ Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, 216, cf. 210. Compare Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 21.

concern with being biblical often causes Evangelicals to miss dogmatic arguments that might be made. By dogmatic arguments, I particularly have in mind arguments that might be made concerning the attributes of God in light of the dogma of the Trinity, which Evangelicals do affirm. This is not to suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity is not biblical—Evangelicals will affirm that it is!—but simply to suggest that dogmatic arguments are neglected due to a preference for arguments based more so on the method of biblical theology. The following chapter examines how this is the case as it explores hindrances to a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God. In the mean time, it is sufficient to note that, in general, Evangelicals have neglected to explore with much depth a trinitarian approach to the doctrine of God, and therefore a pneumatological approach as well.¹⁵⁴

As with classical theism (which includes some Evangelicals), for many Evangelicals, the doctrine of the Trinity appears to be almost an afterthought for the doctrine of the divine attributes. Kevin Vanhoozer notes that there has been among Evangelicals “the tendency to treat the doctrine of the Trinity (when it *was* treated rather than neglected) in a merely notional way rather than as the operative concept of the distinctly Christian God of the gospel.”¹⁵⁵ For example, Thomas Oden has four chapters on the doctrine of God before he moves to his doctrine of the Trinity (and then on to the doctrine of creation). This is not unusual.¹⁵⁶ This is not symptomatic only of complete

¹⁵⁴ This is evident throughout the recent *Four Views* book written by evangelical authors edited by Ware, entitled *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God*.

¹⁵⁵ Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 17–18.

¹⁵⁶ The previous chapters cover, “The Naming of God,” “The Nature of God,” “The Character of God,” and “Whether God Is” (Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 1:15–180). Compare, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, part 3, chs 13–16; Williams, *Renewal Theology*, vol. 1, chs 3–4; Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, chs 13–23; and Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, chs 9–14. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of*

systematic theologies, but also of evangelical monographs on the doctrine of God, for example, Feinberg's *No One Like Him* and John Frame's *The Doctrine of God*.

Erickson's *God the Father Almighty* does not contain a section on the doctrine of the Trinity, but he had previously written on the doctrine in *God in Three Persons*. In light of the fact that Erickson published his doctrine of the Trinity three years before his doctrine of God's attributes, Kärkkäinen exclaims (with respect to *God the Father Almighty*) that it is "astonishing" that "Erickson is totally silent about the Trinity" and that "implications of the social doctrine of the Trinity are not carried over to considering . . . the attributes of God."¹⁵⁷ Even Donald Bloesch, who is significantly influenced by the work of Karl Barth (a prominent figure in contemporary trinitarian theology), discusses the doctrine of the Trinity in his *God the Almighty* after having already discussed most of the attributes of God. It is not so much that the order of the discussion of these topics is of utmost importance, but rather that the order of the discussion points to the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is not adequately integrated into the doctrine of the divine attributes and that, as Vanhoozer notes, the doctrine of the Trinity is treated in "a merely notional way."

Most often, when evangelical theologians discuss the attributes of God in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity, it occurs in a context where a theologian

God, is one exception who does consider the doctrine of the Trinity before the attributes of God. Another exception, in a doctrine of God more specifically, is Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*. However, simply placing the doctrine of the Trinity before a discussion of the attributes of God does not necessarily mean that the doctrine is treated in more than a "notional way" (which is Vanhoozer's concern). For example, Highfield, *Great is the Lord* places his chapter on the Trinity before his discussion of the attributes of God, however, he rarely employs trinitarian insights (especially from the economy of salvation) in defense of his views. Rather, he regularly (but briefly) mentions the immanent Trinity to say that God is eternally in possession of the various divine attributes (as the divine persons relate to each other in eternity) and he discusses the doctrine of the Trinity to reject the proposals of contemporary trinitarian doctrines of the divine attributes (e.g. in defense of impassibility in relation to the suffering of the Son of God in Jesus Christ). Highfield's lack of trinitarian reflection is somewhat surprising given his explicit recognition of the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for all Christian knowledge of God (106).

¹⁵⁷ Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 216.

wants to affirm that each of the divine persons is in fact divine. That is, an affirmation that each divine person shares the divine attributes leads to the conclusion that each of the divine persons shares the one essence of God. For example, after discussing the attributes of God (with limited trinitarian reflection), Grudem turns to a chapter on the Trinity. Introducing this doctrine he states, “the biblical teaching on the Trinity tells us that all of God’s attributes are true of all three persons, for each is fully God. Thus, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are also eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely loving, omniscient, and so forth.”¹⁵⁸

This is similar to the typical discussion that involves the Holy Spirit (specifically) in relationship to the attributes of God. For example, Feinberg, in an effort to prove that the Holy Spirit is divine, assumes an understanding of the attributes of God and observes that Scripture applies them to the Holy Spirit. He writes, the Holy Spirit “has attributes only God could have. He is eternal (Heb 9:14); omniscient (1 Cor 2:10-11; John 14:26; 16:12f.); powerful (Rom 8:2; 15:19); and truth (1 John 5:7).”¹⁵⁹ Again, this is typical of much evangelical theology. Like Feinberg, to illustrate the deity of the Spirit, Erickson notes that “the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes or qualities of God” (he discusses omniscience, omnipotence and eternity).¹⁶⁰ While these discussions of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the attributes of God do help to illustrate the deity of the Spirit, they begin with an assumed understanding of the attributes of God (which is not necessarily

¹⁵⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 226.

¹⁵⁹ Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 465.

¹⁶⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 874, cf. 352. Also, Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 686–7; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 1:201; Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3:15; Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 2:149–50; Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 70–1; and Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 237.

wrong), rather than seeking to understand the attributes of God in light of the Holy Spirit, who is firstly affirmed as God. This latter approach is the one taken in this book.

In his defense of open theism Pinnock does reflect on the triune nature of God to support his proposal. He claims that the idea that “God is triune personal life in relationship” supports his view that “God freely enters into personal relationships with his creatures . . . because he wants to since relationality is an essential aspect of God.”¹⁶¹ While this is a significant insight drawn from dogmatic theology, the bulk of Pinnock’s arguments are not marked by trinitarian reflection, but rather are concerned with interpreting key biblical texts that speak of God’s attributes.¹⁶² As a result, as one reads through open theists’ presentations of the doctrine of God one wonders if they are thinking of God more so as a “loving person” than as a “loving community of persons.”¹⁶³ Outside of open theism, Grenz’s systematic theology is marked by a heightened concern to integrate the doctrine of the Trinity into all the theological topics. However, similar to Pinnock, he too presents a relational understanding of God in light of the doctrine of the Trinity, but does not develop this into a revised understanding of the attributes of God.¹⁶⁴

This is not to say that Evangelicals never make trinitarian observations within their discussions of the attributes of God. Certainly, the one area where this is most

¹⁶¹ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 28 (see 28–31 for his trinitarian reflections).

¹⁶² Coppedge makes similar observations regarding open theism, and Pinnock’s writing specifically (*The God Who is Triune*, 17, fn. 7).

¹⁶³ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 81 and 83 respectively. Shults, “Is the Future Open?” makes similar observations regarding open theism.

¹⁶⁴ Grenz, *The Named God* and Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*. Neither of these works discuss the attributes of God in detail, however, Grenz does discuss the attributes of God in *Theology for the Community of God*, 88–97.

common is in deliberations regarding the impassibility (or not) of God. For example, Pinnock remarks, “The God of the gospel becomes involved in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Father, Son and Spirit both suffer, though in different ways. The Father suffers the death of his Son and the Spirit feels both the Father’s pain and the Son’s self-surrender.”¹⁶⁵ Insights are also sometimes made regarding other doctrines. For example, with respect to the doctrine of omnipotence, Sanders observes that “all notions of divine power and weakness must be filtered through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, since these events display the wisdom and power of God.”¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Evangelicals repeatedly neglect such common (even basic) trinitarian insights. For example, when Grudem discusses the doctrine of impassibility, the one place where theologians are most likely to make a trinitarian (via Christology) argument regarding an attribute of God, he chooses instead to focus only on key biblical texts when he discusses the passibility of God.¹⁶⁷ Like Charles Hodge, the main concern of most Evangelicals who deny the doctrine of impassibility is not that they are being consistently trinitarian, but rather that they are avoiding “philosophical speculation” and following “the clear testimony of the Bible.”¹⁶⁸

Pneumatological insights are even less common than trinitarian deductions via Christology for the doctrine of God among Evangelicals. In Tiessen’s discussion of impassibility one does find a brief sign of an undeveloped pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God’s attributes when, in support of his view, he proposes, “Then, as now,

¹⁶⁵ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 189, cf. 193. Also, Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 96.

¹⁶⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 166.

¹⁶⁸ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:428.

the Spirit of God is grieved when his loving overtures are spurned, and Scripture appropriately enjoins us not to ‘grieve the Holy Spirit of God’ (Eph 4:30).”¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, again, such pneumatological and trinitarian insights are rare.¹⁷⁰

One might expect to find pneumatological developments regarding the doctrine of God within Pentecostal theology, which falls within the bounds of evangelical theology. However, Pentecostals have not adequately integrated their pneumatology into their doctrine of God’s attributes. In fact, they have probably done this less so than other Evangelicals.¹⁷¹ The fact is that, in general, Pentecostals have not been forced to think about the doctrine of the divine attributes (as they have been forced, for example, to think about the issue of Spirit baptism). Hence, as Terry Cross observes, “Pentecostals have been deficient in crafting a doctrine of God.”¹⁷² As noted in the introduction, the lack of development in this area of theology is not surprising, since Pentecostal systematic theology in general is still in the early stages of its development.

Kärkkäinen recently published his *The Doctrine of God*, however, since it is an introductory text, Kärkkäinen does not make any constructive (nor pneumatological) proposals, but rather takes a historical-descriptive approach to the doctrine (though it does become clear in places that he is critical of classical theism).¹⁷³ Some other

¹⁶⁹ Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 329. Although not discussing it, Grudem lists this same text as a proof text for divine passibility (*Systematic Theology*, 166).

¹⁷⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover* does have a couple pages (134–5) in which he reflects on the Holy Spirit, but he does not draw conclusions regarding the attributes of God here either (rather, he is reflecting on the problem of evil).

¹⁷¹ For a survey of Pentecostal approaches to the doctrine of God see Gabriel, “This Spirit is God,” 71–3.

¹⁷² Cross, “Rich Feast of Theology,” 46. With respect to Pentecostal theology in general, see p. 28.

¹⁷³ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 121 and 305.

contemporary Pentecostals have also given more attention to the doctrine of God as they have discussed the theology of open theism. This has also been done, however, largely without any explicit consideration of God's triune nature.¹⁷⁴ One significant exception can be found in Cross's response to Pinnock's call for Pentecostals to reflect on the relationality of God.¹⁷⁵ Cross follows Isaac Dorner's christological exposition of the doctrine of divine immutability, arguing that God does not change ethically, but that God changes ontologically, particularly as the Son of God is incarnated in human form.¹⁷⁶ However, again one finds that this trinitarian reflection on the doctrine of God is specifically from a christological point of view. Though there are many pneumatological insights within Pentecostal theology that have implications for the doctrine of the divine attributes (I draw on these in future chapters), a thoroughgoing pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God remains unexplored by Pentecostals.¹⁷⁷ Like the remainder of evangelicalism, Pentecostals have been more concerned with being biblical than being trinitarian in their doctrine of God. The pneumatological approach that I develop here works out the implications that the Spirit Pentecostals experience in worship and devotion is God.

¹⁷⁴ Some Pentecostals have rejected open theism, others have embraced it. Negative responses to open theism include: Railey, "Open Theism;" and Lee, "Openness of God." Positive responses to Open Theism include Thompson, "Does God Have a Future?" and Archer, "Open Theism View." An inconclusive response is found in Ellington, "Who Shall Lead Them Out?" And making neutral observations see, Studebaker, "Mode of Divine Knowledge." Studebaker is not evaluating the legitimacy of open theism, but simply arguing that it stands in continuity with the Arminian tradition.

¹⁷⁵ Pinnock, "Divine Relationality," 3–26 (p. 20 makes it clear that Pinnock is commending open theism to Pentecostals, though this is not his primary concern since he affirms that "a relational theist need not accept it [open theism]").

¹⁷⁶ In the same volume as the above article, see Cross, "Rich Feast of Theology," 42–3. Cross makes it clear on p. 44 that he accepts some of Pinnock's proposals, but does not embrace open theism.

¹⁷⁷ I have made initial attempts at this in Gabriel, "This Spirit is God," 85–93.

The most notable exception to the lack of thoroughgoing trinitarian reflection within evangelical reflections on the doctrine of God comes in Shults' *Reforming the Doctrine of God*.¹⁷⁸ In fact, one of the main challenges that he perceives within historical expressions of the doctrine of God is the presupposition that God is a single subject.¹⁷⁹ He explicitly seeks to overcome this by affirming a social doctrine of the Trinity that informs and permeates all of his discussions on the attributes of God, namely 'omniscient faithfulness,' 'omnipotent love,' and 'omnipresent hope' (he does not reflect on impassibility or immutability as this book does).¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the fact that this formulation of the doctrine of God stands out so clearly from the remainder of evangelical theology as perhaps the only truly trinitarian evangelical doctrine of the divine attributes only illustrates even more so the general lack of trinitarian reflection found within evangelical doctrines of God. It should be clear by now that although Evangelicals would be among the first to defend the doctrine of the triune God, they have not played a significant role in the renewal of trinitarian theology. This is so much so the case that Vanhoozer laments that "the outstanding story of twentieth-century evangelical theology is its benign neglect of the Trinity."¹⁸¹ That said, this general lack of trinitarian

¹⁷⁸ In a somewhat less technical work, Coppedge also reflects on the attributes of God from a trinitarian standpoint (*The God Who is Triune*, 166–213). However, unlike Shults, Coppedge's trinitarian reflections lacks pneumatological depth as his utmost concern is with exploring "the centrality of Jesus" (168). Consider his opening comment in the introduction, "It is time to return to Jesus as the center of the Christian faith!" (13). More significantly, however, at numerous points when reflecting on the attributes of God, Coppedge's writing loses its trinitarian feel and begins to look like the majority of evangelical theology in this sense.

¹⁷⁹ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 41–65.

¹⁸⁰ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 205–93. See also Olson's comments regarding Shult's work in Olson's, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, 228–31.

¹⁸¹ Vanhoozer, "The Triune God of the Gospel," 19. At the same time, Vanhoozer views the recovery of trinitarian theology as a very "significant development of great value to the long-term health of

reflection leads, understandably so, to an even greater lack of pneumatological reflection on the doctrine of God within evangelical theology.

4. Trinitarian Revisions of Classical Theism

a) Diversity and Continuity in Trinitarian Theology

In recent years, several scholars have sought to reform the classical doctrine of God in light of the fundamental Christian confession of God as Trinity. The trinitarian impulse for the doctrine of the divine attributes has resulted from a wider renewal of interest in trinitarian theology and the doctrine of the Trinity in general. In emphatic language, Olson and Hall observe, “After centuries of neglect and stagnation, the doctrine of the Trinity became not only a fresh subject of interest and constructive attention in theology but also almost an obsession.”¹⁸² Hence, in contrast to classical theism and the general pattern of evangelical theology, trinitarian theologians generally reflect on the fact that God is triune *before* moving to an exploration of the attributes of God.¹⁸³ Most importantly, this signals the integration of trinitarian thought within the doctrine of the divine attributes.

evangelical theology” (24). Kärkkäinen suggests that Evangelicals have made little contribution to constructive trinitarian theology “because it has not been an issue of contention between conservatives and liberals” (*The Trinity*, 215).

¹⁸² Olson and Hall, *The Trinity*, 95.

¹⁸³ For example, Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (herein cited as *CD*), I/1, 295–489 (on the Trinity) and *CD*, II/1, 257–677 (on the attributes of God); Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol 1, chs 5–6; and Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*. Jenson does not have a section on the attributes of God as such (as he himself notes in *Systematic Theology*, 1:223), however the doctrine of the Trinity informs and fills his doctrine of God from the very beginning. Though not having a specific chapter on the doctrine of the Trinity, Gunton has also clearly aimed to integrate trinitarian thought into his doctrine of the divine attributes throughout his *Act and Being*.

Like evangelical theology, diversity exists among trinitarian theologians. Certainly trinitarian theology runs across denominational lines. There is even some overlap between trinitarian and evangelical theology. More importantly though, Paul Louis Metzger aptly notes that “there is no one way of doing Trinitarian theology, but rather, a variety of ways.”¹⁸⁴ Trinitarian theologians regularly acknowledge the difficulty of balancing the unity (essence) of God with the diversity (threeness) of God. Hence, it is not unusual for a trinitarian theologian to be accused of modalism (e.g. Karl Barth), on the one hand, or tritheism (e.g. Jürgen Moltmann), on the other hand.¹⁸⁵ Along these lines, some trinitarian theologians continue to insist that God is a single subject,¹⁸⁶ while others refuse to think of God as a single subject (even viewing this as one of the greatest challenges arising from the history of the doctrine of God to a contemporary formation of the doctrine of the divine attributes), preferring instead to speak of the three divine persons as distinct subjects of divine action.¹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, in the midst of this diversity within trinitarian theology and, more specifically, even diversity within the doctrine of the divine attributes among trinitarian theologians, there are certainly aspects that hold these trinitarian theologians together. As would be expected, the primary observation and consistent critique from trinitarian theologians regarding classical theism is that classical theology neglects the triune reality

¹⁸⁴ Metzger, “What Difference Does the Trinity Make?” 6

¹⁸⁵ For examples: regarding Barth, see LaCugna, *God For Us*, 252 and regarding Moltmann, see Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 227.

¹⁸⁶ For example, Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 233.

¹⁸⁷ Emphatically, Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 15–40. Moving from the presupposition of God as a single subject to a social trinitarian understanding of divine knowing, willing, and acting does not make as significant a difference to the attributes of God as many social trinitarians (such as Shults) claim. Such theologians simply move from a doctrine of God as a single subject, to a social trinitarian doctrine of God as three divine subjects—God still has subjective activity nonetheless.

of God in its expression of the divine attributes. Classical theists tended to speak of God as a generic ‘God,’ the ‘Supreme Being,’ or the ‘Infinite,’ rather than as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Catherine Mowry LaCugna rightly notes that the historic separation of the discussion on the attributes of God from the doctrine of the Trinity implicitly, and inappropriately, suggests that the work of Christ and Spirit tell us nothing of the mystery of God.¹⁸⁸ In contrast to this history, trinitarian theologians realize that the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit is the same triune God who has existed from all eternity.

This sentiment has been expressed in Karl Rahner’s axiom, “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity.”¹⁸⁹ Walter Kasper observes that, “What K. Rahner sets down as a basic principle reflects a broad consensus among the theologians of the various churches.”¹⁹⁰ Rahner’s Rule, as it has been called, posits that there is an epistemological and ontological link between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.¹⁹¹ In other words, the triune nature of God (as God is eternally in himself, *in se*) is revealed as God brings salvation to the world (God for us, *pro nobis*). Hence, when one discusses the doctrine of the attributes of God, one can only learn about who God is by looking at the divine persons

¹⁸⁸ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 216. And before her, Rahner, *The Trinity*, 15–21 and 45–6.

¹⁸⁹ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 274. Noted also by Schwöbel, “Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology,” 7. Certainly Barth has expressed similar ideas (e.g. *CD*, I/1, 479), but Rahner’s thesis has become the succinct summary statement that trinitarian theologians eventually refer to. This is not to suggest that everyone receives Rahner’s rule the same way, but that they do accept the basic point of the rule. For a summary of the diverse responses and interpretations of Rahner’s rule see Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 66–71.

¹⁹¹ A “link” is not equating the two.

as they are acting in the economy of salvation.¹⁹² This approach thereby overcomes any disjunction between the being and action of God and realizes that Christian theology should not separate God's nature (attributes) and identity (Trinity).¹⁹³ What is the result? As Peter Robinson correctly observes, "At the heart of the recent revival in Trinitarian theology has been the recovery and development of a dynamic and relational understanding of the being of God. This recovery has helped overturn the static notion of a distant and disengaged God that developed as a result of the separation between God's being and action."¹⁹⁴

b) Key Attributes in Trinitarian Revisions of Classical Theism

i) Impassibility

In trinitarian theology there is almost unanimous agreement with Robert Jenson's conclusion that the doctrine of divine impassibility is the "least biblical concept of late Hellenic theology."¹⁹⁵ In fact, the most common critique of classical theism among trinitarian theologians concerns this attribute.¹⁹⁶ The most familiar and significant example of this comes from the theology of Jürgen Moltmann.¹⁹⁷ In Moltmann's

¹⁹² LaCugna notes that the concern of trinitarian theology is not whether one starts by seeking to understand the essence or persons of God, but rather whether one begins (epistemologically, not ontologically) with the economy of salvation (*God for Us*, 97).

¹⁹³ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 1.

¹⁹⁴ Robinson, "The Trinity," 58.

¹⁹⁵ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 63.

¹⁹⁶ Thompson notes that "Modern theology—particularly in its christological and trinitarian perspectives—has been highly critical of the view expressed in much traditional thought that God is impassible" (*Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 53–4).

¹⁹⁷ Grenz and Olson emphatically state that "No other theologian has done as much to explore the implications of eschatology and of the cross of Christ for the being of God" (*Twentieth-Century Theology*, 185).

trinitarian reasoning, Grenz identifies what he considers to be “a thoroughgoing appropriation of Rahner’s Rule.”¹⁹⁸

Moltmann critiques the classical understanding of the impassibility of God from the perspective that the cross is “inner criterion of all theology” and the “the key signature of all Christian theology.”¹⁹⁹ He speaks of the suffering of Christ as that of rejection and abandonment. Jesus was killed because of the way he lived his life. He was condemned to die as a blasphemer and as a rebel against the authorities.²⁰⁰ Hence, Moltmann proposes, “the knowledge of the cross is the knowledge of God in the suffering caused to him by dehumanized man.”²⁰¹

Beyond this, Moltmann suggests that the suffering of Christ was greatest not in relationship to the Jews and the law or the Romans and their politics, but in relation to God, who rejected and abandoned him. This is how Moltmann interprets Christ’s cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34).²⁰² Moltmann often speaks of Jesus as having been ‘godforsaken.’ This was “absolute abandonment by God.”²⁰³ The suffering of Christ was particularly painful because he had lived a life in

¹⁹⁸ Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 85.

¹⁹⁹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 2 and 72, cf. 25, 153 and 204.

²⁰⁰ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 126–45.

²⁰¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 71.

²⁰² In contrast to Moltmann, Jowers correctly suggests that Jesus’ cry on the cross as recorded in Mark was not solely a cry of despair. Jowers notes that the other gospel accounts do not give indications that Christ was in despair and that in Jewish tradition Psalms and other Scripture passages are often cited by quoting their first words (Jowers, “The Theology of the Cross,” 256–9). Accordingly, Jesus’ citation of Psalm 22 in Mark 15:34 likely included reference to the end of the Psalm, which is optimistic and hopeful. In particular, v. 24 reads, “For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.” Granted this, we must not neglect the words of the Psalm that Jesus actually spoke—those of suffering.

²⁰³ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 55.

direct fellowship with God not mediated by a covenant, nation, or tradition.²⁰⁴ Just as his fellowship with God had been unique, now Christ was uniquely abandoned by him.

These observations become pertinent for the doctrine of God in that Moltmann concludes from Christ's suffering that God suffered. Moltmann speaks often of the 'crucified Christ' and the 'crucified Jesus,' but he also speaks of the 'crucified God.' On account of the incarnation, Moltmann reasons, "God (himself) suffered in Jesus, God himself died in Jesus for us. God is on the cross of Jesus 'for us.'"²⁰⁵ Moltmann quite explicitly claims that "God died on the cross of Christ."²⁰⁶

Following the classical tradition, Dennis Jowers disagrees with Moltmann's conclusion and argues that "one could always confine the suffering to Christ's human nature."²⁰⁷ This proposal is precisely what Moltmann is disputing when he claims that God suffered in Christ. It might appear that, "Moltmann rejects the traditional 'two-natures' doctrine of Christ," as Burnell Eckardt claims, but this is simply incorrect.²⁰⁸ Moltmann does not reject the doctrine, but rather emphasizes the unity of these two natures. Moltmann asserts that "the doctrine of the two natures in christology attempted not only to make a neat separation between the natures of Godhead and manhood, but also to assert their *unity* in the person of Christ."²⁰⁹ Moltmann argues that those who have claimed that Jesus suffered only 'in the flesh' come near to docetism, which states that

²⁰⁴ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 148, cf. 64 and 147–9.

²⁰⁵ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 192. Cf. "To recognize God in the cross of Christ, conversely, means to recognize in the cross, inextricable suffering, death and hopeless rejection in God" (277).

²⁰⁶ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 216.

²⁰⁷ Jowers, "The Theology of the Cross," 259.

²⁰⁸ Eckardt, "Luther and Moltmann," 23.

²⁰⁹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 231 (emphasis added).

Jesus appeared to suffer, but it did not actually happen.²¹⁰ By contrast, Moltmann claims that whatever can be said about the human nature of Christ may also be said about his divine nature.

Moltmann does qualify the suffering of the cross by positing that the death of God may only be properly attributed to the Son of God. That is, in saying that God, in Jesus, suffered and died on the cross, one must distinguish between the divine nature and the Son of God, as a divine person of the Trinity. It was, in particular, the Son of God who suffered and died.²¹¹ Moltmann wishes to stay clear of the theopaschite idea that simply ‘God’ died on the cross, and he is also careful to deny patripassianism, which states that the Father also died on the cross.²¹²

This is not to say that the Father did not suffer as well. Moltmann states, “The Father suffers with him, but not in the same way.”²¹³ As noted above, according to Moltmann, Jesus, the Son of God, is abandoned by his Father. The Father delivers Jesus up to be crucified, the Son suffers the death and the Father “suffers the pains of abandonment” and “the death of his Son in his love for forsaken man.” Recognizing this, Moltmann concludes that “what happened on the cross must be understood as an event between God and the Son of God.”²¹⁴

The trinitarian critique of the impassibility of God does not only concern the suffering of God, however. For example, Moltmann also identifies the passion of God’s

²¹⁰ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 227–8.

²¹¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 232 and 235.

²¹² Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 243.

²¹³ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 203.

²¹⁴ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 192.

love in his suffering. This is not so much an addition to Moltmann's project but central to it. Richard Bauckham correctly observes:

Moltmann's criticism of the concept of divine *apatheia* is not concerned narrowly with God's ability to suffer, but more widely with God's *pathos*. It rejects the unmoved, self-sufficient God of the philosophers in favour of the living God of the whole Bible whose 'anthropopathisms' in the Old Testament and incarnate *pathos* in the New Testament are to be taken quite seriously as revealing God's *leidenschaft* and his *leiden*, his passionate interest in the world . . . and his readiness to suffer in his involvement with the world, which becomes most apparent in the cross. The dialectical love which embraces its own contradictions remains the cruciform centre of this divine *pathos*, but the latter provides a more comprehensive account of the love which God is in relation to the world.²¹⁵

Accordingly, Moltmann views the cross as "the suffering of love."²¹⁶ Moltmann goes to the extent of claiming that God must have the ability to suffer if he is to have the ability to love: "Incapability of suffering . . . would contradict the fundamental Christian assertion that God is love."²¹⁷ Moltmann's argument may be restated as suggesting that one must be able to experience *pathos* or feel in order to love. If God can love, God can feel, and if he can feel, he is capable of suffering. The acceptance of divine love and divine suffering are bound together in the acceptance of divine *pathos*. The cross, for Moltmann, is an instance divine *pathos*, both love and suffering.

²¹⁵ Bauckham, *Moltmann*, 105–6.

²¹⁶ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 64. The cross is loving as it is salvific. Moltmann recognizes objective aspects of the atonement in the cross of Christ in that he clearly recognizes that Christ's death is representative suffering 'for us' in that he "died for our sins." Moltmann writes, "The phrase 'died for our sins' means that the cause of his suffering was our sins, the purpose of his suffering is expiation for us, the ground of his suffering is the love of God for us" (*The Crucified God*, 183). Further, Moltmann is critical of exclusively moral understandings of the atonement (*The Crucified God*, 228).

²¹⁷ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 230. Thompson suggests that Moltmann's understanding of suffering love collapses the freedom and necessity of God together; "God *must* suffer because he *is* love" (*Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 62). It is true that Moltmann is culpable for not adequately distinguishing God's freedom and love in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 52–6. Nevertheless, in *The Crucified God* Moltmann's argument is only that God must be *capable* of suffering (and that he in fact does suffer).

Overall, contemporary theology has well received the aspect of Moltmann's trinitarian arguments in support of a belief in the passibility of God. With respect to this, Grenz and Olson remark that "the suffering of God is almost a new orthodoxy that few have seriously questioned."²¹⁸ In contrast to classical theism, which views the idea of God suffering as a potential imperfection in God, for trinitarian theologians, such as Elizabeth Johnson, "divine suffering appears not as an imperfection but as the highest excellence."²¹⁹

ii) Immutability

Any rejection of the impassibility of God necessitates a revision (if not rejection) of the doctrine of the immutability of God. Moltmann himself recognizes this. Due to the suffering that occurs in God, Moltmann remarks, "the cross of Jesus, understood as the cross of the Son of God, therefore reveals a change in God, a *stasis* within the Godhead: 'God is other.'"²²⁰ Furthermore, in his wider doctrine of God, Moltmann exemplifies an acceptance of the mutability of God as he emphasizes the concept of an 'open Trinity.' He speaks of "the relationships of the Father, the Son and the Spirit" as being "relationships of fellowship" that "are open to the world," indicating that Moltmann believes that the world can have an effect on the triune existence of God.²²¹

²¹⁸ Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology*, 185.

²¹⁹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 266.

²²⁰ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 193.

²²¹ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 64, cf. 94–6.

Moltmann, however, is not the first theologian that others turn to when it comes to illustrating a trinitarian critique of the doctrine of the immutability of God.²²² That falls to Barth, who is consistently regarded as the contemporary father of trinitarian theology.²²³ Like Moltmann, Barth too agrees that God is not immutable because God is passible. He suggests that the mercy of God includes the compassion of God, which is a disposition of the heart and a readiness to share sympathy with others.²²⁴ However, Barth is not most often referenced with respect to this (which is a rejection of the immutability of God), but rather for other ways that he revises the doctrine of divine immutability, which he refers to as the divine constancy.

Divine constancy continues to affirm some of the concerns of the classical doctrine of immutability. It affirms God's faithfulness to his creation, but more so, Barth wishes to affirm that God remains who he is. By divine constancy, Barth means a "holy mutability of God" in that he is the same in every change.²²⁵ God is constant in his knowing, willing, and acting. From a trinitarian perspective, Barth finds this to be particularly true with respect to Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God is one with the creature. In Jesus Christ God reveals himself as faithful to his creation and God reveals

²²² I have discussed Moltmann before Barth (even though Barth historically precedes Moltmann) because Moltmann is generally the first theologian people tend to point to with respect to impassibility, and because the impassibility issue is the most common issue for trinitarian discussions.

²²³ Consider the comments of Leupp with respect to Barth's influence in contemporary trinitarian theology (*The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, 11). With respect to the immutability of God, some theologians refer back to the nineteenth-century theologian Isaac Dorner (whom Barth himself acknowledges as a key influence on his thought in *CD*, II/1, 493), but most theologians will still make primary reference to Barth.

²²⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 369–75.

²²⁵ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 496.

the constancy of his love.²²⁶ This is despite humanity's lack of faithfulness to the covenant. Jesus Christ was not necessary, Barth notes, but results from God's free decision and from God's constancy. This emphasis on divine constancy highlights Barth's continuity (though difference) with classical theism (over an emphasis on a rejection of the doctrine of immutability) and also sets Barth apart from process panentheism, which Barth explicitly rejects.²²⁷ Barth, in contrast, emphasizes God's freedom to be present in creation as he is constant in his relationship to it. Furthermore, even though Barth prefers the term 'constancy,' Barth does not completely reject the term 'immutability.'²²⁸

Like the doctrine of impassibility, there is a general agreement among trinitarian theologians that the doctrine of the immutability of God, as classically understood, must be revised. God is not unaffected by the world, Thomas Torrance claims.²²⁹ With respect to the act of the incarnation, Pannenberg argues that God became something new (i.e. God changed) in the Son.²³⁰ LaCugna puts a further trinitarian twist on the doctrine of immutability and observes that God is immutably three persons. At the same time, however, she notes that persons always change and grow in their relationships, and that God is, therefore, also mutable.²³¹ The concern of all of these trinitarian theologians is that the triune God, by virtue of being three persons, is a relational God. As Barth

²²⁶ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 515.

²²⁷ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 312, 315 and 562.

²²⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 494.

²²⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 4.

²³⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:438.

²³¹ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 301 (on the immutability of the persons) and 288–92 (esp. 291, on the mutability of persons).

expressed it, if God is immutable, and if this immutability means immobility, then there can be no relationship with God and also no hope.²³² Hence, trinitarian theology generally includes revisions to the doctrine of the immutability of God as understood by classical theism.

iii) Omnipotence

There is no particular trinitarian theologian who yet stands out as the prime example when it comes to a discussion of the omnipotence of God, but there is, once again, a general thrust toward revising classical theism here, especially Thomistic or Reformed expressions of it. In trinitarian theology, divine omnipotence is not a general omnicausality.²³³ Barth suggests that if God causes all things, then one cannot glorify God for his work as his, because it is then not distinct from the activity of the creature and other powers in the world.²³⁴

Trinitarian theologians, like Eberhard Jüngel, tend to speak of divine power as “the self-limiting omnipotence of love.”²³⁵ There is a movement in trinitarian theology away from seeing God’s power as simply the power to do anything that is logically possible; power can be evil.²³⁶ Rather, describing God’s omnipotence as an omnipotence of love shows that God’s power is his ability to do anything consistent with his character

²³² Barth, *CD*, II/1, 494.

²³³ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 527–8.

²³⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 531.

²³⁵ Jüngel, “Theses on the Relation of the Existence, Essence and Attributes of God,” 6.1 (p. 68). Also speaking of omnipotent love are Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:421–2; Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 235–64; and Barth, *CD*, II/1, 531. Barth (351) says that all of the divine perfections are perfections of the love of God. Similarly, for Krötke “God is Love” is the “trinitarian principle” (*Grundsatz*) of the doctrine of the attributes of God (*Gottes Klarheiten*, 82).

²³⁶ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 100–101.

or nature. God's character limits what is 'possible,' not anything external to God. In this manner of thinking, Barth writes, God "can only do what is possible for Him and therefore genuinely possible."²³⁷

With Torrance, trinitarian theologians are concerned to "reject all abstract notions of divine omnipotence, for omnipotence is not to be understood in terms of what we think God can do, defining it as potence raised to the nth power, i.e., as omnipotence, but in terms of what God actually *is* and actually *has done*."²³⁸ In other words, in order to understand the general omnipotence of God, one must first understand the particular instances where the power of God operates. As one would expect, Barth draws on the Pauline concept of Christ being the power of God (1 Cor 1:24), which is an instance of the omnipotent love of God.²³⁹ Christ is the power of God in action. Gunton clarifies that Jesus Christ himself is not thought of as omnipotent, "but his life is an expression of God the Father's omnipotent dealing with his creation through the life and death of his incarnate Son."²⁴⁰ For Wolf Krötke, Jesus Christ is the parable of God. In this expression of divine omnipotence, Krötke observes that "God's power does not act in human history according to the ideal of absolute success and violent coercion" but rather in the powerlessness of the crucified Christ.²⁴¹

Among trinitarian theologians there is diversity with respect to how to understand the omnipotence of God when it comes to divine providence. Some theologians believe

²³⁷ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 533.

²³⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 204 (original emphasis).

²³⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 607.

²⁴⁰ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 153.

²⁴¹ Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 219.

that they are able to overcome the dichotomy of choices between a unilateral view and a bilateral view of omnipotence. One example is Barth. He reasons that God's omnipotence includes his ability to be omniscient. Following the typical Reformed way of reasoning, Barth concludes that God's foreknowledge is independent of all things.²⁴² For Barth, God's omnipotence is his knowing and willing. The knowing and willing give his omnipotence direction and content.²⁴³ Barth posits that God's will is his knowledge and his knowledge is his will. In other words, God knows what he wills. On the other hand, Barth says that God *also knows what he rejects*.²⁴⁴ It is his will (including what he rejects) that allows him to be omniscient. Barth suggests that his position excludes both deterministic and non-deterministic understandings of divine omnipotence, while at the same time rejecting that God is the cause of all things.

Shults also believes he overcomes the antinomy that is associated with the doctrine of divine omnipotence, which suggests that either God has all the power (and he controls all things) or that humans also have some power.²⁴⁵ To overcome this he emphasizes the idea of divine infinity. He suggests that "God's 'working' is not the effect of one finite power among many powers, for then it would limit (and be limited by) human working." God's agency is "the originating condition of human agency." It is "not a finite dynamic that excludes our working, but an infinite agency in which we are invited to share."²⁴⁶ Like Shults, a number of trinitarian theologians emphasize God as inviting

²⁴² Barth, *CD*, II/1, 559.

²⁴³ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 544.

²⁴⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 551–2.

²⁴⁵ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 237.

²⁴⁶ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 261 and 262.

humanity to share in a relationship where God shares his rule with humanity. For Moltmann, for example, God invites us into the community of the divine persons.²⁴⁷ Similarly, Krötke writes that “God is almighty in this in such a way that he, on the basis of his self-sufficiency *authorizes freedom* for reality other than himself.”²⁴⁸ Shults, too, emphasizes that the power of God draws creatures into the divine love shared by the divine persons. As noted, Shults also believes that he overcomes the dichotomy of choices regarding divine power. However, as Gijbert van den Brink notes, in as much as Shults (and other trinitarian theologians like him) wishes to utilize language that speaks of God ‘calling’ or ‘inviting’ creatures into fellowship with the divine persons, “then in fact Shults simply opts for the Arminian horn of the dilemma. There may be nothing wrong with that, but clearly the author’s suggestion that he is dissolving or overcoming the dilemma is simply false.”²⁴⁹ Though not explicitly referring to Shults, Coppedge apparently recognizes this when he argues that the idea of God as “the Holy One who in self-giving love uses his power to enable all persons to enter into a relationship with himself” supports an Arminian understanding of omnipotence and providence.²⁵⁰ Regardless of the conclusions that a trinitarian theologian makes with respect to this aspect of the doctrine of the omnipotence of God, it is clear that trinitarian theologians present a more immanent view of God’s omnipotence than classical theism (even though omnipotence itself suggests transcendence). The view is more immanent because trinitarian theologians understand God’s omnipotence in light of how God exercises his

²⁴⁷ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 221.

²⁴⁸ Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 210 (original emphasis).

²⁴⁹ van den Brink, “Review of *Reforming the Doctrine of God*,” 6.

²⁵⁰ Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 193.

power within the history and space of humanity and the rest of creation, especially in the history of Jesus Christ.

c) An Appraisal of Trinitarian Critiques

The above discussions of impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence illustrate how trinitarian theologians revise and critique classical theism. Other attributes could be considered, but there is more diversity in discussing them than the attributes discussed above.²⁵¹ Like other contemporary critiques of classical theism, trinitarian theologians generally present a God that is (in general) more immanent than classical theism. Obviously, unlike process and evangelical theologians, a concern for the doctrine of the Trinity is what drives this critique of classical theism. However, like process and evangelical theologians, trinitarian theologians also tend to overlook pneumatological perspectives for the attributes of God. This is well illustrated by looking at Barth's doctrine of God. Barth's doctrine is particularly important since he has had a significant influence on all trinitarian doctrines of God written after his.

Observations regarding Barth's focus on Christ within his trinitarian thinking abound. He is regularly accused of "christomonism" or of presenting a "christocentric" theology. He claims that no Christian theme should be thought of independently of Christology.²⁵² This is also true regarding the doctrine of God. Don Schweitzer speaks of

²⁵¹ Unlike evangelical theology, there is no theological movement within trinitarian theology like that of open theism which would continue to give continuity to the discussion at hand. Since the three attributes that have been discussed are the three that are the focus of this book, it seems unnecessary to consider more attributes with the same amount of detail from the trinitarian perspective.

²⁵² Barth, *CD*, II/1, 320. Rosato observes how Barth interprets everything "pan-christologically" (*The Spirit as Lord*, 183). Cf. Gunton, "The Being and Attributes of God," 22.

Barth's critique of classical theism correctly as a "christological critique of classical theism" and observes his "christologically focused Trinitarian doctrine of God."²⁵³

Barth consistently makes christological insights regarding the attributes (which he prefers to call the divine 'perfections') throughout his doctrine of God, in both the categories of the perfections of the divine love and the perfections of the divine freedom (Barth's overarching division of the divine perfections). He finds Christ to be the crown of the divine love.²⁵⁴ When beginning to discuss God's grace and holiness, Barth explicitly claims that all knowledge of the divine perfections must begin with Jesus Christ.²⁵⁵ The mercy of God, for Barth, is not a general concept of mercy, but something that is actual in Jesus Christ.²⁵⁶ Barth pairs the perfection of God's righteousness with that of mercy, noting how in God's condemnation of Jesus Christ one finds both the righteousness and mercy of God revealed.²⁵⁷ The last pair of attributes discussed under the category of divine love, patience and wisdom, are also found revealed in Jesus Christ.²⁵⁸ Turning to the perfections of the divine freedom, Barth argues that the unity of God is established by the fact that Jesus Christ "reveals Himself as the Son of His heavenly Father."²⁵⁹ With respect to divine omnipresence, Barth notes that the incarnation of Christ reveals how God can be present to places in distinct ways.²⁶⁰ We

²⁵³ Schweitzer, "Karl Barth's Critique of Classical Theism," 241.

²⁵⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 273–5 (esp. 274), cf. 351.

²⁵⁵ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 351.

²⁵⁶ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 369.

²⁵⁷ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 384, 390, 393, 395 and 398–404.

²⁵⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 409, 437 and 439.

²⁵⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 455.

²⁶⁰ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 483.

have already seen Barth's christological perspectives regarding divine constancy and omnipotence. To end off his list of divine perfections, Barth notes how eternity became time in Jesus Christ (therefore eternity is not simply timelessness) and that the Son of God reveals the divine glory (which is the sum of the divine perfections) to a supreme degree.²⁶¹ Barth clearly has a christological emphasis in his doctrine of the divine perfections.

One has to search hard to find similar pneumatological reflections regarding the divine perfections in Barth. Certainly, Barth makes numerous blanket statements claiming that in speaking of the being of God one *must* always be speaking of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁶² However, Barth seems not to follow this fully in practice. The Spirit is mentioned with respect to the omnipresence of God, noting how there is a distinct presence of God in Christians.²⁶³ Other than that, however, there are only passing references to the Spirit in his discussions of divine holiness and divine constancy.²⁶⁴ Overall, reflection from a pneumatological perspective is lacking in Barth's doctrine of God.²⁶⁵ Although this might seem strange, given his prominence as a *trinitarian* theologian, when considered in the light of his wider doctrine, the reason for the absence of the Spirit in his doctrine of God becomes understandable. Throughout the *Church*

²⁶¹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 616 (on eternity), and 661 and 672 (on the glory of God).

²⁶² Consider Barth, *CD*, II/1, 261 and 659.

²⁶³ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 483.

²⁶⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 363 and 364 (holiness), and 508 and 509 (constancy). There is an additional reference to the Spirit as the love poured out in believers' hearts (Rom 5:5) when Barth introduces the concept of God as the one who loves (in freedom) (*CD*, II/1, 277), but that is not directly related to any particular discussion of one of the divine attributes.

²⁶⁵ Gunton also makes note of this (*Act and Being*, 102–3).

Dogmatics, Barth's pneumatology has a decidedly noetic function.²⁶⁶ That is, Barth generally relegates the work of the Holy Spirit to revealing Christ to the believer and enabling the corresponding affirmation (Barth's, 'Yes') that the believer gives to the person and work of Jesus Christ.²⁶⁷ This view of the Spirit begins at the very beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* where the Holy Spirit is called the "Revealedness" that helps people grasp the "Revelation," who is Jesus Christ.²⁶⁸ In this context, the Holy Spirit is the "subjective reality of revelation" and the "subjective possibility of revelation."²⁶⁹ Accordingly, Jenson suggests, "It appears that, for Barth, an act of the Spirit would not transcend the subjectivity of our hearing." The result, Jenson continues, is that "his doctrine of Trinity, when thus *used*, often seems rather to be a doctrine of binity," ignoring the various activities of the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁰ This has been true, as seen above, with respect to Barth's doctrine of the divine attributes.

The influence of Barth on those trinitarian theologians who follow him is clear in both the content of their writing and the resulting minimal place for pneumatology within their doctrines of God. Wolf Krötke is among them. Although a lesser known theologian, Christopher Holmes proposes that Krötke "has attempted the most in-depth theological interpretation of the attributes of the God of the gospel since Barth's own magisterial

²⁶⁶ Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 133, 161, 172 and 182.

²⁶⁷ Barth, *CD*, I/1, 453–4.

²⁶⁸ Barth, *CD*, I/1, 295.

²⁶⁹ Barth, *CD*, I/2, 203 and 242. In *CD*, I/1, 449, Barth also speaks of the Holy Spirit as the subjective side of revelation.

²⁷⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:154. Cf. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 296–7 and Rogers, "The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth," 173–8. Ables rightfully challenges the notion that Barth presents a depersonalized doctrine of the Spirit ("The Grammar of Pneumatology in Barth and Rahner," 210–16), however, the function of the Spirit is clearly still decidedly noetic in Barth and, furthermore, pneumatological reflection is clearly lacking in his doctrine of the divine perfections.

treatment in *CD II/1*.²⁷¹ Krötke criticized those in his own context (the former German Democratic Republic, Eastern Germany) who, like classical theists, presented a metaphysical or religious theism as a prolegomena to a distinctively Christian doctrine of God, based on the actual revelation of God (Krötke would say the “concreteness” of the Christian doctrine of God).²⁷² Krötke’s response to this context exhibits an overall concern to describe God as a concrete reality who “comes to the world in Jesus Christ.”²⁷³ Accordingly, in *Gottes Klarheiten* each of his chapters on an attribute of God include a section on each attribute “in the mystery of the parable of Jesus’ humanity,” but with no corresponding section reflecting on each of the attributes from a pneumatological perspective. Those who recommend Krötke’s work clearly recognize that, like Barth, (in all of his theology) Krötke presents a “pervasive christological concentration which allows the scriptural identity of Jesus Christ to be the primary determinant of both the content and form of theological discourse.”²⁷⁴ Hence, Philip Ziegler labels Krötke’s theology as a “theology of the second article.”²⁷⁵ The Christ event is that which makes any speaking and thinking about God even possible for Krötke.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Holmes, “God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities,” 55.

²⁷² Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 37–45 and 47. Consider also Krötke’s discussion of Aquinas’ “metaphysical doctrine of the attributes of God” in *Gottes Klarheiten*, 49–59.

²⁷³ Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 14.

²⁷⁴ Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 11, cf. 9 and 12.

²⁷⁵ Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 11, 12 and 226. Cf. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes*, 156, 158 and 209. Elsewhere, Holmes writes, “Krötke’s account can be rightly described as nothing but an extended and sophisticated theological meditation on the glory of God shining forth in the fact of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6)” (“God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities,” 59).

²⁷⁶ Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 13–14 and 19–33; and Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 47 and 51.

At times the christological emphasis found among trinitarian theologians does not just sidestep but even hinders the development of a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. For example, using emphatic language, Krötke writes that “The New Testament is of the view that *we know enough* about God when we know the history of Jesus Christ,”²⁷⁷ and that “*speech cannot be about God* if it is not speech about Jesus.”²⁷⁸ Similarly, Torrance, in his doctrine of the triune God, writes that “*all authentic knowledge of God* is derived and understood in accordance with the incarnate reality of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, and is formulated in doctrinal coherence with Christology.”²⁷⁹ Jüngel too, clearly displays a christological emphasis, particularly on the passion and death of Christ. Hence, similar to his observations regarding Barth, Gunton senses in Jüngel “a question of the under-determination of the place of the Spirit, and therefore a weakness in conceiving the manner of the presence of God to the world.”²⁸⁰

One might expect the situation to be different in Moltmann’s doctrine of God, particularly given his critique of Barth’s pneumatology and Moltmann’s own emphasis

²⁷⁷ Krötke, *Der geschichtliche Gott*, 18 (emphasis added), as quoted in Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 48.

²⁷⁸ Krötke, “Kann ich von Jesus reden, wenn ich Gott meine?” 40 (emphasis added), as quoted in Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten*, 48.

²⁷⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 17 (emphasis added).

²⁸⁰ Gunton, “The Being and Attributes of God,” 22. Cf. Williams, “Word and Spirit,” 107. Dvorak also notes a “marginal role” for pneumatology in Jüngel’s doctrine of the Trinity, specifically (*Gott ist Liebe*, 335). Holmes questions Gunton’s assessment of Jüngel (*Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes*, 131–2). However, Holmes’ own conclusions seem to give weight to Gunton’s, since Holmes himself observes in Jüngel “a sustained attempt to explicate a doctrine of God’s being which is *controlled* by the events of Jesus’ passion and death” to the extent that “other events in the economy of salvation and portions of the biblical witness are eclipsed” (Holmes, “Eberhard Jüngel and Wolfe Krötke,” 160 [original emphasis]). The primary writings under discussion include Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*; Jüngel, *God’s Being is in Becoming*; and Jüngel, “Theses on the Relation of the Existence, Essence and Attributes of God.”

on the full personhood of the Holy Spirit.²⁸¹ However, this is simply not the case. If we turn again to Moltmann's critique of the doctrine of impassibility, we again find a christological emphasis within his doctrine of God and that the Spirit is inconspicuous. In *The Crucified God* it almost appears as though there are only two divine persons. As we have seen, Moltmann focuses on the relationship of the Father and Son in the event of the cross.²⁸² Moltmann attempts to fill this gap in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. Here he suggests that "Christ offered himself to God 'through the eternal Spirit' (Heb 9:14). . . . 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."²⁸³ With respect to the cross, the Spirit is the unity of the Father and Son. Nevertheless, though Moltmann speaks of the suffering of both the Father and the Son, he fails to speak of the suffering of the Spirit in this context. If one confesses the unity of the divine persons and their work, through the divine perichoresis (as Moltmann does) or otherwise, then one must also confess the suffering of the Spirit in light of the cross. Moltmann seems to have realized this as well, as he comes to affirm it in *The Way of Jesus Christ* and *The Spirit of Life*.²⁸⁴ However,

²⁸¹ Moltmann, "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit," 57–69 and Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 289–309.

²⁸² This is often noted. Newlands observes that "Moltmann does provide a fine account of the loving, suffering relationship between Father and Son" however "the material on the area of the Holy Spirit is decidedly thin" ("A Review of Moltmann's *The Crucified God*," 149). Braaten remarks, "Whereas the relations between the Father and the Son are spelled out in the event of the cross, the Spirit goes along for a free ride. Would not a binitarian concept of God work as well?" ("A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," 118). Cf. Jowers who, although writing well after Moltmann published *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, writes, "Moltmann ascribes to the Holy Spirit no role in the cross/resurrection event which requires the act of a distinct subject" ("The Theology of the Cross," 263).

²⁸³ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 82. Moltmann also makes a brief similar comment earlier in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 95.

²⁸⁴ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 174. This theme becomes clearer in *The Spirit of Life*. Moltmann writes, "The story of the suffering of the messianic Son of God is the story of the suffering of God's Spirit too" (*The Spirit of Life*, 64). Here Moltmann also further develops the theme that the Spirit leads and enables Jesus Christ to surrender himself to suffering (*The Spirit of Life*, 60–5). With much detail,

here Moltmann is drawing an implication regarding pneumatology (i.e. that the Spirit suffers) on the basis of Christology, more so than a pneumatological insight regarding the doctrine of God. Furthermore, as is typical of Christian theology, this pneumatological insight, while having implications for the doctrine of God, remains isolated in a work on pneumatology and has not been integrated into the general doctrine of the attributes of God.

It is fair to say that trinitarian theologians have moved beyond Gunton's critique of the Christian history of the doctrine of God with its "most general appeal to dogmatic christology" and neglect the doctrine of the Trinity in general.²⁸⁵ However, to this point trinitarian theologians have still focused on revising the doctrine of God from a christological perspective. Following historic trinitarian theology, when contemporary trinitarian theologians do discuss the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of God, it is usually not concerning the attributes of God, but rather concerning the Spirit's transcendent activity (i.e. the Spirit's life in the immanent Trinity) in relation to both the Father and Son. That is, they focus on discussing the procession of the Holy Spirit within the immanent Trinity and whether or not the *filioque* is legitimate.²⁸⁶ Related to this is the concern among trinitarian theologians to affirm the full personhood of the Spirit and to affirm that the Spirit is more than (if at all) the bond of love between the Father and Son. Though trinitarian theology rightly affirms the divinity of the Spirit, trinitarian theology has only

Linahan also traces and expounds the development of Moltmann's reflections on the Spirit in relationship to the suffering of Christ in her "The Grieving Spirit," 32–42.

²⁸⁵ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 15.

²⁸⁶ For example, Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 178–87. This is often the focus in pneumatologies as well, for example, Hendry's chapter "The Holy Spirit and God" in *The Holy Spirit*, 30–52.

begun considering the implications of the Spirit's economic activity for the doctrine of the divine attributes. There are some pneumatological insights regarding the attributes of God found among the trinitarian theologians (future chapters draw on some of these), however, they are infrequent and one generally has to look hard to find them because they are so few and far between. Shults and Colin Gunton have made particular strides toward integrating pneumatological insights into their doctrines of God.²⁸⁷ However, in many cases pneumatological insights do not take much of a controlling or determining factor but tend to be add-ons, confirming what has already been discussed from a christological perspective. Jenson rightly comments, "The common factor in Western problems with the Spirit, one may suggest, is a tendency of the Spirit simply to disappear from theology's description of God's triune action, often just when he might be expected to have the leading role."²⁸⁸

Even though the revival of trinitarian theology may be regarded, with Stanley Grenz, as "one of the most far-reaching theological developments of the [twentieth] century,"²⁸⁹ it seems that trinitarian theology should reach further (or closer) within its own vicinity in the doctrine of God, given that more work needs to be done to impact the doctrine of the divine attributes from a pneumatological perspective. This book joins and builds upon the contemporary efforts of trinitarian theology as it maintains that

²⁸⁷ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 205–93 and throughout Gunton, *Act and Being*, especially pages 106–7.

²⁸⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:153.

²⁸⁹ Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 1.

pneumatology provides a fundamental way to contribute to the contemporary revision of classical theism.²⁹⁰

5. Conclusion

This chapter has observed three contemporary attempts to revise classical theism, all of which result in a God who is presented as more immanent than the God of classical theism. We have seen that process theology proceeds primarily with a philosophical critique of classical theism and evangelical theology proceeds primarily with a biblical critique of classical theism. Contemporary developments in trinitarian theology illustrate the possibility of revising the doctrine of the divine attributes from a trinitarian (including pneumatological) perspective. Even so, trinitarian theology proceeds largely from a christological standpoint. While there are many valuable critiques of classical theism within the perspectives examined above that support the conclusions reached in this book, this survey has revealed that they have not fully developed a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. The need for further development itself provides a reason to pursue this line of theological reflection. Chapter four will explore in more depth why this pneumatological approach should be taken as an avenue into the doctrine of God as a complement to current trinitarian approaches.

²⁹⁰ I first made this proposal in Gabriel, “Beyond the Cross,” 106–10.

CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDING A PNEUMATOLOGICAL APPROACH

1. Introduction

Before exploring specific divine attributes from a pneumatological perspective, this chapter first explains in more detail why this approach is necessary. As the previous chapter exhibits, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes has not been well developed. This in itself provides one reason that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God should be pursued. At the same time, however, one might wonder if there is a valid reason that it has not yet been explored to a great extent or whether there is sufficient reason for taking pneumatology as an avenue into the doctrine of the divine attributes. This chapter responds to such questions as it provides the basis for a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God. This chapter proceeds by first considering hindrances to a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God, then the rationale for such an approach, and, lastly, this chapter responds to potential objections to this proposal.

2. Hindrances to a Pneumatological Approach

Recognizing hindrances to a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes is important for understanding the context of the contribution of this

book. In addition, addressing possible objections helps overcome false presuppositions and thereby paves the way for one to embrace pneumatological revisions to classical theism. A number of aspects of the Christian theological tradition have inhibited, even suppressed, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. Certainly one of these aspects has been the influence of philosophical theology upon the doctrine of God. This has already been expressed in chapter two's discussion of classical theism, as well as chapter three's discussion of the philosophically driven theology of process panentheism. An additional aspect of Christian theology that somewhat hinders a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes is the history of pneumatology itself. Before turning to consider how this is the case, we will first consider another impediment to a pneumatological approach which has already been alluded to (within the previous discussion of evangelical theology), namely, certain approaches to the biblical text when exploring the doctrine of God's attributes.

Although it sounds counter intuitive, certain methods of approaching the biblical text in systematic theology have forestalled a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God. A common critique of classical theism is that the classical doctrine of God's reliance on philosophical categories led to a loss of the dynamic vision of God found in the biblical narratives. As chapter three observed, this critique often comes from Evangelicals, who, John Franke observes, have traditionally exhibited a "concordance" conception of theology."¹ This understanding of theological method views theology as an attempt to arrange scriptural statements in an orderly and systematic fashion. Given

¹ Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 88. Franke observes, "Although this approach to theology is clearly still the dominant paradigm in traditional evangelical circles, there are signs that this situation is beginning to change" (89). Elsewhere, Grenz and Franke also refer to the "concordance model of theology" as a "rationalist approach to theological method" (*Beyond Foundationalism*, 13 and 15).

the prominence of this approach in evangelical doctrines of God, one might say that in their doctrines of the divine attributes Evangelicals typically aim to engage in ‘biblical’ theology more so than they aim to engage in trinitarian theology (which, of course, also involves biblical interpretation).² Although Evangelicals rightfully turn to the Scriptures in their critiques of classical theism, following the concordance model of theology often causes Evangelicals to neglect the full trinitarian reality of God as portrayed in the Bible and, along with that, hinders them from formulating a pneumatological doctrine of God.

Following the concordance model of theology, when Evangelicals discuss the doctrine of the divine attributes (though they are not alone on this) they tend to focus their attention on texts which refer to ‘God’ or ‘the Lord’ when discussing the divine attributes. The ‘problem’ (if one may call it that) with focusing on such texts, is that in the biblical witness ‘God’ may refer to God in general, but it most frequently refers to what trinitarian theology specifies as God the Father. In Johannine literature one finds the tendency to speak of the three divine ‘persons’ as Father, Son/Jesus, and Spirit. This terminology is largely limited to the Johannine corpus however. By contrast, Pauline literature tends to describe this threefold relationship as God, Jesus/Lord, and Spirit, although Paul does seem to exhibit trinitarian presuppositions.³ Accordingly, in an attempt to remain faithful to the biblical text, theologians engaging in the doctrine of the Trinity will speak of God’s threefold relationship as Father, Son, Spirit, as well as God,

² By ‘biblical’ theology I mean founded on Scripture, with frequent citation and exposition of Scripture, and largely attempting to use terms found in Scripture (not the academic discipline of biblical theology). Cross speaks of ‘biblical theology’ in a similar manner with respect to Williams’ systematic theology. Cross writes, “I would contend that Williams’s work is really a biblical theology, not a systematic theology. . . . A biblical agenda is important as a foundation, but a systematic theology . . . must do more” (“Theology of the Word and the Spirit,” 118 and 122, cf. 127).

³ Gabriel, “Pauline Pneumatology,” 347–62.

Jesus, Spirit. Confusion can arise because the term ‘God’ is used in trinitarian theology to refer to the divine life in general as well as to the divine person of the Father. Exhibiting this confusion, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen describes the doctrine of God as focusing “on interpretations of what in trinitarian language is called Father.”⁴ And he does this even though one of the themes that flows throughout his book is how theologians have historically represented God as triune in their theologies.⁵ To restate the problem, first, using biblical terms, one may speak of ‘God’ as God the Father in particular. Second, in a trinitarian doctrine of God however, a doctrine of God, at least since the contemporary revival of trinitarian theology post-Barth, must include the consideration that God is in fact *three* divine persons; namely, God is the Father, the Son, and (and this is the point I wish to push here) the Holy Spirit.

While Evangelicals are trinitarian, they tend to be so only in confession. That is, much of evangelical theology is not ‘trinitarian theology,’ if ‘trinitarian theology’ is defined as the doctrine of the Trinity in general *and* how this doctrine affects and shapes other theologies—one can be a ‘trinitarian’ (which more or less means ‘Christian’ these days), without doing trinitarian theology.⁶ Paul Metzger rightly notes that trinitarian theology is not just a restatement of the doctrine of the Trinity but also, “a revisiting of systematic theology in view of the Trinity” or, in other words, “a constructive theological enterprise that recovers and extends the Trinitarian tradition in order to reshape classic systematic loci in particular ways.”⁷ Sometimes Evangelicals engage in trinitarian

⁴ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 7.

⁵ Similarly, Spittler, *God the Father*, includes a chapter on God as Trinity.

⁶ Sanders, “Trinity Talk,” 264 and Schwöbel, “The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology,” 1.

⁷ Metzger, “What Difference Does the Trinity Make?” 7.

theology. However, inasmuch as Evangelicals do not regularly make trinitarian appeals in the doctrine of God (nor pneumatological appeals, specifically) they do not do trinitarian theology. My point is that while trinitarian theology is (most often) biblical, not all 'biblical' theology is necessarily trinitarian. A trinitarian doctrine of God should remain consistent, nevertheless, with the presentation of 'the Lord' or 'God' in general found in the Bible, since the doctrine of the Trinity itself is said to flow from and be consistent with the thought of the biblical authors. If the Bible supports the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is claimed, then the Bible supports a trinitarian and pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. In spite of this, even though Evangelicals focus on Scripture when doing theology, the traditional evangelical concordance approach to theology (and the doctrine of God in particular) has hindered and continues to hinder Evangelicals from integrating pneumatological insights into the doctrine of God.

One might be surprised to find that an additional inhibitor to a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes can be found within the overall thrust of the entire Christian tradition of pneumatology itself. As noted in chapter three, when theologians do attempt to overcome the limitation of speaking of God in general or God the Father alone with respect to their doctrines of God, they almost always do so with reference to Christology, not pneumatology; the Spirit is regularly overlooked when discussing the divine attributes. In this, theologians have fallen prey to the same tendency that is found in patristic theology, namely, the hesitancy to speak of the Holy Spirit as 'God.' Though the inclusion of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Creed seems to presuppose the divinity of the Spirit, early patristic theology focused on christological issues. For centuries, in an attempt to remain biblical (the Bible does not explicitly call

the Holy Spirit ‘God’), the ancient heroes of the doctrine of the Trinity were hesitant to speak of the divinity of the Spirit, even though the Spirit was part of the creedal confession and named alongside God the Father and the Son. As Kilian McDonnell observes, the patristic fathers wished to continue with the same imprecise language regarding the Holy Spirit that is found in Scripture. In the end, they lost this battle. Those who denied the divinity of the Spirit forced the Church fathers to affirm the deity of the Spirit in the fourth century.⁸

In response to those who denied the Spirit’s divinity, many theologians began arguing for the divinity of the Spirit indirectly, but, for numerous reasons (especially Church unity)⁹ they refused to assert outright that the Spirit was *theos* (‘God’). The Nicene Creed of 325 AD had explicitly affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by affirming that he was “very God” and *homoousious* (of the same being/substance) with the Father. The patristic fathers were generally not as explicit about the Holy Spirit. Athanasius (ca. 296–373), making a rather bold step around the year 360, was the first to use the term *homoousious* with respect to the Spirit, but this was specifically concerning the Spirit’s relationship to the Son, not the Father.¹⁰ This did, of course, *indirectly* imply that the Spirit was *homoousious* with the Father, since the Son had already been confessed as *homoousious* with the Father. Furthermore, though Athanasius did not apply the term *theos* directly to the Spirit, he came close when he

⁸ McDonnell describes “Losing the Battle to Stay with the Imprecision of Scripture” (chapter 8), in *The Other Hand of God*, 71–9. Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:29–45.

⁹ Edwards describes how this was the case for Basil of Caesarea in particular (*Breath of Life*, 22). Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:74 and McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 138.

¹⁰ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 127–9.

wrote that the Spirit is “confessed as God with the Word.”¹¹ Another example may be found in Basil (ca. 330–379) who, writing after Athanasius, *indirectly* placed the Spirit on the same ontological level as the Father and the Son by using a doxology that stated that the Spirit was glorified together with the Father and the Son.¹²

Some theologians were more explicit about the divinity of the Spirit. Basil’s brother Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–395) affirmed that “the Holy Spirit is Divine, and is to be called so.”¹³ Even more explicitly, their friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389) expressed that the Spirit “is God.”¹⁴ Granted, in the end, the council that responded to those who denied the divinity of Holy Spirit, the Council of Constantinople (381), used less explicit language, following closer to the thought of Basil. The 150 fathers present at the council were reluctant to go beyond the original Creed coming from the council of Nicaea (325) which simply stated “[and we believe] in the Holy Spirit.” Similar to the doxology that Basil employed, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed speaks of the Holy Spirit as “the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets.”¹⁵ Though the ‘Lord’ could refer to the ‘Lord’ (Adonai) of the Septuagint (cf. 2 Cor 3:17), McDonnell notes that the wide use of this term in the Hellenistic world suggests that

¹¹ Athanasius, *To Serapion*, 1.31.

¹² Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 1.3 (p. 17). Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit* from 374–375 AD. Basil’s most explicit affirmation, which is made only once in *On the Holy Spirit*, comes when he affirms that the Spirit “is divine in nature” *On the Holy Spirit*, 23.54 (p. 86).

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Holy Spirit,” 316.

¹⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, “On the Holy Spirit,” *Oration* 31.8; 31.10 (p. 28).

¹⁵ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 155. McDonnell also notes similarities between Athanasius’ writing and the text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, but (as McDonnell also notes) Athanasius had been more explicit than the creed (157).

applying ‘Lord’ to the Spirit was not sufficient to refer decisively to the Spirit’s divinity. Rather, the words that do suggest the Spirit’s divinity are those that refer to the Spirit being worshiped together with the Father and the Son. As McDonnell suggests, “The one who is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son is evidently divine”¹⁶—evident, though not stated outright. I do not mean to suggest that the patristic fathers were being ambiguous regarding the divinity of the Spirit.¹⁷ Catherine Mowry LaCugna rightly notes (with respect to Basil in particular), “The Holy Spirit must be divine if the Spirit can be worshiped with Father and Son.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, there was clearly a hesitancy (again, sometimes for good reasons) to speak of the Spirit as ‘God’ and this hesitancy has remained throughout the Christian tradition in a particular way. That is, when one generally thinks of ‘God,’ the Spirit does not immediately come to mind. More specifically, the Spirit is generally neglected when discussing the doctrine of the divine attributes, even though this is done by those who confess that God is triune, and that, with this confession, the Spirit is indeed God.

That the tradition of pneumatology hinders a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes is true not only of the patristic era. It is also true of the remainder of Christian theological history. In particular, in the history of Christian theology one does not find a well developed pneumatology. Writing in 1985, McDonnell

¹⁶ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 157.

¹⁷ In contrast, Badcock writes, “At best, we have to conclude that Constantinople’s pneumatology is ambiguous and that the felt need to define the status of the Son more clearly than the Spirit effectively highlights the importance of the Son over against the Spirit in Christian theology” (*Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 61).

¹⁸ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 118.

suggested, “Anyone writing on pneumatology is hardly burdened by the past.”¹⁹ Hence, regarding the history of Christian theology, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Forgotten God and German theologians speak of *Geistvergessenheit* in the Christian tradition (forgottenness or even oblivion of the Spirit).²⁰ Regarding this, in his 1897 encyclical, Pope Leo XIII wrote,

Perchance there are still to be found among them, even nowadays, some, who if asked, as were those of old by St. Paul the Apostle, whether they have received the Holy Ghost, might answer in like manner: “We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2).²¹

One apparent cause of the forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit within the development of pneumatology comes from the Augustinian tradition. In relational terms, Augustine speaks of the divine persons as ‘love,’ ‘lover,’ and ‘loved,’ the Spirit being the love that ‘couples’ or ‘binds’ together the Father and Son.²² Although Augustine does not use the title ‘bond of love,’ the Western tradition has frequently applied this title to the Spirit, suggesting that the Holy Spirit is the unity between the Father and the Son.²³ This, theologians claim, has led to a depersonalized understanding of the Holy Spirit. Numerous trinitarian theologians would agree with Jürgen Moltmann that “if the Spirit is

¹⁹ McDonnell, “Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit,” 191.

²⁰ Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person*, vii.

²¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Divinum illius munus*, 10.

²² Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.14, cf. XV.10.

²³ Osborne observes that it was Aquinas who, many years later, introduced the notion of the Holy Spirit as the “bond of love” or the “bond of the Father and the Son.” Aquinas, however, attributes these ideas of ‘bond’ to Augustine and Pseudo Dionysius (Osborne, “The *nexus amoris* in Augustine’s Trinity,” 309).

only termed the unity of what is separated, then he loses every centre of activity.”²⁴

Hence, it is claimed, the Spirit has been neglected in theology.

A further contributor to the reluctance to speak of the Spirit is said to come from the work of the Spirit and the nature of the Spirit himself. Theologians recognize the self-effacing nature of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the Word, but does not manifest himself, nor draw attention to himself. That is, the Spirit is the “Shy Member of the Trinity,”²⁵ who does not make a spectacle of himself, but comes to bring glory to Christ (John 16:14) and that one might confess “Jesus Christ is Lord” to the glory of God the Father (1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11). The Spirit is often seen as the one believers pray ‘in’ (Eph 6:18), but not the one they pray ‘to’ (Matt 6:9). Furthermore, the Spirit appears to be invisible and ‘faceless’ and, unlike Christ, lacking an image (cf. Col 1:15).²⁶ After all, the Spirit is the Holy ‘Ghost.’ These are some of the reasons that the Spirit has not played a prominent role in the history of theology.²⁷

Is it fair, however, to speak of the Holy Spirit as the Forgotten God? A number of historical theologians have desired to correct this exaggeration and have suggested that there has always been some in the Church who have reflected upon the Spirit.

Commenting on the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit through to the end of

²⁴ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 142. Likewise, Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 37. Though it may not have been the intention of this theology, Edwards correctly observes that at the “popular level, the idea of the Spirit as the mutual love between Father and Son has been misunderstood and reified, resulting in an inadequate view of the Spirit of God as something impersonal that exists between the other two trinitarian persons” (*Breath of Life*, 149–50).

²⁵ The subtitle of Bruner and Hordern, *The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity*. Compare the comments of Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 63.

²⁶ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 223; Gaybba, *The Spirit of Love*, 136; Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:5 and 15.

²⁷ Johnson (*She Who Is*, 128–31), Kärkkäinen (“Theology and Ecclesiology of the Spirit,” 68–9), Berkhof (*The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 11), and Congar (*I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:160–4) identify historical and theological reasons for this forgetfulness.

the fifth century, J. Patout Burns and Gerald Fagin observe, “The Spirit, at least in the patristic era, hardly deserves the title, ‘The Forgotten God.’”²⁸ Similarly, Elizabeth Dreyer wishes to emphasize that the Spirit was not forgotten in the medieval Western Church. She “challenges received conclusions about the minimal place the Holy Spirit has held in the tradition.”²⁹

Dreyer’s investigation, however, highlights how the Spirit was still neglected in doctrine and theology, given that she finds her sources not in dogmatic writings, but in commentaries, sermons, prayers, and letters where authors reflected on their experience of the Spirit.³⁰ One may add to this that the Western Church has a history of suppressing the Spirit at times.³¹ People, especially those with ecclesiastical power, can sometimes be uncomfortable with movements of the Spirit. Such suppression may be found from the condemnations of Montanism in the second century, to certain responses to the Spirit in contemporary Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement.³² Given these observations, it might seem that the Holy Spirit was never the Forgotten God, but certainly neglected, at least in doctrine, and even suppressed. This is not to suggest that the historical situation is not as grave as contemporary theologians have made it out to be. It is essential to realize that, as McDonnell correctly remarks,

The issue is not pneumatological nose counting (how many times the Spirit is mentioned). The issue is the integrity of the theological vision. One can have a superabundance of references to the Spirit and still have a serious

²⁸ Burns and Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, 234.

²⁹ Dreyer, “Medieval Mystics and Saints,” 125.

³⁰ Dreyer, “Medieval Mystics and Saints,” 125.

³¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 11. Compare the remarks by Johnson in *She Who Is*, 128–31.

³² Tabbernee, “Catholic-Montanist Conflict,” 97–116.

pneumatological deficit because Pneumatology has not been integrated into the theological vision in a way that is appropriate.³³

Clearly, this integration has been lacking. In this sense, the development of Western Christian theology after the patristic era continued to neglect pneumatology.

Even though Eastern Orthodoxy has often been credited with preserving the Spirit in their traditions, it is worth noting that certain Eastern theologians are also critical of the place of the Spirit in their doctrine. John Zizioulas, for example, acknowledges that regarding the effort to provide a balance between pneumatology and Christology “Orthodox theology has no ready-made answers to offer to the problems at hand” and that “Orthodox theology needs to work closely together with Western theology if it is to be really helpful to itself and to others.”³⁴ It seems that even in the Eastern Church the doctrine of the Spirit has not been well developed.

3. The Growing Place for Pneumatology in Doctrine

The forgetfulness of the Church regarding the Holy Spirit is illustrated by Hendrikus Berkhof’s remarks. Writing what may be regarded as a landmark in contemporary pneumatology, Berkhof remarked in 1964, “The efforts of many theologians are needed to fill what is still more or less a vacuum in the dogmatics of the contemporary churches.”³⁵ He complained that there was little written on the Spirit in

³³ McDonnell, “Response to Bernd Jochen Hilberath,” 295.

³⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 126 (he is speaking specifically with respect to ecclesiology in this context). Rogers supports Zizioulas’ when he observes, “The strongest case for an apophatic theology of the Spirit comes from the East” (*After the Spirit*, 23). Hence Rogers concludes that the Orthodox Church is not going to bring the pneumatological golden age one might hope for (24).

³⁵ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 11. Similarly, in 1956 Hendry noted, “It has become almost a convention that those who undertake to write about the Holy Spirit should begin by deploring the neglect of this doctrine in the thought and life of the Church today” (*The Holy Spirit*, 11).

European languages other than English, and that even here it was primarily limited to devotional or semi-theological works.³⁶ Nevertheless, as noted in chapter three, contemporary theology has seen a revival of trinitarian theology. Somewhat of a revival in pneumatology has come along with this reaffirmation that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since Berkhof's work, many theologians have taken note of the neglect of the Spirit in theology and works on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit have been legion. With the rise of Pentecostalism globally, ecumenical discussions (which, in conversation with Eastern Orthodoxy have brought the *filioque* discussion to the fore), and certain cultural changes, interest in pneumatology is on the rise.³⁷ As of 1985 McDonnell still felt justified to speak of the Spirit as the 'Cinderella' of theology, but now (as of 2003) he agrees that the situation has changed.³⁸ Now the shy Holy Spirit is said to be found wherever there is life.³⁹ As the Holy Spirit has been found to be at work throughout the world, one can even claim that theologians have, to some extent, found the face of the Spirit who was thought to be faceless. Leonardo Boff, for example, finds that the Spirit's "action flows into human actions, giving them power and making them truly creative."⁴⁰ There is still a sense that the Spirit remains hidden behind humanity. Boff, however, moves beyond this claiming that, in as much as the Spirit is found in the midst of liberation, "the Spirit *takes on a thousand faces*. . . . Its divine face is that of transfigured

³⁶ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 10.

³⁷ Pinnock, "Recovery of the Holy Spirit," 5 and Hinze and Dabney, "Introduction," 17–22.

³⁸ McDonnell, "Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit," 191–3. The idea of the Spirit as the 'Cinderella' of theology comes from Sirks, "The Cinderella of Theology," 77–89. For McDonnell's remarks published in 2003 see *The Other Hand of God*, 2.

³⁹ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*.

⁴⁰ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 208.

or humiliated humanity.”⁴¹ Writing from a different perspective, Rowan Williams finds the “face of Spirit” in “redeemed human faces.”⁴²

Beyond simply the writing of pneumatologies, there has also recently been an advent of what is often referred to as pneumatological theology or a theology of the third article (given the place of the confession of the Spirit in the creeds). In contrast to pneumatology, which is primarily concerned with the person of the Holy Spirit and his work in the world, pneumatological theology is theology that focuses on understanding and exploring how pneumatology affects, supplements, and might reform other doctrines. Amos Yong defines pneumatological theology as “a comprehensive theological vision starting from and informed explicitly by pneumatology.”⁴³ Theologians engaged in such theology often remind readers (I suspect in large part they aim to convince those who have followed Karl Barth’s christological focus) that near the end of his life, even Barth called for just such a theological project. He anticipated:

the possibility of a theology of the third article, a theology where the Holy Spirit would dominate and be decisive. Everything that one believes, reflects, and says about God the Father and God the Son in understanding the first and second articles would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit. . . . I give only indications of what I occasionally dream of regarding the future of theology.⁴⁴

The realization of Barth’s dream is still in its developing stages. After a few decades, in 1991, Moltmann observed “if we look critically at the actual results of [contemporary pneumatology], we are bound to conclude that in sober fact, although light has been

⁴¹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 209 (emphasis added).

⁴² Williams, “Word and Spirit,” 125.

⁴³ Yong, “The Spirit and Creation,” 64.

⁴⁴ Barth, “Nachwort,” 311, as translated in McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 209. Also translated in Barth, *Theology of Schleiermacher*, 278. Cf. Busch, *Karl Barth*, 494.

thrown on a whole number of individual aspects, a new paradigm in pneumatology has not yet emerged.”⁴⁵

One landmark work since that time is Clark Pinnock’s *Flame of Love*, which, though a pneumatology (as the subtitle *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* suggests) is in large part a work in pneumatological theology. Pinnock’s *Flame of Love* may be considered an eclectic work in pneumatology in as much as his reflections do end up forming a constructive vision of the Spirit.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the main focus of the book is examining how the doctrine of the Spirit makes contributions to the doctrines of the Church, salvation, Christ, and so forth—seeing how “the Spirit challenges theology at numerous points.”⁴⁷ Unlike theologians who follow him in engaging in pneumatological theology, Pinnock does have a chapter that offers a discussion on the doctrine of God in which he examines the place of the Spirit in the life of the Trinity. However, Pinnock’s discussion does not explore the attributes of God from a pneumatological perspective. Rather, he is concerned with how a social doctrine of the Trinity shapes one’s understanding of the Spirit and helps to establish the distinct personhood of the Spirit, rather than being concerned with how one’s understanding of the Spirit shapes one’s understanding of God. Accordingly, commenting on *Flame of Love*, Terry Cross observes, “The doctrine of God offers us a basis for understanding the Spirit in the ‘liveliness of the Trinity’

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 1. Moltmann’s previous writings *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, *God in Creation*, and *The Way of Jesus Christ*, may themselves be seen as efforts to work out this paradigm.

⁴⁶ Approaching the end of his book, Pinnock invites his readers to view the Spirit as “the bond of love in the triune relationality, as the ecstasy of sheer life overflowing into a significant creation, as the power of creation and new creation, as the power of incarnation and atonement, as the power of new community and union with God, and as the power drawing the whole world into the truth of Jesus” (*Flame of Love*, 247).

⁴⁷ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 11. Perhaps one can say that contemporary pneumatology has realized that the Spirit belongs everywhere. That is, pneumatology becomes pneumatological theology.

within ‘loving relationality.’”⁴⁸ This is primarily an instance of the social Trinity shaping Pinnock’s understanding of the Spirit rather than his understanding of the Spirit shaping his understanding of who God is. In other words, Pinnock’s approach (as valid as it is) is the opposite of what I am proposing in this book.

Pneumatological theology also appears to be the emerging paradigm for Pentecostal theology. Historically, Pentecostal theology has focused on the issues of Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, and spiritual gifts. That is, the focus has been on interpreting certain experiences of the Spirit. More recently, however, Pentecostals have moved beyond the task of discussing their traditional distinctive beliefs (though still being discussed) and are exploring what their understanding of the Spirit and experience of the Spirit implies for the whole of their theology. Among these works one particularly notes the recent writings of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Amos Yong, and Frank Macchia.⁴⁹ These authors have focused on soteriology, ecclesiology, ecumenism, and theologies of creation, religions, and mission, but not on the doctrine of God’s attributes. Pentecostals have certainly shown concern for the doctrine of God, but on account of the historical division between Oneness Pentecostals and their counterparts, the discussion has focused on the doctrine of the Trinity and has taken place outside of the paradigm of pneumatological theology.⁵⁰ In general, Pentecostals do profoundly realize that the Spirit

⁴⁸ Cross, “Pinnock’s *Flame of Love*,” 10, with quotes from Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 21 (Cross himself follows the same approach as Pinnock when he discusses the Trinity and the Holy Spirit in his, “The Holy Spirit,” 94–7). Nevertheless, Pinnock’s pneumatology does contribute to his view of God’s personal relationality.

⁴⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*; Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*; and Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*. As well see the numerous articles by various authors in *Pneuma* and the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. Most, if not all, of these theologians would affirm that Pinnock’s writings have had a significant influence on their thought.

⁵⁰ For example, Yong, “Oneness and Trinity,” chapter 5 in *The Spirit Poured Out*, 203–34.

they experience in their worship and devotion is God, but Pentecostals have not adequately worked out the implications of this truth when it comes to the doctrine of the divine attributes.

The Spirit, of course, is not the concern of Pentecostals alone. Others are also developing pneumatological theology. Denis Edwards (Roman Catholic) and D. Lyle Dabney (Wesleyan) are among those who have written on some of the same issues from a pneumatological perspective.⁵¹ While the contribution of all of these authors has been helpful in a number of areas of pneumatological theology, none has specifically attempted to do what might be referred to as *pneumatological theology proper* (i.e. a pneumatological doctrine of God). That is, these authors have not offered a sustained discussion of how pneumatology affects one's understanding of God (theology proper), particularly the attributes of God. The same may be said of general pneumatologies. Although containing numerous pneumatological insights concerning the doctrine of God, sometimes even explicitly acknowledged, these insights remain isolated in pneumatology, not being integrated into the doctrine of God. In the coming chapters of this book I follow the lead of contemporary Pentecostal and pneumatological theology by drawing insights from pneumatology into a sustained discussion of the doctrine of the divine attributes.

With the rise of contemporary pneumatology numerous theologians were identifying the Spirit as the Forgotten God. We have seen that this title overemphasizes the situation that theologians were speaking of—since the Spirit was not completely

⁵¹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*. Dabney's writings includes a series of lectures he delivered in Canberra, Australia which are published in Preece and Pickard, ed., *Starting with the Spirit*. See also Dabney, "Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit," 154–62 and "Why Should the Last Be First?" 240–61.

forgotten—although it does give a picture of how the Spirit was neglected in doctrine and even suppressed. Clearly the Spirit has been brought to the fore in the writings of contemporary pneumatologies and pneumatological theologies. Nevertheless, some theologians writing on the Spirit still recognize the need for further development in this area. For example, as recently as 2007, Cross has commented, “While more is being written on the Spirit nowadays, I remain unconvinced that it reaches sufficient depth to account for much.”⁵² Regardless of whether or not one agrees with this assessment, one may still accurately apply the title ‘Forgotten God’ to the Spirit in the sense that the Spirit has frequently been forgotten when theologians discuss the doctrine of the divine attributes, as the Spirit is frequently overlooked. As the previous chapter noted, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes has often been ignored in contemporary theology, even at times within the field of trinitarian theology. We have seen that with the revival of trinitarian theology the Son of God is regularly considered by merging christological considerations into the doctrine of God. However, the same cannot be said concerning pneumatology. A pneumatological deficit remains in the doctrine of the divine attributes. It seems the Spirit, in this area, has too often remained the Forgotten God.

4. Rationale for a Pneumatological Approach to the Doctrine of God

Even though classical theism and contemporary theology have not significantly developed a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God, these theologies do provide many insights that serve as a basis for this project and even impulses towards this

⁵² Cross “The Holy Spirit,” 105, n. 2.

project. Overall, the most obvious reason (at least it seems that it *should* have been obvious) that pneumatological perspectives for the doctrine of the divine attributes should be developed is that the Holy Spirit is God. As much as the Holy Spirit may be the Forgotten God, the fact is that the Holy Spirit is still God. And, if this is the case, then the attributes of the Spirit should be considered when one seeks to understand who God is. In addition to an observation of the deity of the Spirit, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes should be developed largely for reasons arising from the doctrine of the Trinity, namely, the triune identity of God, the unity of the divine persons, and the correspondence of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. Furthermore, pneumatology should be integrated into the doctrine of God because of the general interdependence of Christian doctrine, and because it will help to make the doctrine of God more coherent with Christian experience. I consider the issues arising from the doctrine of the Trinity first.

a) The Triune Identity of God

The doctrine of the Trinity provides an explanation regarding the identity of God. It provides the answer to the question, “Who is God?” When one asks about the attributes of ‘God’ without exploring the identity of who that God is, then there is a latent philosophical presupposition regarding the meaning of God.⁵³ And, of course, incorrect presuppositions can cause problems when forming the doctrine of God. As for the Christian tradition, although it has sometimes been neglected, the tradition has always affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity and, implicitly, the triune identity of God. In the patristic era, Gregory of Nazianzus clarified, “When I say God, I mean Father, Son and

⁵³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:393.

Holy Ghost.”⁵⁴ Later, in the Reformation period, John Calvin declared, “Unless we grasp these [three persons], only the bare empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.”⁵⁵ In contemporary theology, John Zizioulas insists, “Outside the Trinity there is no God.”⁵⁶ The affirmation of the triune identity of God has been consistent throughout the Christian tradition. In fact, it could be argued that the affirmation of the triune identity of God is more ‘classical’ to Christian doctrine than classical theism’s expression of any of the attributes of God. Certainly it was the doctrine of the Trinity that was first expressed in creedal form, not a list of the attributes of God. Accordingly, in his chapter on “The ‘Classical’ Portrait” of the doctrine of God, Barry Callen spends significantly more time discussing the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, than he does discussing the attributes of God.⁵⁷ As a result of this consistent historical affirmation of the triune identity of God, contemporary trinitarian theologians, like Christoph Schwöbel, have correctly argued, that the triune reality “must be conceived as the gateway through which the theological exposition of all that can be said about God in Christian theology must pass.”⁵⁸ Even more emphatically, Thomas Torrance proclaims, “In other words, the ‘Trinity’ is not just a way of thinking about

⁵⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, “On the Theophany,” *Oration* 38.3 (p. 347).

⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.2.

⁵⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 41.

⁵⁷ Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 59–81. Compare Bray’s comments in, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted?” 109.

⁵⁸ Schwöbel, “The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology,” 6.

God, for the one true God is actually and intrinsically Triune and *cannot be truly conceived otherwise.*⁵⁹

One might suppose that the implication from this is that the doctrine of the attributes of God must come *after* the doctrine of the Trinity, in contrast to the majority of Christian doctrine. However, that would not be the appropriate conclusion. As Anselm Min accurately concludes regarding the relationship of the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of the attributes of God,

The order between the two is certainly not as decisive as the inherent adequacy, originality, and fruitfulness of the basic concepts used in both treatises in order to account for the unity of the divine essence and the trinity of the divine persons in ways that are faithful to the biblical and theological tradition as well as philosophically coherent. . . . It is a question of devising concepts that will do justice to both unity and trinity and employing them as resourcefully and fruitfully as possible in the actual elaboration of the treatises.⁶⁰

Hence, the appropriate conclusion to be drawn from the affirmation of the triune identity of God for the attributes of God is simply that the doctrine of the divine attributes (wherever it might occur in a systematic theology) must adequately account for and respond to the fact that God is triune. More significantly for the thesis of this book, given that the triune identity of God is Father, Son, and *Holy Spirit*, the Christian doctrine of God should include, and even must include, pneumatological reflection concerning the doctrine of the divine attributes. If the “Trinity is the Christian way of capturing the fullness of the divine reality,”⁶¹ then many current doctrines of the attributes of God are

⁵⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 12 (emphasis added). Slightly less emphatically, Vanhoozer attests, “The Trinity is not merely the appendix to the doctrine of God, then, but the primary and distinctive way in which Christians should think about God” (“The Triune God of the Gospel,” 26).

⁶⁰ Min, *Paths to the Triune God*, 281–2.

⁶¹ Quoting Callen, *Discerning the Divine*, 172.

missing aspects of this ‘fullness’ and one must supplement them with pneumatological perspectives for the doctrine of the divine attributes.

b) The Unity of the Divine Persons

While the doctrine of the Trinity expresses the identity of God, this doctrine also affirms the unity of the divine persons, hence theologians speak of God as the *triune* God.

This unity of the divine persons provides another trinitarian reason that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes should be pursued.

Wolfhart Pannenberg notes that the triune identity of God was established very early on in Christian theology and that for the majority of Christian history the central problem for the doctrine of the Trinity has not been how to affirm the three persons as divine, but rather how to explain the unity of the divine persons.⁶² Theologians have done this in a number of ways. The incorrect (but not unusual) way of explaining this is to say that the Western Church has found the unity of God in the ‘substance’ or ‘essence’ (*ousia*) of God, while the Eastern Church has emphasized that God the Father (as the eternal origin of the Son and Holy Spirit) is the basis for the unity of the Trinity. In reality, both Western and Eastern theologians express the unity of God in a variety of ways.

As an example, let us consider Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity. Augustine’s work on the Trinity has arguably had the greatest impact historically on the doctrine of God in the Western Church and, therefore, much theological inquiry regarding the Trinity since Augustine’s day has been a response to his work.⁶³ Certainly the main way that

⁶² Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:342.

⁶³ Schwöbel, for example, asserts that “it would not be a gross exaggeration to see the mainstream of the history of Western trinitarian reflection as a series of footnotes on Augustine’s conception of the Trinity in *De Trinitate*” (“The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology” 4). Cf. Kärkkäinen, who states that Augustine “set the tone for any inquiry into the mystery of God” (*The Doctrine of God*, 8 and 79).

Augustine expresses the unity of God is through the idea of God being one substance. He writes that the divine persons “in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity” and that “Father and Son are of course one with the unity of substance” along with the Holy Spirit who “takes his place in the same unity and equality of substance.”⁶⁴ Some contemporary interpreters of Augustine wrongly suggest that since Augustine finds the unity of God in the substance of God, this therefore means that Augustine has an impersonal concept of the being of God, given that the divine unity (they suggest) is found in an impersonal substance that stands behind the divine persons.⁶⁵ In contrast to this interpretation, for Augustine, the substance of God *is the divine persons*; hence, the substance of God is personal.⁶⁶ Carrying forward this Augustinian tradition, in the Middle Ages Aquinas maintained quite explicitly, “the real identity between essence and person” as he expressed that “the divine essence is identical not just with one person but with the three. . . . The essence is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁷ Following this Augustinian tradition in contemporary theology, Karl Barth warns that the substance of God should not be thought of as a “neutral fourth” (either a fourth divine person or an impersonal substance) standing behind the persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; such thinking belongs to modalism.⁶⁸ Hence, those who affirm the unity of God with ‘substance’ language also, like Barth,

⁶⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.3, VI.4 and VI.7.

⁶⁵ For example, Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 54; Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 217 and 219; and Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 57.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.16.

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.39, a.6; cf. Ia, q.39, a.1. On Aquinas, see Min, *Paths to the Triune God*, 210–11.

⁶⁸ Barth, *CD*, I/1, 396–7, cf. 355.

acknowledge the triune identity of God.⁶⁹ Even LaCugna, who presents a social doctrine of the Trinity, is willing to affirm that (among other reasons) the divine persons are equal because they share in the same essence.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even though Colin Gunton is overly critical of Augustine's theology, in the end he shares Augustine's insight regarding the identification of the divine persons with the substance of God. With this in mind, Gunton writes, "But if we *know* the hypostases—by the mediation of scripture and the Church's life and proclamation—then we know the *substance*, being, essence, *Wesen*, etc., of God, for there is nothing else to be known."⁷¹ One can appropriately draw the conclusion that if the Holy Spirit is the essence of God (as the Father and the Son are as well), then pneumatology should provide a foundation for the doctrine of the divine attributes.

Returning to Augustine, in contrast to the view that Augustine's notion of God's unity is impersonal, Augustine also presents the divine unity in a manner which corresponds to what is typically referred to as the Eastern view of divine unity, namely, the monarchy of the Father. This view is that the Son and the Spirit are said to eternally proceed from the Father and that the divine persons are thereby united by their origin.⁷² The Father remains a principle of unity for Augustine as well. When Augustine reflects

⁶⁹ Barth writes, "There is no possibility of reckoning with the being of any other God, or with any other being of God, than that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as it is in God's revelation and in eternity" (*CD*, II/1, 261).

⁷⁰ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 9.

⁷¹ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 112 (original emphasis). Similarly, LaCugna writes, "To experience God's relations to us—relations which come to be known within a concrete history of salvation—is to experience the very being of God as such" ("The Relational God", 663). Gunton believes that Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity has led to "the theological crisis of the West" (*The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 31).

⁷² Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 9.

on how Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father, he believes Jesus “indicated that the source of all godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity, is the Father.” Likewise Augustine writes that the sendings of the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in Scripture “in order to bring home to us that the Father is the source and origin of all deity.”⁷³

There are also other ways that theologians express the unity of the divine persons. One of these is the notion of the perichoresis (mutual-indwelling) of the divine persons. The concept of perichoresis has a long tradition, but not as the final expression of the unity of God. Moltmann, however, gives it a unique place as the basis for the divine unity. Largely based on incorrect interpretations of the meaning of substance within the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, Moltmann claims that “the unity of the triune God cannot and must not be seen in a general concept of divine substance.”⁷⁴ Similarly, the idea of the monarchy of the Father is said to apply only to the “constitution of the Trinity” and to have “no validity within the eternal circulation of the divine life,” otherwise known as the “Trinity’s inner life.”⁷⁵ In light of these conclusions, Moltmann proposes that one does not need to look outside of the three persons themselves for a principle of divine unity (not that the above presentations of divine unity, when correctly understood, do this), and that the “three Persons themselves form their unity, by virtue of

⁷³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.29 and IV.32.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 176 and 177.

their relation to one another and in the eternal perichoresis of their love.”⁷⁶ Moltmann’s proposal is quite clear:

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 them becomes that which binds them together. . . . 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 reproach, under the name of ‘tritheism’). . . . The doctrine of 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.⁷⁷

In this thinking, the trinitarian persons themselves form their own unity.

In contrast to Moltmann, while certainly appreciative of the concept of perichoresis for the doctrine of the Trinity, Pannenberg suggests that perichoresis was never meant to serve as an account of the unity of God in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, he claims, the concept of perichoresis presupposes a unity that it can only manifest. Furthermore, Pannenberg (like Moltmann) is also critical of all of the above ways of expressing the divine unity. He suggests that they lead to either modalism (finding the unity of God in the divine essence) or subordinationism (finding the unity in the origin of deity, the Father).⁷⁸ According to Pannenberg, God’s relational unity is found in ‘Spirit,’ which he speaks of as the infinite divine ‘force field’ (*Kraftfeld*). He writes, “The idea of the divine life as a dynamic field sees the divine Spirit who unites the

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 177. Following Moltmann in this, see Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, 228–33 and Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 128 and 137.

⁷⁷ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175.

⁷⁸ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:334, cf. 279–80. On the other hand, Pannenberg “does not mean that the monarchy of the Father is destroyed” (324). Rather, it is established as a result of the economic activities of the Son and the Spirit which bring about the kingdom of God. Through this the Father is glorified and “the kingdom or monarchy of the Father in creation is consummated” (324). For a critique of Moltmann’s use of perichoresis see also, Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 243.

three persons as proceeding from the Father, received by the Son, and common to both, so that precisely in this way he is the force field of their fellowship that is distinct from them both.”⁷⁹ Hence the Spirit is both the unity of the Trinity—“God is Spirit” (John 4:24)—as well as a “center of action,” or a divine person, distinct from both the Father and Son. This unity of ‘Spirit’ is also expressed in the love of God—“God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The love of God, for Pannenberg, is the *theological* description for the unity of God, which is described *philosophically* by the idea of ‘field.’ Love is the “concrete form of the divine essence that is initially described as Spirit.”⁸⁰ For Pannenberg, all of the attributes of God are expressions of this divine love. Hence, the unity of God becomes clear only after discussing the attributes of God: “the unity of God thus finds nuanced and concrete form only in the work of divine love.”⁸¹

Clearly, the consensus within the history of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the three divine persons are a unity—they are *one* God, not three Gods. Sometimes this unity is expressed through the idea of the substance of God, the idea of the Father as the origin of deity, the concept of perichoresis, and the concept of the field of divine Spirit. However it is expressed, the unity of the persons of the Trinity implies not only that the Holy Spirit is God, but also that the Holy Spirit is united with the other divine persons. Hence when seeking to revise classical theism, one must also consider the Holy Spirit. Since the divine persons form a unity, the attributes that are found to be exemplified in the Holy Spirit are the attributes of God.

⁷⁹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:383.

⁸⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:396. On Pannenberg, see Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 151.

⁸¹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:445, cf. 299 and 336.

c) The Correspondence of the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity

Another trinitarian impulse for a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes comes particularly from the achievements of contemporary trinitarian theologians within the doctrine of the divine attributes. These theologians emphasize that one should not assume or presuppose a theology of God before encountering the economy of salvation, for it is only in the latter that God is revealed. Hence, in their task, they are essentially applying ‘Rahner’s Rule.’ That is to say, they recognize that the Trinity, and thus God, does not stand in a threefold relationship to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in some sort of analogical way. Rather, the God one encounters in the history of salvation *is* God. To put it in trinitarian terms, there is a recognition that the immanent Trinity is truly present in the economic Trinity.

Karl Rahner, in suggesting the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity, did so in a manner of lamenting the separation between the dogmatic treatises of ‘On the One God’ (the existence and attributes of God) and ‘On the Triune God’ (the doctrine of the Trinity).⁸² This proved problematic because such a distinction suggests that God is other than the triune God, and that God can be known other than how he is in the economy of salvation, and that being as triune. Where Rahner lamented the separation of these dogmatic treatises, trinitarian theologians have not only brought these two together by ‘finding God’ in the economy of salvation, but, by implication, they have further realized that one can not completely separate the doctrine of the Trinity from Christology (with its soteriology). One might say that they have realized that Christology is, at least in part, equal to the doctrine of God. Accordingly, Moltmann’s *The Crucified God* has been

⁸² Rahner, *The Trinity*, 16. Chapter three part 4a notes that theologians interpret Rahner’s axiom in a variety of ways.

described as both “Moltmann’s first major treatise on God,” and likewise as “his first foray into Christology.”⁸³

Many theologians appear to have an unfounded and latent assumption that being trinitarian in the doctrine of the divine attributes means only (or at least first and foremost) integrating insights from Christology into the doctrine of God. For example, in a section entitled “The Significance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Understanding God’s Relation to the World” John J. O’Donnell writes, “Christian theology must Christianize its doctrine of God, i.e., think through the meaning of God radically in the light of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁴ Also, as Kevin Vanhoozer seeks to commend a trinitarian approach to the doctrine of God to Evangelicals, he writes, “the major challenge for an evangelical doctrine of God” is to “think about God biblically, according to the Scriptures that attest Jesus Christ, rather than following clearly devised conceptual or cultural myths.”⁸⁵ Further, typical of trinitarian theology after Rahner, John Thompson interprets Rahner’s lament (see above) christologically: “In other words, Christology and the Trinity were virtually divorced.”⁸⁶ Note that Thompson seems not to even consider pneumatology’s lack of influence on the doctrine of God. Similarly to Thompson one may say, *pneumatology* and the Trinity were virtually divorced. This should not be the case. This is yet a further continuation of the “Western propensity to subordinate the

⁸³ Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God*, 155 and Feske, “Christ and Suffering,” 85.

⁸⁴ O’Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, 198.

⁸⁵ Vanhoozer, “The Triune God of the Gospel,” 18–19. To be fair, elsewhere he does complain of evangelical textbooks that “end up speaking of God’s nature and attributes without adequate focus on the way he has made himself known in Jesus Christ *and the Spirit*” (26, emphasis added). Similarly, Olson’s critique of classical theism is only that “to a great extent classical Christian theism has . . . thought about God’s being apart from Jesus Christ” (*Reformed and Always Reforming*, 234).

⁸⁶ Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 22. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 82.

Spirit.”⁸⁷ Following the lead of contemporary trinitarian theologians who find the immanent Trinity truly present in the economic Trinity (even if sacramentally so), pneumatology must also be taken as an avenue into the doctrine of God.

The manner in which trinitarian theologians have drawn together Christology and the doctrine of God suggests that there is also potential for finding insights regarding the doctrine of God in pneumatology (some trinitarian theologians have already provided some pneumatological insights). With Wolf Krötke I affirm that “the so-called ‘question of God’ as it arises today should not only be considered alongside Christology; rather, it should be decided in Christology,” but it should also be decided in pneumatology.⁸⁸ And with O’Donnell I affirm that “Jesus Christ belongs to the very being of God,” but I would add that the Holy Spirit also belongs to the very being of God.⁸⁹ Given this, Keith Ward is correct in his conclusion that one should not talk about the Christian concept of God “without stressing that the doctrines of Christ *and the Spirit* are integral parts of, not addenda to, the Christian concept of ‘God’.”⁹⁰

d) Pneumatology as Part of the Doctrine of God

If God is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, then the doctrine of God cannot be divorced from Christology and pneumatology. As, Henry Van Dusen realizes, “the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit is, properly, within the Doctrine of God.”⁹¹ Christology and pneumatology are (in part) the doctrine of God. Following this line of thinking, Robert

⁸⁷ Cross, “The Holy Spirit,” 99.

⁸⁸ Krötke, “Die Wirklichkeit Gottes in Jesus Christus,” 26.

⁸⁹ O’Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, 198.

⁹⁰ Ward, *The Concept of God*, 215 (emphasis added).

⁹¹ Van Dusen, *Spirit, Son and Father*, 116.

Jenson's first volume in his systematic theology (on "the triune God") includes both Christology (including the doctrine of atonement and resurrection) and pneumatology in the doctrine of God, thereby "swelling that doctrine to make half of the total work" of systematic theology.⁹² Similarly, Gordon Kaufman's section on the doctrine of God in his *Systematic Theology* (one of his earlier publications) includes chapters on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁹³ The way that these theologians structure their doctrines of God shows that they are moving toward developing a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes.

Integrating pneumatology with the doctrine of the divine attributes is consistent with a wider recognition among theologians regarding the interdependence of Christian doctrine in general. Although theologians often attempt to separate doctrines into distinct theological topics, it is easy to see that each of the doctrines inform one another. We have seen how this is the case in pneumatological theology. The same has been observed of trinitarian theology.⁹⁴ The perichoresis of doctrine can be seen especially in the doctrine of God. Consider for example the term 'theology,' which refers to speaking about God in particular (theology proper) but also all things in relation to God (the remainder of the

⁹² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:x (as noted in chapter three, Jenson's doctrine of God does not include a specific section devoted to the attributes of God). Also, McGrath's popular introductory text, *Christian Theology*, includes a (brief) section on the Holy Spirit within his chapter on the doctrine of God.

⁹³ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 81–252. Here Kaufman divides his discussion of the attributes of God by his discussion of the Father (the perfections of the divine freedom), the Son (the perfections of the divine love), and the Spirit (the perfections of the divine communing). In contrast, it seems more appropriate to discuss all of the attributes of God from a pneumatological perspective. In the end, the majority of Kaufman's reflections on the perfections of the divine communing (namely, faithfulness, responsiveness, understanding, and forgiveness) are not pneumatological as they contain little mention of the Holy Spirit (235–42). His discussion of divine presence (in his previous chapter, 223–34), is, however, thoroughly informed by pneumatology.

⁹⁴ For instance, Sanders notes, "The more pervasive Trinity talk becomes, the more it spreads out from its home base in the doctrine of God proper and infiltrates other doctrinal loci" ("Trinity Talk," 266). Sanders lists examples of specific works on creation, anthropology, ecclesiology, and soteriology.

theological topics). Hence, Pannenberg rightly realized that “Christian dogmatics in every part is the doctrine of God.”⁹⁵ Others have realized this as well. For example, Friedrich Schleiermacher (though certainly not presenting a trinitarian doctrine of the divine attributes) discusses the attributes of God throughout the whole of his systematic theology due to his conviction that “the doctrine of God, as set forth in the totality of the divine attributes, can only be completed simultaneously with the whole system.”⁹⁶ Hence, again, it seems necessary to conclude that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has promise for addressing the doctrine of the divine attributes. Granted, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of God may legitimately be treated as two topics in a theological scheme. However, what is important is that one does not forget that both affect each other. Likewise, McDonnell and LaCugna “affirm the perichoresis (mutual inter-dependence) between doctrines, in particular between Christology, pneumatology, and trinitarian doctrine. Each doctrine gains in richness by being developed in concert with each of the others.”⁹⁷

At this proposal for integrating pneumatology with the doctrine of the divine attributes, some theologians will no doubt feel the same way as people in Gregory of Nazianzus’s day; Gregory wrote that they were “angry with us for introducing a God, the Holy Spirit, who is a stranger and an intruder.”⁹⁸ However, when theologians neglect the

⁹⁵ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:447. He reaffirms this again at the end of his third volume (3:630).

⁹⁶ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 128.

⁹⁷ LaCugna and McDonnell, “Returning from ‘The Far Country,’” 192. Elsewhere LaCugna writes, “Today the trinitarian project is to update archaic dogmatic language and to restore trinitarian theology to its original christological context, re-establishing the ‘perichoresis’ (mutual inter-dependence) between the doctrine of God, christology and pneumatology” (LaCugna, “Current Trends in Trinitarian Theology,” 141).

⁹⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, “On the Holy Spirit,” *Oration* 31.1 (p. 279).

Spirit in their doctrine of the divine attributes, they are functionally (or implicitly) affirming a tritheistic view of God or a subordinationist view of the Spirit. That is, these heretical understandings of God would provide a reasonable (though inappropriate) basis for neglecting pneumatology in the doctrine of God—if the Spirit is not the God of Christianity (but perhaps another god) or if the Spirit is a lesser god, then the Spirit rightfully would not belong within discussions of the attributes of God.

While the revival of trinitarian theology has found influence across all of the theological disciplines, it seems it has moved too quickly past the most fundamental one. Even as the revival of pneumatology was in its infancy stages, Heribert Mühlen recognized “the narrowness of the traditional teaching on God.” Mühlen observed that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit “is almost inevitably seen as a pious addition, an edifying ornament, but never as the [or even ‘a’] most basic proposition of the teaching on God.”⁹⁹ Though a few decades have past, this remains true: “The revival of trinitarian doctrine and renewed theological interest in the Holy Spirit have not so far converged in any significant way.”¹⁰⁰ This convergence should occur to a greater extent, however, as it will lead to a more robustly trinitarian doctrine of God.

Once again I may remind readers that the aim of this book stands within the contemporary efforts of trinitarian theologians in that integrating pneumatology into the doctrine of God is an effort to be more thoroughly trinitarian. And, as Ralph Del Colle aptly remarks, “to be more thoroughly trinitarian is to be more thoroughly

⁹⁹ Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 12 and 13. Writing around the same time, Pittenger recognized that his doctrine of God was lacking due to its deficient place of the Spirit (*The Holy Spirit*, 15).

¹⁰⁰ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 2.

pneumatological.”¹⁰¹ That is, if one only critiques the classical doctrine of God from the perspective of Christology, one has limited oneself in one’s consideration of God’s acts in history. The classical trinitarian confession is that God is *three—triune*. Whether one uses the term ‘persons’ or ‘modes’ or ‘ways’ of existing or being, the point is that God is a plurality of three and not two. Nevertheless, much of trinitarian doctrine is done as though God were only two persons. In contrast, pneumatology should become an integral part of the doctrine of the divine attributes.

e) An Additional Basis for a Pneumatological Approach

While the above reasons related to the doctrine of the Trinity provide what are probably the strongest foundations for taking a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes, one more may be mentioned. A pneumatological theology of the divine attributes will make explicit what is often sensed to be true in Christian experience. That is, theology has to catch up to what Christian experience of God seems to imply. Mühlen notes, “It is true, of course, that the *experience* of the living God has always been deeper and broader than the traditional *teaching* about God.”¹⁰² So, for example, we observed how Dreyer found the Spirit being discussed not so much in doctrine, but in sermons, prayers, and letters where author’s reflected on their experience. The truth is, most of the Christian experience of God can be attributed to the Spirit. As Elizabeth Johnson notes, “Whenever people speak in a generic way of ‘God,’ of their experience of God or of God’s doing something in the world, more often than not they

¹⁰¹ Del Colle, “Response to Jürgen Moltmann and David Coffey,” 339. Compare, Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 9 and 49.

¹⁰² Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 14 (original emphasis).

are referring to the Spirit, if a triune prism be introduced.”¹⁰³ In this manner, Paul spoke of someone entering a place where the spiritual gifts were being practiced. That person is said to exclaim, “God is really among you!” (1 Cor 14:25). Mühlen wrote that he foresaw that the experience of God the Spirit would lead to a change: “God will be approached not in the first place as the Creator-God who dwells blissfully *on high* in isolation but equally as the Holy Spirit who dwells *in us* and who reigns in our hearts.”¹⁰⁴ This change will affect not only the understanding of God in believers’ piety, but it will also affect the understanding of the attributes of God, which is our primary concern here.

5. Defending the Pneumatological Approach

By this point it should be clear that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes should serve as a helpful and even necessary addition to the doctrine of God. Nevertheless, a number of possible objections might be raised to this approach. First, there is the self-effacing nature of the Spirit. In addition to those concerns that have been alluded to (and responded to) above, one might wonder if this approach wrongly implies that there are attributes specific to the Spirit. One might also wonder if this approach presupposes a social doctrine of the Trinity, and one might argue that I am neglecting the immanent Trinity with a turn to the economic Trinity. Lastly, one might wonder if it is necessary to first clarify the attributes of God before one can even affirm the divinity of the Spirit. These concerns will be discussed in turn.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 42.

¹⁰⁴ Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 31.

The self-effacing nature of the Spirit has been discussed above as a general hindrance to the development of pneumatology. The Spirit is said to draw people to Christ, but not to draw attention to himself. Hence, it might seem natural that a trinitarian doctrine of the divine attributes would possess a christological emphasis rather than much pneumatological reflection. However, if one were to follow this logic through, then pneumatological reflection should be avoided in all areas of theology, and this is something that no Christian theologian is willing to do. John Polkinghorne wisely cautions those who emphasize the self-effacing nature of the Spirit, “Though he is the hidden one, on the inside, that cannot amount to complete ineffability, otherwise there would literally be nothing to say.”¹⁰⁵ Similar to the self-effacing nature of the Spirit, John Frame notes that there is “mutual glorification” among each of the persons of the Trinity.

The mutual deference of the persons of the Trinity is a major theme in the gospel of John. The Son is always subject to the Father (5:30; 6:38; 7:18; 9:4; 10:18), but the Father defers to the Son by answering his prayers, granting him authority, and testifying on his behalf (3:35; 5:22–23, 26–27; 6:37, 43–44; 11:41–42; 12:26; 14:10; 15:2, 8). . . . To my knowledge, no text says precisely that the Father or the Son glorifies the Spirit, but the Father and the Son do honor the Spirit in his particular work. In John 16:7, Jesus tells his disciples ‘It is for your good that I am going away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.’ . . . Jesus testifies, indeed, that after he has gone and that the Spirit has come, the disciples will do ‘greater’ works than those that Jesus performed on earth (John 14:12). So Jesus pays honor to the Spirit: he rejoices that in one sense the Spirit’s ministry will be greater than his own.¹⁰⁶

No doubt Frame here tries to make the self-effacing nature of the Spirit something less than it is in order to affirm the full ontological equality of the divine persons.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*, 148.

¹⁰⁶ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 695.

¹⁰⁷ By contrast, Gunton emphasizes the self-effacing nature of the Spirit as something that makes this divine person distinct from the other divine persons—we are to proclaim Christ through the power of the Spirit, not the other way around (“The Holy Spirit,” 80).

Nevertheless, his comments do confirm that the Spirit is not alone in deferring to the other divine persons. In addition to this insight, one must also remember that knowledge of the Father and the Son is also incomplete and imperfect. The Father, like the Spirit, seems to escape our grasp. The Father “lives in unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16) and no one has seen him (1 John 4:12). Furthermore, Mühlen remarks, though the Son of God appeared in bodily form in Jesus Christ, “he is no longer with us in the form of this particular man either; he has gone away. What has remained is that Spirit within us, of which it is said that he has been sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6).”¹⁰⁸ These recognitions suggest that if one were to follow the logic regarding the self-effacing nature of the Spirit when it comes to the other divine persons (and neglect discussing them), then one would (absurdly) not be able to speak of any of the divine persons. It seems that the self-effacing nature of the Spirit has more implications for one’s proclamation of the gospel than it does for the extent to which one considers pneumatological perspectives for the doctrine of the attributes of God.

Another concern that might be raised regarding a pneumatological critique of classical theism is that it might seem to suggest that there are Spirit-specific attributes.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Gunton intimates this is the case when he says, “the particular persons, Father, Son and Spirit, *must each have their own attributes*, their own distinctive characteristics, or they would be indistinguishable from one another, and so theologically perform no

¹⁰⁸ Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 20.

¹⁰⁹ A concern raised by Ralph Del Colle in personal correspondence as this project was in its infancy stages.

function.”¹¹⁰ If I were to follow Gunton, my pneumatological proposal might appear to violate the unity of God’s essence, the simplicity of God, and the trinitarian principle that the divine action *ad extra* (i.e. toward creation) is undivided. In response, I would first point out that I am not suggesting that there are any Spirit-specific attributes.¹¹¹ Further, the unity of God is precisely that which makes this enterprise worthwhile (see part 4b above). The unity of the divine persons should lead one to conclude that considering the divine person of the Spirit will necessarily tell one something about God the Father and the Son, and possibly even correct some misunderstandings.¹¹² Furthermore, it is possible that looking at the Spirit will tell one nothing that contradicts what one already believes about God, but to approach the task with this presupposition is to assume that theologians have already fully understood who God is. Even if one does not change one’s understanding of God from pneumatology, one’s understanding of God will certainly be enriched. To neglect the Spirit is (to our peril) to neglect what may be the primary actions of God in his relationship with the world.

Second, the doctrine of divine simplicity expresses that because God is not composite, God’s attributes are identical with his essence. This is sometimes taken to mean that, in the end, the attributes of God all express the same thing. Given this, it might seem that a pneumatological approach to the attributes of God would be superfluous and

¹¹⁰ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 27 (emphasis added). Holmes, too, reads Gunton as meaning that “The attributes of God are specific to a particular person, specific to what kind of person they are in the actions they undertake” (*Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes*, 128).

¹¹¹ Similarly, Pannenberg says that he is not developing attributes specific to the Father: “This does not mean that we have to develop the doctrine of the one God as the doctrine of God the Father rather than as the doctrine of the unity of the divine essence in the Trinity of persons. For the Father is known as the one God by the Son in the Holy Spirit” (*Systematic Theology*, 1:326).

¹¹² Pittenger (*The Holy Spirit*, 15) and Van Dusen (*Spirit, Son and Father*, 121) recognize that the doctrine of God needs pneumatology to correct itself.

perhaps even a waste of time. However, divine simplicity may be expressed in positive terms, rather than just stating negatively that there is an absence of parts in God. Gunton, for example, presents divine simplicity from two perspectives. Firstly, he says that God is simple in as much as the divine persons are one—God is not three gods. Second, he asserts that the doctrine of divine simplicity is primarily meant to affirm the unity amidst the multiplicity of the divine attributes. To say that one attribute is essentially the same as another will not do. Gunton clarifies, “The point of the doctrine of divine simplicity is rather that the attributes must be defined from and through one another as a function of the trinitarian perichoresis.”¹¹³ The perichoresis of doctrine, discussed above, must especially be extended to any discussion of the divine attributes.

Third, the doctrine of the unity of God’s actions (*opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*) should not inhibit a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes, because although the actions of the three divine persons are united, they still have distinct roles. This principle goes back to the early Church fathers. Augustine wrote that “the Father and Son have but one will and are indivisible in their working” and that “although just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably.”¹¹⁴ The primary reason Augustine made this judgment is because he wanted to safeguard the unity of the three persons. On account of this, Augustine notes, “if they do some things together and some without each other, then the trinity is no longer

¹¹³ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 123. One may add that the doctrine of the divine simplicity also points to the unity of God’s being and act. That is, God is in his action who he is in his eternal being. As Aquinas proposed, “If therefore the existence of a thing is to be other than its nature, that existence must either derive from the nature or have an external cause” (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.3, a.4). Since God is uncaused, God’s existence (act) must be the same as his nature (being).

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.9 and I.7.

inseparable.”¹¹⁵ This does not exclude distinct roles for the divine persons however.

Gregory of Nyssa, for example, simultaneously affirmed the unity and distinct roles of the divine persons:

But in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit; but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶

The axiom that the divine actions are undivided *ad extra* means that although certain divine actions can be appropriated to particular divine persons, this does not mean that the others were not involved.¹¹⁷ An appropriation is made “when something is said of one person that is properly true of the Three.”¹¹⁸ The most common instance is when the act of creation is appropriated to God the Father—so the Nicene Creed reads, “God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” And yet, this does not mean that the Son and Spirit were uninvolved in creation.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the axiom that the divine actions are undivided *ad extra* does not exclude the possibility that each of the divine persons may have distinct (‘proper’) roles in an action in which the divine persons are united. If it did exclude this, and if God’s causality toward creation had no distinctions whatsoever,

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.8.

¹¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, “On ‘Not Three Gods’,” 334. Cf. Edwards discussion of Athanasius and Basil in *Breath of Life*, 41 and 122.

¹¹⁷ Marshall summarizes the intended affirmations that stand behind the doctrine of appropriations: “1. Every attribute and action common to the three persons belongs primarily to one of them. . . . 2. Every attribute and action common to the three persons belongs to each of them in a different way” (*Trinity and Truth*, 254).

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 122.

¹¹⁹ Barth, *CD*, III/1, 49 and *passim*. In contrast to the Christian majority, some do feel that “Creation should be seen as the *proper* (not just *appropriated*) work of the Father” (Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 223). Cf. LaCugna, who writes, “In contrast to Augustine’s theology, it is clear that if a theology were to begin from and center itself on the economy, all the while presupposing the essential unity of economy and ‘theology,’ it would have no need for a doctrine of appropriations” (*God For Us*, 100).

then there would be no basis in the economy of salvation for distinguishing the divine persons in God.¹²⁰

Edwards argues that there are most clearly proper roles of the divine persons in the case of the incarnation and Pentecost.¹²¹ Rahner too held to this view and claimed, “Each one of the three divine persons communicates himself to man in gratuitous grace in his own personal particularity and diversity.”¹²² It is particularly the Son of God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ, though the other divine persons are causally involved in this act. Likewise, it is particularly the Spirit who was poured out on the day of Pentecost. Similarly, Pannenberg argues that the relations between the divine persons are not just relations of origin (as in the immanent Trinity), but that the relations are also found in the economic Trinity as the Father hands the kingdom to the Son, the Son is obedient to the Father and glorifies him, and the Spirit fills the Son and glorifies him, thereby also glorifying the Father.¹²³ Something may properly be stated of each of the divine persons in these cases. Even Augustine, who emphasizes the unity of the divine persons with the concept of *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, allows for activity to be distinct to a divine person. For example, he acknowledges that it was only the Son who became

¹²⁰ Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, 252; LaCugna, *God For Us*, 152 and 167; Gunton, *Act and Being*, 27; and Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 3–4.

¹²¹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 123–5. Edwards moves beyond this and argues that there are distinct roles for the divine persons in the united act of creation as well. In part, Edwards is following Coffey, “A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit,” 227–50. Coffey’s proposal is that “the title by which the Holy Spirit has a proper mission is qua Christ’s love of his brethren; and the ultimate ground of this is the Father’s love for the Son in the Trinity” (239).

¹²² Rahner, *The Trinity*, 34–5. See p. 23 on the incarnation.

¹²³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:320.

incarnate.¹²⁴ Regarding the doctrine of the *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* and the doctrine of appropriations, Gunton rightly comments,

As in all theology, we are on a knife edge, or, we might say, a narrow path with precipices on each side. On one side, we deny the unity of God, and make it appear that there are three gods; on the other, we cause the distinctions of the three to disappear into some underlying undifferentiated deity.¹²⁵

To help create a sufficient solution to this dilemma, by following Irenaeus, Gunton employs the two hands analogy for the Trinity:

When you use your hands, to greet someone or to write a letter, it is you who are doing it. . . . In sum: all divine action, whether in creation, salvation or final redemption is the action of God the Father; but it is equally brought about by his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. And these hands do not act separately, like someone holding a baby in one hand and trying to bang in a nail with the other—though I fear that our talk of the Spirit might sometimes suggest that.¹²⁶

And so, one may conclude with Gunton that divine actions are “indeed the work of the whole Trinity, undivided certainly, but not homogeneous or monotonous.”¹²⁷ And on account of this conclusion, one may further conclude that if one neglects the Spirit (or the Father and the Son) in forming their doctrine of God, they neglect the complexity present in divine actions.

The unity of God’s essence, the simplicity of God, and the trinitarian principle of undivided action *ad extra* show that there are no Spirit-specific attributes. Nevertheless, just as we learn something about God through the Son’s work in and through Jesus

¹²⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.7, cf. IV.29. Likewise, he states that it was the Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus in the form of a dove and it was the Father who spoke at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan. At the same time, he continues by saying that it was all three of the divine persons who produced the Spirit’s dove, all three who produced the Father’s voice, and even all three who produced the human Jesus (II.18 and IV.30).

¹²⁵ Gunton, “The Holy Spirit,” 79.

¹²⁶ Gunton, “The Holy Spirit,” 80. Elsewhere he writes that in the Son and the Spirit it is “the Father himself in action through their particular action” (Gunton, *Act and Being*, 139). Cf. Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 140.

¹²⁷ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 140.

Christ, so we can learn something unique about God through the economic work of the Holy Spirit. With Johnson I affirm, “Forgetting the Spirit is not ignoring a faceless, shadowy, third hypostasis but the mystery of God vivifying the world, closer to us than we are to ourselves, drawing near and passing by in liberating compassion.”¹²⁸ In looking to formulate a pneumatological doctrine of God, I am not suggesting that one should neglect the other divine persons, but rather that a pneumatological approach should supplement the current discussion in an effort to be fully trinitarian. Furthermore, I am not suggesting that a pneumatological approach would contradict a christological approach. It will supplement it and perhaps at times critique it. The two approaches should, in the end, however, be in full agreement. After all, as Zizioulas reminds us, “Christ *exists only pneumatologically*,” in the sense that Christ’s whole life is guided by the Holy Spirit.¹²⁹ Therefore, in a sense, christological approaches to the doctrine of the divine attributes are already the beginning of pneumatological approaches to the same doctrine. And given that the risen Christ is present by the Spirit, one might also say that pneumatological approaches are a continuation of christological approaches.

Furthermore, as seen above, the doctrine of the Trinity affirms the unity of all three of the divine persons. Although, for the purposes of this book, I am ‘stepping aside’ to focus on pneumatology for the doctrine of God, even this ‘stepping aside’ does not, and can not, remove me from trinitarian theology. As LaCugna and McDonnell rightly remark, “It is impossible to know any one divine ‘person’ apart from the other two. There are not three gods, but one and the same God.”¹³⁰ Elsewhere, McDonnell writes, “to do pneumatology

¹²⁸ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 20.

¹²⁹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 111 (original emphasis).

¹³⁰ LaCugna and McDonnell, “Returning From ‘The Far Country,’” 201.

is to do Trinity,” after all, the Spirit is always in relation to the Father and the Son. That is, the Spirit is never ‘alone’ since the Trinity is a tri-unity.¹³¹ When reflecting on the Spirit one necessarily finds his relations to the Father and to Christ. This is true from the perspective of the *perichoresis* (eternal mutual indwelling) of the divine persons, as well as the fact that the Spirit is not a spirit in general, but precisely the Spirit of God and of Christ. Furthermore, when speaking about the Spirit, one is not speaking about only one ‘part’ of God. The Trinity is not a doctrine of whole and parts, because the whole is actually contained in each of the ‘parts.’ Hence, the patristic fathers argued that when you have one of the divine persons (including the Holy Spirit), you have the *holos theos*, the whole God.¹³²

While the above are probably the most significant possible objections to pursuing a pneumatological doctrine of God, a few more may be mentioned. Some may be concerned and question whether a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God presupposes a social doctrine of the Trinity. This would, of course, be a concern for those who view the social analogy—God as a triune society or community of three persons—as falling into tritheism. It is not my concern here to defend a social doctrine of the Trinity. Further, a social understanding of the triune God is not necessary for one to undertake a pneumatological theology of the divine attributes (at the same time, it does not exclude a social Trinity). For any trinitarian theologian, the fact that the divine persons are one God means that one’s understanding of the Spirit should help one to understand who God is. In fact, one need not even be trinitarian to carry out such a task. Even modalists who

¹³¹ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 1.

¹³² Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 26–9 and 175.

understand God to be at work in the Spirit should find that the insights from pneumatology enrich their understanding of God.

An additional concern and possible critique is that in proposing a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes I will be focusing on the economic Trinity and, thereby, neglecting the immanent Trinity. Some might even suggest that I should begin with the immanent Trinity.¹³³ It should be noted, first of all, that this concern is not unique to a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes. For example, Christopher Holmes remarks that “a dogmatic depiction of the triune God’s antecedent existence, and therewith God’s ontological self-sufficiency, is overwhelmed, in Krötke’s text [*Gottes Klarheiten*], by his treatment of what the triune God has done in relation to us.”¹³⁴ On account of this, Holmes complains of an “insufficient articulation of God’s immanent divine freedom, an account of which is *necessary* to honour the utterly gratuitous character of God’s self-disclosure.”¹³⁵ This critique might apply to the pneumatological approach taken here as well, because, similar to Krötke, the approach developed here focuses on what the triune God has done in relation to us. In contrast to Holmes’ comments, it seems unnecessary to develop a doctrine of the immanent Trinity for the purposes of this project. One cannot expect every book to say all that might be said. Nevertheless, I would certainly affirm the

¹³³ A concern raised by Frank Macchia at the 2007 Pentecostal Forum, McMaster Divinity College. The final version of the paper I presented there is published as Gabriel, “This Spirit is God.”

¹³⁴ Holmes, “God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities,” 66. In his *Divine Freedom*, Paul Molnar seems to think that every trinitarian theologian other than Barth (and perhaps Thomas Torrance) has an insufficient doctrine of the immanent Trinity.

¹³⁵ Holmes, “Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke,” 178 (emphasis added). Elsewhere, Holmes writes, “An account of God *in se*, God’s aseity, ought not to take second place in relation to an account of God *pro nobis*, for the *in se* and the *pro nobis* exist in a non-competitive albeit asymmetrical relation to one another” (“God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities,” 70).

doctrine and my proposal assumes the doctrine. I share Paul Molnar's concerns to maintain "a clear and sharp distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity in each of its theological reflections."¹³⁶ To neglect such a distinction would confine God (or at least the triune nature of God) to his relationship with creation and make divine revelation in the economy (and even creation) a necessity rather than something that is freely given. Nevertheless, while it is true that the immanent Trinity has ontological precedence over the economic Trinity, it is only in the economy of salvation that one can learn about the immanent Trinity. Therefore, it certainly seems appropriate (necessary even) to approach the doctrine of the divine attributes with epistemological precedence given to the economic Trinity.¹³⁷ In fact, this approach might even help one to have a stronger doctrine of the immanent Trinity, because, as Gunton observes, one effect of "an under-determined pneumatology is an inadequate theology of the immanent Trinity."¹³⁸

In contemporary trinitarian doctrines of God, one task is indeed to affirm that the attributes of God are true not just of God in the economic Trinity, but that they are true of God's eternal existence within the immanent Trinity. For example, when discussing the doctrine of omnipotence, Barth argues that God is almighty in himself; God's omnipotence does not begin with his relation to creation. God is omnipotent *in se* "in His power to be the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," in the power to be the one in the other, and

¹³⁶ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 316.

¹³⁷ Cf. Grenz, who suggests, "If the twentieth-century conversation reached any point of consensus regarding this issue, it is that any helpful explication of the doctrine of the Trinity must give epistemological priority to the presence of the trinitarian members in the divine economy but reserve ontological primacy for the dynamic of the relationality within the triune life" (*Rediscovering the Triune God*, 222).

¹³⁸ Gunton, "The Being and Attributes of God," 21.

“in the begetting and being begotten, the causing to proceed and proceeding.”¹³⁹ It is possible to discuss the attributes of God *in se* from a pneumatological perspective. In fact, Gunton begins to develop just such a pneumatological concept of divine freedom.¹⁴⁰ Again, though it is possible to pursue the doctrine of God from this angle, LaCugna has observed that too much speculation and focus on the immanent Trinity, largely apart from a consideration from the economy of salvation, is essentially what has damaged the doctrine of the Trinity and even lead to a “defeat of the doctrine” in Christian history.¹⁴¹ In contrast, a focus on the Spirit in the economic Trinity helps the doctrine of the attributes of God to become, once again, a doctrine of the God of the gospel.¹⁴² In this, one advantage to focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation is that this approach will necessarily overcome the historical reliance on philosophical theology.¹⁴³ In pneumatology one finds the immanent Trinity present in the economy of salvation. The Spirit is God reaching out with one of his ‘two hands’ to act in history. God is not confined to his self-sufficient divine life but reaches out beyond it as the Spirit. In sum, although I will not develop a doctrine of the immanent Trinity, the pneumatological approach taken here does presuppose and support a doctrine of the immanent Trinity that can be developed elsewhere.

¹³⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 529.

¹⁴⁰ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 104–7.

¹⁴¹ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 198. She has in mind especially discussions regarding the relations of the divine persons within the immanent Trinity (begetting, procession, etc.).

¹⁴² Shults speaks of the doctrine of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence as ‘gospel’ in *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 230, 260, and 289.

¹⁴³ This was one of Karl Rahner’s concerns when he penned his axiom (*The Trinity*, 22). Gunton correctly suggests that with an underdeveloped pneumatology, “the way is opened for the kind of philosophical theology against which the modern theological tradition is in almost unanimous rebellion” (“The Being and Attributes of God,” 21). Compare, Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, xi.

One final possible objection to this project is that a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes presupposes the divinity of the Spirit before the attributes of God have been affirmed. This might be problematic particularly for some Evangelicals, who, we have seen (in chapter three), use the fact that the Spirit has the attributes of God as a means to confirm the deity of the Spirit.¹⁴⁴ That is, some theologians argue that because the Spirit is omnipotent, omnipresent, and so forth, the Holy Spirit must be divine. The approach taken here is the exact opposite; I have affirmed that the Holy Spirit is divine and will seek to understand the attributes of God in light of this. Is this reversal permissible? The answer is simply, yes. Historically, the attributes of God were not a primary factor in affirming the divinity of the Spirit. Rather, the affirmation was based primarily on the activities of the Spirit. Torrance accurately comments,

The overwhelming conviction about the Holy Spirit in the evangelical experience and doxological understanding of the Church, was that all his distinctive operations, in speaking, saving, enlightening, sanctifying and liberating us, are *divine acts: in the Spirit* our creaturely beings come under the immediate impact of the holy being of God, the almighty Creator and Source of all being.¹⁴⁵

In addition, the liturgy of baptism where people were baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, *and the Holy Spirit*, played a significant role for the patristic fathers.

Why would a person be baptized into a person who was not divine?¹⁴⁶ Since there are other means for affirming the deity of the Spirit besides identifying the attributes of God

¹⁴⁴ This is not completely unique to Evangelicals. For example, Gregory of Nyssa, in an effort to convince others of the divinity of the Spirit proclaimed that the Spirit “is Divine, and absolutely good, and Omnipotent, and wise, and glorious, and eternal” (“On the Holy Spirit,” 316). Similarly, Pannenberg proposes that the attributes of God help one to recognize the unity of the divine persons (*Systematic Theology*, 1:445).

¹⁴⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 188 (original emphasis). Cf. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 10.24 (p. 45), 27.68 (p. 102), and 29.75 (p. 112).

as belonging to the Spirit, it is permissible to take a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes.

6. Conclusion

We began this chapter by noting how certain readings of the biblical text constrain theology and how the general neglect of pneumatology in the history of Christian doctrine and classical theism have inhibited the development of a pneumatological doctrine of God. Nevertheless, there is a growing place for pneumatology in doctrine, as the development of pneumatological theology shows. There are many reasons to continue this trajectory by taking a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes, especially the classical affirmation of the divinity of the Spirit. Christian orthodoxy has consistently affirmed both the triune identity of God, which includes the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the three divine persons. This implies that to have a trinitarian doctrine of God, one must integrate both Christology *and pneumatology* into the doctrine of God. We have seen that this proposal does not suggest that there are Spirit-specific attributes. Rather, considering pneumatology will allow for wider reflections on the complexity of divine actions (without requiring, nor excluding, a social doctrine of the Trinity). Further, I have argued that focusing on divine action in the economy of salvation as expressed in pneumatology does not amount to a denial of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity; rather, it presupposes and supports it. Since the Spirit is God, as found confirmed in the divine actions of the Spirit, pneumatology provides a way to contribute to contemporary revisions of classical theism. As the thesis of this book claims, integrating the Spirit into the doctrine of the divine attributes produces a more

immanent view of God than found in classical theism. The following chapters, by revising classical theism, provide constructive proposals for a contemporary doctrine of God from the perspective of pneumatology.

CHAPTER 5

PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF IMPASSIBILITY

1. Introduction

We have now reached the point where we turn to consider specific divine attributes from a pneumatological perspective. This chapter focuses on the doctrine of the impassibility of God. As chapter three indicated, most trinitarian critiques of the doctrine of impassibility focus on the implications that the passion of Christ has for the suffering of God. As a reflection of this, Roderick Leupp's recent chapter-summary of discussion regarding the passibility of God in contemporary trinitarian theology focuses exclusively on how the cross of Christ was an event of suffering for the divine persons of the Father and the Son.¹ In response to this christological emphasis in contemporary critiques of impassibility, James Garrett rightfully asks, "Can the passion of God the Father be postulated and defended apart from and in addition to the suffering of Jesus Christ as the Son of God? To establish the passion of God, one must do more than assert that Jesus suffered on the cross."² This chapter demonstrates that pneumatology can provide another means of establishing this conclusion and can confirm for trinitarian theology what has already been argued christologically. In fact, the most obvious way that contemporary

¹ Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, 81–100.

² Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:250.

pneumatology stands in contrast to classical theism is in its common recognition that the Spirit suffers. For example, Jürgen Moltmann describes the very person of the Spirit as “*God’s empathy, his feeling identification with what he loves.*”³ Since the Spirit is fully God, and given the unity of the divine persons, this implies that God is passible. This chapter develops this theme and argues that the Spirit suffers in relationship to people—as the Spirit grieves, groans in prayer, and gives ‘birth’ to people—and that the Spirit suffers in relationship to creation at large.⁴ While classical theism presents God as transcendent in the sense that God is beyond the possibility of suffering, especially in response to creation, pneumatological perspectives on the divine attributes present God as immanent to creation and suffering within and along side of that which God has created. Before turning to consider how the Spirit suffers in relationship to people and creation, this chapter first observes two advantages that pneumatology has for arguments in support of divine passibility.⁵

³ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 51 (original emphasis).

⁴ Since christological arguments for divine suffering are so well accepted in contemporary theology, it might make sense to begin discussions of the passibility of the Spirit with respect to the relationship of the Spirit to Christ. I am not starting here, however, since (as noted in chapter three, part 4c) this is drawing an implication regarding pneumatology (i.e. that the Spirit suffers) on the basis of Christology, more so than presenting a pneumatological insight regarding the doctrine of God. On the Spirit suffering in Christ see Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 60–5 and following him Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 32–42 and Althouse, “Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit,” 159–66.

⁵ In saying that the Spirit suffers I am following the general understanding of what divine suffering means in contemporary theology. Weinandy (who argues for the impassibility of God) observes that “in the contemporary theological context” the ‘suffering’ of God generally means “that God undergoes some passible change of state and that, as a consequence, he experiences some inner emotional distress or anguish. Moreover, suffering normally implies that some event outside of God has caused him to suffer” (*Does God Suffer?* 168).

2. Pneumatological Advantages in Discussions of Impassibility

Pneumatology has distinct advantages when it comes to providing an argument for divine passibility. First, with the Spirit, unlike with Christ, theologians are not inhibited in their theological reflections by the union of two natures, divine and human. That is, since the Spirit has no hypostatic union one does not have to discern or defend what may be properly spoken of as affecting the divine nature. By contrast, when it comes to Christology the vast majority of contemporary trinitarian theologians disagree with classical theists regarding whether or not the sufferings of Christ can be confined to Christ's human nature. The Spirit does suffer in relation to creation, but the Spirit is not incarnate in creation and the Spirit suffers in other ways as well. Hence, the difficulties that come in understanding the attributes of God in light of the hypostatic union are not present in the same way within pneumatology. Here, in the Holy Spirit, God is simply acting in an unmediated way. Perhaps one should say that the Spirit himself is the mediation of God's acts in history. In this manner, Kilian McDonnell writes, "There is a habit of mind which sees the Spirit as the place of mediation whereby God touches the Church and the world and sets them on the road back to God."⁶ One may say that the Spirit is the 'place' where God is acting immediately in the world.⁷ Given this fact, pneumatology has a unique advantage when it comes to discussions of divine impassibility.

A second advantage that pneumatology presents for supporting a doctrine of divine passibility is that almost universally theologians do not assert that the Spirit is

⁶ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 8. Cf. Pinnock who writes, "Spirit mediates the presence of God in creation and enables the creature to participate in God. The creature, distinct from the Father in the Son, is united to God by the Spirit" (*Flame of Love*, 60).

⁷ Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person*, viii.

impassible. In contrast, as chapter three and four observed, many theologians readily claim that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, eternal, omnipotent, infinite, wise, holy, loving, omniscient, and incomprehensible.⁸ The attribute of impassibility is not found in such lists. One would expect that if theologians believed that God is impassible, then they would also want to affirm that the Spirit is impassible. When asked, theologians who affirm the classical doctrine of divine impassibility would probably answer that the Spirit is indeed impassible (because of the assumed divine nature of the Spirit); however, it is incredibly difficult to find any theologians who affirm the impassibility of the Spirit if they are not asked.⁹ The absence of explicit affirmations that the Spirit is impassible suggests that there may be a latent awareness that the Holy Spirit is indeed passible. That is, this latent awareness has (perhaps) kept many theologians from explicitly claiming that the Holy Spirit is impassible. Besides this latent intuition, there are many reasons to think that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, passible and we now turn to consider these.

3. The Holy Spirit Suffers in Relationship to People

One way that the Holy Spirit suffers is in his relationships with people. The Holy Spirit is not only the principle of fellowship, but also himself in fellowship with people (2 Cor 13:14). Fellowship must have reciprocal realities to it. “Otherwise it is meaningless to talk about their ‘fellowship’,” as Moltmann observes. “In ‘the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,’ God the Spirit evidently enters into a relationship of reciprocity and

⁸ In chapter three see part 3c, in chapter four see the final paragraph of part 5.

⁹ At this point, the only theologian (from any time period) that I have found who asserts that the Spirit is impassible is Weinandy. However, his assertion does not occur in a pneumatology and it is not a reflection on the person of the Spirit in particular. Rather, it is an assertion regarding the divine persons in general. Weinandy writes, “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as subsistent relations fully in act, are immutable and impassible” (*Does God Suffer?* 119).

mutuality with the people concerned and—in line with this—allows these people to exert an influence on him, just as he exerts an influence on them.”¹⁰ One way that people exert an influence on the Spirit is by affecting the passions of the Spirit. In relationship with people, the Holy Spirit is passionate as he grieves from human sin, as he groans with believers in prayer, and as he experiences the joy and pain of rebirth. This section covers each of these themes in turn.

a) The Grieving of the Spirit

The Spirit suffers as he grieves in his relationship with people. Grieving is a natural side effect of relationships. Scripture explicitly describes the Spirit as grieving in two instances. Isaiah reports that the Israelites “rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isa 63:10), and Paul warns the Ephesians that they should not “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” by how they treat one another (Eph 4:30). This grieving implies that the Holy Spirit suffers.

In light of this recognition, some theologians have an apparent contradiction between their pneumatology and their doctrine of the divine attributes. For example, Ron Highfield affirms that the Spirit grieves (in an effort to prove that the Spirit is not an impersonal force). However, at the same time he affirms the doctrine of impassibility with the understanding that “God’s ‘emotional state’ . . . is in no way caused or conditioned by anything outside God” and that it would be an imperfection of God if he were “subject to suffering.”¹¹ Highfield does not discuss the idea of the Spirit (or God)

¹⁰ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 218.

¹¹ Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, 375 and 153 (see p. 116 on the Holy Spirit grieving). Before and after the quoted statement, Highfield qualifies his understanding of impassibility by suggesting that “the doctrine does not assert that God has no heart, no feelings of love, wrath, joy, or jealousy. . . . God’s ‘emotions’ are his own freely self-enacted being.”

‘grieving’ in his discussion of impassibility, and so it seems he has missed a pneumatological insight. Has Highfield contradicted himself? If Highfield does recognize that one can draw real implications from the Spirit’s grieving (i.e. that the Spirit is a person), then should he not also accept the implication that the Holy Spirit’s grieving implies that the Spirit suffers?

Most likely Highfield (and others like him) would respond and say that he is not being contradictory because he would interpret *any* image of the suffering of the Spirit as a metaphor.¹² Scripture does have a running theme that God cannot be compared to any human being or any image (e.g. Isa 40:18), which might support such a conclusion. This leads one to ask, are biblical metaphors “mere figures of speech”?¹³ Are they just ‘religious’ language of the liturgical or devotional kind, but without any value for understanding the attributes of God? Both classical theists and those who critique them would say, “no”—the Holy Spirit empowers language to communicate truth regarding God.¹⁴ At the same time, both classical theists and those who critique them acknowledge that much, if not all, language that Scripture uses to refer to God is metaphorical.¹⁵ That is, theologians acknowledge that Scripture uses language to refer to God that should not be taken literally, but that this metaphorical language, nevertheless, teaches something

¹² As I just mentioned, Highfield does not discuss the issue of the Spirit’s grieving, but he does discuss metaphorical language as used of God (*Great is the Lord*, 151–3).

¹³ This is how Rice (inaccurately) describes the view of classical theism (“Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” 177, n. 9). Rice does not provide any specific examples of theologians who hold to this view.

¹⁴ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 71.

¹⁵ One might even agree that “all language is anthropomorphic and metaphorical” (Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 62).

true about God.¹⁶ So, for example, anthropomorphic language (language depicting God in human form), which might refer to God as having a hand, a back, or a “strong arm,” is not taken literally. Rather, just as humans act with their body parts, the anthropomorphism of God having a body or body parts points to divine action.¹⁷ Things get a little more difficult when it comes to anthropopathic language of God (language that attributes human moods, feelings, or emotions to God), because attributions of passions are not (necessarily) connected with being a physical being. When it comes to the doctrine of impassibility in particular, the problem, then, is in how to interpret such anthropopathic speech that is found in Scripture. Clearly, if the Scripture uses terminology that refers to God as suffering (e.g. grief), then it is legitimate for us to use such language of God as well. Nevertheless, as Highfield notes, “this does not solve the problem of what we should *think* when we hear those words and what we should *teach* on the basis of them.”¹⁸

The passibility of God seems to be the most natural conclusion one would reach when reading Scripture. I once described this chapter to a lay person in my church and he could not understand the problem. He said, “Of course God feels and suffers!” Theologians give good reasons for interpreting anthropomorphisms with respect to body parts the way they do (God is not a physical being). Given the broad range of passionate expressions that describe God throughout Scripture, the onus should be on those who

¹⁶ Open theists are not justified when they suggest that their opponents bypass the truths conveyed by metaphors and when they challenge their opponents to take metaphors “seriously” by actually looking for the implications of metaphors (Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 62–3). Rather, open theists and their opponents just disagree over what those implications might be.

¹⁷ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 33–4.

¹⁸ Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, 151 (original emphasis).

affirm impassibility to prove why it is most appropriate to interpret anthropopathisms in a way that removes a sense of divine passion from the meaning of those metaphors.

Even though the burden of proof should be on their opponents, those who argue that God is passible have a significant reason that they interpret anthropopathisms as implying divine passibility. The main argument is that humans are created in the image of God. Terrance Tiessen remarks,

On the one hand, it is always dangerous to assume that God is like us simply because he uses analogical language to communicate truth about himself for us. On the other hand, we are persons *created in God's image*, and I think that it is reasonable to assume that biblical language about God means the same thing about him as it would mean about us unless there are compelling reasons . . . to indicate otherwise.¹⁹

On account of the correspondence that the image of God in humanity implies for how metaphors relate to God, and “since we are made in God’s image, rather than he in ours,” Millard Erickson proposes that, instead of speaking of anthropopathic language as a form of anthropomorphism, “it would be more correct to say that the ascription of emotions to humans is *theomorphic*.”²⁰ That is, the metaphors would first of all be true regarding God’s passions, and only then be describing something true of humanity, although it would be described of humanity in an imperfect manner, and not in the same (perfect) way that they are described of God. Although Jane Linahan does not employ the concept of theopomorphism, based on this kind of thinking she rightly suggests that, if taken

¹⁹ Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 326 (emphasis added). If one inquired, I suspect Tiessen would correct this and qualify his claim by saying that “biblical language about God means *something similar* (rather than *the same*) about him as it would mean about us.” Although not arguing specifically regarding how to interpret anthropopathic metaphors, Pinnock argues, “It is fitting to speak of God in human terms because humans have been *created in God's image* and because the best self-revelation of God has been in human form” (*Most Moved Mover*, 60 [emphasis added]).

²⁰ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 161 (emphasis added). Also, Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*, 60.

“seriously,” anthropopathic metaphors “should be taken much more than literally.”²¹

They should be taken as teaching a truth that is supremely true of God, and secondarily (metaphorically) true of human beings. So how should one understand the metaphor of the Spirit’s grief?

Although not explicitly discussing pneumatology, Thomas Weinandy, who holds to the doctrine of impassibility, discusses the specific idea of God grieving. He affirms that God ‘grieves,’ but he interprets the metaphor of ‘grief’ in such a way that it has no external cause and in such a way that it is devoid of suffering. Weinandy’s explanation is worth quoting at length. He writes,

Sorrow and grief are attributed to God not by way of predicating a passible emotional change within him, but rather by way of denoting that he is all-loving and good. Because he is perfectly loving and good, he finds sin and evil repugnant, and so he can be said to sorrow and grieve in the light of their presence. God does *not* grieve or sorrow because *he himself experiences some injury* or the loss of some good, *nor that he has been affected*, within his inner being, by some evil outside cause, but rather he grieves or sorrows only in the sense that he knows that human persons experience some injury or the loss of some good, and so embraces them in love. This sorrow and grief ascribed to God could contain the note of suffering only if we mean that, as all-loving, he is intensely concerned with the reality of sin and evil, and the suffering that ensues from them. To ascribe suffering to God is not to denote a positive passible emotional state as if such a state were distinct from a variety of other emotional states within God, but solely to specify the truth that God, as all-loving and good, is opposed to and finds abhorrent all that is not loving and good. To ascribe suffering to God does not then imply that God experiences inner emotional anguish or distress because he has experienced some injury or the loss of some good, nor that he has been adversely affected by some evil outside cause, but rather it accentuates that truth that God’s perfectly actualized goodness is wholly adverse to all that is contrary to his goodness, and that in his perfectly actualized love he embraces those who suffer because of sin and evil.²²

A few key points stand out in Weinandy’s explanation of the metaphor of divine ‘grief.’

First, when God is said to be grieved, he has not been (passively) affected by an outside

²¹ Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 45.

²² Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 169 (emphasis added), cf. 164–5.

cause. Second, God experiences no injury or distress (suffering) from this grief. So what then does the metaphor mean for Weinandy? It expresses that God (actively) “knows” and “embraces” people who experience injury and that he is “opposed” to all that is not good. In case anyone might misunderstand his conclusion, he explicitly states that, in reference to God, any sense of grief (and any sense of suffering) must be “purged of the passible and emotional connotations” of human suffering.²³

There is no support for Weinandy’s case within the Scriptures that refer to the Spirit as grieving. In fact, these Scriptures run contrary to his interpretation of the metaphor of divine grief. First, Weinandy says that God’s grief is not passive, it is active.²⁴ In contrast, when the Scriptures refer to the Spirit’s grieving, it is actually only implied. What the Scriptures do refer to, in contrast to Weinandy’s proposal, is that people are the ones acting, and that they are the ones who cause the grief of the Holy Spirit. The grief of the Spirit is, in these texts, passive. It is passive in the sense that even though the Holy Spirit is the one who (actively) does the grieving, it is in response (passively) to human actions.

Second, while Weinandy suggests that God’s grieving expresses his knowledge and embrace of people who have been injured, the Scriptures that speak of the Spirit grieving (though not denying that this may happen) actually suggest that the Spirit’s grief is in response to the *perpetrator* of sin, but there is no explicit mention of how the Spirit responds to the one who has been injured. Furthermore, in the Isaiah passage (63:10), the

²³ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 169.

²⁴ This is reminiscent of Aquinas (whom Weinandy refers to in *Does God Suffer?* 165–7) who argued that compassion and mercy refers to divine action, but not to feelings of God. However, while an action of helping someone out of their misery can be thought of as ‘compassion,’ grief itself cannot in the same way be thought of as an action that helps someone (though it may lead to such actions).

only one who has been injured is the Holy Spirit, as the grief results from the Israelites rebellion against God, not any human (cf. Ps 78:40).

Third, Weinandy's suggestion that divine grief does not involve any emotional distress, injury, or loss conflicts with any meaning of the word 'grief,' biblical or post-biblical. The very essence of the word 'grief,' has emotional connotations to it. Hence, even when Weinandy describes God's grief as "opposition" to evil, he finds it difficult not to use emotional language. He rewords this "opposition" and (with emotional language) says that God "abhors evil and so repudiates it."²⁵ In all likely hood, a first-century person who read Paul's letter would have understood the grief of the Spirit (Eph 4:30) in precisely the way that Weinandy suggests it should not be understood since the Greek word that is here translated 'grieve' means to cause pain, sorrow, or to wound.²⁶ To strip the metaphor of such connotation removes the supposed meaning of the metaphor far away from the word itself. Similarly, in contemporary society, Linahan describes grief as a "deep sorrow." She writes, "We usually think of grief in correlation with death: it is the overwhelming, life-altering, sometimes passionate, sometimes numbing sense of emptiness, sorrow, protest, and upheaval at the irretrievable loss of a loved one."²⁷ In contrast to Weinandy's proposal, the word 'grief' does connote suffering.

Weinandy's proposal regarding divine grief simply does not line up with the way that the Scriptures describe the grief of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 and Isaiah 63:10 present the Holy Spirit grieving in response to human sin and rebellion. The Holy Spirit

²⁵ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 169.

²⁶ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, s.v., "λύπη, λυπέω," 313–22.

²⁷ Linahan, "The Grieving Spirit," 31.

is passive and passible. If the metaphor of grief is to remain connected in any way to the meaning of the word as it is used in other contexts, then one must accept that these Scriptures also refer to an experience of distress, which may be described as suffering.

b) Pentecostal Theology of the Spirit Groaning in Prayer

By and large, Pentecostals are sensitive to the idea that the Spirit is passible. Indeed, an awareness of the “Spirit’s sigh” may be one of the key characteristics of Pentecostal spirituality.²⁸ Besides affirming that the Spirit grieves because of personal and social sin,²⁹ Pentecostal theologians often suggest that the Spirit groans as believers speak in tongues. The image of the Spirit groaning is a further way that one finds the Spirit’s passion displayed in relation to individuals. Paul writes of times when believers do not know how or what to pray. At these times, he says, “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom 8:26, NASB). A few verses earlier Paul wrote that believers “who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly” (8:23). There is a clear connection here between the groans of the Spirit and the groans of humanity. Pentecostals frequently link these groanings in their theology of speaking in tongues (glossolalia).³⁰ That is, as one speaks in tongues, the Spirit is praying through that person and helping that person pray. As Clark Pinnock notes, “We surrender to God when we pray in tongues and give control even of our speech over to him.”³¹ In such moments, the

²⁸ Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit*, 123.

²⁹ Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit*, 170, 172, and 181.

³⁰ For example, Macchia, “Groans too Deep for Words,” 158; Rybarczyk, “Reframing Tongues,” 92; Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 169 and 245; and Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 575–86. Macchia notes that Pentecostals are not the only ones who propose that the groaning of Romans 8:23 and 26 includes reference to speaking in tongues. Among early commentators he lists John Chrysostom and Origen. Among modern New Testament scholars he lists Hermann Gunkel, Julius Schniewind, Ernst Käsemann, Krister Stendahl, and John A. T. Robinson (Macchia, “Sighs too Deep for Words,” 59).

³¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 173.

Spirit groans and one senses the passion of the Spirit. Edmund Rybarczyk writes, “Indeed, to hear Pentecostal prayer warriors, the Spirit’s travail can be an overwhelming burden that drains a person’s energy.”³² This Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit’s groaning through believers as they pray in tongues further supports a pneumatological understanding of divine passibility. The argument here is not that the Spirit’s influence on people has a reciprocating influence on the Spirit, but rather that the Spirit’s groaning through people displays that the Spirit is passionate.

c) The Spirit and Rebirth

In relation to people, the image of rebirth also infers that the Spirit is passible. Giving birth is a passionate experience. Evangelicals are particularly familiar with the theme of rebirth as it is expressed in the Gospel of John. Here Jesus teaches that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). He again speaks of being “born of the Spirit” in verse eight. The image of rebirth is employed outside of the Johannine literature as well. In Galatians Paul speaks of children who are “born by the power of the Spirit” (Gal 4:29) and in Titus one reads of salvation through “rebirth . . . by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).³³ The New Testament theme that believers are “children of God” might also presuppose the image of rebirth at times (at other times it might presuppose the biblical theme of adoption).

In theology, the language of rebirth is used as a metaphor for a number of actions of the Spirit. On account of the above texts, Evangelicals frequently refer to their

³² Rybarczyk, “Reframing Tongues,” 101.

³³ Although not explicitly pneumatological, Deuteronomy 32:18 speaks of God giving birth and Job 38:29 speaks of the womb of God.

conversion experience as the time at which they were “born again.”³⁴ In another context, Moltmann regards the whole process of salvation as an experience of rebirth by the Spirit.³⁵ In addition, in liberation theology, José Comblin describes the experience of freedom—when an oppressed community is strengthened and regains the ability to speak for themselves—as an experience of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Both evangelical and other theologians generally describe the image of rebirth only with regards to its significance for the people who undergo this process. Most theologians have not considered the implications that this image of rebirth has for the Holy Spirit. Historically, the same was true of the cross of Christ. In discussing the event of the cross, Moltmann remarks that he “turned the traditional question upside down. The question traditionally asked was the soteriological one: what does the cross of Christ mean for us men and women? My question now was the theological one: what does the cross of the Son of God mean for God himself?”³⁷ Here I want to do the same thing pneumatologically. Rather than considering what being ‘born again’ means for Christians, I want us to consider what it means for God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

At least in part, theologians have probably not considered the idea that the image of rebirth by the Holy Spirit might actually have implications for the attributes of God because of the fact that Christian history has been dominated by masculine images of

³⁴ Though understood differently, this theme is not lost in other traditions. For example, Congar (a Catholic theologian), *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:67 and Bulgakov (an Orthodox theologian), *The Comforter*, 298.

³⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 155.

³⁶ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 21 and 41–2.

³⁷ Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 304–5.

God.³⁸ In contrast, the image of ‘rebirth’ naturally suggests a feminine image of God (a feminine *image*, but not a feminine *God*).³⁹ Of course, as classical theology correctly teaches, God is without gender. Remembering this fact can help one to overcome the reticence of accepting the passible implications that ‘rebirth’ has for the doctrine of the divine attributes. What are those implications?

Giving birth is an extremely passionate experience. To imagine that the Spirit experiences the rebirth of a person with no passion, as though the Spirit has had an epidural, would not match the image of giving birth very well (especially to someone in the New Testament era). Besides, the passion of birth goes vastly beyond the physical pain (or “birth-sensations” as my Mother-in-law says). Linahan comments,

If we would try to begin to understand the grieving of the Holy Spirit, we need to consider the labor of a mother giving birth, her unspeakable delight in every minute detail of the precious little life entrusted to her care, the utterly selfless, self-expanding devotion she pours out so that her child will be healthy and safe, her kenotic self-sacrifice in one day letting go so that the child may achieve self-actualization, autonomy, and freedom—and then the unbearable agony of seeing that beloved child violated, humiliated, tortured, maimed, lost, or killed.⁴⁰

Even beyond the passions of grief that Linahan describes, the Spirit has reason for much joy in rebirth. Similarly, the anticipation and celebration of new life brings with it passions that allow women to be willing to experience the physical pain of child birth.⁴¹

³⁸ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 120. Elsewhere Johnson argues that the feminine nature of the Spirit is one reason that the history of Christian theology has neglected pneumatology as a whole (*Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 17–20).

³⁹ The grammatical ‘gender’ of the word ‘Spirit’ sometimes suggests this as well. The Spirit is usually referred to as ‘he’ in the English language (following the Latin), even though it is feminine in Hebrew (Old Testament) and neuter in Greek (New Testament). The Syrian tradition (in Eastern Orthodoxy) has continued to speak of the Spirit in feminine terms (as well as some contemporary theologians).

⁴⁰ Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 45.

⁴¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 254–55.

Along the same lines, the Spirit anticipates and celebrates (cf. Luke 15:7) the rebirth of children of God and says, “Come!,” perhaps in a similar way that the Spirit, along with the bride, longs for the return of Christ (Rev 22:17). Like the suffering of the Son of God in Jesus Christ, the pain of rebirth is a suffering that the Spirit willingly enters into for redemptions sake. Granted, the Holy Spirit is not literally a woman who gives birth to a child. Nevertheless, the image of the Holy Spirit giving birth does present the Holy Spirit as passionate and passible.

4. The Spirit Suffering in Creation

Beyond the Spirit’s relationship with people, the Spirit suffers in all of creation. Linahan proposes, “We and our world, in the totality of our existence together, are enfolded in the Spirit’s grief.”⁴² This cosmic suffering of the Spirit is the most common way that contemporary pneumatologies present the Spirit as suffering. The Spirit’s presence in all of creation has not always been recognized, however.

In the history of pneumatology, there have been three primary concerns: the deity of the Holy Spirit, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to individuals, and the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Church and its liturgy. Nevertheless, in the contemporary context where ecological concerns are mounting, numerous theologians have begun to consider in greater depth the relationship of the Spirit to the natural realm beyond the human aspect of creation.⁴³ This is clearly a growing trend, yet Mark Wallace notes that “the *cosmic* role of the Spirit as the power of life-giving breath within creation, including nonhuman

⁴² Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 29.

⁴³ Consider, for example, the following works: Moltmann, *God in Creation*; Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*; Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*; Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*; and Edwards, *Breath of Life*.

as well as human creation, has been consistently downplayed” and often neglected altogether in contemporary pneumatologies.⁴⁴ At times this might be neglected because, as Robert Jenson notes, “Those who have ventured cosmic pneumatology have not always been able to avoid producing nonsense or myth.”⁴⁵ Specifically, there is the temptation to neglect the fact that the cosmic Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. More and more contemporary theologians are avoiding this temptation, while at the same time presenting a doctrine of the Creator Spirit suffering within creation.

The Spirit is present throughout creation. A running theme through contemporary pneumatology also teaches that the Spirit is *in all things*. This leads many theologians to conclude that the Spirit suffers in creation. Some Christians might have a gnostic tendency to think of the material world as evil, and that, therefore, the Spirit cannot become so related to the natural world that he can dwell within it and suffer within it. However, the incarnation of Christ sets a precedent for this relationship. Sigurd Bergmann writes, “Because the Son took on the human body, so also it is appropriate for the Spirit to act in corporeal fashion.”⁴⁶

Moltmann was one of the first contemporary theologians to develop the idea of the Spirit suffering in creation, though others have developed it in more detail. The center of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation is not God’s transcendence and distinction from the world (though he does affirm this), but divine immanence, as the Spirit indwells all

⁴⁴ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 137 (original emphasis) and again in Wallace, “The Green Face of God,” 449. Besides a number of systematic theologies, he offers as examples the pneumatologies of Hendrickus Berkhof, Yves Congar, George S. Hendry, Alasdair I. C. Heron, G. W. H. Lampe, and John V. Taylor. Gary D. Badcock has written yet another recent pneumatology that has minimal reference to the cosmic role of the Spirit.

⁴⁵ Jenson, “The Holy Spirit,” 165.

⁴⁶ Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 156, cf. 159 and 169. Similarly, Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 43.

things.⁴⁷ This indwelling, Moltmann argues, is analogous to the perichoresis of the Trinity, with the principle of mutual interpenetration. God is in the world and the world is in God.⁴⁸ This builds on the idea that God is “over all, and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6).⁴⁹ There are no limits to where the Spirit can dwell. Correspondingly the Psalmist asks, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps 139:7). The Spirit is not limited by any boundary, for “even the highest heaven” cannot contain him (1 Kgs 8:27). And yet, the Lord (who is the Spirit, 2 Cor 3:17) fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:24). Indeed, the Spirit must be in all things if “the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10). Two theological principles support this interpretation of the Spirit’s relationship to the natural world: the Spirit as the giver and sustainer of all life and the action of the Spirit creating communion within and with creation.

First, the Spirit dwells in all things as the Creator and sustainer of life. For Moltmann, “The possibility of perceiving God in all things, and all things in God, is grounded theologically on an understanding of the Spirit of God as the power of creation and the wellspring of life.”⁵⁰ Following the Nicene Creed, theologies of the Creator Spirit often remind readers that the Spirit is the “Giver of Life.” Since the cosmic role of the Spirit is a running (yet neglected) theme throughout the Scripture, Hendrikus Berkhof defines the Spirit as “God’s inspiring breath by which he grants life in creation and re-

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 13. Moltmann clarifies, “By the title ‘God in Creation’ I mean God the Holy Spirit. God is ‘the love of life’ and his Spirit is *in* all created being” (*God in Creation*, xiv).

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 17.

⁴⁹ Though Ephesians 4:6 is found in the context of a discussion regarding Church unity, Fee notes the universal implications of v. 6. Regarding vv. 4–6, Fee writes that “Paul can conclude only with the ‘one God’ who is the ground and source of everything” (*God’s Empowering Presence*), 704.

⁵⁰ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 35.

creation.”⁵¹ The New Testament authors present the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit primarily as soterio-eschatological. However this understanding of the re-creative work of the Spirit presupposes the original creative work of the Holy Spirit, which the Old Testament author’s emphasize.⁵² Genesis 1:2 is a familiar passage expressing the creative presence of the Spirit of God, who hovered over the waters. With respect to creation, the Word and the Spirit worked together: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath [*ruach*/Spirit] of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6, cf. Isa 40:12–13). In Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones, it is the Spirit of the Lord that brings life. It was only when “breath [*ruach*/Spirit] entered them” that they “came to life” (Ezek 37:10, cf. vv. 5 and 9). Similarly, Job declares, “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4).

The Creator Spirit is also the sustainer. Bergmann comments, “Temporally the Spirit not only creates life in the beginning, but also constantly bestows life, functioning as a kind of perpetually flowing source of being whose activity is oriented especially toward the future.”⁵³ Along these lines, in the Psalms we read, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Ps 104:30). Similarly, Job is aware that if God withdrew his Spirit and breath, all living things would perish (Job 34:14–15). Regarding this, Bernard Ramm comments, “This is an extremely powerful verse setting forth the immanental work of the Holy Spirit, and indicating that Nature to Biblical theism is under the constant and immanent penetration of God.”⁵⁴ By the Spirit,

⁵¹ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 14.

⁵² Barth, *CD*, III/1, 56–9.

⁵³ Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 167.

⁵⁴ Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 109.

God “fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:23). Hence, Pinnock rightly concludes, “By the Spirit, power of creation, God is closer to us than we are to ourselves.”⁵⁵

Sjoerd Bonting suggests that Moltmann (and by implication, others who follow him) overstates the place of the Spirit in creation, based upon the *life*-giving work of the Spirit.⁵⁶ Bonting claims, “Moltmann . . . disregards the scientific evidence indicating that some 9 billion years of God’s creative activity preceded the appearance of the first living organisms.”⁵⁷ From Bonting’s critique, since the Spirit’s work is specifically giving *life*, perhaps it would be incorrect to conclude that the Spirit is in *all* creation. Perhaps the Spirit is only in *living* things. However, in making this critique of Moltmann, Bonting has incorrectly presupposed that these nine billion years were not also life-giving. Rather, these many years were necessary to bring creation to the point of life. Further, from a biological perspective, every living thing is linked to the rest of creation, both from the perspective of evolution and their continual existence as the material of their bodies is consistently recycled.⁵⁸ In that sense, the work of the Spirit throughout all of creation is life-giving.⁵⁹ Further, Bonting argues that the Logos brings the energy for creation and

⁵⁵ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 61.

⁵⁶ In addition, in part 2g of chapter six I note how some theologians reject that the Spirit is in all things because they fail to recognize that that Spirit can be present everywhere, and yet present in different and changing ways.

⁵⁷ Bonting, “Spirit and Creation,” 720.

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 34–5. Johnson is here specifically concerned with noting the kinship of humanity with the rest of creation.

⁵⁹ Furthermore, there is an indication that Moltmann might not be thinking only of the physical world when he speaks of the Spirit being “in all created things,” which would include both the ‘seen’ and the ‘unseen’ (Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 11 and Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 10). Elsewhere Moltmann asserts more explicitly that the Spirit “sustains, nurtures, and gives life to all things *in heaven* and on earth” (“Come Holy Spirit,” 74 [emphasis added]).

the Spirit the information.⁶⁰ If his pneumatological proposal is correct, then the Spirit would still have to be in all things to convey the information for creation. Hence, one can still affirm with Moltmann, that “the Creator, through his Spirit, *dwells in* his creation as a whole . . . by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life.”⁶¹

A second theological principle that supports the conclusion that the Spirit suffers in all things is that the Spirit is the Spirit of communion. Moltmann argues that the ‘fellowship of the Spirit’ is not limited to the Church, or even to human beings, but that “*the community of creation*, in which all created things exist with one another, for one another and in one another, is also *the fellowship of the Holy Spirit*.”⁶² In this fellowship, the Spirit creates a community among creatures, but also “creates the community of all created things *with God* and with each other, making it that fellowship of creation in which all created things communicate with one another *and with God*, each in its own way.”⁶³ Denis Edwards has developed this theme considerably.

As the subtitle of Edwards’ pneumatology suggests—*A Theology of the Creator Spirit*—Edwards is largely concerned with the relationship of the Holy Spirit to creation. In this book he expands upon his previous work in *The God of Evolution* where he seeks to correlate the trinitarian doctrines of God and creation with the contemporary scientific theory of evolution. Here Edwards suggests that the Spirit makes possible the “self-

⁶⁰ Bonting, “Spirit and Creation,” 723. By ‘information’ Bonting means, for example, “the form of the laws of nature, the four physical forces, and the fundamental constants” that were required to order the energetic force of the Big Bang (721).

⁶¹ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, xiv (original emphasis).

⁶² Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 10 (original emphasis), cf. 221.

⁶³ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 11 (emphasis added). Bergmann discusses this aspect of Moltmann’s pneumatology in his *Creation Set Free*, 253–5.

transcendence” of nature, which enables “evolutionary emergence to occur.”⁶⁴ The presentation of the Holy Spirit enabling evolution continues in his *Breath of Life*.

Edwards begins by describing the relatively new worldview that Christians must respond to, which presents the massive and ancient universe as expanding and evolving.⁶⁵ This evolutionary process appears to have occurred following so-called ‘natural’ processes, that is, without any external (particularly divine) manipulation or guidance. Everything in the universe is said to be interconnected physically, due to this evolutionary history.

Edwards presents his pneumatology into this worldview.

Edwards emphasizes that the Holy Spirit has always been around in creation, long before Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has empowered and continues to empower the evolutionary processes, while giving creation its own autonomy and integrity.⁶⁶

Expressing the same idea, Johnson writes,

The Spirit is the great, creative Matrix who grounds and sustains the cosmos and attracts it toward the future. Throughout the vast sweep of cosmic and biological evolution she embraces the material root of existence and its endless new potential, empowering the cosmic process from within. The universe, in turn, is self-organizing and self-transcending.⁶⁷

Edwards finds a foundation for this pneumatological proposal in the pneumatology of Basil of Caesarea. Beyond Basil’s exposition of the deity of the Holy Spirit, Edwards observes that Basil expresses a vision of “the Holy Spirit as the Breath of God who

⁶⁴ Edwards, *The God of Evolution*, 100. Chapter five is entitled “Evolution and the Holy Spirit.”

⁶⁵ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 8.

⁶⁶ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 34. A shorter version of Edwards proposal can also be found in his “A Relational and Evolving Universe,” 199–210.

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 57–8, cf. 44. Also compare Moltmann, who writes, “The Spirit is the principle of creativity on all levels of matter and life. She creates new possibilities and in these anticipates new designs and blueprints for material and living organisms. In this sense the Spirit is the principle of evolution” (*God in Creation*, 100).

enables creatures to participate in divine Communion.”⁶⁸ The foundation of this theology comes from Basil’s experience of baptismal and eucharistic communion. This was expressed, for example, in Basil’s opposition to the solitary life. He suggested that the gifts of the Spirit were given to individuals for the good of the whole community, and that, therefore, the gifts were to be expressed in communal life. Basil proposed that “the Spirit is found in the living of communion—in nursing the sick, in sharing food with the hungry, in hospitality, and in friendship”—a life encouraged by the gifts or charisms of the Spirit.⁶⁹ To summarize, Basil viewed the Spirit as the basis for the social or communal life of Christianity.

Just as the Spirit is said to be the foundation for this interconnectedness or communion in the Church, like Moltmann, Edwards suggests that the Holy Spirit is the source of the interconnectedness in all of creation, which has been described above from the perspective of evolution.⁷⁰ Edwards writes,

It is the Holy Breath of God that we encounter in *all* our experiences of authentic communion. . . . It is the Spirit’s role to dwell in creatures, creating the bond of

⁶⁸ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 17. Edwards certainly could have drawn on Augustine as well, who speaks of the Spirit as the love that binds together the Father and Son (*The Trinity*, VIII.14, cf. XV.10), however, Edwards focuses on Basil because of his ecumenical concerns and goals (*Breath of Life*, 2–3, 17 and throughout chapter ten).

⁶⁹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 21.

⁷⁰ No doubt some theologians will object to Edwards’ understanding of the Spirit suffering within creation based upon its close connection with evolutionary biology. However, whether or not one accepts the proposals of evolutionary biology, one can still accept the concept of the Spirit dwelling and suffering in all of creation, because the concepts of the Spirit as ‘Giver of Life’ and as the principle of the communion of creation are not dependent on this understanding of nature. Edwards (and others) only link pneumatology and evolutionary biology together because the latter is part of the context to which their theology is responding. Furthermore, theologians generally recognize the need to distinguish the process of evolution from the activity of the Spirit, even if the Spirit sustains the former, because even the evolutionary processes need to be redeemed (e.g. see Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 133, 137–8, and 140 regarding Moltmann, Edwards, and Bergmann).

communion between the creature and the life of God. The Spirit is the Communion-Bringer and, as such, is the Life-Giver and Sanctifier.⁷¹

Likewise, Johnson, who also emphasizes the communion-making role of the Spirit, concludes that “the Spirit’s encircling indwelling weaves a genuine solidarity among all creatures and between God and the world.”⁷² On account of this communion between the Spirit and creation, Edwards (along with Johnson and others) concludes that the Spirit is in all things and suffers with the suffering of creation.

To further support this conclusion regarding the Spirit’s relationship to creation, Johnson presents a number of ‘cosmic symbols’ which she believes illustrates the intimate connection that the Holy Spirit has with nature.⁷³ She begins with the symbol of the Spirit as wind, which is clearly concordant with the biblical terms *ruach* and *pneuma*. In Ezekiel 37:1–14 the Spirit is the wind that blows through the valley of dry bones bringing life and in Acts 2:1–4 the Spirit is the wind that fills the house where the believers were gathered at Pentecost. Johnson suggests further that “the blowing Spirit can also be discerned in mundane events,” such as the warm wind that melts the winter’s ice to green the earth.⁷⁴ The Spirit is also associated with the symbol of fire, which is often used to represent the presence of God among his people. For example, in Acts 2:1–3, the Spirit descends upon the people like tongues of fire. Johnson applies this symbol to the creative action of the Spirit at the beginning of the world in light of contemporary science: “Contemporary scientific theory about the origin of the universe in a primeval

⁷¹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 34 (emphasis added) and 29. Similarly, Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 20. Boff, drawing on 1 Cor 12:4—“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit”—notes that there is still a diversity within this communion (*Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 167).

⁷² Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 43.

⁷³ Also, Wallace, “The Wounded Spirit,” 58–9.

⁷⁴ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 45.

explosion, inelegantly named the Big Bang, releases yet another layer of the meaning from this symbol. The act of creation is already a Pentecost, a first and permanent outpouring of the fiery Spirit of life.”⁷⁵ The final cosmic symbol that Johnson presents of the Spirit is that of water. Here the Spirit is that which is “poured out” and pictured as “the bottomless wellspring of the source of life” (cf. Isa 32:15–18; Joel 2:28–9; John 4:7–15; and Rom 5:5).⁷⁶ Eugene Rogers finds the symbol of water particularly helpful for linking the Spirit with nature. He observes, “‘Nature’ is not a common biblical word outside Paul, but ‘water’ is. Let ‘water’ stand for nature,” and one finds many connections between the Spirit and nature.⁷⁷ All of the above cosmic symbols present the Spirit as that which gives life—wind, fire, and water—and as intimately connected with the natural world. From these symbols Johnson concludes,

A theology of Creator Spirit overcomes the dualism of spirit and matter with all of its ramifications, and leads to the realization of the sacredness of the earth. . . . Instead of matter being divorced from spirit and consigned to a realm separate from the holy, it is an intrinsic part of the cosmic community, vivified, indwelt, and renewed by the Creator Spirit.⁷⁸

All of these cosmic symbols of the Spirit—wind, fire, and water—suggest that the Spirit has an intimate connection with nature, and further support the idea that the Spirit suffers within creation.

Theologians sometimes refer to the intimate relationship of the Spirit to creation as a trinitarian form of panentheism, which (as with the general concept of panentheism—see chapter three) is interpreted in a number of different ways. Johnson

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 48.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 49.

⁷⁷ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 135.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 59–60.

attempts to qualify her version of trinitarian panentheism noting that she envisions the world as dependent upon God, but not God dependent upon the world.⁷⁹ However, her emphasis on how the cosmic symbols of the Creator Spirit ‘overcome’ the dualism of spirit and matter may appear to cause problems. Elsewhere she more appropriately speaks of how these cosmic symbols of the Creator Spirit “*transcend* the hard dualism of spirit and matter.”⁸⁰ One must remember that these cosmic symbols, are in fact only that—symbols or metaphorical expressions of the work of the Creator Spirit.⁸¹ Furthermore, although the Spirit may indeed work *through* created matter, this does not mean that the Spirit can be identified with that matter. If this is done, the Creator/creation distinction is placed in jeopardy. The Christian tradition has historically confessed that nature itself is not divine, though God is always present to it. The appropriate Creator/creation duality (not dualism) must remain.⁸² If this is what Johnson intends, and it seems that it is, then this aspect of her proposal may be accepted.

Others, however, have been more extreme in their expression of the close relationship of the Spirit with the world. Building upon Sallie McFague’s model of viewing the world as the body of God, Wallace claims that the world is God’s body

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 43.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 47 (my emphasis).

⁸¹ By contrast, Wallace, who I discuss below, writes, ‘In this framework, the earth’s waters and winds and birds and fires will not be regarded only as *symbols* of the Spirit, but rather as sharing in her very *being* as the Spirit is en fleshed and embodied through natural organisms and processes’ (“The Wounded Spirit,” 55, original emphasis).

⁸² Johnson speaks of dualism as envisioning “two separate levels of existence . . . opposites” (*Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 11).

specifically by virtue of the Spirit dwelling within it.⁸³ Although God *corporeally* feels the pain of creation, according to McFague,⁸⁴ Wallace critiques McFague for being inconsistent in her presentation of the model of the world as God's body because she presents it in such a way that God is not dependent on the universe in the same way that humans are dependent upon their bodies. "McFague seems to want to have it both ways. She wants to maintain both God's identity *with* and *autonomy* from the universe, God's body, without specifying the exact manner in which God both *is* and *is not* dependent on the earth."⁸⁵ In an attempt to correct this supposed weakness, Wallace imagines "God as casting her lot with the earth to the degree that God's fate and the world's future are fundamentally bound up with one another."⁸⁶ He does this by emphasizing the coinherence of the Spirit and the natural world using incarnational terms: "In an earth-centered model of the Spirit, God is a thoroughgoing incarnational reality."⁸⁷ Wallace applies the christological Chalcedon definition to pneumatology and speaks of the "Spirit as the enfleshment of God's sustaining power in the biosphere" and of the "Spirit who enfleshes divine presence in nature."⁸⁸ Following from this, Wallace asserts that when

⁸³ McFague, *The Body of God*, 131–96 and McFague, *Models of God*, 69–77. Like Wallace, Chryssavgis also reaches this conclusion pneumatologically ("The World of the Icon and Creation," 253–66).

⁸⁴ McFague, *The Body of God*, 75.

⁸⁵ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 140 (original emphasis).

⁸⁶ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 141.

⁸⁷ Wallace, "The Wounded Spirit," 60 (this essay is republished with few changes as Wallace, "The Green Face of God," 444–64). Also, Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 141 and Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River*, 23. Bergmann also speaks of the "incarnational activity of the Spirit" as the Spirit is present within believers and "permeates creation at large," however, he does not take this analogy as far as Wallace does (Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 170).

⁸⁸ Wallace, "The Wounded Spirit," 59 and 62. Also Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River*, 125–9.

nature is wounded, the Spirit himself is wounded. Actions upon the world affect God's being, even to the extent that "ongoing assaults against the earth's biotic communities may eventually result in permanent injury to the divine life itself" as the Spirit suffers within it.⁸⁹ He claims,

If the Spirit and earth mutually indwell each other, then God as Spirit is vulnerable to loss *and destruction* insofar as the earth is abused and despoiled. . . . God, then, is so internally related to the universe that the specter of ecocide raises the *risk of deicide*: to wreak environmental havoc on the earth is to run the risk that we will do irreparable, *even fatal harm* to the Mystery we call God. . . . Their basic unity and common destiny raise the possibility that continual degradation of the earth's biotic communities may result in the attenuation and *eventual destruction of the divine life* itself.⁹⁰

Wallace attempts to qualify these claims by saying that his understanding of the Spirit's relation to the natural world is framed (supposedly) "without collapsing [them] into undifferentiated sameness or equivalence."⁹¹ On the one hand he admits that "the charge of pantheism may be the understandable response to this approach, and to a degree the charge sticks."⁹² On the other hand, he endeavors to distance himself from pantheism by claiming that God decides "in freedom, and not by any internal necessity, to indwell all things" and that the "world and God, while not the same reality, are inseparably interrelated."⁹³ Wallace tries to keep the Spirit as ontologically distinct from the world even though assault on the earth becomes an assault upon the Spirit. In making these

⁸⁹ Wallace, "The Wounded Spirit," 61.

⁹⁰ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 138 and 141 (emphasis added). See p. 143 again regarding 'deicide.' Similarly, Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River*, 129.

⁹¹ Wallace, "The Wounded Spirit," 59. Cf. "Under the control of the dialectic, the earth is the body of the Spirit. Metaphorically speaking, God as Spirit corporealizes Godself through her interanimation of the biosphere" (60).

⁹² Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 144.

⁹³ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 141 and 143.

claims, Wallace is just as libel to the accusation of inconsistency that he makes of McFague, especially since he is trying to make a stronger connection between the Spirit and nature than McFague. Like McFague, it seems Wallace also “wants to maintain both God’s identity *with* and *autonomy* from the universe, God’s body, without specifying the exact manner in which God both *is* and *is not* dependent on the earth.”⁹⁴

Wallace correctly argues that the Spirit dwells within all things and suffers within creation. Nevertheless, such versions of pantheism appear to violate the Creator/creation distinction and neglect that although immanent, the Holy Spirit, too, is transcendent. In spite of Wallace’s attempt to maintain autonomy for creation, Keith Ward notes that “to call the universe God’s body seems to make God unduly dependent upon some independent material reality.”⁹⁵ Besides the practical difficulties that arise when one attempts to apply the implications of this form of pantheism, it can also intensify the problem of evil, for creaturely action or ‘natural’ disasters might all be attributed to the action of the Spirit.⁹⁶ In addition, identifying nature with God’s body in any way has the potential of contributing to animism or idolatry.⁹⁷ Indeed, Wallace even indicates that his “approach calls us beyond respect for nature or even reverence for nature toward love of nature, *even worship of nature*, insofar as all life . . . bodies forth the reality of the Creator Spirit.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, in contrast to the concern of idolatry, if

⁹⁴ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 140.

⁹⁵ Ward, “The World as the Body of God,” 67.

⁹⁶ Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*, 151. Granted this, even the idea of the Spirit empowering or sustaining creation causes problems for theology. Johnson observes that “We may well wonder how Love could be empowering such a messy and at times tragic arrangement” (*Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 58).

⁹⁷ A concern expressed by Nash, *Loving Nature*, 115 and Gunton, “The Holy Spirit,” 89.

⁹⁸ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 144 (emphasis added).

one were to accept the existence of demons and their possession or affecting of physical material, as many Pentecostals and Charismatic theologians do,⁹⁹ then one would also have to conclude absurdly that the Spirit, through his body of the material world, would be at times, in some way, possessed by demons. In the end one should submit with John Polkinghorne that “the Spirit is not incarnated in the cosmos. Pneumatology and Christology must not be assimilated to each other.”¹⁰⁰

This does not mean, however, that the overall concept of trinitarian panentheism has to be forsaken. On the contrary, one can still take seriously that God is “over all, and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6). Edwards and Pinnock’s theologies of the Creator Spirit prove helpful here. Although embracing the concept of panentheism, they define it carefully in an orthodox manner, presenting numerous qualifications. Pinnock’s main qualifications are that the world is ontologically distinct from God and relatively independent.¹⁰¹ With a little more detail, Edwards notes that his understanding of panentheism is 1) trinitarian; 2) it “understands God as wholly other to creatures, and, precisely as such, as radically interior to them;” 3) it “understands the spatial image of all-things-in God as an appropriate but limited analogy;” and 4) it “conceives of the Creator as enabling creatures to have their own proper autonomy and integrity.”¹⁰² In

⁹⁹ Yong (a Pentecostal theologian) states, “I conclude that angels and demons are not merely transcendental entities, but social, personal, and even (to the extent that they are incarnate in our world) physical realities which constitute our experience” (“The Spirit and Creation,” 82).

¹⁰⁰ Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*, 151.

¹⁰¹ See Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 56, 57, 61, and 77. Pinnock continues to develop these themes, quoting Edwards approvingly, throughout his, “The Other Hand of God: God’s Spirit in an Age of Scientific Cosmology,” forthcoming in a Festschrift for Vinson Synan.

¹⁰² Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 140–1. Deane-Drummond correctly observes that Edwards’ “idea of the Creator Spirit being present to each creature in love . . . allows there to be a sense of interrelationship with each creature, thus distinguishing this view from the pantheism espoused by Wallace [which Wallace prefers to call panentheism]” (Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 138).

contrast to other versions of panentheism, the third and last of these points are particularly important for he emphasizes that God, though immanent, transcends creation. Nevertheless, both Pinnock and Edwards still view the Spirit as suffering within the suffering creation.

In spite of the qualifications of panentheism that are listed above, some readers might have a problem accepting the conclusion that the Spirit suffers within the suffering creation because they might still fear that I am presenting process theology. When many theologians (particularly on the conservative side of things) think of ‘panentheism,’ they inevitably think of process theology. This is in spite of the fact that some theologians who hold to a form of panentheism critique process panentheism.¹⁰³ No doubt process theology has influenced some theologians to rethink the idea of God being in all things, rather than thinking of God, in an anthropomorphic manner, as a divine superhuman who exists outside of creation. However, there are a number of forms of panentheism (as discussed in chapter three), and only one of them can be identified with process theology. Comparing the panentheism of Wallace and Edwards further illustrates the variety of ways one can understand panentheism. The trinitarian and pneumatological panentheism that I am advocating here recognizes that creatures are dependent upon the Spirit for their existence and that they do not possess the Spirit by any permanent right. In contrast to dipolar (process) panentheism, this is a type of revelational or expressivist panentheism (discussed in chapter three). As Gregersen summarizes this view, “The point here is that the divine Spirit expresses itself in the world by going out of God and returning to God,

¹⁰³ For example, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 79 and Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 227.

enriched by the experiences of world history.”¹⁰⁴ At the same time, my proposal might be thought of as a form of soteriological or eschatological panentheism, in as much as the Spirit’s presence in creation continues to intensify (see chapter six).

Furthermore, if this is not enough to help readers to be friendly to this proposal (and to distinguish my proposal from process theology), one would do well to recognize that the basic idea that God is in all things (and to some extent that all things are in God) has a long history in Christian theology, even to the biblical authors themselves. In addition to the biblical texts discussed above, a consideration of several examples illustrates the point. Among the deuterocanonical texts, the idea is explicit in Wisdom 12:1: “Your immortal Spirit is in all things.” Within the history of Christian theology, the theologians that one finds speaking of God (or the Spirit specifically) being in all things would likely surprise some people. The majority of these theologians do not make it into the usual lists of ‘panentheists.’¹⁰⁵ In the fourth century, Hilary of Poitiers wrote that God “is present in all things; in him who is infinite all are included.”¹⁰⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus claimed the same thing.¹⁰⁷ In the eighth century, John of Damascus wrote of God who “fills all things with His essence. . . . In His essence He fills the world, but in His power the world does not contain Him.”¹⁰⁸ In chapter two I noted how Thomas

¹⁰⁴ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 21.

¹⁰⁵ Consider, for example, the long list of people in Cooper, *Panentheism*.

¹⁰⁶ Hilary of Poitiers, “On the Trinity,” 1.6 (p. 41). Consider also Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 26.63 (p. 95).

¹⁰⁷ Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 166, particularly the references to Gregory’s *Oration* 32.27 and 26.19.

¹⁰⁸ John of Damascus, “The Orthodox Faith,” 1:13 (p. 200).

Aquinas (thirteenth century) also affirmed that God is in all things.¹⁰⁹ Among the Reformation theologians (sixteenth century), Martin Luther wrote that “God’s divine essence encompasses all things and dwells in all,” so that, for example, “it can be substantially present in a grain, on a grain, over a grain, through a grain, within and without.”¹¹⁰ Coming closer to today, Karl Barth (twentieth century) emphasized that God is free to be inwardly present to all things and that he is indeed “as a gift . . . everywhere, with and in all things.”¹¹¹ Further, Barth speaks of created space existing within God’s space, God surrounding creation, and creation existing in God.¹¹² In Catholic theology, Yves Congar teaches that the Holy Spirit is a “penetrating reality” who is transcendent and yet “in all things.”¹¹³ From an Orthodox perspective, Kallistos Ware emphasizes the divine presence in all of creation to transform and divinize the world.¹¹⁴ Among Evangelicals, in the nineteenth century Charles Hodge maintained that God is “everywhere present, and everywhere imparting life . . . present in every blade of grass . . . He is in all, and over all things; yet essentially different from all, being over all, independent, and infinitely exalted.”¹¹⁵ Bernard Ramm, one of the most influential evangelical theologians of the twentieth century, contends that nature “is under the

¹⁰⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.8, a.1 and a.3, and the introduction to Ia, q.7.

¹¹⁰ Luther, *WA (Weimarer Ausgabe)*, 23.134.34–23.136.36, translated in Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 188. Shults finds similar themes in Calvin’s theology (Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 107).

¹¹¹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 485, cf. 313, 462, 469, and 475–7. At the same time, he rejects pantheism and (what he refers to as) “panentheism” because God cannot be synthesized with creation (*CD*, II/1, 312, 315, and 562).

¹¹² Barth, *CD*, I/2, 162; II/1, 411, 458, 475–7, 500, and 503.

¹¹³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:17–18.

¹¹⁴ Ware, “God Immanent yet Transcendent,” 167.

¹¹⁵ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:385.

constant and immanent penetration of God” and that “the Spirit of God [is] in all things.”¹¹⁶ Likewise, today many Pentecostals, like Amos Yong, are affirming that “the Spirit infuses the world.”¹¹⁷ One could find many more theologians who articulate the idea that God is in all things. Given this long and wide tradition of interpreting Scripture in this manner, it is clear that the idea that the Spirit is in all things is not a departure from the biblical traditions. “On the contrary,” as Moltmann notes, “it means a return to their original truth: through his cosmic Spirit, God the Creator of heaven and earth is present *in* each of his creatures and *in* the fellowship of creation which they share.”¹¹⁸ Hence, I again affirm that the Spirit is in all things, suffering with the sufferings of creation.

Granted the long Christian tradition of God being in all things, the notion that the Spirit is in all things does not *necessarily* lead to the conclusion that the Spirit suffers with the suffering of creation. On the one hand, Aquinas is willing to admit that God is in all things, and yet Aquinas holds to the doctrine of impassibility (though he does not relate the concepts together in any discussion). On the other hand, most of the theologians I cite above affirm that God, through the Spirit, suffers in creation. These diverging interpretations of the implications of what God being in all things might mean for the doctrine of impassibility does confirm that just because the Spirit is in all things, this does not necessarily mean that the Spirit suffers. However, if one comes to consider the implications of the Spirit being in all things having already concluded that the Spirit

¹¹⁶ Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 109. Ramm presents qualifications of pantheism that are almost the same as Edward’s qualifications (listed above).

¹¹⁷ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 281.

¹¹⁸ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 14 (original emphasis).

suffers in relationship to individuals as the Spirit grieves and groans, then it is natural to conclude that the Spirit also suffers within creation.

The suffering of the Spirit in creation is similar to that of the suffering of the Spirit in Jesus Christ. Moltmann explains the latter. Although it is the Son and not the Spirit who is incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Spirit nevertheless indwells Jesus and thereby “participates in his weakness, his suffering, and his death on the cross . . . is drawn into his sufferings, and becomes his *companion* in suffering . . . suffering the death of the Son, without dying with him.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, the Spirit participates in the travail and suffering of creation. Although the Spirit is not incarnate in creation—the Spirit is not *both* fully God and fully creation (as Jesus is both fully God and fully human)—the Spirit nevertheless binds himself to the fate of creation as the Spirit sustains and leads creation toward the kingdom of God. Like the Spirit also groans within Jesus as Jesus cries (like believers following him) “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36, Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6), the Spirit groans within the groaning of creation (Rom 8:22).¹²⁰ As the Spirit indwells both Jesus and creation, the Spirit empathetically enters into their sufferings.

Instead of equating the suffering of creation with the suffering of the Spirit (as Wallace does), one can appropriately conclude that the Spirit suffers with creation’s suffering. “Suffering with” (and within) creation and grieving on account of the suffering of creation are the more common ways that theologians describe the suffering of the

¹¹⁹ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 93-4 and Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 62 and 64 (original emphasis).

¹²⁰ On the Spirit and the prayer of Jesus see Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 63-4.

Spirit in creation.¹²¹ This suffering is the pain that the Spirit feels in response to sin and creaturely suffering. Edwards maintains, “It is a divine pain that springs from infinite compassion.”¹²² This is what Bergmann refers to as ‘sympathetic cosuffering’ (which might be better termed ‘empathetic cosuffering’) namely “participating in the suffering of another” by “subjecting oneself as well to whatever is causing that other to suffer.”¹²³

Beyond the Spirit’s compassionate and empathetic response to the pain of creatures, the Spirit also suffers from his relation to creation as he grieves (cf. Eph 4:30) in response to the actions of humanity which work in opposition to the Spirit’s own creative actions. This latter statement involves a turn from focusing on the overall relationship between the Spirit and creation to the Spirit’s creative action itself. In the next chapter (part 3) I describe the perfecting work of the Spirit, where the Spirit is drawing creation toward new creation—breathing forth life and drawing creation toward its end. Recognizing this aspect of the Spirit’s work, one might describe those actions that are detrimental to the Spirit’s perfection (and sustaining) of creation as grieving the Spirit, and in some way causing the Spirit to suffer. Pinnock summarizes these sentiments well: “As shaper of the environment, Spirit is ecologist par excellence, forming and sustaining all hospitable space. . . . The destruction of nature is hurtful to God who

¹²¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 76; Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 51; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 69 and 96–7; Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 112, 141–2 and 175; Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 190; and Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 169.

¹²² Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 113 (original emphasis). Cf. Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 45.

¹²³ Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 296. Cf. Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 43 and Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 15 and 69. Moltmann employs the term ‘empathy’ for the suffering of the Spirit (*The Spirit of Life*, 51 and 68).

formed it and loves it. The Spirit suffers along with nature and struggles against powers that despoil.”¹²⁴

As I alluded above, this suffering of the Spirit is related to the Spirit’s groaning in creation. The Spirit groans not only with and through believers in their prayers, but also with creation (Rom 8:22) as the Spirit anticipates the day, and draws creation toward the day, when “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay” (Rom 8:21).

Commenting on this passage of Scripture, Linahan remarks,

The connection cannot be accidental: the groaning and travail of creation are infused with the groaning and travail of the Spirit laboring to bring the new creation to birth out of subjection to ‘futility’ and ‘slavery to corruption.’ . . . From within creation and within our own beings the Spirit labors and groans against all the conditions that impede creation’s fullness of life, especially death.¹²⁵

Following this same line of thought, Steven Studebaker also claims, “The Spirit who cries out from the breast of every forlorn human also groans within creation and yearns for the same eschatological redemption.”¹²⁶ These comments reflect the connection between the groaning of the Spirit, creation, and humanity that Paul expresses in Romans eight. In the midst of this groaning, it is particularly the Spirit’s groaning that concerns us here. On account of this, with James McClendon one should conclude, “As Paul’s groaning Spirit in Romans 8 suggests, not only can Christians believe in a passionate and suffering Deity; they *must* do so.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 77.

¹²⁵ Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 44.

¹²⁶ Studebaker, “The Spirit in Creation,” 952. Similarly, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 69 and Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 190.

¹²⁷ McClendon, *Doctrine*, 171.

5. Clarifications and Qualifications of Divine Passibility

This chapter has argued that the Spirit is passible, primarily by emphasizing the suffering of the Spirit. At this point a few clarifications and qualifications regarding the suffering of the Spirit are in order. I will first clarify that the suffering of the Spirit is not limited to the person of the Spirit in the Godhead. Second, I will qualify the suffering of the Spirit by explaining how it differs from the suffering of humanity and by explaining how it a voluntary form of suffering.

It should be abundantly clear (especially in light of chapter three) that in arguing that the Spirit suffers, I do not mean to suggest that this is limited to the person of the Spirit.¹²⁸ The suffering of the Spirit supports a general doctrine of divine passibility. Gerald Bray would likely disagree. With respect to contemporary rejections of the doctrine of impassibility, Bray incorrectly claims that “modern theologians who have rejected classical theism have also rejected, though perhaps without realizing it, the important distinction between the persons and nature of God.”¹²⁹ Following on this supposed distinction, Bray proposes that at the level of the divine nature, God is impassible. In trying to explain the suffering of Jesus Christ, he proposes, “The answer surely must lie in saying that the *persons* of the Trinity are indeed moved by our suffering, but that God’s *essence* is untouched by it.”¹³⁰ If Bray were to follow this reasoning, then in response to this chapter he would claim that my arguments only demonstrate that the *person* of the Spirit suffers, but not that this suffering affects the

¹²⁸ I reject that there are any Spirit-specific attributes in chapter four, part 5.

¹²⁹ Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 61.

¹³⁰ Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 99 (original emphasis). Lee makes a similar argument with respect to the immutability of God (“Does God Have Emotions?” 213, fn. 6).

essence of God, and that, therefore, God is impassible. His proposal, however, actually reveals a misunderstanding regarding triune reality of God. While the doctrine of the Trinity does (as Bray correctly observes) make a distinction between the divine persons and essence, it is not an ontological distinction. This distinction does not allow (as Bray supposes) for an attribute to be true for any divine person that is not true for the divine nature. Rather, as chapter three observed, the divine persons are the divine nature. For example, the Son is *homoousious* (the same nature/essence/substance) with the Father, as the Nicene Creed declares. There is no ontological distinction between the divine persons and the divine nature. Bray's proposal presupposes otherwise, and, in somewhat of a modalistic manner, appears to posit that in the divine essence one finds a 'divine fourth' (which Barth argues against) that is hiding behind the divine persons and is unaffected by creation.¹³¹ In contrast to Bray's proposal, the unity of the Holy Spirit with the other divine persons in the divine essence means that if the Holy Spirit suffers, God suffers.¹³²

A couple of qualifications come along with this affirmation of the passibility of God in light of pneumatology. The first qualification is the most common qualification made in discussions regarding the passibility of God; the suffering, emotions, or passions of the Holy Spirit are not exactly the same as those of humanity. Affirming the immanence of God in the suffering of the Holy Spirit does not signify a denial that the Holy Spirit is transcendent. Hence, Erickson correctly observes, "If we take seriously the idea that God is both transcendent and immanent, then his emotions must in some sense

¹³¹ Barth, *CD*, I/1, 396–7, cf. 355.

¹³² Other ways of expressing the unity of the divine persons supports this conclusion as well (see chapter three, part 4b).

be both similar to ours and yet to some extent different from ours.”¹³³ God suffers in an analogical way. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, in light of the fact that humanity is created in the image of God, humanity suffers in an analogical way. With Bauckham, “We may say that there is something analogous to human suffering in the divine experience, but we may not thereby claim that we know what it is like for God to suffer.”¹³⁴ This seemingly significant qualification may not be as significant as it first appears, however, because this is also true among humans. That is, I do not know exactly what it is like for another human being to suffer (of course, there is good reason to believe that it is more similar than divine suffering). All that said, God’s passion is not the same as human passion.

To balance this qualification, however, one must recognize that the difference between human and divine passions does not mean that they do not exist for God; difference does not equal absence. In fact, divine passions can be even greater than human passions. God knows more, experiences more, and encounters more. God has more reason for passion. Hence, Johnson suggests that “divine suffering is infinite beyond human comprehension.”¹³⁵ Similarly, speaking specifically from the perspective of pneumatology, Linahan explains,

Divine love is not limited to the human dimensions of life, but it is infinitely greater. Put simply, we grieve because we love: whatever element of love’s intensity is expressed in grief, that element of God’s love must be infinitely richer. The grieving of the Spirit is God’s passionate, tenderhearted (Eph 4:23), vulnerable love, bearing the world in its suffering.¹³⁶

¹³³ Erickson, *God the Father Almighty*, 161. Similarly, Johnson, *She Who Is*, 251.

¹³⁴ Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 69.

¹³⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 260. Cf. Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 113.

¹³⁶ Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 45.

So, to conclude, the suffering of the Spirit is (both similar to and) different than that of humanity's (in kind), but the suffering of the Spirit can also be greater than that of humanity's (in degree).

A second qualification regarding the suffering of the Spirit is that, even though it is caused by an external created source, it is not an involuntary suffering. The pain that the Spirit suffers does not take him by surprise. Similar to the pain of child birth, he saw it coming and proposed to bear it.¹³⁷ In this sense, the passibility of God does not limit divine freedom, but it is an expression of divine freedom. This means that an affirmation that the Spirit suffers in creation does not imply that the Spirit presents God at the total mercy of creation, suffering with no means of escape. The Spirit is immanent to creation by God's choice.¹³⁸ God freely created and freely chooses to sustain creation by the Spirit's power. God could have created the world otherwise, and could choose to withdraw from us in such a way that he would not suffer (although this would likely mean the end of existence for creation, which God is present to sustain), but instead, God chooses to remain in creation where he is vulnerable to its suffering. This is similar to God's suffering on the cross, which Moltmann insisted is an instance of "active suffering, the suffering of love, in which one voluntarily opens himself to the possibility of being affected by another."¹³⁹ With respect to the Spirit, Edwards rightly suggests,

¹³⁷ Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer*, 326. Regarding child birth see Johnson, *She Who Is*, 251 and 255.

¹³⁸ Cf. Bloesch, who writes, "God's immanence is an act of his freedom, not a quality of his being. Just as he freely relates to his creation, so he is also free to withdraw from his creation" (*God the Almighty*, 99).

¹³⁹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 230 (emphasis added). Cf. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 178.

The Holy Spirit suffers not out of necessity and not out of imperfection but in the active freedom of the divine love. This kind of suffering springs from the incomprehensible depths of divine compassion. The Spirit suffers with creation not to glorify suffering but in order to bring liberation and healing.¹⁴⁰

And, I would add, the Holy Spirit suffers within creation in order to sustain creation.

This emphasis on the freedom of the suffering of the Spirit should calm the fears of those who are concerned that a doctrine of divine passibility makes God impotent. For example, Ron Highfield, with his support for the doctrine of impassibility, rhetorically concludes, “Because God’s hands are not busy wiping his own tears, they are free to wipe away ours.”¹⁴¹ Surely we need a strong God to be able to affect redemption; however, an affirmation of divine passibility does not by any means imply that God is “crippled with pain.”¹⁴² Rather, God’s suffering is what Samuel Solivan refers to as “*orthopathos*.” *Orthopathos* leads to and accompanies action. It is a “redemptive pathos” or “liberating passion.”¹⁴³ As the Spirit did in the life of Christ, the Spirit characteristically acts with kenosis as the Spirit ‘empties’ himself by entering into places of suffering to bring new life.¹⁴⁴ The Holy Spirit suffers, but the Spirit is not impotent (as the chapter seven will show). The Spirit suffers voluntarily.

¹⁴⁰ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 114.

¹⁴¹ Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, 389. Though (unlike Highfield) she rejects the doctrine of impassibility, Johnson also discusses this concern (*She Who Is*, 267).

¹⁴² As supposed by Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 100. Nevertheless, this can be a danger.

¹⁴³ Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Dabney, “*Pneumatologia Crucis*,” 524. Cf. Linahan, “The Grieving Spirit,” 37.

6. Conclusion

By way of pneumatology, this chapter has presented a revised doctrine of impassibility. As seen in chapter three, revisions to (and rejections of) the doctrine of impassibility are common in contemporary theology, including among Evangelicals. Here I have presented this attribute of God from the perspective of pneumatology to provide a greater appreciation of what it means for God to be passible. This chapter began by examining interpretations of the biblical texts that attribute grief to the Holy Spirit. This divine 'grief' includes connotations of suffering, even if one should understand the term 'grief' as a metaphor. The notion of the Holy Spirit groaning through and with the prayers of believers as well as the biblical metaphor of 'rebirth' further support the conclusion that the Spirit is passible. Finally, this chapter considered the primary theme in contemporary pneumatology that supports a doctrine of divine passibility, namely, the suffering of the Spirit in creation. As contemporary pneumatologies testify, the Holy Spirit is in all things, sustaining and perfecting creation and maintaining communion within creation and between creation and God. Though the Spirit is distinct from creation, and does not become incarnate, the Spirit is indeed immanent to creation and actively enters into the suffering of creation, suffering with creation's suffering. All of these notions of the suffering of the Holy Spirit present God as more immanent than classical theism, which emphasizes that God, as impassible, transcends creaturely suffering and can not be affected by creation. As classical theism rightly maintains, the Spirit's passions are not the same as human passions (one might maintain that God is impassible in that sense). However, God is passible in the sense that the Spirit's (very real) passions are affected by creaturely actions. In contrast to the fears

of some theologians, the passibility of God does not render God impotent. However, an affirmation of the passibility of God is generally taken to imply a revision to the doctrine of immutability—God’s passions change. Following the lead of this chapter, the next chapter focuses on the question of the supposed immutability of God.

CHAPTER 6

PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF IMMUTABILITY

1. Introduction

One could imagine many ways that God might possibly change. Chapter two (part 3a) explained how classical theism generally posits that God is absolutely immutable; he does not change metaphysically (God's substance), he does not change his emotions or disposition toward people, and he does not change his knowledge, thoughts, ethical standards, actions, experiences, plans, will, and attributes. In most cases classical theism also entails that God does not change his presence. It seems logical that an immutable God must be present in an unchanging way.¹ Ron Highfield proposes that since "God is absolutely present to all things at all times in the most intimate possible way possible," then the presence of God does not change and God is not "present in different modes and intensities."² The doctrine of omnipresence serves to support the classical doctrine of immutability—if God is already present everywhere, then he does not have to move from place to place. Following this line of thought, in his doctrine of divine omnipresence Charles Hodge claims that God "is equally present with all his creatures, at all times, and in all places. . . . He is not absent from any portion of space, nor more present in one

¹ An observation of Schweitzer, "The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God," 19.

² Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, 290.

portion than in another.”³ In contrast to this characteristically classical understanding of the immutability of God’s presence, this chapter argues that, although God the Spirit is omnipresent, God changes in the sense that the Spirit’s presence changes and (metaphorically) intensifies in relationship to Jesus Christ, the Church, individual believers, and creation at large. This understanding of the mutability of the Spirit does not however amount to a complete rejection of classical theism’s doctrine of divine immutability, for the Spirit is still immutable as he is faithful to creatures and creation at large as the Spirit is the Paraclete and the perfecter of creation, bringing forth the kingdom of God. Before turning to examine how the presence of the Spirit changes, this chapter first seeks to build on Karl Barth’s doctrine of divine omnipresence, then notes basic ways in which pneumatology implies change, and then responds to the classical objection to a seemingly changing presence of God.

2. The Mutable Spirit: The Changing Presence of God

a) Barth on Divine Omnipresence

In an effort to develop a pneumatological understanding of the mutable presence of God, I begin by drawing on the theological intuitions of Barth’s doctrine of omnipresence. Barth certainly affirms that God is omnipresent: God is present to all that is distinct from him and, conversely, God is not absent from anywhere. Three somewhat unique insights that Barth provides are that God is not non-spatial (he possesses place), that God is and can be present in different ways, and that the general (omni)presence of God is recognized in light of the special presence of God. First, while one might think

³ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:383.

that God is non-spatial because he is infinite (in contrast to finite space), Barth contends that God possesses space.⁴ For example, God is said to “fill heaven and earth” (Jer 23:24). Barth’s point is that, even though God’s spatiality is different than that of creation, his space and ours are together and he is present in them all.

Second, Barth maintains that God can be present in different and special ways.⁵ He argues, “If His were, so to speak, an *immovable omnipresence*, excluding a divine here and there and its relationships and distances, it is inevitable that He would again be lifeless and loveless and therefore fundamentally unfree.”⁶ Barth finds a basis for this differentiation within the triune life where the divine persons are free to be present to one another. This is God’s “differentiated presence within Himself.” Similarly, God is free to be present in all of creation “with a presence which is not uniform but distinct and differentiated.”⁷ So, for example, God has *different* forms of divine presence in as much as “there is a presence of God in wrath and a presence in grace. There is a presence in His hiddenness and a presence in His revelation.”⁸ As a further example of the differentiated presence of God, God was present in a *special way* on Mount Sinai with Moses (Exod 24:16), and also in the tabernacle (Exod 25:8), but especially in Jesus Christ (Col 2:9).⁹

⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 467–76. In contrast, Owen, *Concepts of Deity*, 41, argues that God is “entirely non-spatial.” For Barth, with respect to divine presence, God’s infinity means that God is not bound to the limitations of space (however, God’s infinity is not antithetical to space).

⁵ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 470–3. Barth also refers to “a divine remoteness and proximity” (461–3), but it seems that this phrase does not refer to distinctions within the divine omnipresence, but, rather, that the phrase refers specifically to the Creator/creation distinction (when the phrase is used regarding God’s relationship to creation) or to the distinctions between the divine persons (when the phrase is used of God ‘in himself’).

⁶ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 473 (emphasis added).

⁷ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 473. On the presence of God ‘in himself’ see 462–3, 472–4, and 487.

⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 476.

⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 479 and 483.

These instances of the “special presence of God” are, Barth explains, “concrete cases of God being here or there, which rise like mountain peaks from the plain of God’s general presence with His creation.”¹⁰

Third, Barth argues that “God’s special presence is first and decisive” for understanding God’s general presence, that is, God’s omnipresence.¹¹ In other words, one cannot begin with an assumed understanding of divine omnipresence, but one must begin with the actual revelation of God in history as he reveals his presence to creation by means of his special presence. Only in light of this revelation can one posit the omnipresence of God. For example, following Barth, Colin Gunton observes that, although the human Jesus is not omnipresent, “what we discover is the incarnation as an expression of God’s capacity to be present to the world—anywhere and everywhere—on the basis of what we know of his particular presence in Jesus.”¹²

Other than a brief note that the Spirit is present in a distinct way in Christians, Barth’s reflections on the presence of God take place with little reference to pneumatology, even though the Holy Spirit is frequently associated with the presence of God.¹³ However, from Barth’s conclusions one can begin with the premise that when the Spirit is said to be present, he truly does possess place. This chapter develops and builds upon Barth’s insights by demonstrating how *the Spirit* can be present in a special way and, therefore, be present in different places in different ways, and, further (and this is the

¹⁰ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 477. Barth understands God’s special presence as God’s “presence in His definite and distinct action in His work of revelation and reconciliation within creation” (483).

¹¹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 483.

¹² Gunton, *Act and Being*, 153.

¹³ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 483. On the latter point, Mühlen explicitly observes, “It is by virtue of the Spirit that God is present among his people” (“The Holy Spirit as Person,” 17. Cf. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 42).

key point for the purposes of this chapter), that the special presence of God by way of the Spirit changes. Barth himself does not relate the idea of the special and differentiated presence of God to his doctrine of immutability. Nevertheless, such a relation is apparent given the fact that God's special presence in creation changes. Furthermore, the relation between the special presence of God and the doctrine of immutability is implicitly found when trinitarian theologians reason that the incarnation of Jesus Christ (a special presence of God) is something new for God.¹⁴ Similar to this christological perspective on the doctrine of immutability, when the presence of the Spirit changes and intensifies in creation, it amounts to something new for God.

b) Basic Signs of the Mutability of the Spirit

In general, pneumatology lends itself to revising the classical doctrine of immutability. Chapter three and four noted that one way theologians buttress an affirmation of the deity of the Spirit is by declaring that the Spirit has the attributes of God.¹⁵ Most significantly, I have found no theologian who argues for the divinity of the Spirit based upon the immutability of God.¹⁶ By contrast, they readily claim that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, eternal, omnipotent, infinite, wise, holy, loving, omniscient, and incomprehensible. Surely, if the attributes of God truly included immutability then these

¹⁴ For example, Pannenberg writes, God "himself became something that he previously was not when he became man in his Son" (*Systematic Theology*, 1:438). Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 275.

¹⁵ In chapter three see part 3c, in chapter four see the final paragraph of part 5.

¹⁶ Even outside of such lists, almost universally, theologians are not claiming that the Spirit is immutable. This is true particularly of contemporary theology, but also for most theologians in the past. The only exceptions I have found thus far are Augustine (patristic theology) and Weinandy (contemporary theology). However, both theologians claim that the Spirit is immutable in a general statement regarding the divine persons (not in a discussion specifically regarding the Spirit). Augustine writes, "Neither God the Father nor his Word nor his Spirit, all of which is one God in being and identity, is in any way changeable or variable" (*The Trinity*, III.21). Similarly, Weinandy writes, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as subsistent relations fully in act, are immutable and impassible" (*Does God Suffer?* 119).

theologians would be able to (and want to) illustrate how immutability is also true of the Holy Spirit (in an effort to prove the deity of the Spirit). If they were asked, no doubt some theologians would affirm that the Holy Spirit is immutable based upon a presupposition that God is immutable—they might think, “If the Holy Spirit is divine, he must be immutable.” However, the omission of the attribute of immutability from lists of divine attributes that are explicitly said to be true of the Holy Spirit suggests that there may be a latent awareness that the Holy Spirit is indeed mutable (in some way). Since the Christian tradition has historically affirmed that the Holy Spirit is God, this serves as an argument from silence for a revision, perhaps even denial, of the classical doctrine of the immutability of God, even if these theologians might explicitly affirm divine immutability elsewhere in their doctrines. Besides this latent intuition, there are many reasons to think that the Holy Spirit does change.

Even at first thought, the concept of the immutability of God does not square well with pneumatology. The very idea of the ‘Spirit’ of God implies movement. As Jürgen Moltmann remarks, the word “always means something living compared with something dead, something moving, over against what is rigid and petrified.”¹⁷ As is well known, the words for ‘Spirit’ in the biblical languages, *pneuma* and *ruach*, carry with them images of air moving. The ‘Spirit’ is the dynamic ‘breath’ or ‘wind’ of God that blows throughout creation wherever it pleases (John 3:8). Biblical authors also depict the Holy Spirit with the image of water that is “poured out” on people (Isa 32:15, 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18, 33, 10:45). Both of these images of the Holy Spirit suggest that the Spirit is mutable.

¹⁷ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 41, cf. 278.

Similar to how the presence of God changes through the Son in the incarnation, the presence of God also changes in the person of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand David affirmed that there is nowhere he could go that would take him out of the presence of the Spirit (Ps 139:7), but on the other hand, after committing adultery with Bathsheba, he prayed that God would not cast him from his presence or take the Holy Spirit from him (Ps 51:11). Within the life of the contemporary Church it is already a common thought that the Spirit's presence changes, and that the Spirit is present at different times, in different places, and in different ways. For example, Gordon Kaufman observes that some have thought that the Spirit is more present "in the sacraments or in moments of overt prayer, in semi-mystical experiences when one 'feels the presence of God' or in highly emotional moments when one 'feels the Spirit.'"¹⁸ The sense that the Spirit is 'more present' in certain places (which is not literally true) points to the fact that the Spirit changes in how he is present.

c) The Classical Objection

In contrast to the pneumatological proposal that the presence of God changes, as noted in the introduction, classical theists generally teach that God is absolutely immutable and that, therefore, God's presence does not change. When it might seem that God's presence has changed and that, as a result, he is present in a special way, classical theists, like Highfield, tend to suggest that it is really only a matter of humans becoming more aware of the God's presence.¹⁹ This conclusion is based on a preconceived notion of the absolute immutability of God rather than any biblical or doctrinal argument. Along

¹⁸ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 224.

¹⁹ Highfield, *Great is the Lord*, 290–1. In light of his conclusion, his statement that "God can be present in ways that are additional to his general omnipresence" (p. 290) tells us nothing about God himself but only *our changing awareness* of God.

the same lines, Thomas Aquinas argues that wherever Scripture depicts God as changing in his position or changing the place where God resides, one should understand this as a metaphor.²⁰ In other words, according to Highfield and Aquinas the change is in a person's perception of the presence of God, but not actually in God's presence. Similarly, Daniel Albrecht observes how Pentecostals sometimes refer to the "manifest presence of God" when there is a "heighted awareness of this presence," particularly during a time of praise and worship.²¹ This too might imply that the presence of the God has not changed, but only that one's awareness of God has changed because God's presence is now 'manifest' to that person. However, such understandings of the immutable presence of God run contrary to a pneumatological understanding of divine presence—the presence of the Spirit not only 'seems' to change, it actually does change. In contrast to Highfield's suggestion from the perspective of classical theism (and those like his), changes to the presence of the Spirit are not dependent on anyone being aware of the changes. At times people have indeed been able to perceive a change in the presence of the Spirit (e.g. Acts 2, Pentecost), but this does not necessarily mean that it is *only* a subjective perception. In contrast to such experiences where one's awareness of the Spirit's presence does change, it can also happen that the Spirit might be present or that the Spirit's presence might change without people being aware of it. For example, when one receives the Holy Spirit, one is not always readily aware of his presence—one might not have an 'experience' of the Spirit, even though the Spirit's presence has changed.

²⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q.9, a.1.

²¹ Albrecht, "An Anatomy of Worship," 72. Similarly, Pinnock claims, "We all know, however, that the level of manifest presence of God can vary" (*Most Moved Mover*, 135).

Following the apostle Paul, every believer has become a temple of the Spirit, even though they may not have perceived this to be the case in their experience (1 Cor 6:19). Similar to this understanding, Sebastian Brock explains how the Syrian Orthodox tradition maintains that a person receives the Spirit at their baptism before there is any indication in their experience that they have received the Spirit. He writes, “The Syriac Fathers are well aware that the Pentecostal effects of baptism do not necessarily *manifest* themselves at baptism itself, but *may be delayed until later*: the ‘pledge of the Spirit,’ the potential, however, is *already present* as a result of baptism.”²² This understanding of how one receives the Spirit without necessarily being aware of the change in the Spirit’s presence shows that the actual presence of the Spirit does change, not just people’s awareness of the Spirit. If the Spirit’s presence does truly change in some instances, then it is reasonable to conclude that the Spirit’s presence also changes even when a person perceives it to be the case or when pneumatological traditions or the Scriptures speak of a change in the presence of the Spirit. In fact, such testimonies of an experience of a change in the presence of the Spirit only serve to further support the conclusion of this chapter. This chapter illustrates that the presence of the Spirit changes in relationship to Jesus Christ, the Church, Christians, and throughout creation at large.

d) Jesus Christ and the Spirit’s Presence

While Christology has historically focussed on the incarnation of the Logos or the Son of God (Logos Christology), contemporary pneumatology has placed a renewed emphasis on the place of the Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ (Spirit Christology). No

²² Brock, *The Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 204 (emphasis added), cf. 75. According to Brock, the signs that come after time are love, humility, kindness, and an “illuminated vision of your mind” (204-5).

longer is Spirit Christology thought to imply adoptionism, rather, it may be held together with Logos Christology.²³ A common theme in Spirit Christology is that Jesus is not the Christ because he is the incarnation of the Logos, but that he is the Christ (*christos*) because he has the anointing (*chrisma*) of the Spirit upon him. Summing up his mission, Jesus quoted Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19; cf. Isa 61:18–19)

The presence of the Spirit is foundational to the life and work of Christ. Accordingly, Denis Edwards speaks of the Spirit as “bringing about the Christ event.”²⁴ This begins even before the birth of Christ. The Spirit is “the divine Breath [that] transforms and sanctifies the humanity of Jesus so that he might be the Christ of God.”²⁵ This refers to the work of the Spirit in the incarnation; that Jesus was “conceived by the Holy Spirit,” as affirmed in the Apostles’ Creed and presented in the Matthean and Lukan infancy narratives (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35). “The Spirit rests on the Son in the womb of Mary,” as Eugene Rogers states.²⁶ After his birth, the remainder of the history of Jesus presents a history of the Spirit. However, it is not a uniform story. That is, the presence of the Spirit changes in relationship to Jesus

Even though Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, all of the Gospels place a special emphasis on the baptism of Jesus and his reception of the Spirit at that time. In the

²³ Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 150.

²⁴ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 66.

²⁵ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 66, cf. 80.

²⁶ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 98–104.

Gospel of Mark, the first recorded experience of the Spirit for Jesus Christ occurs when he is anointed with the Spirit at his baptism (Mark 1). This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy: the "Spirit of the Lord will rest on him" (Isa 11:2). From that point on, the Spirit is consistently present in Jesus' life for it was regarding his baptism that John the Baptist said the Spirit would "come down and remain" on Jesus (John 1:33). With his baptism, the Spirit was present in Jesus in a new way. As a result of the presence of the Spirit within him, Jesus was able to refer to himself as "the temple" that could be destroyed, but raised again (John 2:19). In as much as Jesus' anointing by the Spirit at his baptism results in a new presence of the Spirit within Jesus, this suggests a change in God.

Furthermore, even though Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1) and is said to have received the Spirit "without limit" (John 3:34), the presence of the Spirit still changed in relationship to Jesus. Recognizing this, José Comblin refers to two "stages of the coming of the Spirit on Jesus."²⁷ The first stage Comblin describes is Jesus' baptism. Although the Spirit is frequently associated with the resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1:4; 8:11), the second stage, according to Comblin, occurs *after* his resurrection. It is only as Jesus is "exalted to the right hand of God" that he "*received* from the Father the promised Holy Spirit" whom he poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Concerning the significance of this reception of the Spirit, Comblin concludes, "This was a new stage, bringing such abundance of the Spirit that Jesus could pour it out, something he could not do before. . . . He could not have the full anointing till he had gone back to the Father (cf. John 20:17)."²⁸ One might argue that this post-resurrection reception of the Spirit is actually a

²⁷ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 144.

²⁸ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 145.

third stage in the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus, with the second occurring at the transfiguration of Christ. Eastern Orthodox theology, exegesis, and art have a history of interpreting the transfiguration as a trinitarian event. Like Jesus' baptism, the voice of the Father is present proclaiming "This is my Son" (Luke 9:35) and the cloud that overshadowed Jesus is understood to be the Holy Spirit (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).²⁹ The implication from these stages of the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus is that the Spirit was changing.

Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have somewhat of a reciprocal relationship. Jesus both receives and sends the Spirit. In the Synoptic Gospels the Spirit tends to have priority in relationship with Jesus. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, the Spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove at his baptism, he leads Jesus into the wilderness where he is tempted (Matt 4; Mark 1; Luke 4), and Jesus performs miracles "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14; cf. Matt 12:28). In Pauline and Johannine literature, however, Christ has a dominant place over the Spirit in that he is the one who sends the Spirit and baptizes with the Spirit.³⁰ The idea that the Spirit is a 'gift' that is 'sent' into the world is the insight most commonly made by theologians who connect pneumatology with the doctrine of immutability. We turn now to consider how the sending of the Spirit results in a change for the Spirit.

e) The Spirit as a 'Gift' that is 'Sent': Pentecost

In pneumatologies and doctrines of the Trinity, the sending of the Spirit in the economy of salvation (*ad extra*) is most often discussed in the context of the *filioque* and

²⁹ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 12 and 172.

³⁰ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 17–18.

the inter-personal relations of the Trinity *ad intra*. Nevertheless, the sending of the Spirit has implications for the doctrine of immutability as well. The idea of the Spirit being ‘sent’ is not foreign to the Old Testament. Psalm 104:30 reads, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” However, when trinitarian theologians refer to the ‘sending’ of the Spirit they generally have the New Testament event of Pentecost in mind. Following, the Gospel of John, theologians affirm, “Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (7:39). Jesus said that he first had to “go away” before the Spirit would come (John 16:7). The ‘gift’ had *not yet* been given. John’s Gospel testifies that Jesus would ask the Father, and the Father would give them the Holy Spirit, after which time the Spirit would be with them “forever” (John 14:16). Using ‘sending’ language, Jesus is also reported to have said “I *will send* [the Holy Spirit] to you from the Father” (John 15:26, cf. 16:7). This ‘giving’ or ‘sending’ of the Spirit was to be a future event that had not yet occurred. Luke also records and emphasizes the ‘newness’ of this event in a narrative when Jesus exhorts the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and “wait for the gift my Father promised” (Acts 1:4).³¹ In light of the above texts, when Augustine seeks to name the Spirit using a term unique to him which would reflect his relationship with the Father and Son, he refers to the Spirit as ‘gift’: the Holy Spirit is the “gift of the giver.”³²

Augustine raises an important question which confounds many people who read the texts listed above: If the Holy Spirit already exists and is present in the Old Testament

³¹ The Spirit is also spoken of as a ‘gift’ that is ‘promised’ and ‘sent’ in Pauline literature: Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 3:14, 4:6; and Eph 1:13.

³² Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.29, V.13, and XV.29.

period, what is meant by the New Testament sending of the Spirit?³³ (A similar question is asked regarding the sending of the Son of God.) Augustine answers, “what their being sent would mean is their coming forth from the hidden world of the spiritual into the public gaze of mortal men in some bodily shape.”³⁴ The Holy Spirit’s sending, in particular, is said to have occurred when his person was signified and shown to people in bodily forms. This happened when he came upon Jesus in the guise of a dove and on the day of Pentecost, appearing like tongues of fire.³⁵ Augustine concludes that the ‘sending’ of the Spirit had a new and special quality to it in comparison to when the Holy Spirit acted in the Old Testament—“there was going to be a kind of giving or sending of the Holy Spirit after Christ’s glorification such as there had never been before,” one that “was going to have some special quality about it that there had never been before.”³⁶

It is this new “special quality” of the presence of the Spirit that is particularly significant for the topic at hand. Similar to Augustine, Edwards remarks that with the event of Pentecost, “God is now present with God’s people in a new way.”³⁷ Sergius Bulgakov and Thomas Torrance equate the significance of this event with the incarnation. Bulgakov recognizes that “the *hypostatic* descent of the Holy Spirit into the world . . . is completely analogous to the descent from heaven of the Logos for the

³³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.8.

³⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.3.

³⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.10. The sending of the Spirit differs from that of the Son for “we cannot say of the Holy Spirit that he is God and dove, or God and fire, as we say of the Son that he is God and man” (II.11).

³⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.29. Nevertheless, this is not Augustine’s main point. His main point is that, for both the Son and Holy Spirit, being sent means that we know that they are from the Father (consider also II.10 and XV.45).

³⁷ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 72.

purpose of His Incarnation.”³⁸ We have already seen in chapter three (part 4.b.ii) how trinitarian theologians draw implications from the incarnation of the Son of God for the doctrine of immutability (God changed and became something ‘new’). Torrance connects the significance of Pentecost with the christological implications. He posits that, as with the incarnation, one “must likewise also think of Pentecost and the *radical change in the nature and mode of his presence* in the world which it initiated.”³⁹ The events of *incarnation and Pentecost*

tell us that far from being a static or inertial Deity like some ‘unmoved mover,’ the mighty living God who reveals himself to us through his Son and in his Spirit is absolutely free to do what he had never done before, and free to be other than he was eternally.⁴⁰

That is, from the perspective of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (and from the perspective of the incarnation) we see that God is free to change and does change, and that God is not immutable in every way.

Comblin views the Spirit as “the opening of God out from God’s self. . . . [This] movement that is God tends to ever greater expansion.”⁴¹ With this, Comblin expresses an awareness that Pentecost was not the final event in the outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit was poured out, but continues to be poured out. It is a process.⁴² As Hendrikus Berkhof concludes, “Now that the last days have set in . . . the pouring out of the Spirit

³⁸ Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, 267.

³⁹ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 208 (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 208.

⁴¹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 177.

⁴² Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, 275 and Welker, *God the Spirit*, 229 and 274. Sometimes theologians waver between speaking of the outpouring of the Spirit as an event in the past and as a continual event, but the latter is still recognized. For example, Yong refers to the Spirit “who *has been* poured out upon all flesh” (*The Spirit Poured Out*, 303 [emphasis added]), but he also says that God “*continues* to pour out the Spirit” (*The Spirit Poured Out*, 31 [emphasis added]).

on all flesh *has begun*.”⁴³ For example, even though the Spirit had been poured out on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was later “poured out even on Gentiles” (Acts 10:45). The Spirit is still being poured out in the Church, on individuals, and into the world at large. This continual changing presence of the Spirit in these three spheres will be discussed below in turn.

f) The Presence of the Spirit in the Church

Early on in Christian history, Irenaeus described the Church as a place where the Spirit is present: “For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace.”⁴⁴ The unique presence of the Spirit in the Church has found a new emphasis in contemporary pneumatological ecclesiology.⁴⁵ The basis of this relationship of the Spirit to the Church (Spirit ecclesiology) is the Spirit Christology that was discussed above.⁴⁶ As charismatic and Pentecostal theologians are apt to highlight, just as the Spirit was upon Christ, particularly with respect to his anointing for ministry, the Spirit is poured out upon the Church that continues the ministry of Christ.⁴⁷

⁴³ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 16 (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.24.1 (p. 458).

⁴⁵ For example, Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* and chapters in many contemporary pneumatologies.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 92 and Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 165–9.

⁴⁷ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 77–8. Although Pentecostals tend to take this in more individualistic terms, Pinnock does apply this to the Church: “The church is an extension not so much of the incarnation as of the anointing of Jesus” (*Flame of Love*, 114). Macchia too emphasizes the reception of the Spirit as an ecclesial experience (*Baptized in the Spirit*, 155 and 191).

Catholic theologians, in particular, have emphasized that “the Spirit is above all *a gift to the church*, belonging constitutively to the church’s deepest identity.”⁴⁸ With the new presence of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Spirit becomes “the life of the Christian community.”⁴⁹ As the Spirit of fellowship (2 Cor 3:16), the Spirit constitutes the Church. Therefore, it seems appropriate for Leonardo Boff, from within the Catholic tradition, to suggest that the Church is the “favoured manifestation” of the Spirit and to speak of the Church as a “sacrament” of the Spirit, pointing to the unique presence of the Spirit within it.⁵⁰

The Catholic Church has been so aware that the Spirit is present in the Church in a special way that at times they have identified the Holy Spirit with and reduced the Holy Spirit to the Church in both theology and practice.⁵¹ If the Spirit worked in the world, it was through the Church. In an effort to express the special presence of the Spirit in the Church, some nineteenth-century Catholic theologians referred to the Church as a “kind of incarnation of the Holy Spirit,” although this has been rejected today.⁵² During the same time period, in an alternative effort to express the presence of the Spirit in the Church, Pope Leo XIII published an encyclical in which he writes, “As Christ is the Head

⁴⁸ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 59 (emphasis added). Berkhof (a Reformed theologian) comments that in the Catholic Church “the Spirit is mainly the creator of the church as a sacramental and institutional reality. The connection between the Spirit and the individual is mainly indirect” (*The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 44).

⁴⁹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 72. Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:19.

⁵⁰ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 209.

⁵¹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 36–37. In addition, Congar notes that sometimes the Virgin Mary took the place of the Holy Spirit in Catholic piety (*I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:163–4). The ironic result of identifying the Spirit with the Church was that the Spirit was forgotten. Comblin observes that since the Spirit was identified with the Church, the Catholic “liturgy hardly evoked the Spirit, and the faithful were not able to recognize the Spirit in its liturgy” (*The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 81).

⁵² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:155 (and 154–6) and Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 54.

of the Church, so is the Holy Ghost her soul.”⁵³ Yves Congar, a contemporary Catholic theologian, observes that if this is taken literally and ontologically it leads to “an ecclesiological monophysitism,” thereby limiting the Spirit to the Church and placing the Spirit at the disposal of the institution of the Church.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Congar suggests it is appropriate to take this statement as an analogy referring to the function of the Spirit in the Church (as it seems was the case in Vatican II). That is, “What the soul does in our body, the Holy Spirit does in the Church.”⁵⁵ While the Spirit may blow in many places, Catholics have correctly identified that the Spirit is clearly present, in a special way, within the Church.

Certainly one key biblical foundation for this understanding of the presence of the Spirit in the Church comes from Paul. Regarding the importance of Church unity, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?” (1 Cor 3:16). As if this were not enough, based upon this understanding of the Spirit’s presence, Paul continues by adding that “God’s temple is sacred” (v. 17). If this particular place (the Church) is sacred, then this must be a place where the Spirit dwells in a unique way. From this line of thinking, and following

⁵³ Pope Leo XIII, *Divinum illud munus*, 6.

⁵⁴ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:154. Comblin is more critical of the Catholic Church (of which he is a part) than Congar: “The Catholic Church has often given—and still gives—the impression of behaving as though it had the Holy Spirit constantly at its command. It sees itself as a sort of vast warehouse of the Spirit, which it distributes in the form of sacraments, dogmas and acts of authority” (*The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 103).

⁵⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:154. He is here summarizing Augustine, from whom the idea of the Spirit as the soul of the Church is derived. Pope Leo XIII refers to the same passage immediately after the citation given above. For comments similar to Congar’s, and in agreement with Congar, see Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 83.

Catholic insights, Berkhof challenges Protestants to discover “the church as the holy ground on which we are standing, as the great sacrament of God’s active presence.”⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the reticence to view the Church as a sacrament of the Spirit, historically Protestants have still affirmed that the Spirit is present in the Church in a unique way. Protestants are certainly by no means blind to the presence of the Spirit in the Church. Barth, for example, observes that the community of Christ is created, ruled, and upheld by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ Gary Badcock even views the “descending movement of God in the world, which comes through the Son and in the Spirit” as being “*fulfilled in the existence of the church*.”⁵⁸ Among Reformed thinkers, the presence of the Spirit in the Church is especially emphasized by focusing on the relation of the Word and the Spirit. The idea, to use the words of Martin Luther, is that “Wherever Christ is not preached, the Holy Spirit is not at work.”⁵⁹ Carrying on this tradition, Barth places the connection of the Word and Spirit in the Church within the context of his doctrine of revelation. He argues that the Church is the exclusive place where God turns to people as recipients of revelation, and that the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church makes the reception of this revelation possible.⁶⁰

Within both the biblical and post-biblical Christian traditions there is, then, clearly a sense in which the Spirit is present in a special way within the Church. This is the place that the Spirit has been poured out. However, this presence is not a static

⁵⁶ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 55.

⁵⁷ Barth, *CD*, IV/2, 696.

⁵⁸ Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 169 (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ Quoted in Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:148, n. 8.

⁶⁰ Barth, *CD*, I/2, 211 and 220.

presence. The Spirit continues to be poured out on the Church; the Spirit's presence in the Church is an ever-changing presence. One expression of this changing presence is the epiclesis. In the Eastern Church the epiclesis is understood to request "the hypostatic intervention of the third person of the Trinity." According to the liturgical prayers Paul Evdokimov describes, the epiclesis is not just about the elements of the sacred eucharistic rite (which is where discussions of the epiclesis generally focus). The epiclesis also concerns the people participating in the moment. The liturgy begins with the prayer "King of heaven, O Paraclete... come to us and live in us," and then continues, "May your Holy Spirit fall on these gifts and on your people."⁶¹ Sebastian Brock describes similar prayers from within the Syrian tradition: "Lord, may your Holy Spirit come . . . send your Spirit to us . . . and as he rested upon your only-begotten Son . . . so may he reside and rest on us and on these offerings."⁶² Furthermore, in the Eastern rite the whole community invokes the Spirit, not just the priest.⁶³

Though the epiclesis has traditionally been associated with the Eastern Church, Congar observes that the concept is not completely foreign to the history of the Catholic Church. For example, during the Middle Ages, within the Catholic liturgy, the Spirit was "invoked in every liturgical action, to be active and present in the liturgy."⁶⁴ The place of the epiclesis continues to grow within the Western Church. In particular, although historically the epiclesis did not take a prominent place in the Eucharist among Catholics

⁶¹ Evdokimov, *l'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe*, 101.

⁶² Brock, *The Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 182.

⁶³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:236.

⁶⁴ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:104.

(Christ was present by virtue of the declaration of the Priest, who represents Christ), since Vatican II, the epiclesis has become a part of the Catholic Eucharistic liturgy.⁶⁵

Both Western and Eastern theologians recognize the changing presence of the Spirit in the Church. Congar speaks of “the life of the Church as one long epiclesis.”⁶⁶ Similarly, John Zizioulas (an Eastern theologian) speaks of the “epicletic life of the Church.”⁶⁷ An invocation is a call for something to come; the Spirit is already there, but continually coming. Accordingly, Zizioulas links the epiclesis to the day of Pentecost when he writes, “The Church needs the Pentecostal scene to be set again and again, each time she wants to affirm her apostolicity.”⁶⁸ Whatever was lacking of the Holy Spirit (who was “not yet given”) before Pentecost, is still not complete.⁶⁹ This ‘Pentecostal’ language, is, of course, more familiar than ‘epiclesis’ language among Pentecostal theologians. Hence, reminiscent of Zizioulas, Clark Pinnock writes, “Spirit indwells the church as a perpetual Pentecost.”⁷⁰ One can find a similar understanding of the special and changing presence of the Spirit in discussions of the relation of the Holy Spirit to each individual believer.

⁶⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:241 and 256. Congar links the role of the Spirit in the incarnation with the Spirit’s work in making Christ present in the Eucharist (3:252).

⁶⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:267 (cf. 271). And following him in this terminology, Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 101.

⁶⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 185.

⁶⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 185.

⁶⁹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:77.

⁷⁰ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 114.

g) The Presence of the Spirit in the Christian

Like the Spirit is present in a special way in the Church, the Spirit is also present in a special way in individual believers. There is no conflict between the emphasis on the Spirit dwelling within the individual and the community. Even if the Spirit is poured out on individuals, the Spirit draws these believers together into a community. As Amos Yong remarks, “The Spirit is the personal reality who makes individuals into a community of persons.”⁷¹

Regardless of when an individual receives the Spirit (some would say at the point of baptism, others at conversion), the consensus is that every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. This has been particularly emphasized in the Protestant Church. This is largely because, as Berkhof notes, the Reformers posited a direct relation between the individual and the Holy Spirit, rather than an indirect relation by means of their relationship to the institutional Church.⁷²

As noted in the above discussion regarding the sending of the Spirit, the Spirit did relate to individuals at various times throughout the Old Testament. This was certainly a time when the Spirit’s presence changed as he “rested” on different individuals (Num 11:25). However, Jesus spoke of a time when the Spirit would be with believers “forever” (John 14:16). The Spirit would not only “rest” on individuals (1 Pet 4:14) but would also “be in” them (John 14:17; cf. 1 John 4:13). Hence, similar to the language of the Spirit in the Church, Paul referred to individual’s bodies (plural) as the “*temples* of the Holy

⁷¹ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 135.

⁷² Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 45. Compare the comments of Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 103.

Spirit” for the Spirit they received from God was ‘in’ them (1 Cor 6:19). Elsewhere he wrote of the Spirit of God living in people (Rom 8:9, 11; 2 Tim 1:14).

The reception of the Spirit (and the corresponding language of ‘gift’ and language of the Spirit being ‘sent’) is not limited to the event of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. For example, after the Spirit had been given to many on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the possibility of everyone ‘receiving’ the gift of the Holy Spirit upon repenting and believing and he emphasized that this promise was for those listening as well as for their children and those who were still to come (Acts 2:38–39). These ideas of the Spirit being ‘sent’ to places where he was not, or ‘given’ to and ‘received’ by people who did not ‘have’ him, like the original Pentecost event, suggest more new changes to the Spirit’s presence as individuals receive the Spirit. Don Schweitzer aptly remarks that “how the Spirit becomes present in peoples’ lives, being poured into their hearts as they come to have faith, suggests that this involves an increase in the Holy Spirit’s presence in history.”⁷³

Beyond the moment when individuals first receive the Spirit, it seems that they can still ‘receive’ the Spirit in a greater manner even though they might already be a temple of the Spirit, who lives in them. That is, it seems that the Spirit’s presence can continue to change in the life of a believer. Pentecostal theologians (following the holiness movement) particularly emphasize this reality, especially in their understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. For other traditions, the baptism in the Holy Spirit (or Spirit baptism) is something that occurs when an individual *first* receives the Spirit

⁷³ Schweitzer, “The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God,” 18. Later, he writes, “One has to recognize that a change does occur in the way the Spirit is present in people’s lives as they come to have faith and strive to live this out” (20–1).

(either at the point of conversion or water baptism). For many Pentecostals however, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an event that occurs (in most cases) subsequent to conversion and has no particular relationship with water baptism.⁷⁴ Even though they affirm that all believers have the Spirit dwelling within them, it is at the moment of Spirit baptism that these Pentecostals say they are “filled with the Holy Spirit” just as those who first received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were said to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).

One might object to this interpretation of Spirit baptism based on the fact that all believers are already temples of the Spirit and, thereby, they are already ‘filled’ with the Holy Spirit; how can one be ‘filled’ with or ‘receive’ the Spirit when they already have the Spirit? However, this apparent conflict between an initial ‘filling’ with the Spirit (at the point of conversion or baptism) and a subsequent event of being ‘filled’ with the Spirit is not unique to a Pentecostal interpretation of the Lukan narratives. A similar ‘conflict’ may be found in Paul’s writings, and outside of the issue of Spirit baptism. For example, although clearly recognizing the special presence of the Spirit in all believers, Paul also exhorts believers to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Further, even though they are already a temple of the Holy Spirit, Paul also reports to the Ephesians that “you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:22, cf. 1 Pet 2:5).

These apparent ‘contradictions’ are simply indicators that the biblical authors were not concerned with offering precise theological language when expressing their experience of the Holy Spirit. For example, Roger Stronstad notes that in the Lukan

⁷⁴ Menzies, *Spirit and Power*, 109–19 and Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 107–32.

writings the terms ‘clothing,’ ‘baptized,’ ‘empowering,’ ‘filling,’ and ‘outpouring’ are “essentially synonymous.”⁷⁵ They are often used to describe the same phenomenological reality. In order to avoid the tension of the biblical language (noted in the above paragraph), and as influenced by other charismatic theologians, Pentecostal theologians have tended to shift away from referring to Spirit baptism as being ‘filled’ with the Spirit and instead frequently prefer to speak of Spirit baptism as a ‘release’ of the Holy Spirit who is already dwelling within them.⁷⁶ With similar thinking, Steven Studebaker concludes that “the Spirit is *never an extrinsic agent* to the human person; the Spirit calls and works not from the outside (*extra nos*) but from within the depths of human life and consciousness.”⁷⁷ This conclusion of Studebaker and other Pentecostals, however, privileges a select set of biblical descriptions of the activity and presence of the Spirit and, without any stated reason, takes the biblical descriptions of the Spirit dwelling within human beings as the foundation from which all other biblical descriptions of the Spirit’s presence and activity must be evaluated; these descriptions control the interpretations of other descriptions. In other words, this approach takes the ‘indwelling’ of the Spirit as literal (or at least with more ontological weight), and the other descriptions as metaphorical (since they can not contradict the previously reached conclusion). By contrast, as Stronstad notes, “Luke’s favorite phrase” for describing experiences of Spirit baptism is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” not a ‘releasing’ of an

⁷⁵ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 50.

⁷⁶ As observed (and appreciated) by Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 77. By contrast, Rogers (not a Pentecostal) thinks ‘rests’ best represents the various verbs used to relate the presence or coming of the Spirit in individual’s lives (*After the Spirit*, 62–3).

⁷⁷ Studebaker, “The Spirit in Creation,” 946 (emphasis added). Studebaker is writing regarding both believers and non-believers in this situation, but his conclusion still applies. Later in the same article he writes, “If the Spirit is present with all living creatures as their source of life, the Spirit’s work *always comes from within* the very depths of their life” (951 [emphasis added]).

already indwelling Spirit.⁷⁸ All this is to say that although *all* of the various terms for describing the experience of the Spirit may be metaphorical, the biblical text still points to a change in the presence of the Spirit in a believer's life.

Even beyond the original experience of Spirit baptism (however one conceives of this experience), there is still a sense among Pentecostals and Charismatics that the presence of the Spirit continues to change throughout a believer's life. As Macchia contends, "God both indwells and continues to come in newness."⁷⁹ Indeed, even for classical Pentecostals, after being 'filled' with the Spirit, they still have not reached the epitome of having the Spirit present in their life. For example, Stronstad (in his interpretation of Luke's theology in Acts) makes a "distinction between the once-for-all and the repetitive character of the gift of the Spirit."⁸⁰ The former, he believes, is found in the terms "anointed" and "baptized" (in relationship to the Spirit) and the latter repetitive character is found in the terms "filled," "clothed," and "empowered" by the Spirit. Hence, Pentecostals often speak of "one baptism, many fillings." They might say that a person may be filled with the Spirit more, over and over again. Non-Pentecostals also sometimes make a similar distinction between the initial reception of the Spirit (understood to be Spirit baptism) and subsequent events of being filled with the Spirit.⁸¹ As a biblical example, both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals point to Peter, who was "filled" with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4) and was said to be "filled" again at a later time (Acts 4:31). The Pentecostal expectation and prayer for more of the presence of the Spirit

⁷⁸ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 49.

⁷⁹ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 96.

⁸⁰ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 81.

⁸¹ For example, Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, 47–52 and Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 89.

in one's life (at an individual level) corresponds to the understanding of the epiclesis or invocation of the Spirit (at the ecclesial level) in the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches. That is, though the Spirit is present in every believer in a special way, the Spirit is still called on to come in a greater way. In this expectation and calling, there is a latent understanding that the presence of the Spirit changes.

This understanding of the changing presence of the Spirit can also be detected within non-classical Pentecostal presentations of an expanded metaphor of Spirit baptism. Rather than viewing baptism in the Holy Spirit as a one-time event, these theologians view it as an ongoing event. Macchia, for example, presents baptism in the Holy Spirit not as a one-time experience (or even a repeatable experience) but rather as a process identified with the coming of the kingdom of God. That is, the process of Spirit baptism began at Pentecost, continues still, and will continue until the full consummation of the kingdom of God.⁸² Macchia finds biblical support for his proposal to expand the metaphor of Spirit baptism in Matthew 3:1–12 and Acts 1:2–8, both of which place the metaphor of Spirit baptism in the context of preaching about the kingdom of God.⁸³ For example, in Acts 1:3 Luke reports that Jesus appeared to the apostles and “spoke about the *kingdom of God*.” Then, in verse 5 Jesus tells them that “in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” In this process of Spirit baptism, there is, again, an

⁸² Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 17 and 103. Though not in terms of ‘Spirit baptism,’ Moltmann similarly views the dawn of the kingdom coming through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (*The Spirit of Life*, 280). Another Pentecostal theologian who expands the metaphor of Spirit baptism is Amos Yong who views Spirit baptism as “a New Testament metaphor for the full salvific work of God,” past, present, and future (*The Spirit Poured Out*, 119, cf. 101 and 105–6).

⁸³ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 85–6.

understanding of a change in the presence of the Spirit as Macchia claims that “Spirit baptism . . . fills the temple with God’s holy presence.”⁸⁴

Among both charismatic and Pentecostal theologians, charismatic experiences have functioned as signs of the special presence of the Spirit. For example, whether or not speaking in tongues is considered as ‘an’ or ‘the’ ‘initial evidence’ of Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) is often connected with the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Macchia views tongues as the “characteristic sign of Spirit baptism.”⁸⁵ That is, tongues is the decisive sign that confirms the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Speaking more generally (outside of the issue of Spirit baptism), Macchia remarks that for Pentecostals tongues “is the audible medium for realizing the presence of God” and hence he describes tongues as a “sacrament.”⁸⁶ Similarly, Pinnock views glossolalia as one “evidence [of] the Spirit’s presence” and as a “key manifestation” of the Spirit’s presence.⁸⁷ Likewise, Walter Hollenweger suggests that “Glossolalia is a linguistic symbol of the Holy. Glossolalia says: God is here, just as the Gothic cathedral says: God is majestic.”⁸⁸ The same may be said not just of glossolalia, but also of other charismatic experiences. In these moments that are graced by the Spirit one learns that God is present in a special way. In this manner, Paul spoke of someone entering a place where the spiritual gifts were being practiced and that person is said to exclaim, “God is really among you!” (1 Cor 14:25). Clearly then, Pentecostal understandings of

⁸⁴ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 100.

⁸⁵ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 281.

⁸⁶ Macchia, “Tongues as a Sign,” 63 and 71–6.

⁸⁷ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 172. Similarly, Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 164.

⁸⁸ Hollenweger, “*Creator Spiritus*,” 37. And following him, Macchia, “Sighs too Deep for Words,” 53.

charismatic experiences and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (in the variety of ways it is understood) imply that the presence of the Spirit changes in relation to the individual believer.

h) The Presence of the Spirit Everywhere

Notwithstanding the fact that the Spirit is present in a special, yet changing, way in Jesus Christ, the Church, and in individual believers, the Spirit is not limited to these places. Moltmann proposes, “Because the Spirit is poured out ‘on *all* flesh,’ merely ecclesiastical flesh cannot be meant.”⁸⁹ The Spirit is also present in the world outside the Church. One can easily affirm this, at least to a limited extent, because it is the Holy Spirit that leads people to faith, drawing them into the Church.⁹⁰ The Spirit is also present and at work in other ways among those who may not believe. The presence of the Spirit cannot be limited to the Church and believers. Rather, “the *pneuma* blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:8). Edwards speaks of the Holy Spirit “enfolding human beings in grace.” He views “the Holy Spirit as *always and everywhere* graciously present in self-offering love to human beings.”⁹¹ The world-wide presence of the Spirit is also being attested to in contemporary theology of religions.⁹² The Spirit’s work may indeed be ambiguous in the world, not often being recognized by those in whom or around whom he works, but *his work is also ambiguous in the Church*.⁹³ It is not necessary for a person

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 240 (original emphasis). Also, Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 100. Rogers (*After the Spirit*, 2–3 and 57) and Yong (*The Spirit Poured Out*, 300) suggest that the Spirit is even poured out on animals.

⁹⁰ John 16:8, cf. numerous Pauline reference to the “Spirit of faith.”

⁹¹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 50 (original emphasis).

⁹² For example, Yong, *Beyond the Impasse* and Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 247–57.

⁹³ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 104.

to recognize or even feel the presence of the Spirit for the Spirit to be present.⁹⁴ To suggest otherwise would limit the freedom of God the Spirit. Gunton correctly posits, “the Spirit is free to enable those who by no means confess God’s being and action to achieve the greatest things.”⁹⁵ Even the most conservative of Evangelicals should be able to affirm this since it is implicit in their affirmation of the concept of ‘common grace’ (God at work ‘non-salvifically’ in the world).⁹⁶ The idea of common grace indicates that the Spirit is present throughout the whole world making humanity better than it would otherwise be. This is now a common theme in pneumatology, where theologians affirm that “wherever there is truth, goodness and beauty; wherever things turn out to be what they are created to be, there is to be experienced the work of the perfecting Spirit.”⁹⁷ Along these lines, Berkhof recognizes that “the liberating and transforming power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is at work everywhere where men are freed from the tyranny of nature, state, color, caste, class, sex, poverty, disease, and ignorance.”⁹⁸ From this perspective, one can affirm that the Spirit is present even in the “depths” of despair (Ps 139:7–8).⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 226. Cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:220, who speaks of the Spirit “secretly” guiding God’s work in the world.

⁹⁵ Gunton, “The Spirit Moved,” 202.

⁹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 658–63. In support of my conclusion that the concept of common grace implies the worldwide presence of the Spirit, Studebaker (“The Spirit in Creation,” 943–60) and Coffey (in his book *Grace*) explicitly link pneumatology and the theology of grace together. Further, Rogers observes that historically talk of ‘grace’ has too often inappropriately replaced references to the work of the Holy Spirit (*After the Spirit*, 216–22).

⁹⁷ Gunton, *The Christian Faith*, 178. Also, Gunton, “The Spirit Moved,” 200; Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, 5; Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 159–60; Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 71; Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 59; Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 120; and Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 191.

⁹⁸ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 102, cf. 95–6.

⁹⁹ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 224–5.

The presence of the Spirit is not, however, limited just to human beings. The Spirit is present throughout the whole of creation. The presence of God (and the omnipresence of God more generally) are associated with the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible. For example, David asks the Lord, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (Ps 139:7). Pinnock correctly observes that “theology would not think of denying the omnipresence of God but may overlook the omnipresence of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁰ For example, Pentecostals in the Western world have tended to restrict “the Holy Spirit to the individual believer and to religious experiences.”¹⁰¹ Hence, the Spirit was thought of as a supernatural force working from outside of the natural world (from an invisible realm of sorts). By contrast, Hollenweger observes, the Majority World Pentecostals (especially those less influenced by Western theology) have more or less always recognized that the Spirit works from within the world of nature, as “the root and fountain of everything, whether explainable [‘natural’] or not explainable [‘supernatural’],” with the result that any “separation between sacred and profane is an extremely difficult piece of theological acrobatics, and probably quite impossible to perform.”¹⁰² The need to recognize this has been an issue not only for Pentecostals, however, but for much of the Church. As Moltmann notes,

In both Protestant and Catholic theology and devotion, there is a tendency to view the Holy Spirit solely as *the Spirit of redemption*. Its place is the church, and it gives men and women the assurance of the eternal blessedness of their souls. This redemptive Spirit is cut off both from bodily life and from the life of nature.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 51.

¹⁰¹ Hollenweger, “*Creator Spiritus*,” 38.

¹⁰² Hollenweger, “*Creator Spiritus*,” 36–37, then 39.

¹⁰³ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 8 (original emphasis). In this context, “redemption” refers specifically and only to the redemption of humankind.

This tendency seems to be going by the wayside (among both Pentecostals and other Christians), however, as theologians now frequently even refer to the Spirit being in all things (see chapter five). As Rogers maintains, “the Spirit befriends matter.”¹⁰⁴ The Spirit is present everywhere.

Again, however, even though the Spirit is omnipresent, everywhere in creation, the Spirit is present in different ways and the presence of the Spirit changes throughout creation. Alasdair Heron cautions one from viewing the Spirit as equally present in all places. He writes, the Spirit is “not some *general* (and abstractly conceived) ‘immanence’ of God . . . but his [God’s] *specific* and *particular* ‘making himself present’ *at points of his own choosing*.”¹⁰⁵ Heron is expressing the intuition that the Spirit’s presence changes throughout creation. Macchia expresses the same intuition in his expanded understanding of Spirit baptism which takes on a cosmic scope: “Seen as an eschatological concept, Pentecost becomes a symbol, not only of the divine breath filling and charismatically empowering God’s people, but also indwelling all of creation one day.”¹⁰⁶

i) Intensification of the Spirit’s Presence

How can one make sense of this changing presence of the Spirit throughout creation? This has been an issue in all areas of creation. Jesus Christ, on the one hand, is filled with the Spirit, but, on the other hand, he still receives the Spirit from the Father to pour him out. The Church receives the Spirit as the Spirit is poured out, but it still prays

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 55–60. Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 339.

¹⁰⁵ Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, 9 (original emphasis). Cf. Welker, *God the Spirit*, 161–3.

¹⁰⁶ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 102–3, cf. 60, 84, 102, 103, and 107. Similarly, Yong, though not using the term Spirit baptism here, writes, “Although the Spirit is God present and active in the world, this presence and activity are still eschatological—not yet fully experienced but punctuated here and now by the Spirit” (*The Spirit Poured Out*, 252).

for the Spirit to come. Believers are temples of the Spirit, and yet they continue to be filled with the Spirit. Moreover, the presence of the Spirit in creation is distinguished from the special presence of the Spirit in Jesus, the Church, and believers. Certainly, the Spirit is present in a different way in a human being than he is in a tree.¹⁰⁷ One could, of course, suppose that the presence of the Spirit has not really changed in these situations, only people's awareness of the Spirit. However, as seen above (part 2c), this is not an adequate explanation given that the Spirit's presence sometimes changes without anyone being aware of this change.

Due to the changing presence of the Spirit, it can sound as though there are some places "where the Spirit of the Lord is" (2 Cor 3:17) and other places where he is not. Hence, there is a struggle here between the recognition that the Spirit is already present everywhere and the fact that the Spirit still continues to come. As a result, some theologians simply reject one of these two affirmations. Classical theists would strongly affirm that the Spirit is omnipresent, but generally reject the idea that the Spirit's presence changes. By contrast, Floyd Elmore practically rejects the idea that the Spirit is present in the whole world (and in all things) because he thinks this means that "concepts like 'receiving' the Spirit make no sense" when referring to the believer's reception of the Spirit.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Michael Welker incorrectly concludes that, "the Spirit is [not] present

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 119 (cf. 175); and Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 12. Pinnock, writes, "God is nowhere more present than in human beings" (*Flame of Love*, 73).

¹⁰⁸ Elmore, "An Evangelical Analysis of Process Pneumatology," 29. As the title of his article indicates, he is responding specifically to *process* pneumatology, *not* to *trinitarian* pneumatology (which is proposed here). Nevertheless, his struggle applies to this issue just as well. On the one hand he affirms that "the Holy Spirit is active in all the world" (28), but on the other hand, Elmore's conclusions illustrate that he believes that the Spirit comes to places that he is *not* present when a believer receives the Spirit and on the day of Pentecost (29).

in that which is decaying to dust.”¹⁰⁹ In making such conclusions, these theologians fail to recognize that that Spirit can be present everywhere, and yet present in different and changing ways.

These changes in the presence of the Spirit may be explained using the metaphor of intensification. Congar employs this metaphor suggesting that the Holy Spirit is present in “an intense way in the Christian communions,” as well as Norman Pittenger, who concludes that “the church . . . is the place where the Holy Spirit is intensively present and intensively active.”¹¹⁰ With comparable language, Welker speaks of “God’s living and concentrated presence” through the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹ As the Spirit is poured out into a world where he already is, or as the Spirit is received or comes upon those who already have the Spirit dwelling within them, the Spirit’s presence intensifies.¹¹²

This understanding of the intensive and intensifying presence of the Spirit overcomes the apparent conflict between seeing the Spirit as omnipresent and yet changing in presence. The positing of a contradiction between these concepts is based on an extensive understanding of presence, where a person must go from ‘here’ to ‘there,’ or where the presence of something can be measured in length. God however is not limited by space, though he is present to it. He is infinite in an intensive, rather than in an

¹⁰⁹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 161.

¹¹⁰ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:272 and Pittenger, *The Holy Spirit*, 81.

¹¹¹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 159. Welker also refers to God’s concentrated presence on pages 144, 148, 151–2, and 155.

¹¹² This notion of the intensification of the Spirit in creation is similar to Moltmann’s discussion of the Spirit as Shekinah. Moltmann describes the Shekinah as “the decent and indwelling of God in space and time” (*The Spirit of Life*, 47, cf. 48–51 and *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 104–5). At the same time, the notion of the intensification of the Spirit expresses the dynamic and varied ways that the Spirit may be present better than Moltmann’s description of the Shekinah. Tracing the theme of Shekinah in Moltmann’s pneumatological thinking see Althouse, “Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit,” 158, 164, and 168–70.

extensive manner.¹¹³ In an extensive manner, one might incorrectly view the Spirit, who is ‘poured out,’ like created water (a material substance) that must be drained or moved from one place to another if it is to change where it is present. Or one might view the Spirit, who is the ‘breath’ or ‘wind’ of God, like the air in the sky, which can have a different air pressure at different times depending on the weather. In contrast, based on the findings throughout this chapter, it seems necessary to view the presence of the Spirit in an intensive manner, where the Spirit does not have to ‘leave’ a place, in order to ‘fill’ another place. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes intensively. Hence, Schweitzer remarks, “When the Holy Spirit comes to be present in a new way in a person’s life, it is never said that this happens by its presence being diminished elsewhere.”¹¹⁴ Similarly, Rogers concludes that with Pentecost, after the ascension of Christ, “the Spirit . . . may rest in the church and anywhere on earth, *without* departing from Christ, *without* exiting the trinitarian communion.”¹¹⁵ This becomes explainable with an affirmation that the presence of the Spirit intensifies in different places, at different times.

Furthermore, as the presence of the Spirit intensifies, the Spirit changes.

Schweitzer correctly observes that although the coming of the Spirit, and other such biblical expressions,

focus on the change effected in the people involved, they also speak implicitly of *a change in the Holy Spirit itself*. In this event the Holy Spirit came to be present in a place and way in which formerly it was not so. Like the incarnation, the

¹¹³ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 130–2.

¹¹⁴ Schweitzer, “The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God,” 17. The image of water being drained from one place to another also comes from Schweitzer.

¹¹⁵ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 206 (original emphasis).

pouring out of the Holy Spirit has an element of novelty for God as well as for creation.¹¹⁶

From this idea of the Spirit's increasing presence in creation, Schweitzer refers to the Holy Spirit "as a growing edge of God."¹¹⁷ Growth, of course, implies change. The Spirit is a "growing" edge in as much as the Spirit's presence changes and becomes more intense.

In using the metaphor of 'intensification,' I am (to be most explicit) using it as a metaphor. The metaphor points to the different and changing ways that the Spirit is present. As a metaphor, the intensification of the presence of the Spirit does *not* mean that the Spirit is *literally* more present in one place than in another. I affirm with Barth that, since God is omnipresent, "there is no place where He is less present than in all others. On the contrary, He is everywhere completely and undividedly the One He always is, even if in virtue of the freedom of His love He is this in continually differing and special ways."¹¹⁸ As the omnipresent one, God is fully present everywhere, though he is present in different and changing ways in different places.

In light of the above affirmation, one rightfully asks, what does it mean for God to be 'fully' present? The word 'fully' here is also a metaphor. In *one sense* God is 'fully' present everywhere. If God is simple and undivided (as classical theists rightly claim), then God is necessarily fully present; God has no 'parts' which might allow for him to be partially present. This is because, as the doctrine of divine simplicity maintains, in

¹¹⁶ Schweitzer, "The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God," 16 (emphasis added). Besides a discussion of the changing presence of the Spirit, Schweitzer also argues that God's being increases as people enter into communion with the triune life through the Holy Spirit, the bond of love. "When this happens, the circle of love that is the communion of the Holy Spirit *expands*, as it comes to include more than it did before" ("The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God," 19 [emphasis added]).

¹¹⁷ In the title and throughout Schweitzer, "The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God."

¹¹⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 470, cf. 471–2.

everything that God is and does, God “is wholly and undividedly Himself.”¹¹⁹ Hence, when I say that God is ‘fully’ present I am *denying* that God has parts, but I am not denying that God can be present in distinct ways. In this sense, I maintain that God is ‘fully’ present to all things.

However, there is a *different sense* in which God is not ‘fully’ present everywhere. He is not ‘fully’ present in the sense that he is not ‘fully’ active—God is not active in every possible way. In that sense, the presence of God the Spirit does change. Further, this means that the Spirit can be present in changing ways and that the presence of the Spirit can intensify. And in this sense, the Spirit can (metaphorically) be more present in one place than another.

In making this conclusion I am recognizing the correspondence between the action and the presence of the Spirit. Welker correctly observes, “The action of God’s Spirit and the presence of ‘the face’ of God can . . . designate two aspects of the same thing.”¹²⁰ Similarly, Congar posits, the Holy Spirit “is present where he is active. This is known as his presence of immensity.”¹²¹ Therefore, although Congar affirms that God “is already *present through his activity* as creator and is therefore *also substantially present*,” Congar also affirms that when the Spirit comes to indwell believers “God *becomes firmly present*.”¹²² These comments reflect a correspondence between the Spirit’s activity and

¹¹⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 445.

¹²⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 159. On account of this understanding of the relationship of the activity and presence of the Spirit, Welker makes the claim (noted above) that the Spirit is not everywhere and not present in all things (161–3), because the Spirit is not actively (i.e. not present) giving life where things are decaying. Of course, the Spirit can be present (and active) in a different way unrelated to the life of the thing which is decaying.

¹²¹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:83.

¹²² Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:83 (emphasis added). There is also a sense for Congar in which the presence of God is still not ‘fully’ present, for “the end will be when God is ‘everything to

the presence of the Spirit, along with a sense of the changing presence of the Spirit.¹²³ Overall, the predominance of language regarding the changing presence of the Spirit throughout Scripture and the Christian traditions point to the fact that the Spirit does in fact change the way that he is present. In light of this, one can appropriately conclude that the way that the Spirit is present changes as the presence of the Spirit intensifies throughout creation. This conclusion leads to a revision to the classical doctrine of immutability.

3. The Immutable Spirit: The Faithful Presence of God

The notion that the Spirit changes does not necessarily mean, however, that one must abandon the term ‘immutability,’ although it does imply that the classical understanding of divine immutability needs to be revised. This revision does not mean that God is mutable in every way. It is commonplace in contemporary theology to speak of immutability in two senses: weak and strong immutability.¹²⁴ Strong immutability is

everyone’ (1 Cor 15:28) as an intimate, radiant, total and sovereign presence of a kind that does not consume the individual” (2:84).

¹²³ I am compelled to argue that even though there is this clear connection between the activity and the presence of the Spirit, it will not do to completely reduce language of the presence of the Spirit to language of the activity of the Spirit. I am only making note of my hypothesis, however, because at the moment I cannot fully articulate exactly why this is the case. Nevertheless, it seems to me that God’s general (omni)presence *implies* relationship and it *implies* divine action, but is not to be equated with it. Likewise, it is true that the (special or general) presence of the Spirit and the activity of the Spirit *correspond* to each other, but (it seems) they are distinct nevertheless. Otherwise, there would be no need for distinct language. Since the Holy Spirit is God, and since (as seen above) God truly does possess place, then it might not be possible to reduce reference to the Spirit’s presence to a reference to the Spirit’s activity (even though the concepts correspond to one another). In other words, I am inclined to argue that when the Spirit is said to be present in a different way, the Spirit is *not just* active in a different way (indeed, as the Spirit is ‘poured out’ the Spirit is passive, not active). Similarly, regarding the special presence of God in Jesus Christ, one must be able to say that God is truly present in Jesus, not just active there (Barth, *CD*, II/1, 486).

¹²⁴ These terms are even common in introductory texts. For example, Olson discusses this distinction in *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 125–7.

the classical position of absolute immutability. Weak immutability emphasises that God is unchanging in his character and in his faithfulness to his promises. Pneumatology does, in fact, support this notion of divine immutability, which theologians sometimes prefer to speak of as divine faithfulness or, following Barth, divine constancy.

In support of this interpretation of divine immutability, or this aspect of divine immutability, one can note first of all that the Spirit is not present in a neutral manner, but that the Spirit is always present with purpose.¹²⁵ The presence of the Spirit is the faithful presence of God, and the Holy Spirit is faithfully present in creation to sustain and redeem it. Kaufman has explicitly linked pneumatology, and the presence of the Spirit in particular, with divine faithfulness. He writes, “God’s faithfulness, thus, is the presence of his Spirit to and with and for all creation, sustaining it in being, giving it structure, teleologically ordering its processes of evolution and development so they will move toward the realization of his ultimate objectives.”¹²⁶ Moltmann also points to this connection between the presence of the Spirit and divine faithfulness when he writes, “To say that the Spirit ‘rests’ on the messianic king is a way of expressing God’s faithfulness to him.”¹²⁷

In relationship to believers, though Jesus Christ has ascended to the Father, he has sent the Spirit to remain with believers. The Holy Spirit comes alongside believers as the Paraclete, whom Jesus said (to the disciples) would faithfully “be with you forever” (John

¹²⁵ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 59.

¹²⁶ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 237–8. This link between divine presence and divine faithfulness is also implicit in Shults’ doctrine of God when he connects the doctrine of omnipresence with hope, because humans can only have hope based upon the faithfulness of God (*Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 265–93).

¹²⁷ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 53.

14:16). Kaufman notes that as the Paraclete, the Spirit has the loyalty of a true and faithful friend.

He remains faithful . . . in trouble and adversity, even patiently bearing with them when they violate his holy will, when in despite and distrust of him they commit treason against his kingdom; he remains faithful even in death, in the loss of all human companions, when all they know and cherish and believe seems gone. Such is “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁸

The faithfulness of the Spirit is illustrated, for example, in times of prayer when believers do not know how to pray and the Spirit comes along side and helps them pray “Abba Father” (Rom 8:15). It is also apparent when the Spirit enables believers to pray in tongues with groans that words cannot express, or when the Spirit even prays on their behalf (Rom 8:26–7).

The Spirit’s faithfulness is also seen in his identification as the “Spirit of truth.” Shults observes,

In the Gospel of John, “truth” has to do with the transforming faithfulness of God . . . The promised “Spirit of truth” (16:13) will guide the disciples into all truth, and Jesus longs for them to be “sanctified” in the truth (17:16–19). John explains in his first Epistle that it is through the Spirit, who “is the truth” (5:6), and through the Son of God, who “has given us understanding,” that we “know him who is true” and “we are *in him* who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ” (5:20).¹²⁹

As Shults observes, the Spirit is the Spirit of ‘truth’ in a “reformative” manner. In as much as the Spirit is the ‘truth’ and leads believers into ‘truth,’ the Spirit thereby changes a person into the image of Christ and leads people into relationship with the Father. In this work of the Spirit we see an exemplification of the faithfulness of God.

Given that the Spirit is omnipresent, the Spirit is faithful not only to individual believers but also to creation at large. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Spirit is

¹²⁸ Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 237.

¹²⁹ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 223 (original emphasis).

the presence of God that sustains creation (Ps 104:29–30; cf. Job 33:4).¹³⁰ Even beyond sustaining creation, the Spirit’s perfecting work in the whole of creation exemplifies God’s faithfulness. Salvation is not just for humanity but for the whole of creation. “All things” have been reconciled to God through Christ (Col 1:20), and the Spirit brings this into reality as he perfects or completes this work. This idea goes back to the Cappadocian theologians. Creation, Gregory of Nyssa writes, “began with the Father, advanced through the Son, and is completed in the Holy Spirit.”¹³¹ So too, Basil of Caesarea writes that the Spirit “perfects all other things, and Himself lacks nothing.”¹³² Gunton, a contemporary theologian, describes this perfecting work of the Spirit as “pulling things forward to that for which God has made them” and he describes the Holy Spirit as “the one who directs the creatures to where the creator wishes them to go, to their destiny as creatures.”¹³³ As such, the Spirit is the Giver of Life, who faithfully liberates creation from its groaning (Rom 8:20–26).

Overall, the Spirit displays the faithfulness of God as the Spirit makes the future present now. Believers “groan inwardly” as they await their future redemption, but they do “have the firstfruits of the Spirit” in the mean time (Rom 8:23) and the Spirit has been placed in believers’ “hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor 1:22, cf. 5:5 and Eph 1:14). Beyond simply providing certainty of the faithfulness of God, the Spirit has the “proleptic task” of making future aspects of salvation a reality now by

¹³⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:414.

¹³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Holy Spirit,” 320.

¹³² Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 43 (cf. 62). It is clear that he has the scope of creation in mind as he continues, “He gives life to all things.”

¹³³ Gunton, *Act and Being*, 78 and Gunton, “The Holy Spirit,” 81. Also speaking of the Spirit as ‘perfecting’ or ‘completing’ creation is Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 50, 56–7, 63, 68, and 70; Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 21; and Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, 183.

providing foretaste of what is to come.¹³⁴ Hence, D. Lyle Dabney views the Spirit as “the possibility of God.” That is, the Spirit makes creation open to the possibility of a new creation.¹³⁵ In doing so, the Spirit is an expression of the power of the future.¹³⁶ Even the original Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit so many years ago is said to have been a sign of the “last days” (Acts 2:17). The experience of the Spirit is, therefore, an eschatological experience; an experience of God’s coming new creation. Along these lines, Kilian McDonnell remarks, “to do pneumatology is to do eschatology.”¹³⁷

The eschatological connection between the Spirit and the faithfulness of God is also seen in the connection between the Spirit and the concept of the coming of the kingdom of God. Although the consummation of the kingdom is still future, the kingdom comes and is present through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ himself identified the presence of the Spirit in his life with the coming of the kingdom when he explained, “if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). Among the Gospels, the significance of the coming of the Spirit is greatest in the John’s Gospel where language of the kingdom (which is typical of the Synoptic Gospels) is replaced with the promise of the Holy Spirit (and eternal life).¹³⁸ Robert Jenson feels it appropriate to conclude that “in Jesus’ proclamation the power of the Spirit and the pressing immanence of the Kingdom are the same

¹³⁴ Peters, *God—The World’s Future*, 230 and Yong, “The Spirit at Work in the World,” 131 and 133.

¹³⁵ Dabney, “The Nature of the Spirit,” 101 and 109. Cf. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 50.

¹³⁶ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 2:98 and Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:157 and 160.

¹³⁷ McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 33.

¹³⁸ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 45.

thing.”¹³⁹ The New Testament does make a clear distinction between the presence of the Spirit and the final coming of the kingdom of God, which will take place alongside the second coming of the Messiah. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to speak, with Comblin, of the Holy Spirit as “the *present realization* of the kingdom of God” and to say that the Spirit is aiming at the kingdom of God.¹⁴⁰ Hence, Pinnock writes, “The Spirit aims to bring about the sabbath rest of new creation and the joys of the kingdom of God.”¹⁴¹ Similarly, as seen above, some Pentecostals see Spirit baptism as leading toward the kingdom of God. Further, just as the Spirit was at work in Jesus life, Yong views the present use of the spiritual gifts among Pentecostal and charismatic circles as “signs of the kingdom.”¹⁴² For the issue at hand, the overall point is that the presence of the Spirit is a confirmation of the faithfulness of God as the Spirit brings about the kingdom of God. To conclude, as Moltmann proposes, “The presence and efficacy of the Spirit is the eschatological goal of creation and reconciliation. All the works of God end in the presence of the Spirit.”¹⁴³

4. Conclusion

By way of pneumatology, this chapter has presented a revised doctrine of immutability. This chapter began by noting how the biblical images of the Holy Spirit

¹³⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:157.

¹⁴⁰ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 44 (emphasis added), cf. 55. Similarly, Berkhof writes, “The Spirit, with all his gifts of conversion, forgiveness, communion with God and joy in him, is *the first part* of the coming glorification, the *foretaste* of the Kingdom” (*The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 106 [emphasis added]).

¹⁴¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 61.

¹⁴² Yong, “The Spirit at Work in the World,” 133.

¹⁴³ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 96.

seem to imply change. This fact, along with the lack of attribution of 'immutable' to the Spirit in contemporary theology, seems to suggest that the Spirit is indeed not immutable in the classical sense of the term. This intuition was confirmed by means of a pneumatological doctrine of divine presence.

Pneumatological revisions to the doctrine of divine immutability emphasize divine immanence more so than classical theism. Whereas for classical theism God is beyond (transcendent) the possibility of having events in the world change God, beyond allowing them to change God, and even beyond changing in response to the events in creation, a pneumatological understanding of the presence of God posits that God does (actively) change his presence in creation as he is present at different times, in different ways. God is immanent in that his changing presence in creation presents a change for God. God the Holy Spirit changes in relationship to Jesus Christ, who sends the Spirit upon the Church, individual believers, and creation at large in an ever increasing way. As this occurs, God changes as the presence of the Spirit intensifies throughout creation. Nevertheless, pneumatology also supports the immutable faithfulness of God as the Spirit is faithfully present to individuals as the Paraclete, as the Spirit perfects creation, and as the Spirit provides a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God. Overall, the pneumatological insights in this chapter (and the previous chapter) do not necessarily amount to a complete rejection of the doctrine of divine immutability, but certainly a revision of the doctrine. Just as the presence of the Spirit is dynamic within creation, pneumatology also supports a dynamic understanding of the omnipotence of God. The doctrine of divine omnipotence is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

PNEUMATOLOGICAL REVISIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF OMNIPOTENCE

1. Introduction

As a divine person, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent. Such a simple statement, however, leaves open the question of how that divine power expresses itself. Omnipotence is commonly taken to mean that God can do anything that is not illogical and anything consistent with his nature. Beyond this, however, a statement of the positive content of the doctrine of omnipotence is needed. That is, the doctrine of omnipotence does not concern a general concept of transcendent unlimited power, but specifically God's power. Therefore, this doctrine also has to say what God's power can do, but most importantly, what God's power has done and continues to do. Furthermore, an abstract notion of divine omnipotence will not do for Christian theology because the power of God must be understood as the power of the Father, the Son, *and the Holy Spirit*. When this is taken into account, the doctrine of the omnipotence of God can be good news, gospel.

Since the Holy Spirit is divine, considering the activity of the Holy Spirit helps one to understand divine omnipotence. Pneumatology critiques and calls for a revision of the doctrine of omnipotence as many classical theists understand it. Much of classical theism promotes a vision of divine unilateral omnipotence. Here God's transcendence is

thought to imply that God, the cause of all things, sovereignly controls all things.¹ In place of this unilateralism, this chapter argues that pneumatology leads to a reciprocal theology of divine power. Pneumatology illustrates that although God is omnipotent, God chooses not to determine everything by his power. Rather, similar to the christological perspectives of contemporary trinitarian theology (chapter 3, part 4.b.iii), pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of omnipotence display that the power of God is a kenotic, liberating, and holy power of love. If it is true, as Wolf Krötke claims, that “only in the work of the triune God *as a whole* can God’s power be properly understood,” then these pneumatological perspectives must be integrated into the doctrine of divine omnipotence.² One finds that instead of offering an abstract notion of transcendent power, which is characteristic of classical theism, pneumatology portrays a more immanent view of divine omnipotence as it offers content to the doctrine by understanding divine power in light of the activity of the Spirit within the economy of salvation. Before turning to present pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of divine omnipotence, this chapter first establishes a biblical and theological connection between the themes of power and the Holy Spirit.

2. The “Spirit” and “Power” in Theology and Scripture

When theologians explicitly ascribe a list of divine attributes to the Holy Spirit, omnipotence is one attribute that does generally make it on the list. Other than process theologians, the Christian tradition unanimously affirms the omnipotence of the Holy

¹ Consider, for example, Frame’s comment that “Divine transcendence in Scripture seems to center on the concepts of control and authority” (*The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 15).

² Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten*, 223 (original emphasis).

Spirit. Nevertheless, when one thinks of the omnipotence and power of God, one might not immediately think of the Holy Spirit and the various topics in pneumatology. If one were to think with a trinitarian framework in mind, one would most likely think of God the Father. After all, God the Father is the one to whom the Christian tradition has appropriated the work of creation. When Christians recite the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed they are constantly reminded that they believe "in God the *Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*" And what could be a greater expression of the power of God than the work of creation? Many have gazed at the mountains, a coming storm, and other aspects of nature, and thought, "Wow, God is powerful." This supports the apostle Paul's claim that creation displays the existence as well as the power of God (Rom 1:20). Given this experiential connection between the power of God and creation, and given the fact that the work of creation is appropriated to God the Father in the early creeds, it is understandable that the doctrine of divine omnipotence is most often connected with the divine person of God the Father.

As with other attributes, when contemporary trinitarian theology reflects on the power of God it has tended to focus on Christology. After all, Paul claims that Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24, cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Col 2:10; 2 Pet 1:16). Nevertheless, Scripture provides much reason to pursue a trinitarian doctrine of the omnipotence of God from the perspective of pneumatology as well.

When thinking of the Spirit in relation to power in the Scriptures one might actually find a possible reason not to link these themes together. This is because of the familiar verse in which Zechariah says to Zerubbabel, "'*Not by might [chayil] nor by power [kôach] but by my Spirit,*' says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6). This verse

might appear to present a contrast between the ideas of power and might and the work of the Holy Spirit, almost as though the Holy Spirit is not powerful. Such a simplistic reading, however, misses that the Lord, through the prophet Zechariah, is actually drawing a contrast between the power and might of human forces and the Spirit, who is indeed powerful. A simplistic reading of Zechariah 4:6 would also contradict the majority testimony coming from Scripture.

First of all, the very words that are translated ‘Spirit,’ *pneuma* and *ruach*, could also be translated wind, which can be very powerful at times. Beyond this, however, there are in fact many times in both the Old Testament and the New Testament traditions that the idea of the power of God occurs in association with the work of the Holy Spirit.³ In the Old Testament, one reads of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Samson in power (or “mightily;” *tsâlach*) when he received strength from God (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). The same is said of Saul when he prophesied (1 Sam 10:6, 10; cf. 11:6). Further, when Samuel anointed David king, the Scriptures record that “the Spirit of the Lord came on David in power” (1 Sam 16:13). With a slightly different expression, Micah claims, “I am filled with power [*kôach*], with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might [*g^ebûrâh*]” (Mic 3:8).

The relationship between the Spirit and power (*dunamis*) continues in the New Testament. Luke speaks of the Spirit being on both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ with power (Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 10:38). He also reports that when the Spirit would be poured out at Pentecost, the believers would receive power (Acts 1:8). Similarly, Paul

³ See Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 4:6; Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38; Romans 1:4; 15:13, 19; 1 Corinthians 2:4; Galatians 4:29; Ephesians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; and 2 Timothy 1:7.

prays and testifies that God gives believers power through the Spirit (Eph 3:16; 2 Tim 1:7). In the New Testament, one even reads explicitly of the “power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14; Rom 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 2:4).⁴ The Lord (Yahweh) is the Almighty one, but, as Paul teaches, “the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17).⁵ There is, then, clear biblical warrant and impetus for exploring the omnipotence of God from a pneumatological perspective.

The history of pneumatology also provides impetus for connecting pneumatology with the doctrine of divine omnipotence. Theologians, such as Heribert Mühlen, have recognized that God acts “precisely through that *dynamis*, that power, which is called Pneuma.”⁶ Pentecostal theology also lends itself to connecting pneumatology with the doctrine of divine omnipotence given that Pentecostals often perceive a strong association between the Spirit and power.⁷ Macchia expresses this connection when he observes, “Spirit baptism has often been interpreted throughout Pentecostalism with a heavy emphasis on the Spirit as the *power* of God for enhancing worship and service and overcoming the obstacles to the life of faith, especially with the aid of powerful manifestations and gifts of the Spirit.”⁸ This is so widely recognized that, as my experience attests, many Pentecostal lay people sometimes think of the Spirit solely as a divine powerful force. Of course, the Spirit is not just the ‘power of God.’ Although the Old Testament (in particular) sometimes seems to portray the Holy Spirit as the power of God at work in the world, the Scriptures also depict the Spirit as a divine person, distinct

⁴ Also in Gal 4:29 in some translations, although the word ‘power’ is not present in the Greek text.

⁵ This refers to the Lord (Yahweh) of the LXX in this context (Gabriel, “Pauline Pneumatology,” 358).

⁶ Mühlen, “The Holy Spirit as Person,” 17.

⁷ Consider even the very title of Menzies, *Spirit and Power*.

⁸ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 82 (original emphasis).

from the Father and the Son.⁹ Hence, even as patristic pneumatology was developing, Gregory of Nazianzus warned that one should not “give Essence to the Father and deny Personality to the Others, and make Them only Powers of God.”¹⁰ The Holy Spirit is powerful, nevertheless. There is, therefore, also clear theological precedent for exploring the omnipotence of God from a pneumatological perspective.

3. The Kenotic Power of the Spirit

Two theological perspectives coming from pneumatology might suggest that God characteristically exercises his power unilaterally: a Reformed perspective on the Spirit in relationship to salvation and Pentecostal perspectives on the charismatic activity of the Spirit. The following section outlines these two pneumatological perspectives on the power of the Spirit and proposes that the unilateral exercise of the Spirit’s power is not normative of how the Spirit works. Rather, the Spirit acts kenotically as the Spirit self-limits the exercise of his power.

First, some Reformed theologians argue that pneumatology supports a monergistic view of salvation, where God is the only active agent in salvation. Chapter five observed the biblical theme of rebirth by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5, 8; Gal 4:29; Titus 3:5). This image of salvation might appear to illustrate that salvation is exclusively the work of the Spirit and that the people whom the Spirit saves are completely passive. On account of such images of the Spirit’s work, Sinclair Ferguson concludes,

The New Testament’s statements on regeneration emphasize the sovereign, monergistic, activity of the Spirit. . . . The monergism behind it is spelled out

⁹ Gabriel, “Pauline Pneumatology,” 347–62. This is also certainly a common theme in many pneumatologies and systematic theologies.

¹⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, “On the Holy Spirit,” *Oration* 31.32 (NPNF translation, p. 328).

elsewhere in antitheses: we are born, not of our own will, but of God's decision (Jn 1:12); from above, not from below; of the Spirit, not of the flesh (Jn 3:3, 5–6); of God, not of man (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18); by God's choice, not our own; through his word, not out of the energies of an autonomous will (Jas 1:18).¹¹

Reformed theologians who follow Ferguson's conclusions argue that this does not imply that people lose their freedom in making their response to God in faith, but rather that the Spirit sanctifies people's freedom so that they do make this response. As Ferguson explains, "because the Spirit works in us we are able freely to respond. Sovereign divine activity does not negate the necessity for human activity; rather it grounds it and renders it possible."¹² This view of the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation might appear to imply that the Spirit exercises his power in such a way that God sovereignly controls everything. That is, if the Spirit is the only agent in salvation, ensuring that God's will is done, then, one might conclude, the omnipotence of God is always expressed in such a way that God's will is always accomplished. Is it not true that God has all "power and might" and that "no one can withstand" him (2 Chron 20:6)?

In addition to the above Reformed perspective on pneumatology, some Pentecostal experiences and understandings of the Spirit might also appear to suggest that the Spirit always exercises his power unilaterally. Historically, when it comes to

¹¹ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 119. Also employing pneumatology in support of monergism see Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 70; Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*, 103-11; Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?* 253; and Wells, "The Doctrine of Scripture," 60. In contrast to some Reformed theologians, Bloesch suggests that "regeneration is always correlative with either seeking or faith. Regeneration does not first occur and then seeking, but regeneration is realized through seeking and then finally through faith" (*The Holy Spirit*, 389, n. 54, cf. 287).

¹² Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 124. Cf. Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 72. The significance of this pneumatological argument for discussions regarding synergism and monergism is beyond the scope of this book. However, it is interesting to note that synergistic explanations of the role of the Spirit in salvation can sound remarkably similar to a monergistic position. For example, Coppedge writes, "God the Spirit, working through the prevenient grace that has been provided by God the Son, orders circumstances through various means so that God can enable persons to freely choose his design for their lives" (*The God Who is Triune*, 310). However, unlike Ferguson, he continues, "If this freedom is used appropriately, the Father's purposes and best plans will be actualized" (310). The 'if' in this sentence suggests that one might resist the Spirit.

pneumatology Pentecostals have often focussed their theological reflection on the miraculous work of the Spirit, such as the miraculous charismatic gifts. Welker observes, “Within the Charismatic Movement the interest in the Holy Spirit seems frequently to concentrate on the unusual, *sensational* action of the Spirit.”¹³ There is definitely clear warrant for connecting the power of the Spirit with extraordinary experiences, such as miracles. For example, when the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, he prophesied and was “changed into a different person” (1 Sam 10:6). In the New Testament, Jesus said that he drove out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28) and it is clear throughout the book of Acts that the early Christians were empowered by the Holy Spirit in such a way that they performed many miraculous “signs and wonders” (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12). In such moments, the power of the Spirit is expressed in a unilateral fashion.

Nevertheless, both of the above Reformed and Pentecostal perspectives on divine omnipotence are not normative of how the Spirit works (Reformed and Pentecostal theologians do not necessarily claim that it is normative—both traditions have contrasting perspectives). Hence, in response to notions that emphasize the unilateral power of the Spirit, Elizabeth Johnson overstates the issue and suggests that the love of the Spirit grants autonomy and “never forces.”¹⁴ Likewise, José Comblin proposes, “The Spirit is the power that acts through appeal, through attraction, not through constraint: through maternal, not paternal authority.”¹⁵ In contrast to these claims, the above Reformed and Pentecostal perspectives do illustrate that God’s power is not limited by the will of

¹³ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 15 (original emphasis). For example, consider the table of contents in Palma, *The Holy Spirit* and Menzies, *Spirit and Power*.

¹⁴ Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 49. Similarly, Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 196.

¹⁵ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 64.

human beings or even by the ‘laws’ of nature (mind you, even these ‘laws’ are sustained and created by God) and that the Spirit may indeed, at times, even force a situation.

Accordingly, Jürgen Moltmann correctly observes two sides to the Spirit’s work, when he states,

By virtue of the Spirit . . . [God’s] relationship to creation must rather be viewed as an intricate web of unilateral, reciprocal and many-sided relationships. In this network of relationships, ‘making,’ ‘preserving,’ ‘maintaining’ and ‘perfecting’ are certainly the one-sided relationships; but ‘indwelling,’ ‘sym-pathizing,’ ‘participating,’ ‘accompanying,’ ‘enduring,’ ‘delighting’ and ‘glorifying’ are relationships of *mutuality* which describe a cosmic community of living between God the Spirit and all his created beings.¹⁶

At times the Spirit does force. Since the Spirit is omnipotent, he does have the ability to act unilaterally. Besides the above perspectives, this is also true as the Spirit is associated with the resurrection of Christ (Rom 1:4, 8:11; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:18), which, Ferguson observes, is “an act of undiluted sovereignty.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, this is not normative of the Spirit.

To demonstrate the point that the Spirit does not usually exercise his power unilaterally, contemporary theologians correctly remind believers that the experience of the Spirit cannot be reduced to the sensational charismatic manifestations. Welker, for example, suggests that the Scriptures do not regard the miraculous activity of the Spirit “as the best path to the experience and knowledge of God’s Spirit.”¹⁸ Moreover, Karl Barth cautions one from thinking that miracles are evidence of some sort of special omnipotence of God. Rather, they are demonstrations of the one and only omnipotence of

¹⁶ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 14. Also, Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 13.

¹⁷ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 126.

¹⁸ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 15. Cf. Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 13; Williams, “Word and Spirit,” 120; and Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 41.

God.¹⁹ The miraculous power of the Spirit is the very same divine power that remains hidden as God acts in a variety of ways throughout creation. The power of the Spirit is not always easy to perceive. The wind of the Spirit blows not just as a hurricane but also as a prevailing wind.²⁰

Molly Marshall is among the few who explicitly recognize that “pneumatology carries considerable promise for addressing . . . the character of God” and she sees this particularly with respect to divine power and agency.²¹ Likewise, Daniel Migliore observes, “When the work of the Holy Spirit is forgotten or suppressed, the power of God is apt to be understood as distant, hierarchical, and coercive.”²² Along the same line of thought, Marshall suggests that in the Spirit one sees God sharing his power. She argues that “rigid notions of sovereignty that ascribe all causality to the divine must be challenged,” and, on account of pneumatology, she concludes that “God is not the all-determining power.”²³ In contrast to other possible images of God, pneumatology leads one to imagine God more so as a gentle dove descending rather than as a sovereign king on a throne. The Spirit does not determine all things, but rather is one who counsels believers in how to live (John 16:7) and one who extends an invitation, by saying “Come!” (Rev 22:17). By the Spirit people are invited to participate in the life of God. This perichoretic life is not all-determined by God, but one which is a dance with mutual contributors. Expressing this idea, Pinnock writes, “The Spirit calls us to participate in

¹⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 539–40.

²⁰ Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 198.

²¹ Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 4.

²² Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 224.

²³ Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 12 and previously in Marshall, “Participating in the Life of God,” 149. See also, Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 18 and Welker, *God the Spirit*, xi.

the relationship of intimacy between Father and Son and to be caught up in the dance already begun.”²⁴ The Spirit draws people into the relationship as he enables believers to say “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). Presumably when Paul writes that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22–23) one can be sure that God does not cause such ‘fruit’ as, hatred, misery, disorder, uneasiness, impatience, malice, or unfaithfulness. Rather, these are characteristics of those who are not dancing with the Spirit, or, in Paul’s words, those who do not “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). There is fellowship between the Holy Spirit and believers and “fellowship is never merely unilaterally determined,” as Moltmann observes.²⁵

F. LeRon Shults raises a possible critique of the above conclusions. Shults recognizes the theological difficulty that the doctrine of omnipotence can face in relation to the question of human freedom. Regarding this relationship, he observes in the history of theology a continuum between divine determinism and libertarian freedom (which he also refers to as the antinomy of predestination). In this continuum, he posits, “It seems that either God’s power or God’s love must be limited. This way of framing the debate also assumes an ‘extensive’ view of infinity, in which creaturely and divine power are measured on the same quantitative scale and so are capable of mutual limitation.”²⁶ Continuing, Shults suggests that “the debate is over the ‘extent’ to which limitations are *posed on God’s ‘control’*”—whether human power inherently limits divine power.²⁷

²⁴ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 46. Cf. Marshall, *Joining the Dance*, 158–9.

²⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 218.

²⁶ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 236, cf. 261.

²⁷ Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*, 238 (emphasis added).

While this might sometimes be the case in theological discussions, a pneumatological view of divine omnipotence (and possibly other views) does not have to presuppose that created power limits divine power. It does not have to posit a “mutual limitation” of powers (created and divine). Rather any limitation of divine power might be described as a kenosis of divine omnipotence.

Overall, pneumatology paints a picture of the kenotic power of God. Discussions of divine ‘kenosis’ generally focus on Christology. The concept of kenosis is based on a passage in Philippians that describes Jesus as having “emptied himself” (*kenoō*) to take the nature of a servant and as having surrendered himself to the conditions of created reality (Phil 2:7, NASB). In discussions of the attributes of God, the concept of kenosis can describe any way that God willfully limits himself. Similarly, some theologians ascribe divine kenosis specifically to the Spirit.²⁸ For example, the Spirit acts kenotically when he allows himself to suffer within creation. With respect to divine omnipotence, the Spirit acts kenotically as the Spirit makes room for creaturely freedom, even to the point of allowing creatures to resist him. In this sense, the Spirit ‘surrenders’ or ‘empties himself’ as he exercises his power within created reality. This is a divine self-limitation (kenosis) of the exercise of divine power. As Denis Edwards remarks, “The power of the Spirit . . . is a power that is freely self-limiting because it makes room for the otherness of creatures.”²⁹

The fact that the Spirit can be resisted attests to the kenosis of the omnipotence of the Spirit. In a speech Stephen gave before he was martyred he charged the listening

²⁸ For example, Althouse, “Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit,” 155–72 (building on Moltmann); Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 107–10; and Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, 219–27.

²⁹ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 111.

crowd with having consistently resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). The powerful ‘fire’ of the Spirit can even be quenched and restrained (1 Thess 5:19). Comblin observes that even the Church sometimes resists the Spirit and that, therefore, it is in continuous need of reform.³⁰ One can resist the Spirit. The kenotic Spirit generally does not force. Rather, believers are invited to “walk by the Spirit” and to be “led by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 18).

4. More Pentecostal Perceptions of the Spirit’s Power

Two Pentecostal understandings of the power of the Spirit support this kenotic view of the power of the Spirit. First, one finds a synergy of divine and human agency in the experience of speaking in tongues. On the one hand, speaking in tongues may be viewed as a result of the power of the Spirit. Not just any kind of vocal expression can be considered tongues (e.g. when people mimic speaking in tongues). Regarding the early Christians, Luke records that they spoke in tongues specifically “as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). Hence, Frank Macchia remarks, “Glossolalia theologically understood cannot be viewed as a human potential utilized at will to achieve some religious end. Like all genuine encounters with God, it takes place primarily as the result of the divine decision to act.”³¹ On the other hand, Pentecostals also regard tongues as a manner of human expression. Demonstrating this, Macchia maintains, “Poetry, song, dance and silence have always been offered as examples of in-depth responses to God that transcend prayer as rational and verbal communication. Glossolalia is certainly one such response

³⁰ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 59–60.

³¹ Macchia, “Sighs too Deep for Words,” 60.

to God.”³² With respect to speaking in tongues, the Spirit transforms this human expression as the Spirit takes the groans of humanity and changes them into a cry for redemption.³³ There is a synergy of sorts between the power of the Spirit and the believer that happens in the event of speaking in tongues. Macchia’s testimony of the first time he spoke in tongues illustrates this. He writes,

I felt a fountain well up within me. It grew stronger and stronger until it burst forth with great strength. I began to pray in tongues. It was not forced, neither from me nor from God. In fact, it seemed at the moment to be the most natural thing to do.³⁴

As with this example, Pentecostals report that when a person speaks in tongues they generally still have good control over themselves. Regarding the general charismatic activity of the Spirit, Samuel Solivan reports,

Contrary to popular belief, Pentecostals do not believe that their faculties are suspended when they are directed by the Spirit—what many uninformed observers have called ecstasy. . . . Pentecostals believe that the Spirit is always subject to the prophet when working through the gifts and ministries in the life of the believer.³⁵

This is also true with speaking in tongues specifically. Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians to take turns and limit the amount of speaking in tongues in a church gathering also presupposes that one has some control over when one might speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:27–28).³⁶ The Spirit does not force one to speak in tongues. Rather, the

³² Macchia, “Sighs to Deep for Words,” 47. Similarly, from a non-Pentecostal perspective, Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 185.

³³ Macchia, “Groans too Deep for Words,” 10.

³⁴ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 13.

³⁵ Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*, 109.

³⁶ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 889.

Spirit exercises his power kenotically and in reciprocal relationship with the recipient of the Spirit's work.

Another area of Pentecostal theology that supports the kenotic view of divine omnipotence is the notion of discerning the Spirit.³⁷ If the Spirit exercised his power in such a way that God was the all-determining reality, then there would be no need to discern the Spirit. Pentecostals argue that there is, in fact, the need to discern the Spirit. In contrast, in contemporary pneumatology there is a danger of overlooking this reality. The most obvious example comes in the pneumatology of Moltmann, who emphasizes that the Spirit pervades all of life. On account of this, Klauspeter Blaser critiques Moltmann (although the critique is somewhat overstated) for replacing a "discernment of the Spirit" with a "profound continuity between the Spirit and [the human] spirit."³⁸ Following upon this critique of Moltmann, from a Pentecostal perspective Néstor Medina writes, "Indeed, for Pentecostals all of life falls under the jurisdiction of the activity of the Spirit. But for Pentecostals the Spirit is at work countering the forces of evil whose personification is the Devil."³⁹ From a similar perspective, Macchia uses characteristically Pentecostal warfare language and writes, "Pentecostalism does not recognize any 'demilitarized zone' but rather accents the battle for the victory of the kingdom of God over the forces

³⁷ The Catholic Church has a long tradition regarding discernment of the Spirit as well. Consider, Edwards, "Discernment of the Spirit," chapter eleven in *Breath of Life*, 158–69.

³⁸ Blaser, "La pneumatology de Jürgen Moltmann," 261. This critique only illustrates the *danger* of overlooking the need to discern the Spirit. I say Blaser's critique is overstated because Moltmann does recognize the need to discern the Spirit. For example, at the very beginning of his pneumatology he observes that the world religions are not unequivocal about life, whereas the Spirit creates a bias in favor of life (Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, xiii).

³⁹ Medina, "Jürgen Moltmann and Pentecostalism(s)," 106.

of sin and darkness.”⁴⁰ If it is the case that there are evil powers at work in the world that are distinct from the power of the Spirit, then there is need to discern the Spirit.

To support the belief that one must discern where the power of the Spirit is active, Pentecostals draw on Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 12:10, where Paul speaks of the gift of “distinguishing between spirits,” and 1 John 4:1, which warns one to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” In Johannine and Pauline literature, the issue is truth; the Spirit guides believers “into all truth” (John 16:13, cf. 1 Cor 2:12, 12:3; 1 John 4:1–3). By contrast, there are also “deceiving spirits” (1 Tim 4:1). For Pentecostals, discernment of the Spirit concerns more than just truth. Discernment is also an issue of the power of the spirit(s) that is behind the false truth, and the power of the spirit(s) that can influence other areas of life as well. There is in this Pentecostal thinking an explicit awareness that the power of the Holy Spirit is not an all-determining power. While Christians receive the Holy Spirit, the power of the “spirit of the world” is also at work (1 Cor 2:12). Hence, for Pentecostals, one aspect of salvation involves deliverance from evil spirits.⁴¹ Pentecostals generally recognize that the outpouring of the Spirit is an eschatological reality, and that, therefore, we are living in the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet’ of the manifestation of the Spirit’s power.⁴² One can discern the Spirit, however, in the movement toward this ‘not yet,’ or, in the words of Amos Yong, in the “processes of purification according to a trajectory anticipating the coming kingdom.”⁴³ This understanding of the need to discern where the power of the Spirit is active supports a

⁴⁰ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 82.

⁴¹ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 53.

⁴² Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 252.

⁴³ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 256.

kenotic view of divine omnipotence. It also points to the fact that the power of the Spirit has a particular aim and direction.

5. The Spirit's Holy Power of Love

The kenotic omnipotence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit is also apparent in the fact that the Spirit's work has a particular trajectory to it. The power of God is not just a general power, but, rather, as Barth notes, divine power has "a definite direction and content."⁴⁴ While contemporary trinitarian theology focuses on the Christ event for understanding divine omnipotence, Welker rightly claims, "The Spirit of God makes God's power knowable. The Spirit reveals the power of God in and on human beings and in and on their fellow creatures. The Spirit reveals this power through them and for them."⁴⁵

The Spirit's power aims in one direction. The Spirit sanctifies believers to live a life of love, but the Spirit does not aim to guide believers into sin. The Spirit empowers believers to witness to Christ as they proclaim the gospel, but does not cause them to be silent about this. The Spirit gifts people that the Church may be built up, and creates communion and fellowship among believers, but does not create ecclesial disunity. The Spirit creates faith and brings people together, gathering the Church and making them one with God, and does not hinder people from joining this communion.

At the conclusion of his pneumatology, Pinnock describes the person of the Spirit much in terms of his power. He invites his readers to view the Spirit as "the power of

⁴⁴ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 602.

⁴⁵ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 2.

creation and new creation, as the power of incarnation and atonement, as the power of new community and union with God, and as the power drawing the whole world into the truth of Jesus.”⁴⁶ If this is the “direction and content” (Barth’s words) of divine omnipotence, then God’s power must not be the cause of all things. Conversely, if some creaturely activity does not have the direction of the power of the Spirit, then the cause of such things is not the Holy Spirit.

Rather than existing as an all-determining power, the divine power exhibited by the Spirit is a power of love. There is a clear biblical association between the Spirit and love. Paul wrote to the Romans, “God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5, cf. Rom 15:30). Expressing the same connection, Edwards notes, “The power of the Creator Spirit is not an unqualified despotic power capable of doing anything regardless of cost. It is the supreme power to love.”⁴⁷ And the Spirit’s power is not just a power to love us, but the Spirit’s power is directed in such a way that it causes people to love as well (1 Cor 13:1; 2 Tim 1:7). As Terry Cross expresses it, the Spirit “propels us to love.”⁴⁸

The Spirit works to renew all things, not destroy them. As breath to the body and wind to a sail, so is the Holy Spirit to believers. Ezekiel the prophet proclaimed to his audience that God would give them “a new heart” and that he would remove their “heart of stone” and give them “a heart of flesh” as he would put his Spirit in them (Ezek 36:26–27). From such texts, Leonardo Boff proposes that “the Spirit is seen as the *power of the*

⁴⁶ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 247.

⁴⁷ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 110.

⁴⁸ Cross, “The Holy Spirit,” 102.

new and of a *renewal* in all things.”⁴⁹ Chapter six also highlighted the renewing work of the Spirit as the Spirit faithfully draws all creation toward the kingdom of God. We remember that, as Edwards attests, “the Breath of God is healing, transforming, renewing, refreshing, one who promises health and wholeness for all creation.”⁵⁰

The power of the Spirit is also a sanctifying power. The Spirit sets people “free from the law of sin and death” and leads them to follow “the law of the Spirit” (Rom 8:12), or the “ethic of the Spirit,” as Eldin Villafañe describes it.⁵¹ By the power of the Spirit, God makes believers more like Christ as he transforms them into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). This, of course, involves creating virtues in believers (the fruit of the Spirit), but also involves transforming believers into other-centered people. As Miroslav Volf explains, “The Spirit enters into the citadel of the self, de-centers the self by fashioning it in the image of the self-giving Christ, and frees its will so it can resist the power of exclusion in the power of the Spirit of embrace.”⁵²

That the Spirit’s power is sanctifying and renewing may be summarized by saying that the omnipotence of the Spirit is a holy power. The Spirit is specifically the ‘Holy’ Spirit. ‘Holy’ often conveys images of God as transcendent—God as utterly beyond us spatially and morally. For example, Wolfhart Pannenberg proposes that “the basic meaning of holiness is separateness from everything profane” and Wayne Grudem maintains that “God’s holiness means that he is separated from sin and devoted to

⁴⁹ Boff, *Trinity and Society* 192 (original emphasis). Cf. Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 34.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 171.

⁵¹ Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 194.

⁵² Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 92.

seeking his own honor.”⁵³ In contrast to this understanding of holiness, the holiness of the Holy Spirit shows that God is holy in such a way that he does not remain separate from sin (in any spatial sense). Rather, the Spirit is immanent to all things drawing them toward salvation (as broadly understood). That is, the Spirit is holy not only in the sense of being above and beyond creation, but the Spirit is also holy by being a sustaining and redeeming power in creation.

This accords well with John Webster’s proposals on divine holiness. Webster rightly argues that the biblical portrayal of divine holiness concerns much more than God’s transcendence. Webster emphasizes that holiness is relational in character and describes God’s holiness as “pure majesty in relation.”⁵⁴ God is not holy because he is removed from creation, but rather is holy as he is immanent to it. God is holy in relation to his people—the Redeemer is “the Holy One of Israel” (e.g. Isa 47:4). God is holy as he takes up the cause of his people and draws them into fellowship with himself. As the Holy One, God calls people to holiness and overcomes sin through the reconciling work of the Son as well as the sanctifying work of the Spirit. With respect to pneumatology, Webster writes, “God the Holy Spirit is the one who completes this work of making holy, perfecting the creature by binding the creature’s life into that of Christ and so realizing *in* the creature what has been achieved *for* the creature. The Spirit’s holiness is thus known in his work of sanctifying.”⁵⁵ One may add that the Spirit is holy in his regenerating work

⁵³ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:398 and Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 201.

⁵⁴ Webster, *Holiness*, 41. Similarly, Pannenberg also notes that “the holiness of God both opposes the profane world and embraces it, bringing it into fellowship with the holy God” (*Systematic Theology*, 1:399). Both of these theologians exhibit influences from Barth who observes that God is holy as one who confronts us (separate), but primarily as one who blesses, restores, and helps (*CD*, II/1, 361).

⁵⁵ Webster, *Holiness*, 52, cf. 48. Similarly, Gunton writes, “It is this connection with perfecting that above all characterizes the holiness of the Spirit” (*Act and Being*, 188).

(i.e. not just in applying the work of Christ).⁵⁶ The Spirit is immanent to people being holy as he makes people holy. This is the aim and content of divine omnipotence from a pneumatological perspective.

6. Liberation Theology on the Power of the Spirit

The pneumatology of liberation theologians further supports the conclusion that divine omnipotence is a kenotic liberating power of holy love. One again finds insistence that the Spirit is not an all-determining power. José Comblin states decisively, “The activities of the Spirit are different from the actions produced without the Spirit.”⁵⁷

Overall, the redemptive work of the Spirit can be viewed as liberating. So, for example, Barth observes that the power of the Holy Spirit liberates people for fellowship with God.⁵⁸ However, in liberation pneumatology, liberation refers especially to the liberation of humanity from economic, political, ecclesial, and other such forms of oppression.

Hendrikus Berkhof summarizes the sentiments of liberation pneumatology when he writes, “The liberating and transforming power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is at work everywhere where men are freed from the tyranny of nature, state, color, caste, class, sex, poverty, disease, and ignorance.”⁵⁹ One might add, like Boff, that sometimes the Spirit even liberates people from ecclesial oppression as the Spirit liberates “the Christian community from the authoritarianism of its hierarchs, from domination by abstract truth,

⁵⁶ Studebaker emphasizes that the Spirit has a key role in salvation, not just as the one who applies what Christ has already done (“Beyond Tongues,” 46–68).

⁵⁷ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit,” 148.

⁵⁸ Barth, *CD*, IV/2, 778.

⁵⁹ Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 102. Similarly, Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 66.

from the sterile dogmatization of dogma, [and] from the wearisome repetition of rites which empties ceremonies of meaning.”⁶⁰

Throughout the Old Testament the Spirit “inaugurated its liberative action” as the Spirit came upon judges (e.g. Judg 13:25) and kings (1 Sam 10:10) to free the Israelites from those who were oppressing them.⁶¹ Even the event of the Exodus, which is so foundational for the Jewish faith, is attributed to the power of the Spirit when God “took some of the power of the Spirit that was on” Moses and “put it on the seventy elders” who were to take their place as leaders of Israel (Num 11: 25, cf. v. 17).⁶² The Spirit and liberation also take a significant place in the Jewish Messianic expectations in the Old Testament. As Welker observes, “The messianic promises assign the name ‘Spirit of God’ to the power that both promises and realizes new community for poor and rich, strong and weak, people separated and alienated by economics, politics, racism, and sexism.”⁶³ For example, the prophet Isaiah reports that God said, “I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1, cf. vv. 3–4). In another Messianic passage the book of Isaiah says, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isa 61:1). The New Testament authors proclaim that Jesus is the fulfillment of these very prophecies and, thereby, the mission of Jesus is presented as one of liberation as empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:17–20; Luke 4:16–19).

⁶⁰ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 209. Compare Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 65

⁶¹ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit,” 147.

⁶² I owe this insight to Harold Wells.

⁶³ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 20.

Following on these liberation themes in the Scriptures, liberation theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is still active liberating individuals and communities, thereby introducing the kingdom of God into the world today. In contemporary experiences of liberation, the Spirit makes the new creation a present reality. Boff expresses this consistent theme of liberation pneumatology:

When the poor become conscious of their oppression, come together, organize their forces, throw over the taboos that held them in subjection, unmask the standards by which they were stigmatized, prophetically denounce those who kept them in chains; when, obliged to use force they did not want to, they face up to the violence of their oppressors and strip them of their privileges and unjust rank; when they are filled with creative imagination and plan utopias of the reconciled world in which all will have enough to eat and be able to profit from the bounty of nature, then we can say; the Spirit is at work there, being the catalyst in a conflictive situation. Such historical processes are pregnant with the Spirit. The same Spirit raises up charismatic leaders who sustain enthusiasm and rekindle dormant powers in everyone.⁶⁴

To summarize, the power of the Spirit is at work wherever oppressed communities are made to recognize their plight, wherever they are brought together in solidarity, and wherever they are moved toward speech, action, and an experience of life and freedom. We will consider these themes in turn.

As the power of the Spirit is active to liberate people from oppression, the Spirit causes the oppressed to recognize their plight and raise their voices in protest. As Moltmann notes, “The experience of the Spirit is the reason for the eschatological longing for the completion of salvation.”⁶⁵ In situations of oppression, this eschatological longing manifests itself more specifically in a longing for liberation. The Holy Spirit takes this longing and moves it toward a cry of protest. In the words of Comblin, “The

⁶⁴ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 208.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 73.

Holy Spirit lies at the root of the cry of the poor.”⁶⁶ Comblin observes that the Holy Spirit was the one who inspired the Old Testament prophets to give expression to the voice of the poor and therefore posits that the protests of the poor come from the Holy Spirit as well. As in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit inspires even the “unschooled” and “ordinary” people to speak boldly (Acts 4:13).⁶⁷ The power of the Spirit is active when the poor pray and proclaim utopic visions of new communities and when they begin “to face up to the authorities, demanding their rights, demanding accounts of public spending.”⁶⁸

Similar to the way theologians recognize that the Spirit builds the community of the Church, liberation theologians maintain that the Spirit also binds the oppressed community together in solidarity. Though some forms of community can be oppressive, Comblin posits, “The Spirit brings us together in freedom, without coercion, pressure or persuasion.”⁶⁹ This often happens as the Spirit raises a charismatic leader within the community. Welker observes how this is the situation throughout the book of Judges and concludes, “In situations of distress, God’s Spirit lays hold of or comes upon a specific human being. This person succeeds in restoring loyalty, solidarity, and the capacity for communal action among the people.”⁷⁰

The community in which the Spirit restores solidarity and speech is also a community that the power of the Spirit propels toward action. The Spirit does not lead

⁶⁶ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 185.

⁶⁷ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 67.

⁶⁸ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 26.

⁶⁹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 96.

⁷⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 53.

oppressed communities to only complain. Those who have previously been passive, become active. For example, in Latin America, Comblin reports that, empowered by the Spirit,

People feel themselves taken hold of by new strength that makes them do things they had never thought of doing. Individuals and communities that had been downhearted, lacking in dynamism, resigned to the endless struggle for survival, discover themselves to be the protagonists of a history far greater than themselves. . . . Now they discover that they are acting for themselves, discover that they are capable of setting and seeking goals, of achieving objectives. . . . It is the experience of re-birth. This is the experience that has to be attributed to the Spirit.⁷¹

Comblin observes that such an active state might be expected by those with political or economic power; however, these actions are carried out by those who have no such power or prestige. Instead of powers of the world, these actions of liberation are carried out by the power of the Spirit through the powerless of the world.

As the oppressed are liberated by the Spirit, those liberated experience the freedom and life that the power of the Spirit gives. Oppression and violence subside. This liberation is more than a political or economic event. The Spirit gives birth to renewed human relationships and new personalities. For example, Comblin notes that “in the Christian communities, leaders emerge who cannot be either intimidated or bought.”⁷²

Pentecostals should find it easy to agree with liberation theologians that the power of the Spirit is at work when the oppressed find speech, renewed community, action, freedom, and life. This is because Pentecostals also preach liberation themes and have a history of liberation in their own experience of the Spirit. In their preaching of Spirit Baptism, Pentecostals often refer to Joel 2:28–29 (and its quotation in Acts 2:17–18),

⁷¹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 20 and 21.

⁷² Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 24.

where the Lord promised, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” In this text there is a sense of the inclusive nature of the work of the Spirit. The Spirit would be poured out on “all people,” specifically (in this text) without regard for age, gender, or class. Furthermore, on the day of Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit drew together people “from every nation under heaven” as those who were filled with the Spirit spoke in the languages of many nations (Acts 2:5–6). This Pentecostal experience has also been the experience of contemporary Pentecostals. The experience and preaching of the Spirit has bound Pentecostals together regardless of color, race, gender, and even denomination.⁷³ This was apparent, for example, in the early history of North American Pentecostalism where (during a time when racial segregation was still legally enforced in the United States) believers from every ethnic background gathered in Pentecostal revival meetings to worship together. Such was the case at the Azusa Street revival, which was even lead by an African-American, namely William J. Seymour. From this Pentecostal liberation tradition (though it is not generally referred to as such), Amos Yong emphasizes that the Spirit empowers Jesus’ followers to forgive others; to bring deliverance, healing and restoration; to show hospitality; and to transform society.⁷⁴ These are all themes that may be labeled liberation. Similarly, from the same tradition, Terry Cross concludes,

⁷³ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 31–80. I am not suggesting that racism and other issues are not present within Pentecostalism, but only highlighting that liberation from these issues has been a significant experience within Pentecostalism.

⁷⁴ Yong, *Spirit Poured Out*, 88–91.

It is logically impossible for the love of God poured out in our lives by the Spirit to indwell us as believers and not work for justice and peace in the world. If we have been transformed by participating in the very life of God, then to the best of our human, earthly abilities and with the power of the Spirit, we will love our neighbors by transforming the structures that oppress their very humanity as well as treating them as we would treat ourselves.⁷⁵

Those who can affirm these Pentecostal liberation themes should also be able to affirm with liberation theologians, such as Comblin, that the experience of liberation is an “experience of the power of the Spirit.”⁷⁶

Overall, the variety of perspectives coming from liberation pneumatology point to the fact that the power of God is a liberating power. The power of the Spirit is a power that brings freedom—“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). Today, the Spirit’s power is at work where communities are made to recognize their plight, moved toward speech and action, and experience life and liberation. If the Holy Spirit works to liberate people, the Spirit must be liberating people from something that was not caused by God. “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:25). Therefore, it must be the case that God’s power is at work in the Spirit to liberate people, not to set them in bondage.

Liberation pneumatology provides further support for some of the pneumatological perspectives that have been presented above. Namely, liberation pneumatology also presents the Spirit’s omnipotence as a kenotic power and, in support of this point, liberation pneumatology highlights a need to discern where the power of the Spirit is active. First, within liberation pneumatology one finds a latent affirmation that the power of the Spirit is a kenotic power. The Spirit does not work with a forceful zap

⁷⁵ Cross, “The Holy Spirit,” 103.

⁷⁶ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 26.

from heaven that magically liberates people. As Welker notes, “The deliverance does not happen all at once. It does not happen in an unambiguously miraculous way. . . .

Nowhere is it said that the Spirit brings deliverance in an immediate, magical way.”⁷⁷

Rather, the Spirit kenotically makes room for human power and works with human agency to bring about liberation. Along the same lines, Boff writes that the Spirit’s

“action flows into human actions, giving them power and making them truly creative.”⁷⁸

In doing this the Spirit limits himself to the conditions of creaturely finitude. The result,

Welker observes, is that “God’s Spirit unleashes unexpected forces and produces

improbable results.”⁷⁹ In other words, persons upon whom the power of the Spirit is

active do not become ideal figures without flaws. Rather, such persons can still act

contrary to what one would expect the Spirit is leading them to do. So for example, even

though “the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon,” he remains doubtful (Judg 6:34–40) and

he even ends up making an idol that the Israelites worshipped (Judg 8:27). In such

situations one finds that the Spirit exercises his power kenotically, allowing humanity

room to exercise its own power, even if that is detrimental.

The kenotic omnipotence of the Spirit is also apparent in the call (coming from

liberation pneumatology) to discern the Spirit. Though it is not always expressed, at the

very heart of liberation pneumatology is a call for a discernment of the Spirit. Comblin

argues, “The signs of the action of the Spirit in the world are clear: the Spirit is present

wherever the poor are awakening to action, to freedom, to speaking out, to community, to

⁷⁷ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 53 and 56. Similarly, Comblin, “The Holy Spirit,” 146.

⁷⁸ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 208.

⁷⁹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 55.

life.”⁸⁰ By contrast, Welker proposes, “The demonic power that paralyzes and disintegrates individual persons and their surroundings is directly opposed to the life-creating Spirit of God.”⁸¹ Beyond this basic principle for discerning the Spirit, liberation theologians also acknowledge that there is a need to discern where the Spirit is active even within experiences of liberation (or, at least, experiences that appear to be experiences of liberation). That is, liberation theologians do not accept that every experience of ‘freedom’ results from the power of the Spirit. Expressing this, Welker cautions,

Not every human *experience of liberation and freedom* is necessarily an experience of God’s Spirit. Forces that are spiritless, disintegrative, and are detrimental to life, indeed even forces that are demonic powers, can also generate the illusion of freedom and can elicit misleading experiences, experiences of supposed freedom.⁸²

So, for example, Comblin questions whether or not powers that lead to experiences of ‘freedom’ that are associated with individualism can be attributed to the Spirit. In such situations, individualism generally leads to competition in which, once again, the strong begin to crush the weak.⁸³ Since not every experience that might appear to be liberating can be attributed to the power of the Spirit, and if the Spirit’s power here, once again, needs to be discerned, then, by implication, the Spirit’s power must not be understood as an all-determining power that causes all things, as much of classical theism supposes. Rather, the omnipotence of the Spirit is a kenotic and liberating power.

⁸⁰ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 185

⁸¹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 200–1.

⁸² Welker, *God the Spirit*, 336 (original emphasis). Welker explicitly affirms the need to discern the Spirit in *God the Spirit*, 55, 309 and 337.

⁸³ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 65–6.

7. An Idealistic Pneumatology?

The conclusion of this chapter is that pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of omnipotence display that the power of God is a kenotic power of liberating and holy love. One might wonder if this conclusion is too absolute. Perhaps it is idealistic and not realistic. Michael Welker wrestles with the diversity present in the biblical traditions regarding the Spirit and remarks that the diversity can only be reconciled with great difficulty. A ‘realistic’ theology, he suggests, recognizes both the continuity and discontinuity in the biblical traditions.⁸⁴ In contrast to Welker’s observations, perhaps the above pneumatological perspectives idealistically present the Spirit as only doing ‘nice things’ and miss some alternative perspectives. Perhaps I have missed what Mark Wallace refers to as “‘the dark side’ of the Spirit.”⁸⁵ He claims that the biblical traditions portray the Spirit “as capricious and judgmental” and warns that “a biblically-informed pneumatology must guard against an overly positive and one-sided view of the Spirit’s ministry of renewal and reconciliation.”⁸⁶ In support of his claims, Wallace suggests that in the book of Judges “the Spirit is presented as a vengeful power who inspires Israel’s wars against its aggressors.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, “in Acts the Spirit is similarly portrayed,” Wallace supposes, “as a terrifying judge who condemns to death two renegade disciples,

⁸⁴ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 46–7, cf. x.

⁸⁵ Wallace, “The Green Face of God,” 462, n. 17. Similarly, Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 3.

⁸⁶ Wallace, “The Green Face of God,” 462, n. 17.

⁸⁷ Wallace, “The Green Face of God,” 462, n. 17. Similarly, Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 201–2. In contrast to Wallace, Welker does not attribute violence directly to the power of the Spirit. Rather, Welker observes, “There is no place where the Spirit of God immediately or directly causes a military conflict” (*God the Spirit*, 56), and he suggests that violence results only because “the Spirit acts under the conditions of what is creaturely and finite” (55).

Ananias and Sapphira, for their lying and disobedience” (Acts 5:1–10).⁸⁸ Wallace is right to observe that not every experience of the Spirit is positive. Even believers experience the Spirit in ways that are not always comforting. For example, the Spirit convicts people of their sin, which involves a peril to humanity because the holiness of the Spirit condemns and annihilates sin.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Wallace overstates the issue when he suggests that the Spirit has a “dark side.” Rather, the conviction and judgment of the Spirit is directed at the overall aim of redemption and the kingdom of God. For example, the conviction of sin is part of and aims at the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Furthermore, while the Spirit came upon the various judges in early Hebrew history, it was always for the purpose of liberating oppressed people, and when the oppressed are liberated, the oppressors are also liberated from their oppressing. In addition, when God punishes nations throughout the Old Testament, one purpose of the punishment (besides liberating the oppressed) is found in the common statement, “Then they will know that I am the Lord their God” (Ezek 28:26). With respect to the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, Wallace incorrectly supposes that the Spirit essentially kills them when he writes that “the text points to the Spirit’s violent complicity with the apostles in bringing about the sudden death of the couple.”⁹⁰ In actuality, the text does not state that the Spirit plays a role in their deaths, but only that they have lied to and tested the Spirit (Acts 5:3, 9). In contrast to Wallace’s conclusion, it would be better to conclude that Ananias and Sapphira died because of the withdrawal and absence of the power of the Spirit who

⁸⁸ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 3 (cf. 203–4) and again in Wallace, “The Green Face of God,” 462, n. 17.

⁸⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 363–4.

⁹⁰ Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, 203.

“gives life” (John 6:63, Rom 8:2, cf. Ps 104:29–30). This is, then, not at an act of violence in any usual sense of the term. Even if one did concede that the Spirit had a ‘dark side,’ one must also realize that this supposed ‘dark side’ is clearly not characteristic of the overall activity of the power of the Spirit. Indeed, in spite of Wallace’s (and Welker’s) concerns, it is appropriate to conclude that the omnipotence of the Spirit is a kenotic and holy power of liberating love.

8. Conclusion

This chapter has presented pneumatological perspectives for the doctrine of divine omnipotence. This chapter began by observing how there is a close conceptual connection between the Holy Spirit and the power of God throughout Scripture and Christian theology. The Spirit is not a power, he is a divine person, but the Spirit is powerful. In fact, the Spirit is so powerful that the Spirit can exercise his power unilaterally. The Reformed emphasis on the priority of the power of the Spirit in the salvific experience of rebirth, the Pentecostal emphasis on the miraculous power of the Spirit, and the Spirit’s power as expressed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ all highlight the ability of the Spirit to act unilaterally. This illustrates the omnipotence of the Spirit. Nevertheless, a unilateral use of power is not characteristic of the Spirit (and therefore for the triune God in general); the Spirit’s power is not an all-determining reality. Rather, God exercises his power through the person of the Spirit in a kenotic manner, allowing his creatures to resist him. Pentecostal theologies of speaking in tongues—the Spirit does not force this—and of discerning the Spirit—the Spirit’s power is not the cause of all things—further support the kenotic view of the Spirit’s power. On a broad scale,

pneumatology supports the view that the omnipotence of God is a kenotic liberating power of holy love. This is the impulse of the power of the Spirit. Liberation pneumatology further supports the kenotic view of the Spirit's power, which needs to be discerned, as liberation theology proposes that the Spirit is not behind every power. Rather, the Spirit is a liberating power that helps the oppressed recognize their situation, and brings them together in solidarity, toward speech, action, and the experience of life and freedom. Lastly, this chapter observed how Wallace correctly cautions one from thinking that every experience of the Spirit's power is (subjectively) a positive one. Even so, one can still conclude that pneumatology presents divine omnipotence as a kenotic, liberating, and holy power of love.

Pneumatological perspectives regarding the doctrine of divine omnipotence emphasize divine immanence more so than divine transcendence, which is emphasized in classical theism, in the sense that the former expands on the meaning of omnipotence in light of how the Spirit exercises his power in relation to creation, rather than viewing omnipotence as a general abstract concept of power. The Spirit is certainly transcendent in the sense that the Spirit has unlimited power. However, focusing on the Spirit in the economy of salvation displays how the Spirit is immanent to creation with a kenotic power of liberating and holy love. In this reciprocal theology of divine power, the Spirit acts as partner in a dance, not as a transcendent primary cause of events for which creaturely agents are only secondary causes (as many classical theists suppose). Sometimes God's creatures do not join the dance, but it is not characteristic of the Spirit to force us to. In sum, pneumatological perspectives regarding the doctrine of divine omnipotence emphasize the immanence of God more so than classical theism.

CHAPTER 8

A PNEUMATOLOGICAL VISION OF GOD

1. The Pneumatological Vision

This book has presented what might be called a pneumatological vision of God. Although it has focused on discussing the work of the Holy Spirit, it has been, at the same time, a discussion of the doctrine of God. As Elizabeth Johnson correctly acknowledges, “whatever is said about the Spirit is in fact language about the mystery of God.”¹ Although not quite a summary of the chapters in this book (for that see the introduction), this chapter brings together the pneumatological vision of God promoted throughout the previous chapters. It also responds to a couple of final possible concerns and suggests areas for further research.

The Christian tradition has consistently affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit. And yet, from classical theism through to contemporary critiques of classical theism in process and evangelical theology, the Christian tradition has done little to develop a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God, although some trinitarian theologians have made great strides in this regard. In this respect, there is still warrant to describe the Holy Spirit as the Forgotten God. By bringing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit into conversation with classical theism, this book has proposed pneumatological revisions to

¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 146.

the doctrines of impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence. In contrast to classical conclusions regarding these doctrines, the Holy Spirit suffers, changes his presence, and kenotically shares his power.

The Holy Spirit is the touch of God. Hence, integrating pneumatology into the doctrine of God produces an increased emphasis on the immanence of God. In fact, in some instances, attributes that have traditionally been understood as transcendent attributes of God, are presented from the perspective of pneumatology as immanent attributes of God. Classical theism holds that God's emotions do not change and that, of greatest significance in this discussion, God does not suffer. The doctrine of impassibility emphasizes divine transcendence—God's passion is not affected by anything in creation. In contrast, with respect to this doctrine pneumatology emphasizes divine immanence. From the perspective of pneumatology, God is immanent as he enters into relationship with creation, suffering as the Spirit grieves, groans in prayer, gives 'birth' to people, and with the suffering of creation. This is an active suffering, for the sake of sustaining and redeeming creation.

When one draws pneumatological perspectives into the doctrine of divine immutability, one again emphasizes the immanence of God more so than classical theism. Classical theism typically teaches that God is absolutely immutable. In this affirmation, classical theism emphasizes God's transcendence—God is beyond the possibility of changing, either from an external cause, or by his own choosing. In contrast, pneumatological revisions for the doctrine of immutability emphasize the immanence of God. God, by the Spirit, changes how he is present throughout his creation. Furthermore, God changes in that the Spirit intensifies his presence in different places. Just as Jesus

Christ was an intensification of the presence of God in creation and presented a change for God, the intensification of the presence of the Spirit too presents a change for God. The Spirit does not change in every way however. For example, the Spirit is the faithful (immutable, constant) Paraclete and the perfecter of creation, bringing forth the kingdom of God.

Pneumatological revisions for the doctrine of omnipotence also recover an emphasis on divine immanence. In classical theism, God's transcendent omnipotence is understood primarily as an abstract power to do anything that is not illogical. Furthermore, a sizeable contingent within the classical tradition holds to a unilateral view of divine omnipotence, which maintains that God is the cause of all things as he determines all things. In contrast to classical theism, pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of divine omnipotence focus on God's immanent relation to creation when it defines the nature of divine power. The power of God expressed in the person of the Holy Spirit is a kenotic power that allows creatures to resist the power of God. It is a holy power of love that overcomes the effects of sin and draws people into fellowship with God. The Spirit's power is also a liberating power that sets the oppressed free.

From this pneumatological vision I conclude that "the Spirit is not a pit stop along the trinitarian highway," but is integral to the Christian doctrine of God.² Indeed, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God recovers an emphasis on divine immanence, which has been marginalized by classical theism's imbalance toward divine transcendence. The conclusions that I have presented regarding the doctrines of divine immutability, impassability, and omnipotence are consistent with and build upon

² McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God*, 112.

contemporary critiques that evangelical and trinitarian theologians frequently make of classical theism.

Once again I want to affirm that the Spirit is both transcendent and immanent. The question should never be, is God transcendent? Rather, the question is always, which view of transcendence is correct?³ Yves Congar rightly contends, “Transcendence and immanence go together. . . . The truth and the grace of the Holy Spirit unites both aspects.”⁴ As the introduction observed, one must affirm both the immanent transcendence of the Spirit as well as the transcendent immanence of the Spirit.⁵ Classical theism also affirms that God is both transcendent and immanent. The difficulty is finding the correct balance of emphasis, which is affected by how one understands transcendence and immanence. One wants to describe God in such a way that divine immanence and transcendence are accurate to the actual nature of God, rather than a preconceived notion of what the ‘balance’ of transcendence and immanence might look like. Giving priority to divine transcendence for fear of slipping into liberalism would not help a person. As Carl Henry observes, a “distorted emphasis on transcendence . . . is just as faulty as a radical divine immanence that erodes the distinction between the infinite and the finite.”⁶ In critiquing classical theism for unduly privileging divine transcendence, this book has sought to move Christian theology toward the appropriate balance of emphasis between divine transcendence and immanence. Since these pneumatological perspectives are one aspect of trinitarian theology, I agree with evangelical theologian Allan Coppedge who

³ Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, 6, fn. 18.

⁴ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:139.

⁵ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 31 and 47 and Johnson, *She Who Is*, 147.

⁶ Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6:36.

argues that trinitarian theism expresses the correct understanding of God's transcendence and immanence.⁷

This book has discussed the attributes of God. However, one must remember that the primary concern of this doctrine is not (or at least it should not be) with the attributes themselves, but with God himself.⁸ Hence, with this pneumatological vision of God, we can say that we have seen a glimpse of the glory of the Lord. Karl Barth described the glory of God as the sum of all of the divine perfections, or divine attributes. Divine glory is the beauty and attraction of God that shines forth as God reveals himself.⁹ Since the glory of God is the manifestation of God who is, it is natural to find the glory of God expressed in the attributes of God. Here we have had a pneumatological vision of the glory of God as we have gazed upon "the Spirit of glory" (1 Pet 4:14).

2. Potential Areas for Further Research

While the pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of the divine attributes that I have presented move toward revising classical theism, there is still work to be done. I have considered the attributes of impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence because they were particularly pertinent to my thesis. The fruitfulness of the pneumatological approach with respect to these attributes suggests that the pneumatological approach will bear fruit in other areas. Hence, the most obvious potential area for further research is to

⁷ Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 211. He writes, "trinitarian theism balances God's transcendence and immanence," however, the issue is more so a correct understanding of transcendence and immanence than the appropriate 'balance' between transcendence and immanence.

⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 326.

⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/1, 641, 643, and 650. On the Holy Spirit and divine glory see Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 180–1.

carry out this pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes with respect to more of the divine attributes.

I have supported the thesis of this book primarily with dogmatic, doctrinal, and biblical arguments. However, my conclusions raise philosophical questions that might be pursued elsewhere. Some people dismiss classical theism as the “God of the philosophers,” a title that presupposes that philosophical influence on the doctrine of God is inherently negative. However, John Cooper wisely cautions, “any suggestion that the modern alternatives to classical theism are free of philosophy is entirely false and misleading.”¹⁰ And so, I am led to ask, what philosophical presuppositions support the pneumatological vision of God? Is it necessary to abandon a metaphysics of substance to affirm the proposals I have made? One might suppose that the relational ontology of process philosophy would support my pneumatological conclusions concerning the divine attributes, but my conclusions are at odds with some of the proposals of process theology. The question then remains open regarding what philosophy might support my pneumatological vision.

Finally, a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes needs to be further integrated in a fully trinitarian doctrine of the divine attributes. Concerning an early attempt I made to present a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of God, Christopher Stephenson remarks, “It is not clear that Gabriel’s own attempt is thoroughly trinitarian, resting at times more on an assumed connection between pneumatology and Trinity than on sustained argumentation for such a construction.”¹¹ On the one hand,

¹⁰ Cooper, *Panentheism*, 17.

¹¹ Stephenson, “Review of *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism*,” 2.

given the long history of the doctrine of the Trinity, which affirms the divinity of the person of the Holy Spirit, it seems fair to assume the connection between pneumatology and Trinity. On the other hand, I hope that chapter four's trinitarian arguments in support of developing a pneumatological approach to the doctrine of the divine attributes will have addressed these concerns. Beyond this, however, I do agree with Stephenson that pneumatological revisions to the doctrine of the divine attributes are not thoroughly trinitarian in the sense (and only in this sense) that this is only one contribution to a fully trinitarian doctrine of God—pneumatological insights alone are not sufficient for a doctrine to be thoroughly trinitarian, but they are necessary. Overall, this book has illustrated that integrating pneumatology into the doctrine of the divine attributes facilitates a retrieval of divine immanence from the margins it occupied in classical theism as pneumatological perspectives on the doctrine of God have led to revisions of the doctrines of divine impassibility, immutability, and omnipotence. These insights need to be integrated into a complete trinitarian doctrine of God.

In the year 2000 Clark Pinnock challenged Pentecostals: “It is time for Pentecostals to realize that they have a distinctive doctrine of God implicit in their faith and that they need to make it explicit—not just for purely academic purposes but for revival too, because Christianity is only as dynamic as its understanding of God.”¹² My hope is that this book has made a step in this direction and that it will contribute in some small way to revival in the Church.

¹² Pinnock, “Divine Relationality,” 6. Conversely, Comblin notes a connection between the absence of a theology of the Holy Spirit and the triumph of atheism (*The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 8 and 40).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ables, Travis. "The Grammar of Pneumatology in Barth and Rahner: A Reconsideration." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11.2 (2009) 208–24.
- Albrecht, Daniel E. "An Anatomy of Worship: A Pentecostal Analysis." In *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Russell P. Spittler*, edited by Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, 70–82. London: T & T Clark International, 2004.
- Althouse, Peter. "Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit for a Creational Eschatology: A Pentecostal Engagement with Jürgen Moltmann." In *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, edited by Amos Yong, 155–72. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009.
- Andersen, Svend, ed. *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*. Acta Jutlandica 70:1; Theology Series, 18. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994.
- Anderson, Allan. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- _____. "When Is a Pentecostal Not a Pentecostal? When She's a Charismatic! Responding to Irvin, López Rodríguez and Waldrop." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16.1 (2007) 58–63.
- Anselm. *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*. Translated by Sidney Norton Deane. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.
- _____. *Summa Theologiae*. New York, NY: Blackfriars, 1964–1976.
- Archer, Kenneth J. "Open Theism View: 'Prayer Changes Things.'" *Pneuma Review* 5 (2002) 32–53.
- Athanasius. *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Translated by C. R. B. Shapland. London: Epworth Press, 1951.

Augustine. *The Trinity*. Translated by Edmund Hill. New York, NY: New City Press, 1991.

Badcock, Gary D. *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. in 13 parts. Translation edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957–1975.

_____. *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938.

_____. “Nachwort.” In *Schleiermacher-Auswahl*, edited by Heinz Bolli, 290–312. Munich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1968.

_____. *The Theology of Schleiermacher*. Edited by Dietrich Ritschl. Translated by George Hunsinger. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.

Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit*. Translated by David Anderson. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980.

Basinger, David. “Practical Implications.” In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 155–76. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.

Bauckham, Richard. *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1987.

_____. *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995.

Bergmann, Sigurd. *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*. Translated by Douglas Stott. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Berkhof, Hendrikus. *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: The Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectures, 1963–1964*. Richmond, VI: John Knox, 1964.

Blaser, Klauspeter. “Étude critique: La pneumatologie de Jürgen Moltmann.” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 132 (2000): 259–67.

Bloesch, Donald G. *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love*. Christian Foundations. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.

_____. *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts*. Christian Foundations. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

Bonting, Sjoerd L. “Spirit and Creation.” *Zygon* 41.3 (2006) 713–26.

Boff, Leonardo. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Translated by Phillip Berryman. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997.

_____. *Trinity and Society*. Translated by Paul Burns. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988.

Bowne, Borden P. *The Immanence of God*. Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1905.

Boyd, Gregory. *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000.

_____. "The Open-Theism View." In *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, edited by James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 13–47. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.

Braaten, Carl E. "A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross." *Journal of Religion* 56.1 (1976) 113–21.

Bracken, Joseph A. "Creatio ex nihilo: A Field-oriented Approach" *Dialog* 44.3 (2005) 246–9.

_____. "Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology—I" *Process Studies* 8.4 (1978) 217–30.

_____. *Society and Spirit*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1991.

_____. *The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process and Community*. College Theology Society Studies in Religion, 1. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985.

Brand, Chad Owen. "Genetic Defects or Accidental Similarities? Orthodoxy and Open Theism and Their Connections to Western Philosophical Traditions." In *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, edited by John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth, 43–73. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.

Bray, Gerald L. *The Doctrine of God*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993.

_____. "Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted by Greek Philosophy?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 105–17. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Brock, Sebastian P. *The Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*. The Syrian Churches Series, 9. Enlarged 2nd ed. Pune, India: Anita Printers, 1998.

- Bruner, Frederick Dale, and William E. Hordern. *The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984.
- Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Comforter*. Translated by Boris Jakim. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Bundy, David. "The Genre of Systematic Theology in Pentecostalism." *Pneuma* 15 (1993) 89–107.
- Burns, J. Patout, and Gerald M. Fagin. *The Holy Spirit*. Message of the Church Fathers, 3. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984.
- Busch, Eberhard. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976.
- Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Callen, Barry L. *Discerning the Divine: God in Christian Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960.
- Carson, D. A. "How Can we Reconcile the Love of God and the Transcendent Sovereignty of God?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 279–312. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Chenu, M.-D. *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*. Translated by Paul Philibert. Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2002.
- Chryssavgis, John. "The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology." In *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred*, edited by Barry McDonald, 253–66. Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003.
- Clayton, Philip. "Panentheism Today: A Constructive Systematic Evaluation." In *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 249–64. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Clayton, Philip, and Arthur Peacocke, ed. *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

- Coakley, Sarah. "Review of *After the Spirit*." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.2 (2007) 429–32.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. *The Process Perspective: Frequently Asked Questions about Process Theology*. Edited by Jeanyne B. Slettom. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2003.
- _____. "The Relativization of the Trinity," in *Trinity and Process: A Relational Theology of God*, edited by Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, 1–22. New York: Continuum, 1997.
- Cobb, John B., Jr., and David Ray Griffin. *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1976.
- Coffey, David M. *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*. Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979.
- _____. "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit." *Theological Studies* 47 (1986) 227–50.
- Cole, Graham A. *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Comblin, José. *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*. Translated by Paul Burns. Theology and Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989.
- _____. "The Holy Spirit." In *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, edited by Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, 146–64. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996.
- Congar, Yves M. J. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. 3 vols. Translated by David Smith. New York, NY: Seabury, 1983.
- Cooper, John W. *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Copleston, Frederick. *Thomas Aquinas*. London: Search, 1955.
- Coppedge, Allan. *The God Who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007.
- Craig, William Lane. "Timelessness and Omnitemporality." In *God and Time: Four Views*, edited by Gregory E. Ganssle, 129–60. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- _____. "What Does God Know?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 137–56. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

- Cross, Terry L. "A Critical Review of Clark Pinnock's *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 6 (1998) 3–29.
- _____. "The Holy Spirit." In *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, edited by Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, 93–108. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- _____. "The Rich Feast of Theology: Can Pentecostals Bring the Main Course or Only the Relish?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000) 27–47.
- _____. "Toward a Theology of the Word and the Spirit: A Review of J. Rodman Williams's *Renewal Theology*." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 3 (1993) 113–35.
- Dabney, D. Lyle. "The Nature of the Spirit: Creation as the Premonition of God." In *Starting with the Spirit*, edited by Gordon Preece and Stephen Pickard, 83–110. Task of Theology Today, 2. Hindmarsh, Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2001.
- _____. "Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit: A First Theology for a Twenty-First Century." In *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, edited by Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, and Thomas Kucharz, 154–62. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
- _____. "*Pneumatologia Crucis: Reclaiming Theologia Crucis for a Theology of the Spirit Today*." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 53.4 (2000) 511–24.
- _____. "Why Should the Last Be First? The Priority of Pneumatology in Recent Theological Discussion." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 240–61. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Dalferth, Ingolf U. "The Historical Roots of Theism." In *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*, edited by Svend Andersen, 15–43. Acta Jutlandica 70:1; Theology Series, 18. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994.
- Davies, Brian. *Aquinas*. Outstanding Christian Thinkers. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Davis, Stephen T. *Logic and the Nature of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. *Eco-Theology*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2008.

- Del Colle, Ralph. "A Response to Jürgen Moltmann and David Coffey." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 337–44. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Dorrien, Gary J. *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Dreyer, Elizabeth A. "An Advent of the Spirit: Medieval Mystics and Saints." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 123–62. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Dvorak, Rainer. *Gott ist Liebe: Eine Studie zur Grundlegung der Trinitätslehre bei Eberhard Jüngel*. Bonner dogmatische Studien, 31. Würzburg: Echter, 1999.
- Eckardt, Burnell F., Jr. "Luther and Moltmann: The Theology of the Cross." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 49 (1985) 19–28.
- Edwards, Denis. *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.
- _____. "A Relational and Evolving Universe Unfolding within the Dynamism of the Divine Communion." In *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 199–210. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Ellington, Scott A. "Who Shall Lead Them Out? An Exploration of God's Openness in Exodus 32.7–14." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2005) 41–60.
- Elmore, Floyd S. "An Evangelical Analysis of Process Pneumatology." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 14 (1988) 15–29.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998.
- _____. *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.
- _____. *God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
- _____. *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

- Evdokimov, Paul. *l'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe*. Bibliothèque Oecuménique, 10. Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1969.
- Farley, Edward. *The Transcendence of God: A Study in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1958.
- Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Feinberg, John S. *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Holy Spirit*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Feske, Millicent C. "Christ and Suffering in Moltmann's Thought." *Asbury Theological Journal* 55.1 (2000) 85–104.
- Franke, John R. *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of God. A Theology of Lordship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002.
- _____. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God. A Theology of Lordship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987.
- _____. *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001.
- Frankenberry, Nancy. "Classical Theism, Panentheism, and Pantheism: On the Relation Between God Construction and Gender Construction." *Zygon* 28.1 (1993) 29–46.
- Gabriel, Andrew K. "Beyond the Cross: Moltmann's Crucified God, Rahner's Rule, and Pneumatological Implications for a Trinitarian Doctrine of God." *Didaskalia* 19.1 (2008) 93–111.
- _____. "Pauline Pneumatology and the Question of Trinitarian Presuppositions." In *Paul and His Theology*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, 347–62. Pauline Studies, 3. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- _____. "Pneumatological Perspectives for a Theology of Nature: The Holy Spirit in Relation to Ecology and Technology." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15.2 (2007) 195–212.

- _____. "This Spirit is God: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes." In *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent*, edited by Steven M. Studebaker, 69–98. McMaster Theological Studies Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008.
- Ganssle, Gregory E. "Introduction: Thinking about God and Time." In *God and Time: Four Views*, edited by Gregory E. Ganssle, 9–27. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Garrett, James Leo, Jr. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Gavrilyuk, Paul L. *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gaybba, Brian P. *The Spirit of Love: Theology of the Holy Spirit*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Creating God in the Image of Man?* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997.
- Geisler, Norman L., and H. Wayne House. *The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2001.
- Geivett, R. Douglas. "How Do We Reconcile the Existence of God and Suffering?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 157–86. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Three Varieties of Panentheism." In *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 19–35. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Gregory of Nanzianzus. "Oration 38: On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 7. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 345–51. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.
- _____. "Oration 31: On the Holy Spirit." In *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzen*. Translated by Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams, 279–99. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 13. Leiden: Brill, 1991. Reprinted in Gregory of Nanzianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002. Citations marked "NPNF translation" are found in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 7. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 318–28. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.

- Gregory of Nyssa. "On the Holy Spirit: Against the Followers of Macedonius." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 315–25. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.
- _____. "On 'Not Three Gods': To Ablabius." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 5. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 331–6. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theology*. The Matrix of Christian Theology. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- _____. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004.
- _____. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. The Matrix of Christian Theology. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- _____. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Griffin, David Ray. *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1976.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Gunton, Colin E. *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- _____. "The Being and Attributes of God: Eberhard Jüngel's Dispute with the Classical Philosophical Tradition." In *The Possibilities of Theology: Studies in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his Sixtieth Year*, edited by John Webster, 7–22. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994.
- _____. *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

- _____. "The Holy Spirit who with the Father and the Son together is Worshipped and Glorified." In *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*, 75–90. London: T & T Clark, 2003.
- _____. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991.
- _____. "The Spirit Moved over the Face of the Waters: The Holy Spirit and the Created Order." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4.2 (2002) 190–204. Reprinted in *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*, 107–26. London: T & T Clark, 2003.
- Gutenson, Charles E. "Does God Change?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 231–52. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Guthrie, Shirley C., Jr. "The Nearness and Distance of God." In *Transcendence and Mystery*, edited by Earl D. C. Brewer, 32–45. New York, NY: IDOC, 1975.
- Hall, Christopher A., and John Sanders. *Does God Have a Future? A Debate on Divine Providence*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Harnack, Adolph. *History of Dogma: Volume 2*. Translated by Neil Buchanan. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1901.
- Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God*. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.
- _____. *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1984.
- Hartshorne, Charles, and William L. Reese, ed. *Philosophers Speak of God*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Hasker, William. "A Philosophical Perspective." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 126–54. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.
- Helm, Paul. "Is God Bound by Time?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 119–35. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Hendry, George S. *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *God, Revelation, and Authority: Volume IV: God Who Stands and Stays: Part Two*. Waco, TX: Word, 1983.

- Heron, Alasdair I. C. *The Holy Spirit*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983.
- Highfield, Ron. *Great is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Hilary of Poitiers. "On the Trinity." In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 9. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 40–233. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Hinze, Bradford E., and D. Lyle Dabney. "Introduction." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 1–34. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949 (originally published 1871–1873).
- Hollenweger, Walter. "Creator Spiritus: The Challenge of Pentecostal Experience to Pentecostal Theology." *Theology* 81 (1978) 32–40.
- Holmes, Christopher R. J. "Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke: Recent Contributions toward a Trinitarian Doctrine of God's Attributes." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 22.2 (Fall 2006) 159–80.
- _____. "God's Attributes as God's Clarities: Wolf Krötke's Doctrine of the Divine Attributes." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10.1 (2008): 54–72.
- _____. *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes in Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke*. Issues in Systematic Theology, 15. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007.
- House, H. Wayne. *Charts on Open Theism and Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003.
- Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 314–460. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.
- Jansen, Henry. *Relationality and the Concept of God*. Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs, and Cultures, 10. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1995.
- Jenson, Robert W. "The Holy Spirit." In *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2. Edited by Robert W. Jenson and Carl E. Braaten, 100–78. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984.
- _____. *Systematic Theology*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 2001.

- _____. *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982.
- _____. "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went." *Pro Ecclesia* 2.3 (1993) 296–304.
- John of Damascus. "The Orthodox Faith." In *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, 165–406. Translated by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. The Fathers of the Church, 37. New York, NY: Fathers of the Church, 1958.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Quest for the Living God: Mapping New Frontiers in the Theology of God*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2007.
- _____. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992.
- _____. *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*. New York, NY: Paulist, 1993.
- Johnson, Eric L., and Douglas S. Huffman. "Should the God of Historic Christianity Be Replaced?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 11–41. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Jowers, Dennis W. "The Theology of the Cross as Theology of the Trinity: A Critique of Jürgen Moltmann's Staurocentric Trinitarianism." *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.2 (2001) 245–66.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*. Translated by Darrell L. Guder. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.
- _____. *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Translated by John Webster. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- _____. "Theses on the Relation of the Existence, Essence and Attributes of God." Translated by Philip G. Ziegler. *Toronto Journal of Theology* 17.1 (2001) 55–74.
- Kaiser, Christopher B. *The Doctrine of God: A Historical Survey*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction: A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.
- _____. *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission*. Edited by Amos Yong. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002.

- _____. "Towards a Theology and Ecclesiology of the Spirit: Marquette University's 1998 Symposium, 'An Advent of the Spirit: Orientations in Pneumatology.'" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (1999) 65–80.
- _____. *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. London: SCM Press, 1984.
- Kaufman, Gordon. *An Essay on Theological Method*. 3rd ed. Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995.
- _____. *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.
- Keating, James F., and Thomas Joseph White. "Introduction: Divine Impassibility in Contemporary Theology." In *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, edited by James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, 1–26. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Knight, Henry H., III. *A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Post-modern World*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997.
- Knowles, Michael P. *Tell Me Your Name: Celebrating the Character of God*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Krötke, Wolf. *Gottes Klarheiten: Eine Neuinterpretation der Gottes 'Eigenschaften'*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2001.
- _____. *Im Blickpunkt: Der geschichtliche Gott*. Edited by J. Adler, et al. Theologische Informationen für Nichttheologen. Berlin: EVA Verlag, 1978.
- _____. "'Kann ich von Jesus reden, wenn ich Gott meine?'" *Die Christenlehre*." *Zeitschrift für den katechetischen Dienst* 26 (1973) 67–71.
- _____. "Die Wirklichkeit Gottes in Jesus Christus." In *Die Universalität des offenbaren Gottes: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 26–37. Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie, 94. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1985.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Translated by Henri de Vries. New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900.
- LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. "Current Trends in Trinitarian Theology." *Religious Studies Review* 13 (1987) 141–47.

_____. *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York, NY: Harper SanFrancisco, 1991.

_____. "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond." *Theological Studies* 46 (1985) 647–63.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, and Kilian McDonnell. "Returning from 'The Far Country': Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988) 191–215.

Larsen, Timothy. "Defining and Locating Evangelicalism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, edited by Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, 1–14. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Lee, Edgar R. "The 'Openness of God' From a Pentecostal Perspective." *Enrichment Journal* 7 (2002) 134–37. Online: http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200204/200204_134_openness_of_god.cfm.

Lee, Patrick. "Does God have Emotions?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 211–30. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Leupp, Roderick T. *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

Lewis, Gordon R., and Bruce A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology: Historical, Biblical, Systematic, Apologetic, Practical*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987–1994.

Linahan, Jane E. "The Grieving Spirit: The Holy Spirit as Bearer of the Suffering of the World in Moltmann's Pneumatology." In *The Spirit in the Church and the World*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze. The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 49. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.

Lindsey, F. Duane. "An Evangelical Overview of Process Theology." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 134 (1977) 15–32.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1957.

Macchia, Frank D. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

_____. "Groans too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1.2 (1998) 149–73.

_____. "Sighs too Deep for Words: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia." *Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1 (1992) 47–73.

_____. "Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience." *Pneuma* 15.1 (1993) 61–76.

Marshall, Bruce D. *Trinity and Truth*. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Marshall, Molly T. *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2003.

_____. "Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitarian Pneumatology." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30.2 (2003) 139–50.

Mascall, E. L. *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943.

McClendon, James William, Jr. *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume II*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994.

McDermott, Timothy. "What the *Summa* is About." In *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, edited by Timothy McDermott, xvii–lviii. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1989.

McDonnell, Kilian. *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003.

_____. "A Response to Bernd Jochen Hilberath." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 293–99. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.

_____. "A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?" *Theological Studies* 46 (1985) 191–227.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.

_____. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

- McWilliams, Warren. *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985.
- Meckenstock, Günter. "Some Remarks on Pantheism and Panentheism." In *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*, edited by Svend Andersen, 117–29. Acta Jutlandica 70:1; Theology Series, 18. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994.
- Medina, Néstor. "Jürgen Moltmann and Pentecostalism(s): Toward a Cultural Theology of the Spirit." *Toronto Journal of Theology*, Supplement 1 (2008) 101–13.
- Mellert, Robert B. *What is Process Theology?* New York, NY: Paulist, 1975.
- Menzies, William P., and Robert P. Menzies. *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.
- Metzger, Paul Louis. "What Difference Does the Trinity Make?" In *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, edited by Paul Louis Metzger, 5–8. New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2005.
- Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Min, Anselm K. *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter between Aquinas and Recent Theologies*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- Molnar, Paul D. *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology*. London: T & T Clark, 2002.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM, 1977.
- _____. "Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole of Creation." In *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, 70–9. Translated by John Bowden. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1991.
- _____. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1974.
- _____. *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000.
- _____. "'The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit': On Trinitarian Pneumatology." In *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, 57–69. Translated by John Bowden. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1991.

- _____. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1985.
- _____. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- _____. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1981.
- _____. *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.
- Mozley, J. K. *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926.
- Mühlen, Heribert. *Der Heilige Geist als Person in der Trinität bei der Inkarnation und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir*. 5th ed. Münster: Aschendorff, 1988.
- _____. "The Holy Spirit as Person." In *The Holy Spirit and Power: The Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, ed. Kilian McDonnell, 11–33. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.
- Nash, James A. *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991.
- Nash, Ronald H. *The Concept of God: An Exploration of Contemporary Difficulties with the Attributes of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983.
- _____. "Process Theology and Classical Theism." In *Process Theology*, edited by Ronald Nash, 3–29. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987.
- Newlands, G. M. "A Review of Moltmann's *The Crucified God*" *Theology* 78 (1975) 148–50.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951.
- Nnamani, Amuluche Gregory. *The Paradox of a Suffering God: On the Classical, Modern-Western and Third World Struggles to Harmonize the Incompatible Attributes of the Trinitarian God*. Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, 95. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987, 1989, 1992.

- O'Donnell, John J. *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Ogden, Schubert M. *The Reality of God and Other Essays*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1963.
- Olson, Roger E. "The Classical Free Will Theist Model of God." In *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: Four Views*, edited by Bruce A. Ware, 148–72. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2008.
- _____. *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.
- _____. *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- _____. *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- Olson, Roger E., and Christopher A. Hall. *The Trinity*. Guides to Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Osborne, Catherine. "The *nexus amoris* in Augustine's Trinity." *Studia Patristica* 12 (1989) 309–314.
- Owen, H. P. *Christian Theism: A Study of its Basic Principles*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984.
- _____. *Concepts of Deity*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Padgett, Alan G. "Eternity as Relative Timelessness." In *God and Time: Four Views*, edited by Gregory E. Ganssle, 92–110. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Pailin, David A. "Panentheism." In *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*, edited by Svend Andersen, 95–116. Acta Jutlandica 70:1; Theology Series, 18. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994.
- Palma, Anthony D. *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Springfield, MO: Logion, 2001.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology." In *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays: Volume II*, 119–83. Translated by George H. Kehm. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971.

- _____. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, 1998.
- Parrish, Stephen E. *God and Necessity: A Defense of Classical Theism*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997.
- Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées and Other Writings*. Translated by Honor Levi. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Peacocke, Arthur. *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*. Theology and the Sciences. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
- Peters, Ted. *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
- _____. *God—The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992.
- Pinnock, Clark H. "Between Classical and Process Theism." In *Process Theology*, edited by Ronald Nash, 309–27. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987.
- _____. "Divine Relationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000) 3–26.
- _____. *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- _____. *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.
- _____. "The Recovery of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1 (2004) 3–18.
- _____. "Systematic Theology." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 101–25. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.
- _____. "There is Room for Us: A Reply to Bruce Ware." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45.2 (2002) 213–19.
- Pinnock, Clark H., and John B. Cobb, Jr., ed. *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

- Piper, John. "Grounds for Dismay: The Error and Injury of Open Theism." In *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, edited by John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth, 371–84. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.
- Pittenger, Norman. *The Divine Triunity*. Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1977.
- _____. *The Holy Spirit*. Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1974.
- Polkinghorne, John. *The Faith of a Physicist*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996.
- Pope Leo XIII. *Divinum illius munus: On the Holy Spirit*, 1897. Online: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113divin.htm>
- Pope Pius XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi: On the Mystical Body of Christ*, 1943. Online: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi_en.html
- Preece, Gordon, and Stephen Pickard, ed. *Starting with the Spirit. Task of Theology Today*, 2. Hindmarsh, Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2001.
- Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Railey, James H. "Open Theism: An Arminian-Pentecostal Response." Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. Bible and Theology Department Lecture Series, September 24, 2003. Online http://www.agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/articles/railey_open-theism.pdf.
- Ramm, Bernard. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954.
- Reynolds, Blair. *Toward a Process Pneumatology*. London: Associated University Press, 1990.
- Rice, Richard. "Biblical Support for a New Perspective." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 11–58. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.
- _____. *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985.
- _____. "Process Theism and the Open View of God: The Crucial Difference." In *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*, edited by Clark H. Pinnock and John B. Cobb, Jr., 163–200. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

Ritschl, Albrecht. *Theologie und Metaphysik*. Bonn: Marcus, 1887.

Robertson, John C., Jr. *The Loss and Recovery of Transcendence: The Will to Power and the Light of Heaven*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 39. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995.

Robinson, Peter M. B. "The Trinity: The Significance of Appropriate Distinctions for Dynamic Relationality." In *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, edited by Paul Louis Metzger, 49–61. New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2005.

Rogers, Eugene F., Jr. *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

_____. "The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth." In *Conversing with Barth*, edited by John C. McDowell and Mike Higton, 173–190. Barth Studies. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Rosato, Philip J. *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981.

Rybarczyk, Edmund J. "Reframing Tongues: Apophaticism and Postmodernism." *Pneuma* 27.1 (2005) 83–104.

Sanders, Fred. "Trinity Talk, Again." *Dialog* 44 (2005) 264–72.

Sanders, John. "Divine Providence and the Openness of God." In *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: Four Views*, edited by Bruce A. Ware, 196–240. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2008.

_____. *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.

_____. "Historical Considerations." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 59–100. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Translation edited by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928.

Schweitzer, Don. "Karl Barth's Critique of Classical Theism." *Toronto Journal of Theology* 18.2 (2002) 231–44.

_____. "The Holy Spirit as a Growing Edge of God." Unpublished paper presented at the 2006 meeting of the Canadian Theological Society, York University, Toronto, ON.

- Schwöbel, Christoph. "Introduction: The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems and Tasks." In *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, edited by Christoph Schwöbel, 1–30. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995.
- Sherburne, Donald W., ed. *A Key to Whitehead's 'Process and Reality'*. New York, NY: MacMillan, 1966.
- Shults, F. LeRon. *Reforming the Doctrine of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- _____. "Is the Future Open?" No Pages. Personal blog entry from 30 December, 2006. Online: http://leronshults.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/12/is_the_future_o.html.
- Sirks, G. J. "The Cinderella of Theology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit." *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957) 77–89.
- Smith, C. Fred. "Does Classical Theism Deny God's Immanence?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (Jan–Mar 2003) 23–33.
- Solivan, Samuel. *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology*. Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series, 14. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Spiegel, James S. "Does God take Risks?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 187–210. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Spittler, Russell P. *God the Father*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976.
- Sproul, R. C. *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1990.
- Stephenson, Christopher. "Review of *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism*." *H-Pentecostalism, H-Net Reviews*. (December, 2008) 1–2. Online: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=15598>
- Stott, John R. W. *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1971.
- Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *God-Christ-Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1988.
- _____. "Spirit in and through the World." In *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God*, edited by Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, 173–90. New York, NY: Continuum, 1997.

- Stronstad, Roger. *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984.
- Studebaker, Steven M. "Beyond Tongues: A Pentecostal Theology of Grace." In *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent*, edited by Steven M. Studebaker, 46–68. McMaster Theological Studies Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008.
- _____. "The Mode of Divine Knowledge in Reformation Arminianism and Open Theism." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47 (2004) 469–80.
- _____. "Review of *He Who Gives Life*." *Pneuma* 31.1 (2009) 146–7.
- _____. "The Spirit in Creation: A Unified Theology of Grace and Creation Care." *Zygon* 43.4 (2008) 943–60.
- Tabbernee, William. "'Will the Real Paraclete Please Speak Forth!' The Catholic-Montanist Conflict Over Pneumatology." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 97–116. Marquette Studies in Theology, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Talbot, Mark R. "Does God Reveal Who He Actually Is?" In *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 43–70. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Thompson, John. *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Thompson, Matthew K. "Does God Have a Future? A Pentecostal Response to Christopher Hall's and John Sanders' Recent Book." *Pneuma* 26 (2004) 130–37.
- Tiessen, Terrance L. *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
- _____. *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Torrance, Thomas F. *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.
- _____. *The Trinitarian Faith*. London: T & T Clark, 1991.
- _____. *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994.

- Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume 2: Spiritual Master*. Translated by Robert Royal. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.
- Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. New York: Seabury, 1975.
- van den Brink, Gijsbert. "Review of *Reforming the Doctrine of God*." *Ars Disputandi* 6 (2006) 1–10.
- Van der Veken, Jan. "The Historical Roots of Anti-Theism." In *Traditional Theism and its Modern Alternatives*, edited by Svend Andersen, 44–58. *Acta Jutlandica* 70:1; Theology Series, 18. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1994.
- Van Dusen, Henry P. *Spirit, Son and Father: Christian Faith in Light of the Holy Spirit*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. "The Triune God of the Gospel." In *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, edited by Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, 17–34. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Villafañe, Eldin. *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.
- Wallace, Mark I. *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005.
- _____. *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation*. New York, NY: Continuum, 1996.
- _____. "The Green Face of God: Recovering the Spirit in an Ecocidal Era." In *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, edited by Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, 444–64. *Marquette Studies in Theology*, 30. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- _____. "The Wounded Spirit as the Basis for Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology." In *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, edited by Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, 51–82. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Ward, Keith. *The Concept of God*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.

- _____. *Images of Eternity: Concepts of God in Five Religious Traditions*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987.
- _____. "The World as the Body of God: A Panentheistic Metaphor." In *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 62–72. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Ware, Bruce A. "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.4 (1986) 431–46.
- _____. *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000.
- _____. "A Modified Calvinist Doctrine of God." In *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: Four Views*, edited by Bruce A. Ware, 76–120. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2008.
- Ware, Bruce A., ed. *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: Four Views*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2008.
- Ware, Kallistos. "God Immanent yet Transcendent: The Divine Energies according to Saint Gregory Palamas." In *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 157–68. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Ware, Timothy (Kallistos). *The Orthodox Church*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1963.
- Webster, John. *Holiness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Weinandy, Thomas G. *Does God Suffer?* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.
- Welker, Michael. *God the Spirit*. Translated by John F. Hoffmeyer. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994.
- Wells, Paul. "The Doctrine of Scripture: Only a Human Problem." In *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, edited by Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason, 27–61. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality: As Essay in Cosmology*. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1929.
- Williams, J. Rodman. *Renewal Theology*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988, 1990, 1992.

- Williams, Rowan. "Word and Spirit." In *On Christian Theology*, 107–27. Challenges in Contemporary Theology. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "Unqualified Divine Temporality." In *God and Time: Four Views*, edited by Gregory E. Ganssle, 187–213. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Yong, Amos. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- _____. "The Spirit and Creation: Possibilities and Challenges for a Dialogue between Pentecostal Theology and the Sciences." *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 26 (2005) 61–86.
- _____. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: World Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- _____. *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002.
- Ziegler, Philip P. *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*. Issues in Systematic Theology, 14. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007.
- Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.