THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, THE SPIRIT OF THE SON:

A FRAMEWORK FOR A TRINITARIAN

CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

_____

by

Torey James Scott Teer

December 2022

APPROVAL SHEET

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, THE SPIRIT OF THE SON:

A FRAMEWORK FOR A TRINITARIAN

CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

Torey James Scott Teer

Read and Approved by:

_____

Gregg R. Allison (Chair)

_____

Stephen J. Wellum

_____

Bruce A. Ware

Date_____

To my beloved wife, Elizabeth,

for her unfailing love and undying support

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AugS	*Augustinian Studies*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 9 vols. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, and Allan Menzies. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885–1897
Barnard	Justin Martyr. *The First and Second Apologies*. Translated by Leslie William Barnard. Ancient Christian Writers 56. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997
Battles	Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Library of Christian Classics 20–21. London: S. C. M. Press, 1960
BCDBS	*Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018
BCDTT	*Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Behr	Irenaeus of Lyons. *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997
Berthold	Maximus the Confessor. *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*. Translated by George C. Berthold. Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985
DLGTT	*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTNT	Biblical Theology of the New Testament
CD	*Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1975
CCT	Contours of Christian Theology
Credo	*Credo Magazine*
ECD	Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics

EDT	*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
Falls	Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Revised by Thomas P. Halton. Edited by Michael Slusser. Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003
FOET	Foundations of Evangelical Theology
FOTC	Fathers of the Church
Giger	Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. 3 vols. Edited by James T. Dennison Jr. Translated by George Musgrave Giger. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992–1997
Greg	*Gregorianum*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
Hill	Augustine of Hippo. *The Trinity*. Translated by Edmund Hill. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. 1, *Books*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2015
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
ITS	Invitation to Theological Studies
JAT	*Journal of Analytic Theology*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JRT	*Journal of Reformed Theology*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LXX	The Septuagint
MJT	*Midwestern Journal of Theology*
NAC	New American Commentary
N.B.	*Nota bene*, note carefully
NBf	*New Blackfriars*
NEDBT	*New Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000

NPNF[1]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. 14 vols. Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1886–1889
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2. 14 vols. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1890–1900
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NSD	New Studies in Dogmatics
PentS	*PentecoStudies*
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
Presb	*Presbyterion*
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RD	*Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008
RelS	*Religious Studies*
Rester	Mastricht, Petrus van. *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. 3 vols. Edited by Joel R. Beeke. Translated Todd R. Rester. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018–2021
S.a.	See also
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SSST	Short Studies in Systematic Theology
STR	*Southeastern Theological Review*
ST	*The Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benzinger Bros., 1947
Them	*Themelios*
TRS	Thomistic Ressourcement Series
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TheolS	*Theological Studies*
Wickham	Gregory of Nazianzus. *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Translated by Lionel Wickham. Popular Patristics. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002
Wis	Wisdom (Second Temple literature)
WJO	*The Works of John Owen*. 16 vols. Edited by William H. Goold. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965–1968

WTJ   *Westminster Theological Journal*

ZECNT   Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

To the Lord God Almighty: You have blessed Elizabeth and me beyond measure during our time in Louisville. More than that, you have been with us in the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. Though we often fall short of your righteous requirements, you remain ever merciful and compassionate toward us. Whatever may come to pass, we are and always will remain your humble servants.

To my beloved wife and faithful companion, Elizabeth: Thank you for your constant support throughout this academic journey—for always encouraging me, cheering, *ganbare*! Thank you, of course, for reading all of my writing (especially the dissertation) and for listening to all of my verbal reflections (and ramblings). Finally, thank you for your commitment to your vocation and for consistently supporting the family all of these years. I am so proud of you and so grateful to you.

To my honorable supervisor, Gregg Allison: Thank you for your guidance, support, and encouragement these past four years. I believe I am an improved writer, a more careful thinker, and a more qualified teacher because of you. Thank you, of course, for all of your help with this dissertation. I hope the final product honors you. Finally, thank you for your and Nora's friendship. It has been a joy to be a part of your lives.

To my second and third readers, Stephen Wellum and Bruce Ware, as well as my professors, Kyle Claunch, Tyler Wittman, Oren Martin, Michael Haykin, Stephen Presley, and Tyler Flatt: Thank you all for teaching me, sharpening me, and investing in me during my time at Southern. I am confident that I am a better thinker, scholar, and teacher because of your investments and refinements. I am especially grateful to Drs. Wellum and Ware for serving on my dissertation committee and offering me critical feedback for improvement.

To my external reader, Fred Sanders, and my former external study supervising professor, Adonis Vidu: Thank you both for your valuable contributions to trinitarian theology and, by extension, my theological reflection and formulation concerning the Trinity. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Vidu for working with me on issues in trinitarian theology during the Spring 2020 semester and to Dr. Sanders for serving as the external reader for my dissertation.

To the members of the *Ordo theologorum*, Alex Tibbott, Drew Sparks, Henry Lyan, Jonathan Swan, and Randy Johnson, as well as my dear friends and colleagues, Jacob Percy and Lucas Leite: Thank you all for your invaluable friendship. I have been blessed to be part of your—and your families'—lives these past four years. You have encouraged me and sharpened me to become a more careful theological thinker and scholar as well as a thoughtful and qualified servant of Christ and his church.

To my and Elizabeth's family in Texas and beyond: Thank you all for your love, support, and encouragement.

Torey Teer

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Though the Holy Spirit is active in creation throughout Old Testament history and in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, he does not truly *burst* onto the redemptive historical scene—in the fullest sense of his person and work—until his outpouring upon and indwelling of Christ-followers on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). This epochal event inaugurates the Spirit's *mission*—his *being sent* by the Father and the Son to apply to believers the redemption Christ accomplished during his earthly mission. Jesus foretells this moment before his death: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, . . . the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16–17; s.a. v. 26), "the Helper . . . , whom I will send to you from the Father" (15:26; s.a. 16:7).[1] The resurrected Lord reiterates the promise prior to his bodily ascension into heaven ("the promise of [my/the] Father"; Luke 24:49 // Acts 1:4). And Christ keeps his word: from/through/by Jesus's resurrected, glorified, ascended, and exalted humanity, the Spirit is poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4, 33) and beyond (Acts 10:44–46; Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13). In doing so, "Christ doesn't seem to simply pass on the Spirit as it were. Rather, he himself becomes *in some sense* constitutive of the Spirit. He does not merely *reflect* but positively *inflects* the Spirit."[2] This Christoformed descent of the Holy Spirit thus inaugurates the *age of the Spirit*.[3] In light of this paradigm, the Holy Spirit is aptly

---

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version. Further, any italics in Bible quotations are my own additions.

[2] Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 33.

[3] For more on this theme, see Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 235–36; Michael Horton,

called *the promise of the Father*, *the Spirit of the Son*.[4] Indeed, he is the "Christ-directed" Spirit.[5]

Thesis

In this dissertation, I argue that a biblically faithful, theologically robust, and historically grounded pneumatology should be founded upon a classical trinitarian framework as well as maintain a distinct Christological emphasis. A *trinitarian* pneumatology conceives of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in accord with classical trinitarian categories—namely, one God (unity of essence),[6] three persons (subsisting relations or processions; *taxis*),[7] inseparable operations,[8] distinct personal

---

Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), chap. 6 ("The Age of the Spirit").

[4] For the former appellation, see the following: "the promise of my Father" (Luke 24:49); "the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4); "In the last days . . . , I [God] will pour out my Spirit" (Acts 2:17–18; cf. Joel 2:28–29); ". . . received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33; cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3). For the latter epithet, see the following: "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7); "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:11); "the Spirit of [God's] Son" (Gal 4:6); "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19).
I recognize that Scripture also calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of your Father" (Matt 10:20), "the Spirit of the Lord" (Luke 4:18 [i.e., אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה; Isa 61:1]; Acts 5:9 [cf. v. 4]), "the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1 Cor 2:11, 14; 7:40), "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom 8:11), "the Spirit who is from God" (1 Cor 2:12), "God's Spirit" (1 Cor 3:16; cf. 1 John 4:13), "the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11), "the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor 3:3), and "the Spirit of glory and of God" (1 Pet 4:14).
However, to recognize the Holy Spirit as "the promise of the Father, the Spirit of the Son" is to acknowledge the magnitude—and order—of the divine missions (Son, then Spirit). For example, the Son's glorification is a prerequisite of the Spirit's outpouring (John 7:39; 14:1–4, 16–17; 16:7; cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31–32). Such ordering is indicative and supportive of the "Christoformation" of the Pentecostal Spirit; see Adonis Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 45–48; cf. Vidu, *Same God*, 32–36. I return to this point in chap. 5.

[5] Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 21–23.

[6] Included in this category would be the divine attributes such as simplicity, aseity, immutability, and impassibility. That is, God is simple, not made of parts; he is all-sufficient in himself; he is forever unchanging; and he is not externally moved. Further, the one God possesses and operates by a singular knowledge, will, and power.

[7] The classical trinitarian *taxis* (or order) represents the irreducible, irreversible *ad intra* relations of the three divine persons: Father → Son → Holy Spirit. The Father is characterized by paternity; he is eternally unbegotten. The Son is characterized by eternal generation (or filiation); he is eternally generated (or begotten) by the Father. The Spirit is characterized by eternal procession (or spiration); he is eternally spirated (or breathed) by the Father and the Son.

[8] *Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* . . . ("The works of the Trinity toward the outside are undivided . . ."). That is, in every divine act in the world, all persons of the Godhead work together as one, by virtue of the one nature—and thus one knowledge, will, and power—they share *ad intra*.

appropriations,[9] and missions.[10] A *Christological* pneumatology recognizes that the person and work of the Holy Spirit are keyed to the person and work of Christ, for Scripture, theology, and—by extension—pneumatology are Christ-centered. I submit that a classically trinitarian pneumatology coheres with an emphatically Christological pneumatology. In fact, the two mutually entail one another. Hence, what is needed is a trinitarian Christological pneumatology—which *just is* a sound, vibrant, and holistic conceptualization of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Methodology

A work of systematic theology, this dissertation features the following commitments, assumptions, and delimitations.

Biblical preeminence (*sola Scriptura*). God's self-disclosure in Scripture is the foundation of the faith and the doing of theology. It is the "norming norm" (*norma normans*), the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice. The Bible norms even the reading of itself; thus, one must have the whole storyline of Scripture in view when interpreting particular passages. In other words, Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. In all of my theological construction, therefore, I endeavor to be faithful to the witness of Scripture, synthesizing what it says concerning a particular subject (e.g., the Trinity, the Holy Spirit) in accord with its own presentation of that subject.

Faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*). As Stephen Wellum avers, "Theology does not merely repeat Scripture; it seeks to 'understand' what Scripture says in terms of application, logical implications, metaphysical entailments, and

---

[9] . . . *scilicet servata cuiusque personae proprietate* (". . . preserving, of course, the properties of each person"). According to the doctrine of appropriations, a feature common to all three divine persons can be attributed to—or appropriated by—one particular person *ad extra* if that feature especially reflects the property of that person *ad intra*.

[10] Just as the Father is eternally from no one (unoriginate), so also he is not temporally sent. Just as the Son is eternally begotten by the Father, so also he is temporally sent by the Father—to become incarnate and accomplish redemption. Just as the Holy Spirit is eternally spirated by the Father and the Son, so also he is temporally sent by the Father and the Son—to indwell the elect and apply to them the redemption that Christ secured.

so on."[11] The task of the theologian is to answer the questions raised by the testimony of Scripture, even if that task requires the use of extrabiblical language, categories, analogies, and the like. Further, per Glenn Kreider and Michael Svigel, "Building on the 'givens' of the content of the Christian faith [see Jude 3], the Theologian seeks to better understand this faith through a manner consistent with a believing and faithful disposition."[12] Thus, in my theological formulation, I maintain an optimistic—and traditional—perspective concerning what can be predicated about the Creator and his creation based on the biblical witness and the available theological tools.[13]

 The "Rule(s) of Faith" (*regula fidei*). Concerning the "givens" of the Christian faith mentioned above, my theological construction aligns with and seeks to remain faithful to—within their limits—the historic summaries of the Christian faith (e.g., the "Rule of Faith," the Apostles' Creed, Nicaea-Constantinople, Chalcedon) that enunciate, among other things,

> the biblical narrative of creation-fall-redemption which starts with God the Father's creation of everything[;] continues with God the Son's incarnation, atoning death, resurrection, ascension, and anticipated return[;] and culminating in God the Spirit's work in forming, transforming, and moving God's people toward consummation in resurrection and restoration.[14]

---

[11] Stephen J. Wellum, "Retrieval, Christology, and *Sola Scriptura*," *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 36.

[12] Glenn R. Kreider and Michael J. Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 74.

[13] Of utmost relevance to this dissertation is the relationship between who God is in himself (a.k.a. the immanent Trinity) and what God works in time (a.k.a. the economic Trinity). In this dissertation, I take for granted that (1) discourse concerning God *ad intra* is not only acceptable but also necessary since it expresses what is true about God in himself (i.e., his *being*; knowledge made available to us by divine self-disclosure), (2) God's *being* (*ad intra*) is the metaphysical grounding for God's *doing* (*ad extra*), and (3) God's works accurately—or at least adequately—reflect God's being, though there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the two (i.e., God's works in time do not constitute his being). See Fred Sanders's recent work on this subject (or these subjects) in *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 16–27.

[14] Kreider and Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 75. I recognize that such creeds possess the doctrinal authority of "normed norm" (*norma normata*). For the text of Irenaeus's Rule of Faith (2nd c.), see Irenaeus of Lyons, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 3–7 (Behr, 41–44); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.10.1 (*ANF*, 1:330–31). For the text of Tertullian's Rule of Faith (late 2nd–early 3rd c.), see Tertullian of Carthage, *The Prescription against Heretics* 13 (*ANF*, 3:249); Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 2, 9 (*ANF*, 3:598, 603). For the text of the Apostles' Creed (3rd–4th c.), the Niceno-

I call this approach "creedal fidelity."

Protestant theological retrieval. In addition to creedal fidelity, I exercise an appreciation for the insights of those who have gone before for the enrichment of contemporary theology, especially trinitarian theology.[15] Hence, theological retrieval (or retrieval theology), broadly defined as "resourcing contemporary systematic constructive theology by engaging historical theology,"[16] features regularly—though not uncritically—in my theological formulation.[17] Consequently, in addition to and in accord with the bounties of the Protestant Reformation, I engage patristic and medieval sources, double-distilling them through the testimony of Scripture and the inheritance of faith.

Classical (Latin) trinitarianism. This dissertation is a work of trinitarian theology, one that benefits from, operates within the sphere of, and contributes to the contemporary resurgence of classical (esp. trinitarian) theology.[18] In that vein, I intentionally delimit the scope of this study to Western (or Latin) trinitarian theology;

Constantipolitan Creed (381), and the Chalcedonian Creed (451), see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 1438–39. As intimated in n. 7 and n. 10 above, I also affirm the Third Council of Toledo's (589) addition of *filioque* to the Nicene Creed, though I do not applaud the manner in which the council did so. Further, I affirm the Third Council of Constantinople's (681) assertion of the two wills and operations of Christ (i.e., dyothelitism).

[15] See Sanders's cautions against and recommendations for retrieval vis-à-vis the doctrine of the Trinity in *Fountain of Salvation*, 174–200. N.B.: By "contemporary," I mean "existing and ongoing."

[16] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 45.

[17] Though this dissertation largely deals with trinitarian matters (i.e., a doctrinal area of "catholic" agreement), I acknowledge and accept Wellum's caution that

> "retrieval" works best in the doctrinal areas of "catholic" agreement (e.g., Trinity, Christology), but not as well in other areas where disagreement still resides (e.g., atonement, soteriology, ecclesiology). . . . Furthermore, even in areas of "catholic agreement" . . . , there are still areas of disagreement that can only be resolved by returning to Scripture and testing our exegesis and theological formulations by Scripture. ("Retrieval, Christology, and *Sola Scriptura*," 37)

[18] I am thinking of, most recently, the *Journal of Classical Theology*, whose first issue releases Fall 2022 (https://joct.online/); the Center for Classical Theology, announced and established July 2022 (https://credomag.com/center-for-classical-theology/); and the ongoing efforts of *Credo Magazine* (https://credomag.com/). I especially appreciate the concise definition or model espoused by the *Journal of Classical Theology*: "The model of classical theology this journal seeks to retrieve understands that God is triune, *a se*, simple, immutable, impassible, eternal, and the sovereign Lord over his creation, which he created *from himself*" (Journal of Classical Theology, "About," accessed July 28, 2022, https://joct.online/?page_id=140).

therefore, I do not directly engage Eastern Orthodox theology—though I acknowledge the value of doing so. Relatedly, I am largely taking for granted—or presupposing the validity of—classical (Latin) trinitarianism. That is, I generally do not *defend* classical trinitarianism so much as *utilize* and *advance* it. So, while I do defend, for example, Christocentrism and inseparable operations (and its associated grammar), I do not directly defend but presuppose divine simplicity, immutability, and the like.[19] Similarly, while I do offer support for the double procession of the Holy Spirit (*filioque*), I do not engage in a rigorous defense of the notion.[20] Finally, though matters concerning subordination within the Godhead appear occasionally throughout this work, I do not enter into the ongoing debate.[21] Rather, I largely take for granted a "mere fromness" view (a.k.a. "eternal relations of origin" view) concerning eternal intratrinitarian relations: eternal subsisting relations indicate that one divine person is *from* another.

---

[19] Much recent work has been completed on the various aspects of classical trinitarianism; see, e.g., Craig A. Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021); Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*, TRS 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022); Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022); R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022); D. Glenn Butner Jr., *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

[20] See Richard A. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "filioque" (p. 124). For recent discussion concerning *filioque*, see Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, chap. 4 (pp. 101–31); Adonis Vidu, "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," in *The Third Person of the Trinity*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, ECD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 21–35.

[21] The continuing debate among evangelicals concerns whether the eternal subsisting relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit should be understood as—or as including—eternal relations of authority and submission. As Wellum summarizes,

> The ERAS [eternal relations of authority and submission] view contends that the way the divine persons are distinguished is not merely by eternal "relations of origin" (*taxis*) but also by this authority-submission ordering between the Father, Son, and Spirit from eternity (*ad intra*). In this way, ERAS argues for a specific kind of *taxis* between the divine persons from eternity that includes relations of origin (paternity, eternal generation, and eternal procession) *and* authority-submission relations. ("Editorial: Our Glorious Triune God," *SBJT* 21, no. 2 [Summer 2017]: 5–8)

For a summary of the historic debate and the recent (online) debate, see D. Glenn Butner Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 1–5, 17–28. For a recent example of the pro-ERAS position, see Bruce A. Ware, "Unity and Distinction of the Trinitarian Persons," in *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application*, ed. Keith S. Whitfield (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 17–61. For a recent example of the contra-ERAS position, which maintains that the eternal relations of origin are sufficient for distinguishing between the divine persons, see Matthew Y. Emerson and Luke Stamps, "On Trinitarian Theological Method," in Whitfield, *Trinitarian Theology*, 95–128.

This biblical-theological-historical methodology, with certain trinitarian "givens" in place, characterizes my constructive approach to the advancement of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

Survey of Contemporary Research

Though reflection on the person and work of the Holy Spirit spans the entire length of Christian history (though to lesser and greater degrees depending on the period), interest in pneumatology has experienced a palpable resurgence in recent years. In what follows, therefore, I survey various recent evangelical works on pneumatology,[22] comparing their emphases with my research interests. Specifically, I compare whether such sources affirm, employ, or otherwise acknowledge the following: a Christ-centered approach to the economy of salvation, inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, distinct personal appropriations, the divine missions of the Son and the Spirit, and—most importantly—Christological observations or implications vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit. A Christological notion concerning the Spirit is a statement that acknowledges the Christ-centered or Christ-directed nature of the Holy Spirit's person and work. Two quotations by Sinclair Ferguson may serve as examples: (1) "It should be axiomatic in all Christian theology that the Holy Spirit (as indeed the Father) is fully revealed to us only in and through Jesus Christ"; (2) "The central role of the Spirit is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him and to all those who participate in his body."[23]

Ferguson consistently and explicitly offers Christological observations concerning the Spirit as well as acknowledges the Christocentricity of redemptive

---

[22] N.B.: By "recent," I mean in the last thirty years (approx.). By "evangelical," I simply mean conservative Protestant. I also find Gregg R. Allison's definition of "evangelicalism" agreeable: "A broad movement of churches, denominations, and institutions for which the evangel (Gk. *euangelion*), or gospel, is central. . . . This theology includes conversionism . . . , activism . . . , biblicism . . . , and crucicentrism . . . ." (*BCDTT*, s.v. "evangelicalism" [p. 75]).

[23] Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 29, 100.

history.[24] However, sometimes, his language almost conflates Christ and the Spirit in the economy. Concerning Christ's ascension, Ferguson suggests that "*economically* the resurrected Christ and the Spirit are one to us. He is *alter Christus*, another Christ."[25] Granted, the author goes on to nuance the personal distinctions of the Son and the Spirit, and in light of inseparable operations and efficient causality, his statement concerning their "economic equivalence" is *technically* correct.[26] However, Ferguson does not invoke inseparable operations in this instance—though he does affirm both the inseparability principle and appropriations with regard to Christ's conception by the Spirit.[27] Finally, a robust theology of the divine missions is absent from Ferguson's work. My framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology would help the author enhance his Christological notions regarding the Spirit and nuance the personal distinctions of the Son and the Spirit.

Propounding an ecumenical, charismatic "theology of Word and Spirit," Donald Bloesch furnishes several explicit Christological observations vis-à-vis the Spirit and supports the Christocentricity of redemptive history and the canon of Scripture.[28] However, Bloesch focuses more on historical theology and personal spirituality than on systematic theology. As such, the author only briefly treats the persons and nature of the

---

[24] See, e.g., Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 30, 59, 69, 72, 79, 100, 180, 186, 204, 238.

[25] Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 54.

[26] Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 54–56. Of the "four causes" (efficient, material, formal, and final), the efficient cause (a.k.a. the agential cause) is that which—or the agent who—*makes* a thing to be what it is or *brings about* an effect. Efficient causality is associated with inseparable operations because the agent of all divine action is the united Godhead (singular will, knowledge, and power). For helpful teaching on the four causes, see Dominic Legge, "Aquinas 101: Lesson 18: The Four Causes," video, 4:11, Thomistic Institute, accessed May 5, 2022, https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/the-four-causes; s.a. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "causa" (pp. 56–57).

[27] Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 43.

[28] See, e.g., Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 22, 30–31, 57–58, 145, 277–79, 285.

Trinity, and he omits any formal discussion of inseparable operations and the divine missions.[29]

Graham Cole recognizes both the centrality of Christ in the divine plan and the work of the Holy Spirit as focusing on the Son.[30] However, Cole offers no direct, sustained treatment of Christological implications vis-à-vis the Spirit—they are few and far in between, and they reflect more of a Spirit Christology than a Christological pneumatology. Further, *He Who Gives Life* represents more of a biblical theology endeavor than a true systematic account of pneumatology.[31]

Christopher Holmes repeatedly refers to the Holy Spirit as "other-directed," "Christ-directed," and "Son-centric";[32] he recognizes that "the contours of the economy are Son-centric";[33] he consistently affirms the classical trinitarian *taxis*;[34] and he undergirds his entire argument on the divine processions and missions—and the relationship between the two.[35] For all of Holmes's similarities with my own emphases, however, he does not employ inseparable operations and appropriations—and the relationship between the two—in his theological construction. The two axioms appear infrequently and either implicitly or—if explicitly—tangentially as a consequence of

---

[29] The Spirit vis-à-vis the Trinity makes up one six-page section (see Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*, 269–74). Admittedly, Bloesch interacts with trinitarian issues throughout his work. Further, he implicitly affirms inseparable operations (see, e.g., pp. 73, 274) and acknowledges—in what seems a nontechnical sense—the missions of the Son and the Spirit (see e.g., pp. 34, 52, 62–63, 271–73, 285).

[30] See, e.g., Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, FOET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 28n11, 116, 126–27, 185–86, 199, 209, 235–36, 274, 283–84.

[31] Cole is very cautious of theologizing. For instance, inseparable operations and appropriations receive only one mention (*He Who Gives Life*, 72), as do the divine processions and missions (chap. 8).

[32] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 21–23, 89, 93, 129, 131, 154, 159, 163, 206. Holmes offers many more Christological observations concerning the Spirit throughout the book; see, e.g., pp. 19, 41, 74–75, 89, 98, 118, 128, 150, 160, 196, 205, 207.

[33] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 207. More statements affirming Christocentrism appear on pp. 21, 31, 107, 206–7.

[34] See, e.g., Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 24, 26, 70, 88, 96, 128, 188, 204.

[35] See, Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 19–28.

Holmes's primary aim to ground the economic works of the Trinity in the immanent relations of the Trinity.[36] Holmes's adding the axioms to his theological toolbox would further strengthen his argument, and my framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology would help him do just that.

Michael Horton regularly includes both implicit and explicit Christological implications regarding the Spirit in his *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*.[37] Further, his pneumatology consistently relies upon inseparable operations, intratrinitarian relations and the *taxis*, appropriations, and the divine missions.[38] Finally, Horton's work reflects a Christ-centered approach to pneumatology. However, while Horton's monograph is an excellent example of a pneumatology that employs all of the categories of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology, his presentation can be augmented by a fuller understanding of the divine missions, including the distinction between appropriated operations and proper missions as well as distinction between the visible (outward) and invisible (inward) missions.

Myk Habets frequently mentions Christological implications concerning pneumatology—albeit typically from a Spirit Christology and third article theology perspective.[39] In fact, he believes that this dual-pronged approach is the best way forward to deal with the historical over-emphasis on Christological conclusions. While I am sympathetic to Habets's concerns, I believe his theological method is flawed—as I

---

[36] See, e.g., Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 28, 35, 53, 59, 61, 66, 72, 74, 86, 139, 157.

[37] See, e.g., Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 26, 40, 76, 106, 131–37, 184, 202, 264, 315.

[38] See Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 29, where the author describes the two "broad emphases" of his study, one of which is "the *distinctiveness* of the Spirit's person and work along with his *unity* with the Father and the Son."

[39] See Myk Habets, *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), *passim* (esp. chap. 23).

discuss further in chapter 2.[40] The true answer to such concerns lies instead with a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.[41]

Like Holmes and Horton, Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger regularly, explicitly, and emphatically offer Christological observations and implications concerning the Holy Spirit.[42] Plus, a rich trinitarian theology—featuring inseparable operations, appropriations, and the divine processions and missions—supports their pneumatology. Nevertheless, in part 2 on systematic theology, the authors do not list Christocentrism as one of the eight central themes for their doctrine of the Holy Spirit.[43] I acknowledge, however, their concern articulated in central theme (4), reason (c): ". . . correcting the common caricature of [the Spirit] as 'bashful,' 'deferential,' or 'always in the shadow of Christ.'"[44] A full-orbed trinitarian Christological pneumatology will simultaneously champion the Son-centeredness of the Holy Spirit, acknowledge the Spirit as third in the divine *taxis*, and highlight the Spirit's patent participation in the inseparable operations of the Trinity.

Very likely, the relatively recent resurgence in interest in trinitarian matters has influenced the more recent resurgence in interest in pneumatological matters. In the last decade, for example, theologians have more readily employed trinitarian metaphysics—or, to use Holmes's terminology, trinitarian "first principles"—in their discourse concerning the Holy Spirit. Based on the above literature review, while Holmes probably comes the closest to sharing my concern for a characteristically Christocentric pneumatology, Horton and Allison-Köstenberger more comprehensively utilize the full

---

[40] See, esp., Habets, *The Progressive Mystery*, 178–79.

[41] For now, see my critique in Torey J. S. Teer, review of *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition*, by Myk Habets, *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 181–83.

[42] See, e.g., Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275, 278n8, 290–91, 303, 349–50, 353–54, 361–62n29, 422.

[43] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 228–36.

[44] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 232.

suite of trinitarian vocabulary. However, the above-surveyed works either are not Christ-centered *enough* or do not offer a sustained or recurring treatment of Christological implications with respect to the Holy Spirit or do not employ an explicit trinitarian Christological framework—with all of the attendant theological grammar—in proffering such implications. This "snapshot" of the contemporary pneumatological landscape among evangelicals therefore suffices to demonstrate the necessity of a framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

Significance

Although the notion that the person and work of the Holy Spirit center on Christ is not new, no one—to my knowledge—has yet to formulate an entire theological framework to support that proposition and the resultant implications that radiate out across the breadth of theology. To be sure, some have come closer than others, but no one has formally developed a theological framework for pneumatology that is founded upon classical trinitarianism and integrates a Christ-centered approach, the grammar of inseparability, and the divine missions. This dissertation aims to accomplish just that end and, in doing so, to offer a modest but definite contribution to the ongoing discussion and interest concerning the Holy Spirit. In many ways, my framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology builds upon the reflection and work of the above-surveyed authors as well as, of course, older Spirit-thinkers, such as Basil of Caesarea, Thomas Aquinas, and John Owen. As an heir of the historical and modern labor concerning the Holy Spirit, I intend for this dissertation to serve as a synthesis of the collective— sometimes intuitive—recognition of the Christological conclusions concerning the person and work of the Spirit derived from wrestling with the biblical data and reflecting upon trinitarian metaphysics. While this study should complement, supplement, or—in certain instances—correct other contemporary pneumatologies, my work more accurately

represents a particular way of approaching the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis the Trinity that has

existed—to greater or lesser degrees—throughout the Christian tradition.
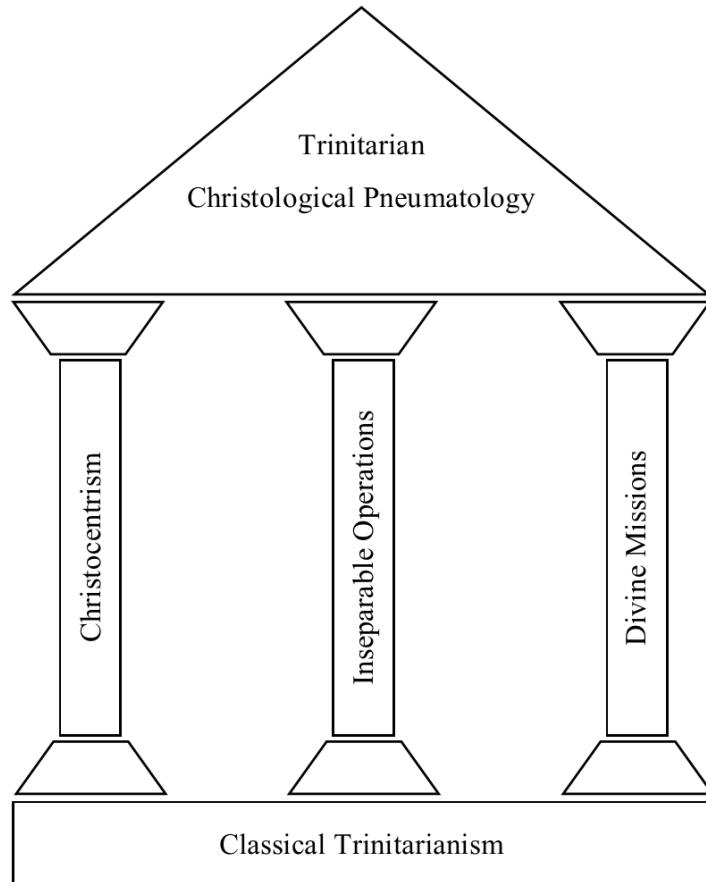
Figure 1. Framework for a trinitarian
Christological pneumatology

Argument

My framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology consists of a

foundation (chap. 2) and three pillars (chaps. 3–5; see figure 1). In chapter 2, I consider

whether certain contemporary models of trinitarian theological method—social

trinitarianism and third article theology (which includes Spirit Christology)—are

preferable alternatives to the historic approach to the Trinity—classical trinitarianism and

traditional *taxis* theology. While the scope of these approaches extends beyond the locus

of pneumatology, they all have significant implications for how one conceives of the person and work of the Holy Spirit—especially vis-à-vis the Father and the Son. Critically engaging recent proponents of social trinitarianism and third article theology, I contend that those models do not possess sufficient persuasive power to unseat classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology as the preferred methodological framework from which to pursue trinitarian discourse in particular and Christian theology in general. Hence, it is upon the foundation of the classical approach that my framework is built.

In chapter 3, I present the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: Christocentrism. Specifically, I argue that hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism possesses sufficient warrant to establish—and even *necessitate*—that pneumatology be Christ-centered. To arrive at this conclusion, I first offer biblical, theological, and historical support for hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism, and then I survey alternative centers for doing theology (anthropo-, theo-, patero-, pneumato-, ecclesio-, biblio-, and eschatocentric theologies), comparing their merit to that of a Christological center. Ultimately, I determine that pneumatology must be consciously Christocentric.

In chapter 4, I present the second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: the theological triplex of inseparable operations, the trinitarian *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations. In particular, I argue that a healthy, robust understanding of these theological concepts is essential for a healthy, robust theology of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. I begin by detailing the biblical foundations upon which these theological concepts are based. Second, I examine the historical attestation to the grammar of inseparability, surveying fourth-century Eastern and Western fathers who contribute to the pro-Nicene theological consensus. Third, I address some concerns about the theological soundness of the inseparability principle as it relates to (1) one's being able to differentiate the divine persons in the economy of salvation as well as (2) a Christocentric emphasis vis-à-vis Scripture and theology. Far from being complicated

theological jargon, the nomenclature of inseparability represents helpful grammatical rules that—as part of a larger trinitarian lexicon—are fitting and fruitful for discourse concerning the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 5, I present the third and final pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: the divine missions. Specifically, I argue that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are *central* to trinitarian theology; therefore, a robust theology of the divine missions is *crucial* for having a well-rounded pneumatology—which itself is Christ-centered. I first detail the biblical basis for the divine missions (the language of "sentness" and "fromness") as disclosed primarily, but not exclusively, in John's Gospel. Second, I unpack Augustine of Hippo's conceptualization of the missions as revealed in Scripture, particularly his observation that the missions *reveal* the processions. Third, I explicate Thomas Aquinas's nuanced development of the tradition's theology of divine missions, especially his understanding that the missions *extend* the processions into creation. Fourth, I summarize and critique the Johannine, Augustinian, and Thomistic contributions and then synthesize a holistic theology of divine missions. Fifth, I show how the mission of the Spirit is Christocentric—that is, keyed to the mission of the Son. Sixth, I explain how a Christ-centered emphasis regarding the divine missions does not detract from the prestige due to both the Spirit and the Father. In sum, one must keep Christ at the center of the divine missions and keep the divine missions at the center of trinitarian theology and, by extension, pneumatology. The result is a healthy trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

In chapter 6, I review the argument of this dissertation and discuss some implications of this research as well as areas of potential future research.

In the end, it will be evident that this framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology does justice to the Christ-oriented nature of the person and work of the Holy Spirit while appreciating the rich and nuanced relations of the persons within the

divine essence and the economy of salvation. It is in this framework that we can fully

appreciate the designation *the promise of the Father, the Spirit of the Son*.

CHAPTER 2

FOUNDATIONAL METHOD FOR A TRINITARIAN
CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

It is common today to hear that we are riding the waves of the twentieth-century renaissance in trinitarian theology or the even-more recent renaissance in pneumatology.[1] Well, for better or for worse, such renewed interest in the Trinity and the Holy Spirit has brought forth novel conceptions of the Trinity and trinitarian theology. Consequently, this chapter is concerned with how to best conceive of the Trinity, on the one hand, and where best to situate the Holy Spirit in trinitarian theological method, on the other. That is to say, because this dissertation advances a *trinitarian* Christological *pneumatology*, I must first specify *what kind* of trinitarianism and *what kind* of pneumatology. This initiative is a worthwhile endeavor, for the framework one utilizes for subsequent theological inquiry will have important implications for the conclusions derived *based upon* that framework.

The historic approach to the Trinity, known as classical (or Latin) trinitarianism, affirms that there are three divine persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) yet one God, and those persons exist as eternal subsisting relations (or relations of origin). The Father is unbegotten or unoriginate; he is characterized by paternity. The Son is eternally generated by the Father; he is characterized by filiation (or eternal generation). The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from, or is eternally spirated (or breathed) by, the Father and the Son; he is characterized by procession (or passive spiration). These relations reveal an irreversible intratrinitarian *taxis* (or order): Father → Son → Holy

---

[1] This chapter has been adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "Classical versus Contemporary: Engaging Trinitarian and Pneumatological Models for Ongoing Theological Construction," *WTJ* 83, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 355–81. Used with permission.

Spirit. Consequently, as reflected in the historic creeds of the church,[2] classical theologians have generally carried out their theology—and the application thereof—in light of said *taxis*: theology proper → Christology → pneumatology. I label this latter approach traditional *taxis* theology.

However, in the twentieth century, two alternative approaches have arisen for engaging in trinitarian discourse: social trinitarianism and third article theology. The former avows that in the Godhead, there are three distinct centers of consciousness, intellect, and will bound by relations of mutual self-giving love, while the latter, closely associated with Spirit Christology, engages in theological formulation with the Holy Spirit as the starting point and the guide. Taking classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology as equally basic, I ask, Do social trinitarianism and third article theology offer persuasive power to unseat the historic methods of discourse concerning the Trinity and the Holy Spirit?

I answer—and subsequently argue—that they do not. Instead, classical trinitarianism and theology vis-à-vis the traditional *taxis* remain the preferred methods for carrying out Christian theology. Hence, these two methods (or one integrated method) serve as the foundation for the trinitarian Christological pneumatology that I develop in subsequent chapters (chaps. 3–5). But before I get there, I must first give the two alternative approaches their due consideration: first social trinitarianism, then third article theology (plus Spirit Christology).

Social Trinitarianism

I begin this section by briefly tracing the development of the social approach to the Trinity. Next, I broadly define social trinitarianism, detail the main characteristics shared by various social models, and highlight a model representative of those shared

---

[2] The Apostles' Creed (3rd–4th c.) reads, "I believe in God the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord . . . [and] in the Holy Spirit." See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 1438.

features. Finally, I critique a recent proponent's rebuttal of the most common objections to social trinitarianism as well as his arguments in favor of that approach.

Historical Overview

Prior to the resurgence of trinitarianism in the second half of the twentieth century, many theologians—and likely laypeople as well—regarded the doctrine of the Trinity as lifeless and impractical, if not dead wrong. Revival came, however, as many thinkers realized the fecundity of the doctrine for other areas of theological formulation and practical (or socio-cultural) application.[3] As scholars widely recognize, the trinitarian resurgence began with Karl Barth's discussion on the Trinity in his *Church Dogmatics*.[4] Barth placed the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning of his work, attempting "to ground the Trinity in revelation and salvation history rather than abstract speculation."[5] Ongoing interest in trinitarian matters then progressed with the writings of Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Leonardo Boff, Robert Jenson, John Zizioulas, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, and others.[6]

Rahner, who insisted on "the importance of the economy of salvation for Trinitarian reflection," and Zizioulas, who brought the "concepts of personhood and relationality to centre stage," are of particular importance regarding the shift of trinitarian

---

[3] For a corresponding overview of this "resurgence" or "revival," see Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), chap. 10 (esp. sects. "Revival versus Retrieval" [pp. 183–86] and "Decontextualized Critiques" [pp. 187–91]).

[4] As Stephen R. Holmes notes, "There is no question that Barth brought the doctrine of the Trinity back into the centre of theological discourse" (*The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012], 9).

[5] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "The Trajectories of the Contemporary 'Trinitarian Renaissance' in Different Contexts," *JRT* 3 (2009): 10. As an example of this point, Kärkkäinen quotes Barth: "*God* reveals himself. He reveals himself *through himself*. He reveals *himself*" (Karl Barth, *CD*, I/1:296).

[6] Though a robust treatment of the twentieth-century developments in trinitarianism is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Stanley Grenz provides a comprehensive survey of such developments, covering the key figures and their supporters, innovators, and critics (*Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004]). S.a. Kärkkäinen, "Trajectories of the 'Trinitarian Renaissance,'" 7–21.

discourse toward (economic) relationality.[7] In Stanley Grenz's estimation, Rahner is in ranks with Barth vis-à-vis the revival and recasting of trinitarian discourse because of "his articulation and consistent use of a methodological principle that informed the subsequent flow of trinitarian theology."[8] Rahner saw historic discussions on the doctrine of the Trinity as detached from salvation history,[9] so his guiding principle—what has become known as "Rahner's Rule"—was that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."[10] While Rahner "retained the classical belief that God's eternal being is ultimately independent of historical events,"[11] later theologians (viz., Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson) would draw out "the more thoroughgoing implication of Rahner's Rule, namely, the idea that God finds his identity in the interplay of the three members of the Trinity within the temporal events of the economy of salvation."[12]

For his part, Zizioulas, whose 1985 work *Being as Communion* "profoundly influenced almost all subsequent trajectories taken by social trinitarianism,"[13] argued for the retrieval of the Cappadocian Fathers' so-called breakthrough in ontology—that

---

[7] Holmes, *Quest for the Trinity*, 9.

[8] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 57.

[9] Rahner conceived of the economic Trinity (i.e., God's action in the world) as "a history of relations between Father and Son, in the unity of the Spirit, that takes places within the created order" (Holmes, *Quest for the Trinity*, 10).

[10] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, Milestones in Catholic Theology (1967; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1997), 22. LaCugna, one of Rahner's successors, clarified (or modified) Rahner's Rule: "The identity of 'economic' and 'immanent' Trinity means that God truly and completely gives God's self to the creature without remainder, and what is given in the economy of salvation *is* God as such" (LaCugna, introduction to *The Trinity*, by Rahner, xiv).

[11] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 70.

[12] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 71.

[13] Gijsbert van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism: A Discussion of Some Recent Theological Criticisms," *IJST* 16, no. 3 (July 2014): 334. Of course, van den Brink recognizes Moltmann's influence on subsequent social models of the Trinity: "Although the origin of terms like 'social trinitarianism' and its cognates is unclear, it is probably Jürgen Moltmann who is to be credited for giving them their widespread present-day currency" (p. 333). S.a. Stephen R. Holmes, "Three versus One? Some Problems of Social Trinitarianism," *JRT* 3 (2009): 79.

"personhood and communion rather than nature and substance are the primary ontological categories."[14] In other words, genuinely personal relationships should be the lens through which one understands divine metaphysics (or ontology).[15] About a decade later, LaCugna served as a sort of nexus of twentieth-century trinitarian development. As Grenz details,

> A more thorough account of the trajectory in which she stands might suggest that LaCugna combines impulses from Zizioulas [i.e., "being as communion"] with Barth's focus on the revelational significance of the divine self-disclosure in Christ, Rahner's linking of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity—which she revises and reformulates as *theologia* and *oikonomia*—and the interest in viewing the divine life through the history of the trinitarian persons evident in Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Jenson.[16]

By way of summary, per Gijsbert van den Brink, "although not every representative of this renaissance endorsed social trinitarianism, the secret behind [the renaissance's] success was often labeled 'the social model of the Trinity.'"[17] I have thus laid sufficient contextual ground for further engagement with social trinitarianism. In

---

[14] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 334. Holmes expands upon this notion, summarizing, "The word *hupostasis*, once essentially synonymous with *ousia*, is distinguished and made synonymous with *prosopon*. The implications of this shift in technical vocabulary is momentous: for the first time in the history of Greek metaphysical reflection, personal and relational terminology is used to describe fundamental ontological realities, replacing substantialistic terminology" ("Three versus One?," 79).

[15] Holmes, "Three versus One?," 80.

[16] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 148. S.a. van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 335. I critically engage LaCugna's model in Torey J. S. Teer, "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?," *STR* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 37–59 (esp. 43–51).

[17] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 331–32. The strong correlation between the trinitarian resurgence and the rise of social trinitarianism was such that in 2000, anti-social trinitarian Karen Kilby noted that the "social understanding of the Trinity . . . has become the new orthodoxy" ("Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *NBf* 81 [2000]: 432–33). However, in 2014, social-model defender van den Brink lamented that—at least in academic theology—"social trinitarianism is leaving the scene again" ("Social Trinitarianism," 332).
   But I question the validity of van den Brink's judgment. Not only does he defend the social model in his article, but also other contemporary theologians continue to support social, relational, or communal understandings of the Trinity. See, e.g., Thomas H. McCall, "Relational Trinity: Creedal Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 113–37; Richard Swinburne, "The Social Theory of the Trinity," *RelS* 54 (2018): 419–37; Jeffrey A. Dukeman, *Mutual Hierarchy: A New Approach to Social Trinitarianism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019).
   As Adonis Vidu rightly recognizes, "ST is an increasingly complex school of Trinitarian theology, showing little sign of abating" (*The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021], 122).

what follows, then, I briefly define the social model, summarize the primary

characteristics shared by various social views, and offer an example that exhibits those

features.

**Definition, Shared Characteristics,
and Representative Model**

Broadly speaking, social trinitarianism is any model that attributes to the

Godhead three distinct centers of consciousness, intellect, and will. According to Karen

Kilby,

> Most basically, social theorists propose that Christians should not imagine God on
> the model of some individual person or thing which has three sides, aspects,
> dimensions or modes of being; God is instead to be thought of as a collective, a
> group, or a society, bound together by the mutual love, accord, and self-giving of its
> members.[18]

Though Kilby goes on to survey three "frequently recurring features" among social-

model proponents, I offer instead van den Brink's summary of the "remarkable consensus

[among social trinitarians] which comprises four clearly distinguishable insights":

(1) three-personal God (three distinct centers of consciousness; use of the term "person"

rather than "impersonal alternatives"), (2) relational ontology (personal subsistences

constituted by mutual relationships of eternal perfect love for one another; perichoretic

relationality), (3) historical reorientation (focus on the economy of salvation via God's

self-disclosure in Scripture), and (4) practical relevance (focus on application to Christian

life and experience rather than speculation).[19]

Consider, for example, the social model proffered by Scott Horrell: "My

definition of *social model* of the Trinity is that *the one divine Being eternally exists as*

three distinct centers of consciousness, wholly equal in nature, genuinely personal in

---

[18] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 433. Theologians who posit a "relational" view of the Trinity may or may not affirm these characterizations.

[19] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 336. See the article for the fully articulated numbered list. Compare van den Brink's fourfold list with Kilby's largely overlapping threefold list.

relationships, and each mutually indwelling the other."[20] Horrell's social conception of

the Trinity aligns with van den Brink's fourfold insights detailed above. (1) Three-

personal God: Horrell defines "'person' in the divine and ideal sense as *a center of self-*

consciousness existing in relationship to others,"[21] and he ascribes "distinct mental

properties" (i.e., intellect) to the three respective "centers" (or "persons"). (2) Relational

ontology: The divine persons are characterized by reciprocal "self-giving love"; "intra-

trinitarian relationships appear neither obligatory nor mechanical but rather deliberate

acts of volition on the part of each of the three persons."[22] Further, "it is *perichoresis*—

the personal interpenetration of each member of the Godhead in the other through mutual

activity of invitation and indwelling—that most adequately explains how three self-

consciences can also be one in consciousness, thought, will, and action."[23] (3) Historical

reorientation: Per his "biblical model" of the social Trinity, Horrell presupposes that "the

economic Trinity as revealed in the Bible accurately represents to finite creation who and

---

[20] J. Scott Horrell, "Toward a Biblical Model of the Social Trinity: Avoiding Equivocation of Nature and Order," *JETS* 47, no. 3 (September 2004): 399. Horrell's model is somewhat unique among social trinitarians in that he argues for an "*eternally ordered social model*," which he defines as "the social model that, while insisting on equality of the divine nature, affirms *perpetual distinction of roles within the immanent Godhead*." Though he uses somewhat different language (in an attempt to avoid theological baggage), Horrell's affirms the preeminence of the Father and the subordination of the Son and the Spirit. The author recognizes that "frequently [though not always] a social model is presumed to include a democratic or egalitarian conception of the immanent Trinity. Indeed, such an assumption is almost endemic in many circles today" (p. 408). To the contrary, he argues,

> A social model of the Godhead that does not recognize eternal differentiation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit based firmly in divine revelation easily loses all significant distinction. An egalitarian model of the immanent Godhead collapses trinitarian distinctions. Conversely, an eternally ordered social model of the Trinity argues that the *activities* and *roles* of each member visible throughout divine revelation are analogously correspondent with the immanent triune relationships. (p. 417)

[21] Horrell, "Biblical Model of the Social Trinity," 403.

[22] Horrell, "Biblical Model of the Social Trinity," 406.

[23] Horrell, "Biblical Model of the Social Trinity," 407. N.B.: It should be clear from my summary thus far that Horrell recognizes distinct centers of intellect, will, and power. Presumably, this move violates the doctrine of inseparable operations. However, Horrell invokes divine *perichoresis* as a way of preserving the inseparability of divine intellect, will, and power (or, to use his words, "consciousness, thought, will, and action"). Whether he is successful in maintaining the inseparability principle (at least, in its most robust sense) is debatable.

what God is, but that the economic Trinity is by no means all that is God."[24] (4) Practical

relevance: Horrell eschews theological speculation ("the speculations of trinitarian

theology are not to supercede revelation"), and he suggests that "radiant truths can be

discerned from social models of the Trinity for our understanding of self and

interpersonal relationships."[25]

Having offered a broad definition of social trinitarianism, summarized the

shared characteristics of various social models, and presented a somewhat recent model

representative of those shared features, I turn now to critically engage the social view of

the Trinity.

Critique of Social Trinitarianism

Many critics of social trinitarianism have gone before me.[26] So, instead of

rehashing existing critiques or critically assessing one social model or another (such as

---

[24] Horrell, "Biblical Model of the Social Trinity," 400. Later, the author articulates a similar thought: "But I think we have to say that the terms used for the relationships between the members of the economic Godhead provide our most penetrating vista for understanding the immanent Trinity" (p. 405). In this regard, Horrell's methodology seems to generally align with Rahner's Rule.

[25] Horrell, "Biblical Model of the Social Trinity," 420.

[26] E.g., Brian Leftow argues that social trinitarianism "cannot be both orthodox and a version of monotheism," and he shows that classical (or Latin) trinitarianism "does not have ST's problems with monotheism" ("Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 203–49; quotations from p. 203). Leftow discusses (on pp. 209–41) "three strategies ST uses to qualify as monotheist": (1) "Trinity monotheism" (only the Trinity is most properly God, though the Father, Son, and Spirit are all divine), (2) "group mind monotheism" (either the three divine persons share one mind [the mind of the one God] or together they constitute a fourth divine mind, which is most properly God), and (3) "functional monotheism" (though the Father, Son, and Spirit are most properly God, they *function as* one God). Leftow republished his chapter in 2009: "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Thomas McCall and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 52–88.
    Sarah Coakley engages the writings of Gregory of Nyssa to "indicate how he has been misinterpreted as a 'social' trinitarian," that is, "solely in terms of the 'three men' analogy, especially with the overtones of psychological self-consciousness or 'individualism'" ("'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins, *The Trinity*, 123–44; quotations from pp. 131, 143).
    Karen Kilby critiques the problematic *manner in which* certain thinkers employ social analogies to the Trinity ("Perichoresis and Projection").
    Richard Cross supports the pro-Nicene consensus, following Lewis Ayres, and responds to the "mistaken" objection that "Eastern views, as commonly understood, seem compatible with 'social' views of the Trinity in ways that Western views do not" (Cross, "Two Models of the Trinity?," *HeyJ* 43, no. 3 [2002]: 275–94; quotation from p. 276).

Horrell's), I engage a social trinitarian—Gijsbert van den Brink—who has recently

attempted to rebut five theological objections to social trinitarianism and offer two

constructive arguments in favor of the social approach. I now take the five and two in

turn, attempting to, as it were, rebut his rebuttal.

According to van den Brink,

> The most common objections to social trinitarianism in recent literature concern (1) the purported practical usefulness of social trinitarianism, (2) social trinitarianism's relation to the theology of the Fathers, (3) social trinitarianism's assumed background in Scripture, (4) social trinitarianism's claims about the inner being of God, and (5) social trinitarianism's difficulties in doing justice to the unity of God.[27]

Concerning the first objection (on the alleged practical utility of the social approach), van

den Brink engages the arguments of Stephen Holmes and Karen Kilby.[28] Since he

primarily focuses on Kilby's objection, I do the same here.

Kilby explains that because social trinitarians recognize in the Godhead three

distinct centers of consciousness and, thus, are on the precipice of tritheism, they have to

---

Stephen Holmes argues that (1) "the practical and ethical usefulness of the social doctrine turns out to be highly questionable"; (2) "contemporary social trinitarianism deviates in crucial aspects from the Cappadocian (and other) Fathers"; and (3) "the claim that social trinitarianism is in fact the best way to appropriate the biblical witness is found wanting" ("Three versus One?," 77).

More recently, Adonis Vidu criticizes social trinitarianism in at least three ways: (1) he finds the approach "inconsistent with the nature of Jewish monotheism" and, by implication, the New Testament's depiction of monotheism; (2) he considers dubious the social approach's "attempt to enlist the Cappadocians and the Eastern trinitarian tradition as a whole to shore up [its] patristic pedigree"; and (3) he critiques Richard Swinburne's "functional monotheism" (see Leftow's categories above), where Swinburne "attempts to secure monotheist unity in coordinating the actions of discrete individuals in such a way that they never become competitive with each other" (Vidu, *Same God*, 47–49, 116–22; quotations from pp. 116, 119). Vidu specifically engages Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Swinburne recapitulates his social model more recently (2018) in "The Social Theory of the Trinity."

For some more recent conversations about (i.e., against) social trinitarianism, see Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021); Craig A. Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 6, 17–18, 45, 267–68, 279–82; Carter, "Why We Must Reject Social Trinitarianism: It is Neither Nicene nor Biblical," *Credo*, July 15, 2021, https://credomag.com/2021/07/why-we-must-reject-social-trinitarianism-it-is-neither-nicene-nor-biblical/. Carter and Barrett dialogue about this subject here: Craig A. Carter and Matthew Barrett, "Since When Did the Trinity Go Social?," Credo Podcast, episode 71, April 13, 2021, MP3 audio, 1:27:54, https://credomag.com/2021/04/since-when-did-the-trinity-go-social-craig-carter-and-matthew-barrett-2/.

[27] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 337.

[28] See Holmes, "Three versus One?," 82–84; Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 441–43.

find a way to explain that there is only one God, not three. Whatever it is that binds "the three into a one" is beyond our experience and understanding—social-model proponents call it *perichoresis* (as exemplified by Horrell's model treated above). From here, a three-stage process ensues:

> First, a concept, perichoresis, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of relationships and relatedness [call this step "projection"]. And then, finally, it is presented as an exciting resource Christian theology has to offer the wider world in its reflections upon relationships and relatedness.[29]

In response, van den Brink asserts (1) that the problem of "projection" does not "specifically threaten social trinitarianism . . . but every form of theology which does not consistently take its starting point in God's revelation" and (2) that "whether or not social trinitarians are guilty of projection depends on whether or not they are true to the sources of the Christian faith."[30] However, while he recognizes that the success of the "projection" argument depends upon the success of common objections (2) and especially (3), van den Brink does not explicitly demonstrate—as I show in my analysis below—that social trinitarians are true to the sources of the Christian faith (viz., Scripture). He *touches* on the subject, but he offers more assumptions than he does supporting evidence. Further, he does not return to Kilby's "projection" argument. Granted, he does assert—against Barth in his discussion of common objection (5)—that proponents of the social approach develop their definition of "personhood" from Scripture, specifically the New Testament. Such a claim is not, however, the same as refuting Kilby's argument that social trinitarians utilize human categories of relatedness

---

[29] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 441–42 (quotation from p. 442). The author summarizes how such "projection" relates to a critique of social trinitarianism's supposed practical usefulness: "It is therefore . . . the abstraction, the conceptual formula, the three-in-oneness, that many theologians want to revivify, and if one is going to make an abstraction . . . relevant, vibrant, exciting, it is natural that one is going to have to project onto it, to fill it out again so that it becomes something the imagination can latch onto" (p. 443).

[30] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 338–39.

to fill out how *perichoresis* works to preserve God's oneness in the social model. So, Kilby's "projection" objection, which raises an issue with the supposed practical usefulness of social trinitarianism, is still in play.

Regarding the second common objection (whether social-model proponents correctly interpret the patristic sources), van den Brink rightly rejects the East-versus-West thesis and accepts the pro-Nicene proposal.[31] As a result, he actually admits that "the Cappadocian Fathers *cannot* be considered as advocates or perhaps even precursors of social trinitarianism."[32] However, he doubles down on the social model's patristic preference, avowing that "contemporary social trinitarians still *can* turn to the Cappadocians for drawing *inspiration* from their work." This statement seems to be more of a concession to the objection as well as a consequent minor redirection of the social approach than an actual rebuttal of the objection.[33]

Responding to the third common objection (whether the social model possesses sufficient basis in the biblical text), van den Brink concludes that "social trinitarianism is not ruled out by the Old Testament whereas, more positively, it is suggested by important strands of the New Testament."[34] It seems to me that van den Brink is simply trying to show that the biblical witness allows for a three-in-one

---

[31] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 339–40. Theodore de Régnon, in his late-nineteenth-century work *Études de théologie positive sur la sainté Trinité*, is often credited as the origin of the East-versus-West paradigm. For more on this subject, see D. Glenn Butner Jr., "For and against de Régnon: Trinitarianism East and West," *IJST* 17, no. 4 (October 2015): 399–412. For proponents of pro-Nicene theology, see Michel René Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *AugS* 26, no. 2 (1995): 51–79; Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *TheolS* 56 (1995): 237–40; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[32] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 340 (emphasis added).

[33] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 340. N.B.: Van den Brink contends that "as long as social trinitarianism subscribes to the orthodox 'three *hypostaseis* in one *ousia* formula' [of the Cappadocians], it is not at all clear why it should be at odds with Nicene Christianity." But he does not go on to explain *how* social-model proponents (do or should) articulate such a subscription, and it seems that opponents of the social model are more concerned with *how* social trinitarians affirm the orthodox formula (i.e., what they *mean* by the terms) than social trinitarians' mere affirmation of the formula. So, again, van den Brink does not truly rebut the second common objection.

[34] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 343.

understanding of divinity; but, such a conclusion does not favor the social model over the classical model. Since both approaches affirm—or should—the "one God, three persons" formula, persuasive power only maintains if one approach can establish that the biblical data supports its particular understanding of divine (essential) unity and (personal) distinction. Van den brink, however, does not proffer supporting evidence, especially vis-à-vis the Old Testament.[35]

Concerning the New Testament, van den Brink invokes as support for his position Fred Sanders's statement that "everyone is bound to be a social trinitarian at the economic level."[36] As an example, van den Brink mentions the depiction of the relation between the Father and the Son in John 14–17 "as two distinct persons who mutually address, glorify and coinhere in each other." Besides the fact that van den Brink does not consider Sanders's comment in light of his overarching discussion on the relation between God's *being* and *doing* (what Sanders calls the "economic-immanent axis"), van den Brink does not actually advance his point; he merely assumes that a "plain reading" of Scripture will lead one to inevitably be a social trinitarian (at least, economically). But

---

[35] Responding to Holmes's objection that "a social trinitarian reading of the Bible unduly privileges the New Testament over the 'Old Testament presentation of the oneness of God,'" van den Brink correctly explains that recent scholarship has shown Christian trinitarianism as stretching back to Jewish Second Temple monotheism, which preserved the ontological distinction between God and all other reality ("Social Trinitarianism," 342, quoting Holmes, "Three versus One?," 87). For "recent scholarship," see, e.g., Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1998).
     Consequently, van den Brink argues that social trinitarianism is not at odds with the alleged fact that "in the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4) the oneness of God is not quantitative, numerical oneness which allows for only one divine person, but rather a qualitative concept denoting the uniqueness of Israel's God" ("Social Trinitarianism," 343, citing as support Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 60).
     Note, however, that Vidu rejects McCall's thesis (upon which van den Brink seems to depend) and critiques social trinitarianism in his survey of the biblical theology of inseparable operations and the character of Jewish monotheism (i.e., whether "fluid" or "strict"; Vidu, *Same God*, 1–11). The relationship between inseparable operations and Jewish monotheism is important because, in Vidu's view, the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of inseparable operations developed side by side (p. xiv).

[36] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 342, quoting Fred Sanders, "The Trinity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

such a claim presupposes that everyone will import the social trinitarian conception of "person(hood)" onto the text, which is far from the case.

Van den Brink recognizes that his rebuttal of the third common objection to the social model only addresses the economic level (i.e., God's activity in redemptive history), so he turns to address the fourth common objection: by taking New Testament language concerning the distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit to be direct descriptions of their immanent (or essential) relations, social trinitarianism risks collapsing the distinction between God's salvific activity (i.e., God *ad extra*) and his inner life (i.e., God *ad intra*).[37] In response, van den Brink recalls Barth's and Rahner's understanding of the relation between God's *being* and God's *doing*, but he does not actually refute the objection. Instead, since Barth and Rahner did not embrace social trinitarianism, van den Brink moves on to the discuss the fifth common objection to the social model of the Trinity—its difficulty in doing justice to the unity of God.

According to van den Brink, Barth and Rahner saw it as "wrong to see the divine *hypostateis* as distinct 'persons,' since that makes it impossible to do justice to God's unity and would in fact lead us into the realm of the dreaded T-word: tritheism."[38] Van den Brink responds by stating that social trinitarians derive their conception of "personhood" from trinitarian doctrine, *not* modern accounts of personhood; thus, for him, personhood means "to find one's very identity in mutual relations with others."[39] He continues, explaining that

> Father, Son and Spirit are persons in the most perfect sense of the term. To be sure, in line with the New Testament, they should be viewed as distinct centers of consciousness and will. . . . Their identity is constituted by their reciprocal personal

---

[37] As an example of this objection, van den Brink ("Social Trinitarianism," 344) cites Carl Mosser, "Fully Social Trinitarianism," in McCall and Rea, *Essays on the Trinity*, 147. This is the very objection that I level against LaCugna in Teer, "Inseparable Operations," 47–49.

[38] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 346. As an example of this objection, van den Brink quotes Barth, *CD*, I/1:403.

[39] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 347.

relationships of love in which they eternally live and have their being. . . . [And] it is this perichoretic communion which accounts for the divine unity.

So far, these statements are representative of the shared characteristics of social models treated above (viz., three-personal God, relational ontology, and historical reorientation). Though van den Brink has more to say, especially concerning *perichoresis*, I must pause momentarily to offer a few judgments. First, though the relationship between defining "personhood" vis-à-vis trinitarian doctrine is *much* more complicated than van den Brink lets on given his brief statement, I can agree with him that personhood can be understood as finding one's identity in "in mutual relations with others." However, his understanding of the divine persons as three distinct centers of consciousness and will does not automatically obtain from this definition. One could argue that classical trinitarian categories (viz., eternal subsisting relations) fit as well. For example, the Father and Son find their respective identities in their mutual relations of paternity and filiation, and the Father and the Holy Spirit find their respective identities in their mutual relations of active spiration and passive spiration (bringing/breathing forth and proceeding from). Per the classical account, "the Persons *are* the relations."[40] Second, it is not obvious from the New Testament data that the divine persons should be understood as distinct centers of consciousness and will. Van den Brink still has not supported that point, other than briefly appealing to imagery from John 14–17, and he still has not explained how he understands the relationship between God *ad extra* and God *ad intra* (as I explained above).

I return now to van den Brink's discussion of *perichoresis* as social trinitarianism's answer to the "unity" or "tritheism" problem. In this regard, he considers the correct question and corresponding critique: "But is it enough to locate the unity of Father, Son and Spirit in their perichoretic communion? Critics of social trinitarianism

---

[40] Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 256.

30

usually claim that it is not, because the notion of *perichoresis* was never meant to function in this way and because monotheism requires a more substantial account of the divine unity."[41] Van den Brink responds to these two objections, taking the latter point first. In his view, the concept of monotheism is more divergent than previously supposed; "both the literature of Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament display a concept of monotheism which is differentiated enough as to allow for a plurality of identities within one divine being."[42] This fluid monotheism thesis, however, is contested in the literature,[43] so the author's conclusion is on unstable ground.

Concerning the former point, van den Brink argues that social trinitarians can venture beyond *perichoresis* in search of additional concepts that can account for or preserve divine unity. However, instead of offering an example of just such a concept, he punts the responsibility to philosophical theologians and philosophers of religion. He even goes a step further, asserting that "perhaps it is not incumbent on the social trinitarian to show exactly *how* the three divine persons are one. . . . It is enough to confess *that* the three are one."[44] I disagree. Though one does not have to scour the

---

[41] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 347. As an example of such a "critic," the author cites John O'Donnell, "Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments," *Greg* 69, no. 1 (1988): 21 (pp. 5–34).

[42] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 348.

[43] See 28n35 above.

[44] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 348. To be fair, Vidu (a classical trinitarian) comes to the same conclusion: "Our proposal hesitates to say just what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, whether persons, or divine individuals, modes of being, etc. They should rightly remain inscrutable." However, he still endeavors to make sense of the available data within given constraints: "At best, we can hope to clarify the rules of trinitarian speech about these three, including speech about their work towards us. And in this we have to remain faithful to the claim of Scripture that 'there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all' (1 Cor 12:6, KJV)" (*Same God*, 122).
  In fact, the doctrine of inseparable operations, about which Vidu's monograph is principally concerned, is a suitable test case for evaluating the viability of the social model's claim to preserve God's oneness. What are the implications of having three distinct centers of consciousness, knowledge, and will in the Godhead for divine action? How can social trinitarianism preserve inseparable operations with three centers of will or volition, which means three actors and, therefore, three actions. The social model would invoke *perichoresis* to explain how the three divine agents participate in shared and collective actions together. Vidu calls this rendering "soft inseparability," which is the very position he endeavors to refute just as he seeks to defend "hard inseparability" (i.e., "that every *act token* of any trinitarian person is also an act token of the other persons"; *Same God*, xv).

depths of God's ineffability, one would think that when facing charges of tritheism, the social trinitarian would go to greater lengths to establish the viability of his position—especially in an article devoted to just that purpose.

After addressing the five most common objections to social trinitarianism, van den Brink briefly offers two constructive arguments: "There is [1] the (formal) argument from the trustworthiness of revelation or divine self-communication . . . and [2] the (material) argument from the nature of salvation."[45] Concerning the former, the author merely asserts that social trinitarianism "seems to follow" from certain simple yet "controvertible" statements, namely, that readers of the New Testament would naturally develop a social understanding of the economic Trinity and that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity (Rahner's Rule). Van den Brink takes these points for granted; he does not defend or expand upon them. However, because he has neither proven that a social reading of the New Testament is obvious nor articulated why Rahner's Rule is the best (or proper) way to understand the relationship between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*, van den Brink has not actually advanced the argument in support of the social model of the Trinity.[46]

Regarding the latter, van den Brink contends that an understanding of salvation as "a participatory ontology, according to which human beings are transformed in the

---

[45] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 349.

[46] An emphasis on the economy of salvation as the epistemological grounding for discourse concerning the Trinity is, according to Bruce D. Marshall, either "uncontroversial, incoherent, or implausible," depending on its formulation ("The Trinity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones, Blackwell Companions to Religion [Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 196). On the one hand, to say that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would remain the same three *persons* had they not undertaken the economy of salvation is uncontroversial. But, on the other hand, to say that the three divine persons are the same in the economy as they are aside from it *in every respect* (e.g., the Son and the Spirit have identical features in virtue of their temporal works of incarnation and indwelling, respectively, as they do in virtue of their divine being) is incoherent. "If [the Son and the Spirit] did not undertake the works, then they would not have the features or characteristics which depend on [their] undertaking the works" (p. 194). Finally, on yet another hand, to say that the immanent Trinity is indiscernible apart from the economic Trinity—that "there just is no 'outside' the economy of salvation"—is implausible, for it forfeits the free gift of God in creation, redemption, and consummation (p. 195). S.a. Marshall, "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question," *Thomist* 74, no. 1 (January 2010): 12; Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 263–65; Sanders, "The Trinity," 41.

Spirit through Jesus Christ into fellowship with the Father, . . . seems to presuppose if not a social, than at least a fairly robust form of trinitarianism."[47] Two argumentative flaws are evident here, however. First, van den Brink does not explain how such a view of creaturely participation and communion with God precludes a classical trinitarian framework. Second, he actually concedes that a "fairly robust form of trinitarianism" must account for such a view, and what is classical trinitarianism if not a *robust* understanding of God's inner life and outward acts? Just as the Son proceeds (via eternal generation, or filiation) from the Father, so also the Son is sent in time for us and our salvation. Further, just as the Spirit proceeds (via spiration) from the Father and the Son, so also the Spirit is sent to apply salvation to the saints. By means of union with Christ, the Spirit bonds believers to Christ and all of his benefits. In this way, Christians participate—according to their creaturely mode of being—in the divine life. Therefore, it seems that, once again, van den Brink has not offered compelling evidence to tip the scales in favor of social trinitarianism.

Summary and Final Thoughts

I began this section with an overview of the development of social approaches to the Trinity in the twentieth century. With that historical context in place, I then offered a broad definition of social trinitarianism, summarized the shared characteristics of various social models, and presented a somewhat-recent model (by Scott Horrell) representative of those shared features. Finally, I critiqued Gijsbert van den Brink's five negative arguments (rebuttals) and two positive arguments (constructive proposals) and found them wanting, thereby showing that the case *against* the social account of the Trinity still stands. Though I have not directly offered condemnatory arguments against social trinitarianism, my critical engagement with van den Brink's defense of the social

---

[47] Van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 350. As an example of a "participatory ontology" proposal, the author cites Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

model suffices to show that the classical model remains the preferred approach to trinitarian theology. In addition, though I have not engaged in direct discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, establishing the proper trinitarian framework is *foundational* (first order) in setting the course for all subsequent theological and, therefore, pneumatological conversation. Having done so, favoring classical trinitarianism, I now turn to consider a distinctly pneumatological manner of engaging in trinitarian discourse—third article theology (TAT). Determining where to situate the Holy Spirit in trinitarian theological method is *semi-foundational* (second order) in setting the trajectory for subsequent theological and, therefore, pneumatological discourse.

Third Article Theology

I begin this section by briefly tracing the development of TAT. Then, I define TAT and detail its primary methodological tenets, the most important of which being a firm commitment to Spirit Christology. Finally, engaging with the movement's staunchest supporter, I critique Myk Habets's conception of both TAT and Spirit Christology. In so doing, I affirm a theological method executed according to the traditional trinitarian *taxis*.

Historical Overview

An approach to theological construction that begins with the Holy Spirit, third article theology is a relatively recent phenomenon. Though D. Lyle Dabney is widely credited for coining the term and initially conceiving of the methodological approach,[48]

---

[48] See D. Lyle Dabney, "Starting with the Spirit: Why the Last Should Be First," in *Starting with the Spirit*, ed. Stephen Pickard and Gordon Preece, Task of Theology Today 2 (Hindmarsh, South Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2001), 3–27; Dabney, "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*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney, Marquette Studies in Theology 30 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 240–61.

Myk Habets acknowledges Dabney's contribution in Habets, "Prolegomenon: On Starting with the Spirit," in *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 2. Elsewhere, however, Habets states that TAT "is an approach initiated by several thinkers, such as Jürgen Moltmann, Clark Pinnock, and Lyle Dabney, to name a few" (*The Progressive*

several theologians and theological developments in the past few decades have worked

toward, anticipated, or called for a third article theology. TAT-champion Myk Habets

offers a brief overview of such developments—which I now summarize.[49]

Karl Barth once suggested that one *could* begin the entire theological

enterprise by starting with the Holy Spirit,[50] and many have since followed his

suggestion. Looking at Roman Catholic scholars, Habets mentions the massive and

influential work of Yves Congar, Heribert Mühlen's "proto-Spirit Christology," and

Ralph Del Colle's and David Coffey's significant contributions to Spirit Christology.[51]

Surveying Pentecostalism, Habets discusses the labors of James K. A. Smith, Veli-Matti

Kärkkäinen, and Frank Machia.[52] Representative of Protestantism is Clark Pinnock.[53]

Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019], 183).

For his part, Amos Yong ("Poured Out on All Flesh: The Spirit, World Pentecostalism, and the Renewal of Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century," *PentS* 6, no. 1 [2007]: 26) cites the following works as representative of TAT: Henry Pitney van Dusen, *Spirit, Son and Father: Christian Faith in the Light of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); John V. Taylor, *The Go-between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Dabney, "Starting with the Spirit" (2001); Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: World Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

[49] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 3–14.

[50] Karl Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 278.

[51] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Complete Three-Volume Work in One Volume*, trans. David Smith, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1997); Heribert Mühlen, *Una Mystica Persona: Die Kirche als das Mysterium der heilsgeschichtlichen Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen; Eine Person in vielen Personen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967); Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[52] James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, vol. 1, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Elsewhere, Habets acknowledges the following works as contributing to Spirit-oriented dogmatics: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission*, ed. Amos Yong (New York: University Press of America, 2002); Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

[53] Pinnock, *Flame of Love* (1996).

Dealing with liberation theologies, Habets engages feminist theologians Elizabeth Johnson and Sarah Coakley.[54] Finally, concerning Eastern Orthodoxy, Habets looks not at certain *figures* but at certain *features* of the tradition that are conducive to TAT (e.g., Basil of Caesarea's notion of the Spirit as Creator and Perfector).[55] The 2016 multi-authored volume *Third Article Theology*, then, represents the first concerted effort to present and apply a theological method that "starts with the Spirit."[56]

Far and away the most important theological endeavor related to TAT is Spirit Christology—which I treat in greater detail below. In fact, the two are so enmeshed that it is somewhat difficult to distinguish them. Nevertheless, a few words about their relationship are in order. Repeated efforts in Spirit Christology have preceded the full flowering of TAT by decades. As such, TAT is birthed out of Spirit Christology. On the other hand, the latter is a Spirit-leading approach to an individual doctrine (viz., Christology), while the former is, according to Habets, "a full theological program."[57] Because I am presently concerned with semi-foundational theological method, I engage primarily with TAT and secondarily with Spirit Christology. With the above historical and theological context in place, I proceed to formally define TAT and detail its central tenets.

---

[54] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). N.B.: Christopher R. J. Holmes critiques Coakley's "Spirit-leading" approach in *The Holy Spirit*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 33–42.

[55] As a representative of his discussion, Habets cites Dimitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God: The Experience of God*, trans. and ed. Ioana Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994).

[56] As Habets avows, "With this pneumatological dogmatics, the contributors submit to the academy a partial and incomplete recommendation for how we may go about doing and thinking theologically from and in the Spirit" ("Prolegomenon," 19).

[57] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 14.

Definition and Methodological Criteria

In the words of Kirsteen Kim, third article theology "attempts nothing more and nothing less than to reflect upon the whole of Christian theology from the perspective of pneumatology."[58] Kim clarifies that TAT "is not only pneumatology. It is an attempt to redo the whole of theology, beginning with what we understand about the Holy Spirit. Instead of starting with God the Father, [TAT] will cover the Creed backwards."[59]

Habets, for his part, defines TAT while simultaneously distinguishing his model from that of Dabney:

> While this account takes its impetus from Dabney's own theological program, it exhibits subtle but important differences. TAT has to be distinguished from dogmatic accounts that are simply pneumatological, something more appropriately termed a *theology of the Third Article*. TAT, by contrast, is not simply a study of pneumatology but is, rather, a conscious and considered approach to conceiving of theology and witnessing to God's self-revelation in Word and works, from the perspective of the Spirit where questions of pneumatology set the agenda and control the trajectory of the dogmatic enterprise, rather than pneumatology being the sole focus. As such, TAT is a specific and technical name for a method of theology. It seeks to articulate the contours of a Christian theology in a Trinitarian fashion, but one that starts with the Spirit.[60]

In his prolegomenon to *Third Article Theology*, Habets decries the putative neglect of the Holy Spirit: "While occluded, oppressed, or consigned to the margins by a christomonistic myopia, the Holy Spirit has often suffered at the hands of Christian theologians," and older systematic theology textbooks have often consigned "the Spirit to perpetual servitude or bonded labor to the work of Christ."[61] TAT, Habets believes, is the

---

[58] Kirsteen Kim, foreword to Habets, *Third Article Theology*, xiii.

[59] Kim, foreword to *Third Article Theology*, xiv.

[60] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 3 (emphasis added). Habets's definition of TAT can be contrasted with that of Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders: "'Third Article Theology' refers to the theological content of the third article of the Nicene Creed. . . . Third article theology should be about the identification and articulation of the procession of the third person of the Godhead" (eds., introduction to *The Third Person of the Trinity*, ECD [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020], xv–xvi). So, like Dabney, Crisp and Sanders's work represents a theology of the third article (which just is pneumatology) more than a third article theology (which is a pneumatological method for doing theology).

[61] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 2. While Habets is correct to condemn consigning the Spirit to "servitude" and "bonded labor" to the Son, closely connecting the work of the Spirit to the work of Christ *is* appropriate if indeed that relationship accords with the divine will for salvation history. It is this strong connectivity between the Spirit and Son that I am promoting in this dissertation.

answer: "[TAT] is proposed as one way to address this less-than-Trinitarian articulation of the faith." David Coffey concurs: "The call . . . for a Third Article Theology to correct and complete [and, per Habets, complement] the accomplishments of the theologies of the First and Second Articles (of the Nicene Creed) deserves a sympathetic response from theologians."[62]

I now move to consider Habets's methodological theses for TAT. But first, why this preoccupation with Habets and his method? In brief, Habets appears to be the proponent *par excellence* of third article theology. As the editor of the 2016 multi-authored volume on the subject (as well as the author of several of its chapters), Habets possesses a clear and emphatic vision for TAT, having embodied Dabney's call for the church to "start with the Spirit" and having "developed this way of thinking after God and of doing theology over a number of works but most comprehensively [in *Third Article Theology*]."[63] Further, Habets shares both of my concerns for theological method and classical trinitarian categories: "With this volume I wanted to go beyond a partial approach and develop a way of doing theology that was orthodox and yet distinctive, biblical and yet constructive, traditional and yet contemporary."[64]

With this rationale established, I move on to summarize the ten methodological criteria for TAT proffered by Habets:[65]

1. TAT begins with the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is not a postscript.

---

[62] David Coffey, "The Method of Third Article Theology," in Habets, *Third Article Theology*, 21.

[63] Myk Habets, acknowledgments of *Third Article Theology*, xi.

[64] Habets, acknowledgments of *Third Article Theology*, xii.

[65] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 14–18. Habets explains that early attempts to establish such criteria for TAT appear in his earlier monograph on Spirit Christology; see Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, PTMS 129 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 232–33. Further, he clarifies that the ten criteria offered in *Third Article Theology* are developments from his previous work; see Habets, "The Surprising Third Article Theology of Jonathan Edwards," in *The Ecumenical Edwards: Jonathan Edwards and the Theologians*, ed. Kyle C. Strobel (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2015), 197–99.

2. TAT looks *through* the Spirit at other theological loci (theological method), rather than merely *at* the Spirit (pneumatology only).

3. TAT precedes first and second article theologies, for the Spirit is the Christian's first point of contact for participation in the divine life (Spirit → Son → Father).

4. TAT complements, but does not compete with, first and second article theologies; it is fully committed to trinitarian theology.

5. TAT recognizes that the Spirit continues to speak to the church today "in a retroactive movement of triune discourse" (retroactive, or pneumatic, hermeneutics).

6. TAT engages the mission of the triune God in the world (applied theology: ethics, worship, mission).

7. TAT is Christocentric and crucicentric in accord with Spirit Christology.

8. TAT emphasizes the eschatological nature of the triune God's mission in the world, which is proleptically incorporated into the overarching dogmatic method.

9. TAT emphasizes the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work to bring believers to greater degrees of holiness or "Christification."

10. TAT is thoroughly ecumenical in that it is (A) committed to historic creeds and confessions and (B) desirous of doctrinal unity among the divided Christian traditions.

After articulating his methodological criteria for TAT, Habets clarifies, "These criteria form a very general locus of agreement around which all of the essayists in [*Third Article Theology*] concur to a greater or lesser extent."[66] However, since Habets himself presents these criteria, I now evaluate them as though they are representative of his very own position.

Evaluation of Methodological Criteria

I commend Habets for endeavoring to rectify the putative neglect of the Spirit in historical and contemporary theology and for prizing traditional trinitarian categories (criteria 4, 7, and 9). Habets reveals his fidelity to the latter, for example, in his critique of contemporary Pentecostal scholarship, where he rejects social trinitarianism and tritheism as well as affirms inseparable operations, the coordination of the divine

---

[66] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 18.

(eternal) processions and (temporal) missions, and the Christological center of trinitarian theology.[67] Next, I am amenable to Habets's "retroactive hermeneutic" (criterion 5). As Habets explains elsewhere, "It is the Spirit of Light who illuminates the significance of the Christ event (*retro*); it is the presence of the Spirit of Life that moves the church on (*active*); and it is the Spirit of Truth who brings the word of God into new situations (*retroactive*)."[68] In addition, I applaud Habets's commitment to the life of the church and the kingdom of God, ensuring that his method includes ethical, doxological, and missional applications (criterion 6). I also appreciate his eschatological emphasis, connecting the Spirit to the person and work of Christ and the body of Christ, the church (criterion 8). Finally, I endorse Habets's affirmation of the Spirit's sanctifying work in believers (criterion 9) and his commitment to the historic creeds and confessions of the church (criterion 10A).

With these commendations, however, come a few concerns and critiques.

Ecumenicism

First, though I commend Habets's desire for doctrinal unity among the disparate Christian traditions (criterion 10B), I am skeptical of ecumenical endeavors that seek—or achieve—unity by compromising core Christian convictions. For example, in seeking ecumenical unity between Eastern and Western traditions, Habets reconceives of the divine processions such that the *filioque* becomes irrelevant and, therefore, unnecessary.[69] However, different branches of Christianity exist *precisely because*

---

[67] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 7–8. Although, as I show below, Habets reinterprets certain trinitarian categories (viz., intratrinitarian relations) in ways that I believe are problematic.

[68] Myk Habets, "Developing a Retroactive Hermeneutic: Johannine Theology and Doctrinal Development," *American Theological Inquiry* 1 (2008): 79. Habets adds, "A retroactive hermeneutic seeks to hold together the plain sense of Scripture ('what it meant') with its use by the Spirit in the community ('its significance today')" (p. 83; s.a. p. 81).

[69] See Myk Habets, "Getting beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology," in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the* Filioque *for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Myk Habets (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 211–30; Habets, "*Filioque? Nein*: A Proposal for Coherent Coinherence," in *Trinitarian*

Christians diverge on certain fundamentals of the faith (e.g., Protestants and Roman Catholics on the nature of justification and sanctification). Consequently, a robust theological method does not have to be ecumenical in order to be sound, charitable, and enriching.

Spirit Christology

Second, I take issue with Spirit Christology (criterion 7), for there are better ways to make sense of intratrinitarian relations as well as the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the incarnate Son. Nevertheless, because Spirit Christology is the single most important feature of TAT and, as Kyle Claunch avers, "is now, and will remain, a force to be reckoned with in the larger pneumatological and Christological contexts of Christian theology,"[70] I now engage with the subject at length. First, I define Spirit Christology; then, I summarize Habets's conception of it; finally, I discuss the issues with his model.

What exactly is Spirit Christology? Claunch, whose dissertation surveys and evaluates various types of Spirit Christologies, defines the theological enterprise as follows:

> Spirit Christology is an approach to Christology that affords paradigmatic prominence to the Holy Spirit for understanding traditional Christological categories. . . . Put differently, a Christological proposal can be identified as Spirit Christology if one or more of the major issues in traditional Christological discourse would be deemed as impoverished or incomplete apart from sustained appeal to the Holy Spirit.[71]

Claunch also distinguishes between the various swathes of Spirit Christology by means of two broad categories: revisionist and trinitarian Spirit Christologies.

Theology after Barth, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday, PTMS 148 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 161–202.

[70] Kyle David Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise of Spirit Christology in Traditional Trinitarian and Christological Perspective" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 2.

[71] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 3 (original emphasis removed).

Contemporary revisionist Spirit Christologies are, *contra* the Logos Christology of the early church creeds, "explicitly non-Trinitarian, articulating a unitarian/modalistic paradigm for understanding the mission and message of Jesus in light of his experience of the Spirit of God. . . . Such non-Trinitarian proposals are little more than contemporary iterations of an ancient Christological heresy—adoptionism."[72] Trinitarian Spirit Christologies, however, "attempt to develop their models within the general boundaries of Trinitarian orthodoxy, as established by the ecumenical creeds, even if they critique the traditional formulae at key points."[73]

Claunch identifies two methodological approaches to trinitarian Spirit Christologies. On the one hand is the "biblical-exegetical" approach, wherein proponents focus almost exclusively on the exegesis of key biblical texts in order to highlight "the role of the Holy Spirit upon or through Christ according to his human nature during his earthly life and ministry."[74] On the other hand is the "historical-systematic" approach, wherein proponents tend to emphasize intratrinitarian relations "in dialogue with the ideas of their theological/philosophical predecessors and contemporaries."[75] Myk Habets, whose trinitarian Spirit Christology I now engage in greater detail, falls into the "historical-systematic" camp.

For Habets, an orthodox Spirit Christology, one that accords with TAT,

---

[72] Kyle Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise and Peril of Spirit Christology," *SBJT* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 91. As representative of this category, Claunch lists Geoffrey Lampe, James D. G. Dunn, Paul Newman, and Roger Haight ("The Son and the Spirit" [diss., 2017], 5; evaluation on pp. 28–48).

[73] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (art., 2015), 92.

[74] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (art., 2015), 92. As representative of this approach, Claunch lists Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware ("The Son and the Spirit" [diss., 2017], 7; evaluation on pp. 51–81).

[75] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (art., 2015), 92. As representative of this approach, Claunch lists Ralph Del Colle, Myk Habets, Clark Pinnock, and Amos Yong ("The Son and the Spirit" [diss., 2017], 6–7; evaluation on pp. 81–106). N.B.: Claunch aptly distinguishes between Del Colle and Habets (who maintain ecumenical hope while prizing Nicene and Chalcedonian categories), on the one hand, and Pinnock and Yong (who de-centralize Christ such that the Spirit is "savingly active in non-Christian faith traditions"), on the other. In engage Pinnock and Yong' pneumatocentric theology in chap. 3 (sect. "Pneumatocentric" [pp. 84–86]).

is one that seeks to articulate the relationship between the "person" of the Holy Spirit and the "person" of the Son, both in the intra-Trinitarian relations and the incarnation. Hence, an orthodox Spirit Christology attempts to inform Christology with an equally important and central pneumatology, while at the same time enriching the integrity of the doctrine of the Trinity. As such, Spirit Christology is a christological construction formulated from a Spirit-oriented direction; it is a Christology that recognizes that its very constitution must proceed from a robust pneumatology.[76]

Further, part of Habets's impetus for pursuing Spirit Christology is his desire to address the putative neglect of the Spirit in theology and to achieve greater ecumenical unity—both of which are features of his vision for TAT.

As Claunch explains, "Habets is concerned that the traditional model of generation/procession as the means of distinguishing the three persons in the immanent Trinity has a tendency to diminish the reality of the Spirit's true personhood in relation to the Father and the Son."[77] In Habets's view, this linear model of the intratrinitarian relations features active individuating properties for the Father (generates, spirates), active and passive properties for the Son (*generated by*, spirates), and only a passive property for the Holy Spirit (*spirated by*). Thus, Habets rejects (or redefines[78]) the classical irreversible intratrinitarian *taxis* and offers an alternative (or complementary) model, for the only way to achieve a proper emphasis on the Spirit is "if all three persons, logically and ontologically, spring forth in one simultaneous, nonsequential, eternal act in

---

[76] Myk Habets, "Spirit Christology: The Future of Christology?," in *Third Article Theology*, 208. Habets categorizes Spirit Christologies along the same lines as Claunch (pp. 207–8). Habets's full proposal for a trinitarian Spirit Christology can be found in *The Anointed Son* (2010), with which Claunch engages in his dissertation.

[77] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 86.

[78] Following Thomas F. Torrance, Habets details,

Torrance affirms the traditional *taxis* of the divine Persons (the eternal processions) with the stipulation that the eternal generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit from the Father apply only to the mode of their enhypostatic differentiation and not to the causation of their being. . . . I would add to this account the enhypostatic differentiation of the Father is also "personed" in the simultaneous acts of begetting and spirating the Son and the Spirit, as both Son and Spirit relate to the Father as Father, as *fons divinitatis* ["fountain of divinity"], and as the *mia archē* ["one source or origin"]. ("Getting beyond the *Filioque*," 225)

which each person of the Trinity subsistently defines, and equally, is subsistently defined by, the other persons."[79]

Consequently, in Claunch's words, "Habets espouses a reciprocal model of double movement in which the Son is eternally generated from the Father in and by the Spirit and the Son loves the Father in and by the Spirit."[80] In brief, per Habets, "In the immanent Trinity the Father begets the Son in or by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit simultaneously proceeds from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten. The Father too is simultaneously personed in the begetting of the Son (in the Spirit) and the spiration of the Spirit (through the Son)."[81] This reconception of intratrinitarian relations and the consequent emphasis on the Spirit's active role therein "is not arbitrarily concocted," Claunch notes. Assuming the validity of the first half of Rahner's Rule ("The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity"), "Habets reasons from Scripture that the personal hypostatic identity of the Son must be, in some way, dependent on the personal hypostatic identity of the Spirit."[82] The biblical text upon which Habets draws (as well as the scriptural text *par excellence* for most, if not all, Spirit Christologies) is the virginal conception of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18–25 // Luke 1:26–38). Because the Holy Spirit is directly responsible for bringing about Jesus's conception and

---

[79] Habets, *The Anointed Son*, 223. As Habets explains elsewhere, "Only when such fully Trinitarian relations are posited thereby each person is active in the 'personing' of the other as subject is a fully *perichoretic* view of God possible, one which accords with the relational ontology of a Third Article Theology" ("Getting beyond the *Filioque*," 222). Again following Torrance, Habets would call these trinitarian relations "onto-relations" or "being-constituting-relations" (p. 224).

[80] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 87. See pp. 85–89 for Claunch's full summary of Habets's proposal. S.a. Jerome Van Kuiken and Joshua M. McNall, "Who's on Third? (Re)Locating the Spirit in the Triune *Taxis*," in Crisp and Sanders, *The Third Person of the Trinity*, 88–104, wherein the authors evaluate three modern *Spirituque* proposals and then affirm their own favored *Spirituque* position (*Spirituque* = a reconceptualization of the divine *taxis* such that the Spirit participates with the Father in the Son's eternal generation).

[81] Habets, "Spirit Christology," 225. In articulating a "relational [or dynamic] ontology of the divine being" (*contra* a so-called "static-substance ontology"), Habets is following and building upon the work of Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). Habets espouses his relational ontology in greater detail in "Getting beyond the *Filioque*," 211–30, and *The Anointed Son*, 188–227. For the quoted material in this note, see Habets, "Getting beyond the *Filioque*," 214.

[82] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 88.

is linked to the identification of Jesus as the "Son of God" (Luke 1:35), "Habets concludes that the eternal hypostatic identity of the Son is to be understood in terms of the working of the Spirit, by whom the Father generates the Son."[83] Thus, in summary form, is Habets's vision for Spirit Christology.

I now turn to address the deficiencies of Habets's Spirit Christology, again following the work of Kyle Claunch (either by agreement or by independent determination).[84] First, it is incoherent to posit the hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit upon two distinct eternal "moments" of spiration: (1) *from* the Father *to* the Son and (2) *from* the Son *to* the Father. This formulation would seem to make the Spirit logically prior to the Son in the order of divine being, which disrupts the traditional trinitarian *taxis*. Habets may find such reordering acceptable; I do not—for reasons I articulate below.

Second, Habets's reciprocal model of intratrinitarian relations disrupts the revelatory correspondence between God's *being* and God's *doing*, a correspondence that the traditional *taxis* model (generation → spiration) correctly captures. As Claunch articulates,

> The traditional model was developed as a way to speak of the eternal being of Godself [i.e., processions] according to the pattern of divine revelation, revelation which has as its source the missions of the Son and Spirit as narratively and propositionally transmitted to the church through the written words that make up the New Testament. The Father sent the Son as redeemer, and the Son accomplished his mission through his passion and resurrection. The Son then sent the Spirit, from the Father, so that those he came to save could, through the indwelling of the Spirit, be sons of God with him. The order (*taxis*) observed in the revelation of the divine

---

[83] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 88. For Habets's treatment of the virginal conception passages, see Habets, *The Anointed Son*, 123–31.

[84] For Claunch's evaluation of the trinitarian Spirit Christology of Habets and Del Colle (whose reciprocal models of intratrinitarian relations Claunch categorizes together), see Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 89–96. The Spirit Christology of the Del Colle can be found in *Christ and the Spirit* (1994).

missions was then said to be true (analogically) of the eternal being of God in himself—Father → Son → Holy Spirit.[85]

Thus, the temporal missions *reveal* (or *communicate*) the eternal processions within the Godhead, while the eternal processions *are the ontological basis for* the temporal missions. The traditional *taxis*—both *ad intra* and *ad extra*—must therefore be maintained.

Habets, however, would affirm the correspondence between God's inward life and his outward works; he believes his model rightly makes sense of the biblical data. After all, the Spirit's activity (virginal conception) precedes that of Christ (life, death, resurrection, ascension).[86] But, as Claunch explains, such work of the Spirit does not reveal reciprocal intratrinitarian relations because the Spirit's anointing only pertains the Son's human nature, not his divine nature; hence, "Jesus' experience of the Spirit reveals more about the ideal way that God relates to man than it does about the way the persons of the Godhead relate eternally to one another."[87] Further, as Adonis Vidu aptly notes, "the contribution of the Spirit in the conception of Christ is not, strictly speaking, a mission but an operation. As an operation, it is only *appropriated* to the Spirit, since all divine persons indivisibly participate in it."[88]

Habets would also see his reciprocal model as making the best sense of "the way humanity is created and drawn into a re-creation by the Spirit, through Christ, to the

---

[85] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 91. This critique by Claunch aligns with the critiques of Christopher Holmes (*The Holy Spirit*, 127) and Bruce Marshall ("The Deep Things of God: Trinitarian Pneumatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 407).

[86] As Habets states, "Christ's mission is specifically situated within the prior mission of the Spirit and can only be adequately understood in that light" ("Spirit Christology," 225).

[87] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 93–94.

[88] Adonis Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 74. See Vidu's full monographs (*Same God*; *Divine Missions*) for a full explanation of the distinction between missions and operations and of *why* the mission of the Spirit does not precede that of Christ. S.a. Vidu, "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," in Crisp and Sanders, *The Third Person of the Trinity*, 21–35.

Father."[89] But the traditional *taxis* model accounts for the inverse relationship of the divine processions and missions (Father → Son → Spirit) and humankind's soteriological experience of God (Spirit → Son → Father). So, while the eternal processions are the *ontological ground* for the temporal missions, the temporal missions are the *epistemological ground* for the eternal processions. In Claunch's words, "Through the grace of new birth by the Spirit, one's eyes are opened to see the glory of Jesus Christ and embrace him as Savior and Lord. Through faith in Christ, the believer experiences union with God and knows God the Father as 'Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6)."[90] Christopher R. J. Holmes raises similar concerns:

> What a Spirit Christology seems to do, if one is to take Habets as one of its representative voices on the Protestant side, is to confuse immanent processions and temporal missions. The missions of the persons follow upon or are derivative of the processions. The temporal action of the persons in the economy teaches us about the "the pattern of eternal divine processions." Given that the Spirit's action in the economy is not to lead us to the Spirit's self but rather to Christ and thereby to his Father, I do not know how one can start with the Spirit, given that the Spirit "works directly to unite us with Jesus Christ and his Father," and does so "by teaching us to know who Jesus is."[91]

Holmes's words are a fitting segue into the third issue with Habets's reciprocal model of intratrinitarian relations and, thus, his Spirit Christology: it threatens to obscure the Christological focus of the New Testament. As Claunch aptly emphasizes, "The Spirit, sent forth from the Father and the Son[,] exalts the person and work of Christ through the witness of disciples[,] whose message is about the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 16:14-15; Acts 1:8)."[92] By ordering the Son's filial relation to the Father

---

[89] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 15. In Habets's view, TAT (via Spirit Christology) is the most consistent way of coordinating the *ordo salutis* ("order of salvation"), *ordo cognoscendi* ("order of knowing"), and *ordo essendi* ("order of being"). However, Holmes contends that Habets has confused "the order of knowing and teaching in relation to the order of being" (*The Holy Spirit*, 128–29).

[90] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 95.

[91] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 127–28, quoting Marshall, "The Deep Things of God," 407, 400.

[92] Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit" (diss., 2017), 95. This point aligns with my proposal for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology (see chaps. 3–5).

logically posterior to the Spirit's eternal procession, Habets risks untethering the work of the Spirit from the work of the Son such that the door to inclusivism is cracked open. Of course, Habets would reject such inclusivist notions, but his reciprocal relations model is susceptible to this critique in a way that the traditional *taxis* model is not. Further, returning to Holmes,

> My worry regarding Spirit Christology—at least insofar as Habets's monograph is representative—is that we are being asked to start with one whose identity is other-directed. I am convinced that the best way to honour the Spirit is to try to keep talking in New Testament terms. One starts with the Spirit by starting with the Son, by whom the Spirit is given, and in turn the Father, who sends the Son in the Spirit. The Father sends the Son in the Spirit in order "that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).[93]

In summary, one of my issues with Habets's vision for TAT is his commitment to Spirit Christology, which I have just outlined and critiqued. I now proceed to my final issues with Habets's methodological criteria for TAT, which, as it turns out, follow naturally from my issues with his Spirit Christology.

First-Order Priority

My third critique of TAT is this: I reject the first-order priority that Habets affords the Holy Spirit in his theological method (criterion 1) and, consequently, his recommendation that third article theology should precede first and second article theologies (criterion 3). In fact, Habets argues (as part of criterion 4) that by combining a Spirit Christology with a Logos Christology, "a TAT will be superior to either First or Second Article Theology *tout court* precisely because it is Trinitarian from start to finish in ways that do not overlook the full contribution and significance of the Spirit, not 'watered down' or 'half-known.'"[94] However, as should be clear from my objections to Habets's Spirit Christology above, a theological method that follows the traditional

---

[93] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 129–30.

[94] Habets, "Prolegomenon," 16.

trinitarian *taxis* can account for all of the highlights of Habets's proposed method while avoiding the pitfalls thereof. Further, though some classical theological treatments are guilty of neglecting the Holy Spirit, traditional *taxis* theology still possesses sufficient explanatory power to highlight and enjoy the significant contributions of the Holy Spirit across the breath of Christian theology and praxis. Hence, I agree with Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger's affirmation that "in terms of a methodology for developing our doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we must avoid two extremes: last-minute addition and first-order priority."[95]

Final Verdict

Ultimately, therefore, I reject Habets's overarching method of looking *through* the first-ordered Spirit at other theological loci (criterion 2). A prime example of a sound alternative method is that of Allison and Köstenberger in *The Holy Spirit*. In part 2 on systematic theology, the authors first situate their pneumatology within their classical trinitarian theology (chaps. 12–15) before correlating their trinitarian pneumatology with the different loci of systematic theology (from creation to eschatology; chaps. 16–23). In other words, Allison and Köstenberger do not look *through* the Spirit at other loci (*contra* TAT). Instead, they place their pneumatology *beside* each locus in order to elucidate, following Michael Horton's counsel, "the unique role of the Holy Spirit in every work"[96]—all through classical trinitarian categories (viz., the generation-spiration *taxis* and the procession-mission paradigm). It is to this latter method of engaging in theological discourse that I subscribe. I believe traditional *taxis* theology makes better

---

[95] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 226.

[96] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 286, quoting Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017) 41 (original emphasis removed). Contextually, both Allison-Köstenberger and Horton are discussing—and affirming—the parallel doctrines of inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations. On account of both doctrines, "It is not different *works* but different *roles* in *every work* that the divine persons perform" (Horton, 38). Hence, it is precisely the unique role of the Holy Spirit that Allison and Köstenberger investigate in each and every divine work in creation, redemption, and consummation.

sense of the biblical data, its logical entailments, and the historic witness of the (Western) church.

Summary and Final Thoughts

I began this section by briefly reviewing the development of third article theology. Next, I defined TAT and detailed its primary methodological criteria as presented by TAT-champion Myk Habets. Finally, I evaluated those criteria, critically engaging with TAT's central commitment, Spirit Christology. Ultimately, I affirmed a theological method executed according to the traditional trinitarian *taxis*. While many of the eventual theological conclusions reached via TAT *may* be sound, those conclusions will be reached by a flawed method, conclusions that could just as effectively be reached (if not more so) by traditional *taxis* theology.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

There is today no shortage of contemporary proposals for reconceiving of the Trinity. By and large, these proposals manifest out of a desire to correct some perceived deficiency of classical (Latin) trinitarianism. It has been my purpose in this chapter to evaluate, in turn, two such proposals, one foundational and one semi-foundational for all subsequent theological inquiry.

Social trinitarianism, *contra* classical trinitarianism, reconceives of intratrinitarian relations such that the three divine persons comprise three distinct centers of consciousness, knowledge, and will. While social models of the Trinity claim to better represent the rich relationality of God *ad intra* and *ad extra*, they run the risk of either falling into tritheism or fumbling divine action.

Third article theology, *contra* traditional *taxis* theology, reconceives of trinitarian theological method by beginning with the Holy Spirit and filtering all subsequent dogmatic discourse through the lens of pneumatology. Far and away the most prominent realization of a third-article theological method is Spirit Christology, one

manifestation of which reconceives of intratrinitarian relations such that the traditional irreversible divine *taxis* is traded for a *taxis* of reciprocal relations. This model teeters on metaphysical incoherence, a violation of the revelatory correspondence between eternal processions and temporal missions, and a disruption of the Christocentric nature of the economy of salvation. And because Spirit Christology and third article theology are so entangled, the problems of one are wrapped up with the problems of the other.

In my view, classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology—two sides of the same coin, really—possess explanatory power for addressing the concerns raised by social trinitarians, on the one hand, and third-article theologians (as well as Spirit-Christology proponents), on the other. To say it a different way, the classical conception of the Trinity need not be *re*-conceived in order to deal with the various criticisms leveled against it. Instead, theologians should take care to show just how classical trinitarian categories make sense of all of the biblical data and are theologically coherent with one another in the face of objections or flat-out rejection. Indeed, I carry out this very task in subsequent chapters: showing how a Christological pneumatology coheres with classical trinitarian categories and, by extension, a trinitarian pneumatology.

It has not been the purpose of this chapter to provide a full defense of classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology but to critically assess and ultimately reject social trinitarianism and third article theology as methods for engaging in trinitarian discourse. In so doing, I hope to have provided preliminary reasons for accepting the historic method for pursuing trinitarian theology.[97] Hence, a *trinitarian* Christological pneumatology must be *classically* trinitarian. Having surveyed alternative approaching

---

[97] While I have provided *preliminary* reasons for affirming classical trinitarianism, several recent sources provide *comprehensive* reasons for doing so. See, e.g., Vidu, *Same God*; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*; Carter, *Contemplating God*; Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020); Steven J. Duby, *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology*, SCDS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019); James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017).

and having found them wanting, I now take the classical approach for granted, employing it as the foundation upon which I construct a trinitarian Christological pneumatology in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTOCENTRISM AND A TRINITARIAN
CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

The first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology is Christocentrism.

Christocentrism—as distinct from Christomonism[1]—is "a way of constructing theology

or an approach towards the doctrine of revelation in which the person and work of Christ

plays a determining or central role."[2] Dane Ortlund categorizes "a healthy

Christocentrism" into five types: (1) hermeneutical, (2) salvation-historical, (3)

homiletical, (4) evangelistic, and (5) sanctifying.[3] For the purposes of this dissertation,

the first two categories are the most relevant. Concerning hermeneutical Christocentrism,

Ortlund comments,

> Mature Christian interaction with the Bible necessarily reads and interprets it
> through a christological lens in which the incarnate Christ is seen to be the ultimate
> interpretive key to accessing the full meaning(s) of the biblical text. . . . Jesus is the

---

[1] As explained by Jonas Schröter, "Christomonism designates a one-sided over-emphasis on the center of the biblical message [i.e., Jesus Christ]. Unbiblical Christomonism is when we lapse in proclaiming who God the Father is, or in preaching the triune God, while Jesus Christ, the center of faith, becomes our exclusive theme. We can even make it appear as if Christ and only Christ is the Christian God" ("Preaching Only Christ? The Danger of Christomonism," trans. Christopher S. Doerr, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 115, no. 3 [Summer 2018]: 203). S.a. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 178 ("The Danger of Christomonism").

 The charge of Christomonism is often leveled against Karl Barth. For an examination of the validity of this claim, see Marc Cortez, "What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a 'Christocentric' Theologian?," *SJT* 60, no. 2 (2007): 127–43. S.a. Henri Blocher, "Karl Barth's Christocentric Method," in *Engaging with Barth: Contemporary Evangelical Critiques*, ed. David Gibson and Daniel Strange (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 21–54 (N.B.: Blocher does not engage Cortez).

[2] Pan-Chiu Lai, *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Study of Paul Tillich's Thought*, Studies in Philosophical Theology (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994); s.a. Dane C. Ortlund, "Christocentrism: An Asymmetrical Trinitarianism?," *Them* 34, no. 3 (November 2009): 310.

[3] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 318–20 (quotation from p. 318). Cf. Richard A. Muller's "On Defining and Distinguishing Christocentrisms" (pp. 254–56) in "A Note on 'Christocentrism' and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology," *WTJ* 68, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 254–60.

"center" of Scripture in the sense that he is "the focal point that gathers all the rays of light that issue from Scripture."[4]

And Ortlund summarizes salvation-historical Christocentrism thus: "Salvation history . . . is christocentric in the sense that Christ is the pinnacle from which all salvation history is to be viewed, the filter through which all salvation history passes, and the goal in which all salvation history culminates (Rom 16:25–26). He is the glue that holds all of history together in a meaningful way."[5]

It is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the viability of this dual conception of Christocentrism and explicate its relationship to pneumatology. Specifically, I argue that the Christocentricity of Scripture and redemptive history is warranted and that it not only supports a Christological pneumatology but even *necessitates* that any healthy, robust pneumatology be Christ-centered. First, I proffer biblical, theological, and historical support for the validity of Christocentrism (as defined and delimited above). Then, I survey alternative centers for theology, showing why they do not possess sufficient merit to overturn a Christological center for theology.

Christocentrism

In this section, I supply biblical, theological, and historical warrant—in that order—for hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism, thereby supporting the claim that a theology of the Holy Spirit should be Christ-centered.

Biblical Support

The doctrine of Scripture and the discipline of biblical theology indicate that Christ is the center of Scripture and redemptive history, and the biblical witness

---

[4] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 318, quoting Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 58.

[5] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 319. S.a. Stephen J. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 177–78.

concerning Christ as the beginning, middle, and end of salvation history confirms this notion.

The Nature of Scripture
and Biblical Theology

Though entirely sufficient in himself, the triune God—because of his good pleasure—enacted creation and thereby entered into relationship with humankind. God has revealed himself progressively throughout history by his mighty acts, and such revelation is recorded and progressively unfolds in Scripture, God's Word. "Written Scripture is trinitarian revelation," explain Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger, "initiated by the Father, expressed through the Son, and terminating in the Holy Spirit, who inspired it."[6] As God's Word, Scripture speaks with God's authoritative voice; thus, it is the interpretative key to understanding all of history and reality.[7] It informs us of God's intentions for creation and salvation as well as his expectations for his people. Hence, God's Word offers insight into the divine (eternal) plan for creation, and that plan—as recorded in Scripture and enacted in creation—centers on the Lord Jesus Christ in his first and second coming.

This view of Scripture aligns with Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's threefold understanding of Scripture as "word-act revelation": (1) God's redemptive acts in history reveal him (e.g., the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the incarnation of God the Son); (2) God's revelatory Word interprets God's redemptive acts ("Word *and* act always accompany each other"); (3) Scripture "is itself a product of God's own redemptive acts

---

[6] Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 309. The authors also explain that although divine revelation is trinitarian (i.e., an inseparable operation), it "is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, as the biblical authors, 'carried along by the Holy Spirit[,] . . . spoke from God' (2 Pet 1:21[; s.a. 2 Tim 3:16])." N.B.: That the Spirit is the author of Scripture and—as I go on to show—that the biblical text centers on Christ together serve as one facet of evidence supporting the Christ-centered nature of pneumatology.

[7] Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 30.

for the purpose of teaching, edifying, and instructing, and as such, it is fully authoritative and sufficient for our thinking and lives."[8] In sum,

> Scripture is, as a written text in its final form, God's own divine interpretation, through human authors, of his own redemptive acts, which carries with it a true interpretation of his redemptive plan. Though it is not an exhaustive revelation, it is a true, objective, and first-order text. We thus read it as a complete canonical text on its own terms, according to its own structure and categories, in order to discern God's intent and redemptive plan—a "thick" [or "intratextual"] reading of Scripture.[9]

Further, Gentry and Wellum agree that "the supreme focal point of Scripture centers on what God has done in Christ Jesus" and that "in the Son, all God's revelation and redemptive purposes culminate."[10]

Related to the doctrine of Scripture, the discipline of biblical theology, as is typically carried out, is also Christ-centered. Biblical theology has a storied past, and various methods exist for carrying out the discipline.[11] However, simply put, biblical theology can be understood as "that process of understanding theology as the Bible itself presents it."[12] The process involves reading Scripture on its own terms in order to discern

---

[8] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 114–15.

[9] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 115.

[10] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 114, 117. Relatedly, Scott Swain, writing on "theological commentary," notes how Scripture finds its unity in Christ, its subject:

The principle of scriptural unity is not simply a literary hypothesis that the commentator, as rational subject, brings to the text, which is his object. The Word made flesh is the lively subject of scriptural revelation who communicates himself in and through the words of his Spirit-inspired ambassadors, thus enabling us to appreciate their fundamental unity and coherence in him (Luke 24:44–47; 1 Pet 1:11; Rom 10:17). (*The Trinity and the Bible: On Theological Interpretation* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021], 62)

[11] For the historical development of biblical theology, see Charles H. H. Scobie, "History of Biblical Theology," in *NEDBT*, 11–20; Jonathan T. Pennington, "Biblical Theology," in *EDT*, 129–30; Graeme Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," *SBJT* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 6–8.
To get a sense of the various ways of doing biblical theology, see Pennington, "Biblical Theology," 130–31; Andrew David Naselli, "What Are the Different Ways That Evangelicals Do Biblical Theology?," in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020), 101–10.

[12] Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," 8. By "theology," Goldsworthy is not suggesting that biblical theology is just a more biblical form of doing systematic theology. S.a. Stephen Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega: A Biblical-Theological Approach to God the Son Incarnate," *JETS* 63, no. 1 (March 2020): 74.

its theological message—reading "the Bible theologically as a singular two-part witness."[13] Approaching the Bible in this way, one perceives the overarching storyline of Scripture, which unfolds in four major arcs: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.[14] As Wellum summarizes, "Scripture consists of many literary forms that require careful interpretation, but what unites biblical books is God's unfolding plan, starting in *creation*, accounting for the *fall*, unpacking God's *redemptive* promises through the covenants, *culminating* with Christ's coming and the inauguration of the new creation."[15] And as the discipline of biblical theology commonly acknowledges, the storyline of Scripture centers on, is directed toward, and climaxes in the person and work

---

[13] Pennington, "Biblical Theology," 129. This vision for biblical theology aligns with that of Brian S. Rosner: "Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus" ("Biblical Theology," in *NEDBT*, 10). Related to and overlapping with the discipline of biblical theology is the theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS), which seeks to "read the Bible theologically as a whole, sensitive to premodern exegesis, orthodox theology, and the Holy Spirit's role in interpretation" (Pennington, 130). TIS has its own complex of issues that need not detain me here.

[14] The storyline of Scripture is variously understood and subdivided. E.g., a recent treatment considers "seven historical stages" according to the acronym KINGDOM; see Jason S. DeRouchie, "What Is Scripture's Storyline?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 29–40. However, the fourfold metanarrative—creation, fall, redemption, consummation—is common, straightforward, and suitable. For a recent espousal of this structure, see, e.g., Randall Kenneth Johnson, "The Christological Case for Compatibilism" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021), 180–83. S.a. Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, FOET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 113–33.
　　An important related subject is how to conceive of the Bible's internal continuity or discontinuity—that is, how Scripture presents itself as the canon progresses from the Old Testament to the New Testament (e.g., dispensations, theological covenants, historical covenants). To get a taste of the diverse methodologies, see Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas, eds., *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, Spectrum Multiview (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022); Benjamin L. Merkle, *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020); Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers, eds., *God's Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays on Biblical Theology in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), chaps. 1–5.

[15] Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 74 (emphasis added).

of Christ.[16] "Why Christ?" Wellum inquires. "Because this is what Scripture teaches, namely that Scripture is Christotelic . . . and Christocentric."[17]

Now, as for an objection, while Andrew David Naselli acknowledges the claim that Jesus is the central theme of Scripture, he suggests that the notion of one central theme is reductionistic, and he posits that "a better approach is to integrate the Bible's most prominent themes as one summarizes the Bible's (1) storyline and (2) theological message."[18] However, out of the author's suggested overarching theological message and out of seventeen other one-sentence summaries that Naselli surveys, almost all of them include, depend on, pivot upon, or climax in Christ. So, the claim that Christ is the center and central theme of Scripture is really not too controversial.[19] Indeed, as Wellum argues, the Bible "is centrally about one thing: what our triune God has planned in eternity,

---

[16] See, e.g., Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 10 ("Biblical theology maintains a conscious focus on Jesus Christ . . . . It reads not only the NT, but also the OT, as a book about Jesus"); Goldsworthy, "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," 9–10 ("We begin with Christ and end with him. He is the hermeneutical Alpha and Omega. . . . [T]he gospel demands of us that we see that the whole Bible is about Christ simply because he says so"; s.a. p. 16); Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 12 ("From the beginning all redeeming acts of God aim at the creation and introduction of this new organic principle, which is none other than Christ"); Andrew David Naselli, "What Do We Mean by 'Biblical Theology'?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 20 ("Biblical Theology studies how the whole Bible progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ"); s.a. Oren R. Martin, "How Do the Old and New Testaments Progress, Integrate, and Climax in Christ?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 49–54.

[17] Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 75. Wellum goes on to survey some biblical passages that warrant his claim (see pp. 75–77). I carry out a similar process below.

[18] Andrew David Naselli, "Does the Bible Have One Central Theme?," in DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 157. Naselli (148n2) quotes Graeme Goldsworthy as follows: "The hub of the church and of the life of the believer is Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. He is not only the hermeneutical center of the whole Bible, but, according to the biblical testimony, he gives ultimate meaning to every fact of the universe. He is thus the hermeneutical principle of all reality" ("Biblical Theology as the Heartbeat of Effective Ministry," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002], 284).

[19] And in fact, Naselli and his co-authors devote an entire chapter of their book to answering the question "How do the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ?" See Martin, "How Do the Old and New Testaments Progress, Integrate, and Climax in Christ?," 49–54. For example, Martin states, "If we interpret Scripture in a way that does not lead to Christ, then we have missed the point of God's revelation and have not received it like Jesus himself instructed his to disciples to receive it," and, "From beginning to end, the Bible is one book with one story that culminates in Jesus Christ, who ushers in the kingdom of God" (p. 53).

executed in time, in order to redeem a people for himself and to make everything new in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:9–10)."[20]

Therefore, I take hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism to be a valid conceptualization of the nature of Scripture and of biblical theology. But to establish the point on the biblical data itself, I now survey Scripture's witness of Christ as the center of redemptive history.

A Biblical Theology of Christ, the Center[21]

The eternal indivisible plan of the Trinity centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ in his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and eagerly awaited return. Thus, Christ should be understood as the beginning, middle, and end of redemptive history. This schema roughly maps onto the four-arc metanarrative discussed above.

Concerning the "beginning," the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17:24) and, consequently, predestined the saints in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3–11; 3:11; 1 Thess 5:9; 1 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:2; cf. 1 Pet 1:20).[22] All things in heaven and on earth were created by him and through him and for him; "he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:16–17; cf. Heb 1:2). It was God's eternal purpose to unite all things in heaven and on earth *in Christ* (Eph 1:10–11). Writing on Christ's office as Mediator, John Owen declares, "I know that

---

[20] Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 71–72. S.a. Todd LeRoy Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son: Theological Revisionism in Contemporary Theologies of Salvation" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 186; Michael J. Svigel, *RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 93; Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 27–28; Glenn R. Kreider and Michael J. Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 76–81, 156–58.

[21] This section is adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions, and the Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," *JTS* 72, no. 1 (April 2021): 342–47, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flab042. Used with permission.

[22] For a recent helpful treatment of election vis-à-vis the Son, see Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), chap. 3 ("'Foreknown before the Foundation of the World': The Son's Election and Mission" [pp. 97–139]).

this is an act eternally established in the mind and will of God, and so not to be ranged in order with the others, which are all temporary, and had their beginning in the fulness of time, of all which this first is the spring and fountain."[23] So, before creation even began, its trajectory was already aimed at the person and work of Jesus Christ. As Scott Swain, reflecting on Hebrews 1, emphasizes, creation is *from*, *by*, and *for* "the Father's eternally begotten Son, to be his inheritance. The *person* of the Son is the *purpose* of creation. He is why creation exists, and he is what creation is for."[24]

Not long after the beginning, however, creation descended into sin, corruption, and death. Although created good and upright, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, leading to the fall: estrangement from God, captivity unto the devil, and death. "A divine dilemma ensues:" Randall Johnson avers, "God must accomplish his end for mankind, but he also must punish mankind for sin."[25] And the remedy—namely, Christ—is foretold in the earliest pages of Scripture: God promises that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent (i.e., Satan;[26] Gen 3:15). Although on the face of it, this passage concerns man and woman and seed and snake, typologically, it foreshadows the redemption that Christ secures by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.[27] Christ, the

---

[23] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1959; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 1.3 (p. 53).

[24] Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 43. S.a. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 98–99.

[25] Johnson, "Christological Case for Compatibilism," 183. S.a. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 652: "If God graciously chooses to make things right, he, as the Lord and King, must act savingly, which sets the stage for the development of the Bible's redemptive storyline, for the coming of a Redeemer to set creation right—to usher in the *saving reign* of God in this world." Cf. Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 86–87.

[26] Thomas H. McCall, *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin*, FOET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 137–39.

[27] In Wellum's words, "The New Testament presents Jesus as the long-awaited typological fulfillment of the offspring of Eve (Gen. 3:15), who crushes Satan by a single sacrificial death, setting a new humanity free from the corruption and death of sin" (*God the Son Incarnate*, 144; s.a. 220). S.a. Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 80; Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991), 106; Herman Bavinck, *RD*, 3:199–200.

new Adam, reverses the curse of the first Adam (Rom 5:12–21), for "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22; s.a. vv. 21–49).[28]

Concerning the middle of redemptive history, the salvation for which God predestined the saints has "now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (1 Tim 1:10; cf. Titus 1:3; 1 Pet 1:20–21). In the fullness of time, the Father sent the Son to accomplish redemption.[29] The language of *sending* is indicative of the Son's unique mission and reflects his relation of origin to the Father. The Father eternally begets the Son, and so the Son is temporally begotten through the incarnation. Thus, the Son becomes present in creation in a novel manner—for us and our salvation.[30] Indeed, "everything Jesus is and does as man aims at our salvation."[31]

Since the Father was not sent,[32] he did not become human; he did not *die* to save sinners. Only the Son became incarnate and died, though, of course, according to the will of the Father (Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 1:15). There is only "one mediator between God and

---

[28] Again, Wellum is helpful here: "Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:21–49), the covenant head of the old creation. In God's plan, Adam anticipates the coming of Jesus, the last Adam, and the head of the new creation" ("From Alpha to Omega," 81; s.a. 84–88).

[29] John 3:16–17; Rom 8:3–4; Gal 4:4–5; 1 John 4:9–10, 14; cf. Mark 12:1–12; John 5:36–37; 6:29, 57; 7:17–18, 28–29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 12:44–45. Owen rightly considers the sending of the Son to be an act appropriated to the Father. He also recognizes John's heavy emphasis on sending: "So more than twenty times in the Gospel of John there is mention of this sending" (*The Death of Death* 1.3 [p. 52]).

[30] Michael Horton agrees: "Since it is the Son who is eternally begotten by the Father, it is fitting that he, rather than the Father or the Spirit, become flesh for us and for our salvation" (*Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017], 34). Furthermore, concerning the Son's visible mission, Fred Sanders rightly declares, "Christian theology has to keep this visible and tangible manifestation of the Son central and prominent. It's the fulcrum and hinge, the centerpoint of what Scripture tells us about the Father sending the Son" ("Invisible Mission of the Trinity," Scriptorium Daily [blog], October 3, 2017, http://scriptoriumdaily.com/invisible-mission-of-the-trinity/). N.B.: Sanders wants to say more about Scripture's witness to the Son's presence in salvation history than just the incarnation, but he dreads saying less. See chap. 5 of this dissertation for greater discussion of the divine missions.

[31] R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 178.

[32] As Augustine of Hippo avers, "When the Father is known by someone in time he is not said to have been sent. For he has not got anyone else to be from or to proceed from" (*The Trinity* 4.5.28 [Hill, 218]).

men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5–6). Furthermore, the Father is only visible

through the Son—that is, only Jesus Christ makes known the invisible Father (John 1:14,

18; 6:46).[33] "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to

reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood

of his cross" (Col 1:19–20). Indeed, it is through Christ's work that the saints have access

to the Father (Rom 5:1–2; Eph 2:13–18; 3:12; Heb 10:19–22). And for accomplishing

such a marvelous work, Christ deserves to be exalted; indeed, the Father exalts the Son

because of his work (Phil 2:5–11; Heb 2:5–9).

Though God passed over sin in former times, he manifested his

righteousness—apart from the law—"at the present time" in Christ Jesus by making him

a propitiation for sin (Rom 3:21–26; cf. Acts 17:30–31). Hence, Christ secured an eternal

redemption, having "appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the

sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:12, 24–26). As our great high priest, Christ established—and

is the mediator of—the new covenant.[34] And after "Christ had offered for all time a single

sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his

enemies should be made a footstool for his feet" (Heb 10:12–14; cf. Eph 1:20–23). In his

death, Christ destroyed sin and death (Rom 6:9–10; 8:3–4; Heb 2:9, 14–15), and in his

resurrection, he inaugurated the new creation (as its "firstfruits"; 1 Cor 15:22–23; Col

1:18) and thus inaugurated the end of history (i.e., the "last days," the eschaton).

---

[33] Certainly, God revealed himself at various times and in various ways in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 18:1–2; Exod 3:1–6; 13:21–2; 33:18–20; 40:34–8), but only in Jesus Christ is the Father fully (and bodily) revealed.

[34] Heb 8:6–13; 9:15; 10:9–10; cf. Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:16–37:28; Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20. Indeed, "all the biblical covenants find their fulfillment and terminus in Christ [and the new covenant]" (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 158, 600; s.a. Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 80, 82). Christ is the second Adam, the new man, the perfect fulfillment of the Mosaic law, the Davidic king, and the bestower of a new heart through the Holy Spirit. Certainly, the covenants—their purpose, relationship to one another, and consummation in Christ—merit greater discussion; however, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. At present, I am merely concerned with *the fact that* Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, the fulfillment of all of the covenants, and thus the *telos* of God's one eternal plan.

All of Scripture points toward and testifies about Jesus Christ as the crux of salvation history. Jesus condemned his opponents for not believing in him, declaring that Moses wrote about him (John 5:39–47). After his resurrection, Christ met two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Peter acknowledges that David, being a prophet, "foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:30–31; cf. vv. 25–28; Ps 16:8–11). Philip exposits Isaiah 53 to share "the good news about Jesus" to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30–35). Paul, at the synagogue in Thessalonica, "reasoned with [the Jews] from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ'" (Acts 17:2–3). Indeed, Paul recognizes that the gospel was promised beforehand by the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures (Rom 1:1–4; 1 Cor 15:1–5). He even goes as far as to proclaim to the church(es) in Galatia that Christ is the promised offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:16–7). As mentioned above, Christ is the promised seed of Adam and Eve who crushes the head of the serpent, the devil.[35] For this reason, and all of those discussed above, Christ—his first coming and the work that he accomplished therein—is the "middle," or turning point, of redemptive history.

Concerning the end of redemptive history, Christ is the initiator. Having appeared once to put away sin, Christ will come anew in glory and power to save the righteous and execute judgment against the wicked (Heb 9:28; cf. Rom 5:8–11; Rev 19:11–21).[36] Indeed, believers will only be resurrected at Christ's return (1 Cor 15:23);

---

[35] Gen 3:15; Luke 3:38; John 12:31; Rom 5:11–21; 1 Cor 15:21–49; Rev 12:9.

[36] Debates regarding the nature of Christ's return, the rapture, and millennial views, though important, are beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I am presently concerned with is *sine qua non* of an orthodox eschatology—namely, that Christ will surely return as judge and king and will bodily resurrect all humankind, the righteous to inherit eternal life and the wicked to inherit eternal condemnation (Dan 12:2; Matt 25:34, 46; John 5:28–9; Acts 1:11; 24:15; 2 Tim 4:1; 2 Thess 1:7–9; Rev 20:13, 15; 21:6–8; s.a. the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed [381]).

when the Lord appears, the saints will appear with him in glory (Col 3:4; 2 Thess 1:10–12; 1 Pet 1:6–7). Through the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord, we have been born again to an imperishable inheritance that has been stored up for us, waiting to be revealed "in the last time" (1 Pet 1:3–5; i.e., "at the revelation of Jesus Christ"; v. 7), when God will demonstrate his immeasurable grace and kindness toward us *in Christ Jesus* (Eph 2:4–7). So, we eagerly await "our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13–14; cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 3:12–13). Only at the end of the age, when all things are completely in subjection to him, will Christ turn over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24–28). Then, in the eternal state, all of the redeemed will behold and enjoy the beatific vision of "the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" forever and ever (Rev 21:22; 22:1, 3–5).[37] As R. B. Jamieson and Tyler Wittman succinctly aver, "Jesus alone is the way faith travels to vision, and he is the vision faith travels toward."[38] Overall, therefore, Christ is the end of redemptive history; he "and his work is the telos (goal, end) of God's plan."[39] As Swain summarizes,

> The supreme good the Father perceives, the final end to which he directs our calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification, is "his Son" and his Son's sovereign installation and manifestation as "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29). . . . Our salvation is finally ordered to Jesus, God's beloved Son, the supreme good eternally loved by the Father in the Spirit, the final end appointed by the Father in the Spirit in his eternal decree, the final end toward which the Father in the Spirit moves all things in his providence. All of God's external works and the new

---

[37] Jamieson and Wittman define the beatific vision simply as "the sight of God that renders us blessed" (*Biblical Reasoning*, 4). S.a. their larger discussion of the beatific vision on pp. 6–16.

[38] Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, 128. Relatedly, the authors comment, "To behold the glory of the crucified Christ is to know now by faith what we will one day see in truth, with unveiled face: the glory that embraces us, purifies us, and raises us further up and further in to the radiant beauty of God" (p. 238). Cf. the similar reflections of Emmanuel Durand: "There is no other visage of the Father than the face of Christ. The unique pathway to the knowledge of the Father, then, is Jesus himself, the exegete and the way. He constantly designates the Father as his own origin and as his ultimate destination. He comes forth from him, and he is going toward him" ("A Theology of God the Father," trans. Thomas Joseph White, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 371; s.a. 385).

[39] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 660. S.a. Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 75, 78, 81, 91; Michael Horton, *Justification*, vol. 2, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 90. See my discussion of the Spirit's consummating work in relation to Christ in Torey J. S. Teer, "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, The Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God," *BSac* 177, no. 707 (December 2020): 417–19.

creation itself are a theater for his [i.e., Christ's] glory, "that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18), "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).[40]

As Scripture attests, all of redemptive history—the beginning, middle, and end—centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ. As Owen puts it, "For whatsoever it was that God promised his Son should be fulfilled and attained by him, that certainly was it at which the Son aimed in the whole undertaking, and designed it as the end of the work that was committed to him, and which alone he could and did claim upon the accomplishment of his Father's will."[41] Thus, "the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance," says Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost . . . . To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:15, 17).

Summary

The nature of both Scripture and biblical theology supports the conceptualization of Christ as the center of the Bible and redemptive history, as seen in Scripture's presentation of Christ as the beginning, middle, and end of salvation history. With this biblical support for hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism now in place, I move on to present the theological warrant for this position.

Theological Support

In answering the question of how New Testament Christocentrism avoids "sliding into some kind of unhealthy and lopsided trinitarianism," Ortlund offers two correct theological points: "(1) it is only through Christ that we know of the Trinity, and

---

[40] Swain, *The Trinity*, 125. S.a. Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, CCT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 88.

[41] Owen, *The Death of Death*, 1.3 (p. 58).

(2) the Trinity itself is Christ-centered."[42] In what follows, I offer theological support for Christocentrism, following and expanding upon Ortlund's two points.

In explicating the first point, Ortlund contends, "The incarnate Son is the epistemological channel by which we come to know of God's triune existence."[43] And this proposition is true, for the author of Hebrews declares, "In these last days he [God the Father] has *spoken* to us *by his Son* . . . . He [the Son] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb 1:2, 3; cf. Col 1:19).[44] Further, Matthew 11:27 records Christ himself as saying, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (s.a. Luke 10:22). As Swain explains, this passage "is a classic example of a text indicating that the knowledge of the Trinity is a matter of 'insider knowledge.' The only reason *we* come to know the persons of the Trinity is that *they* name themselves in our hearing."[45] Another example of trinitarian revelation given by Christ lies in the commission texts of Matthew 28:18–20, Luke 24:46–49, and Acts 1:4–5, 8. In each, the Lord discloses the triune God's plan for salvation: the Father sent the Son to secure salvation, the Father and the Son will send the Holy Spirit to apply salvation to the saints and empower them for ministry, and Christians will preach the gospel and make disciples in the name of the triune God.[46] Indeed, the history *behind* the text, beginning with

---

[42] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 315. Cf. the questions raised by Fred Sanders: "If God is ambidextrous [referring to a kind of Irenaean "two-handed theology"], what are we to make of the church's long habit of Christocentrism? . . . Does the very notion of Christocentrism compromise the project of two-handed theology; even more, does it suggest a deficient Trinitarian theology, in which the Son gets top billing and the Spirit serves at best as a warm-up act?" (*Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021], 142).

[43] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 315. S.a. Swain, *The Trinity and the Bible*, 11, 60; Wellum, "From Alpha to Omega," 84.

[44] "As the author [of Hebrews] spans redemptive history [in 1:1–2]," Wellum comments, "he reminds us that God has spoken in the Prophets but that the ultimate purpose of that revelation reaches its fulfillment in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ" (*The Person of Christ*, 81).

[45] Swain, *The Trinity*, 40. Cf. Swain, *The Trinity and the Bible*, 16–28.

[46] Relatedly, Swain avers, "Matthew 11:25–27 anticipates the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 by identifying Jesus as the Son who, with the Father and from the Father, has 'all authority' (Matt

Christ's incarnation, is revelatory of God's triunity: "The full revelation of the Triune God comes by means of the personal presence of the Son and the Spirit in their respective missions: 'In order to inform us that the Father has a Son and a Holy Spirit, the Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit in person.'"[47]

Interestingly, Wellum makes what may—at first glance—appear to be the inverse of Ortlund's first point. Wellum argues, "The triune God and his word give us the epistemological warrant and worldview necessary to identify Jesus as God the Son incarnate and thus to speak theologically about him."[48] That is, in accord with progressive revelation, God has disclosed through Scripture that Christ is the divine Son, and Scripture gives us the grammar needed for speaking accurately about him. However, Ortlund and Wellum are actually in agreement. Ortlund affirms the reciprocal nature of Scripture's testimony concerning the Trinity and Christology: "As we view the Trinity through Christ and Christ through the Trinity, we find orthodox trinitarianism and Christocentrism not only compatible but mutually reinforcing" (and, I would add, mutually informing).[49] Further, Wellum affirms Ortlund's point about Christ's revelation regarding the Trinity: "Jesus views himself as the divine Son who even as incarnate continues to relate to the Father and the Spirit because they fully and equally share the one divine nature in perfect love and communion (John 1:1, 18; 17:5)."[50] In sum, Christ

---

28:18) to demand the discipleship of 'all nations' through baptism and instruction (Matt. 28:19) and to guarantee the success of the Great Commission by his divine presence (Matt. 27:20)" (*The Trinity*, 40–41). S.a. Gregg R. Allison's discussion of John 20:21–23 in *The Church: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 95.

[47] Swain, *The Trinity and the Bible*, 11, quoting Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 40. See Sanders's wider discussion in *Triune God*, 37–42. S.a. Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, 212.

[48] Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 31. Cf. Swain, The *Trinity and the Bible*, 60.

[49] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 315.

[50] Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 38.

testifies to the Trinity, and the triune God testifies to Christ as God the Son incarnate—all of which is disclosed to the saints by Scripture.[51]

To take Ortlund's first point just a bit further, not only is it only through Christ that we *know of* the Trinity, but also it is only through Christ that we *know* the Trinity. That is, via union with Christ by the Spirit (Rom 6:3–6; 8:9–11; 1 Cor 12:12–13), we have become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 2:9–10; 1 John 3:2) and therefore enjoy communion with the triune God. As Swain summarizes (invoking John 17:3), "This is eternal life, to know the Father by the indwelling Spirit through Jesus Christ whom he [i.e., the Father] sent."[52] The Father sent the Son to become incarnate in order to redeem a people for his own name and return them—by the power of the Spirit—to the Father himself—that is, *in Christ* (2 Cor 5:17–19; Gal 4:4–7; Eph 2:18–21). As Jamieson and Wittman note with respect to Galatians 4:4–7, Christ "came to give us by grace [i.e., sonship] what belongs to him by nature [i.e., Sonship]. He came to grant us participation in what he is."[53] Further, drawing together the revelatory and participatory implications of the divine missions, the authors comment, "At one and the same time, through one and the same sweeping, twofold act of salvific sending, the missions of the Son and the Spirit both reveal the Trinity and accomplish our salvation by drawing us into the Trinity."[54]

Ortlund's second theological point is that the Trinity itself is Christ-centered. I discussed above how the eternal plan of the triune God centers on the person and work of

---

[51] Or, as Ortlund puts it, "We comprehend the Triune God through the lens of Christ (adequately, not exhaustively) and Christ through the lens of the triune God" ("Christocentrism," 318).

[52] Swain, *The Trinity*, 120.

[53] Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, 211.

[54] Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, 212. N.B.: The authors acknowledge that Christ is the center of the divine missions: "The Son's sending is the source, his name the authority, his teaching the content, and his glory the goal of the Spirit's indwelling mission" (p. 196). S.a. Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 178–79. I expand on this subject in chap. 5.

Jesus Christ, but more than that, as Ortlund avers, "God the Father and God the Spirit are both said to direct attention toward God the Son in the NT."[55] One can argue that both the Father and the Holy Spirit are Son-centric.

Concerning the former, Christ declares, "It is my Father who glorifies me" (John 8:54). God the Father "has given all things into [the Son's] hand" (John 3:35; cf. Matt 11:27), "whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb 1:2). "All that the Father has is mine," Christ declares (John 16:15). No one can come to the Father except *through the Son* (John 6:44; 14:6); indeed, to know, see, and believe the Son is to know, see, and believe the Father who sent him (John 8:19; 12:44–45; 14:9; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). The Father gives all judgment to Christ "that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (John 5:22–23). Further, in his high priestly prayer, Jesus beseeches the Father, saying, "Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you . . . . [G]lorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:1, 5). Indeed, because Christ successfully accomplished redemption by his blood, God raised Christ "from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . . . And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:20–22).

In addition, the blessings that Christians enjoy from God (Eph 1:3) "not only prompt the praise of the Father's glorious grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). They also reveal the Father's ultimate purpose of exalting the name of Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, 'above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come' (Eph. 1:1; see also 1:9–10, 20–23)."[56] The Father glorifies himself *through the Son* (John 5:19–20; 12:27–28; 13:31–32; 1 Pet 4:11; Jude 25); thus, to glorify the Son *is* to glorify the Father

---

[55] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 316.

[56] Swain, *The Trinity*, 65–66.

(John 11:4; 14:6–13; Rev 5:5–14). In the words of Swain, "The ultimate end in the Father's sending of the Son is 'that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father' (John 5:23), that the Son might have preeminence in all things (Col. 1:18). Accordingly, when the Son is acclaimed as Lord, the Father is glorified (Phil. 2:11)."[57] The Father, then, is self-centric by being Son-centric.[58]

Concerning the latter (that the Holy Spirit is Son-centric), the New Testament is even more explicit. When the Spirit arrives in the fullness of his mission, he points toward the one who sent him—the Lord Jesus Christ—and the work that he accomplished during his mission. Jesus tells his disciples that when the Spirit comes, "he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26); "he will bear witness about me" (15:26); "he will guide you into all truth . . . , and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (16:13–14). Through the Spirit's post-Pentecost ministry of indwelling, he empowers believers to testify about the risen Lord; indeed, the Spirit himself testifies about Christ through believers. As Jesus declares to his disciples, "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27); "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:49). Indeed, Peter and the apostles proclaim, "We are witnesses to these things [viz., the gospel], and so is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:32). By bearing witness to the Lord Jesus, the Spirit fulfills Christ's commitment to build his church (Matt 16:18). Therefore, Scripture is right to call the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7), the

---

[57] Swain, *The Trinity*, 76.

[58] This paragraph draws from Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 316; Teer, "Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," 360.

"Spirit of [God's] Son" (Gal 4:6), the "Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19), and the "Spirit of Christ" (1 Pet 1:10).[59]

As Christopher Holmes notes, "The Spirit demonstrates profound boldness in promoting another, Jesus Christ. The Spirit's actions are directed to Christ to the glory of the Father. This is what it means to talk about the Spirit as the Spirit *of* Jesus."[60] Or, in the words of Swain, "The distinctive office of the Holy Spirit in God's unfolding kingdom is to glorify Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. God the Spirit crowns God the Son by causing the glory of his eternal, incarnate, crucified, and exalted person to be proclaimed, received, and celebrated to the glory of God the Father (John 20:20; 1 John 1:4)."[61] "In short," Ortlund summarizes, "the Spirit himself is Christ-centered. A fundamental role of the Spirit is to magnify Christ. . . . [O]ne crucial mission of the Spirit is to spotlight Christ."[62]

---

[59] See my earlier discussion of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ in chap. 1 (esp. 2n4). S.a. Bavinck, *RD*, 3:572.

[60] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 22.

[61] Swain, *The Trinity*, 94. Swain also connects the Spirit's unique role with that of Scripture:

The Spirit who inspired prophets and apostles to announce God's word in Holy Scripture inspired them to focus on Jesus Christ: his person, his work, his promises (John 15:26–27; 1 Pet. 1:11). The Spirit's office in God's unfolding kingdom is to bear witness to Jesus Christ, holding him forth as God's beloved Son and our Lord, drawing us to embrace him, causing us to confess him as Lord, enabling us to take on our lips his own address of the Father (John 1:12–13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6). Scripture, because it is inspired by the Spirit, bears the signature of the Spirit's office in its emphasis and end. (p. 91)

[62] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 317. The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* affirms this emphasis: "He [the Holy Spirit] exalts Christ" (art. IIC, accessed February 8, 2022, https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/). S.a. Swain's exhortation about "true spirituality" in *The Trinity*, 102. This body paragraph draws from Teer, "Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," 355–56.
     It is important to note that to suggest that the person and work of the Spirit center on and point toward the person and work of Christ is not to imply that the Spirit is in any way "bashful," "deferential," or "always in the shadow of Christ." Hence, I acknowledge Allison and Köstenberger's concern that the Spirit has often been caricatured thus throughout history (*The Holy Spirit*, 232). I fully agree with them that

to move the Holy Spirit into the background of trinitarian operations is surely to (dis)miss the prominent roles he exercises in communicating divine revelation, applying and perfecting the salvation purposed by the Father and accomplished by the Son, and rendering the presence of the Triune God to believers and the church. Highlighting the Spirit's outpouring will ensure that we avoid this oversight.

S.a. Torey J. S. Teer, "Is the Holy Spirit Shy, Self-Effacing, or Always in the Shadow of Christ?" (unpublished manuscript, 2021), https://www.academia.edu/62215346/.

In truth, there is a reciprocity to divine mutual glorification—which accords with God's one-in-three-ness. As Ortlund states, "To glorify one is to glorify all, for all are God."[63] Or, in the words of Gregory of Nyssa,

> You see the revolving circle of the glory moving from like to like. The Son is glorified by the Spirit; the Father is glorified by the Son; again the Son has his glory from the Father; and the only-begotten thus becomes the glory of the Spirit. For with what shall the Father be glorified, but with the true glory of the Son; and with what again shall the Son be glorified, but with the majesty of the Spirit?[64]

However, by emphasizing Christ, "we are simply noting the strain of biblical teaching that spotlights the Son as the member of the Triune God sent forth—visibly, historically, conspicuously—to accomplish humanity's [or the elect's] redemption, a spotlighting freely affirmed by the Father [and the Spirit]."[65] Hence, Christ is the center of the trinitarian missions—or, as Adonis Vidu calls it, the "cipher of the Trinity."[66]

In summary, it is only through Christ that we know *of* the Trinity (i.e., Christ is the epistemological stream by which we obtain knowledge of God's triunity), it is only through Christ that we *know* the Trinity (i.e., we experience true communion with God in Christ), and the Trinity itself is Christ-centered (i.e., the work of both the Father and the Holy Spirit are Christ-directed). So, to bring the discussion full circle, I echo Ortlund's priming question and concluding answer: "Does Christocentrism . . . reflect an asymmetrical trinitarianism?" No—at least not an unhealthy one."[67] Ortlund aptly explains,

> The distinction that many make between an appropriate "Christocentrism" and an unhealthy "Christomonism" is therefore appropriate. It is the former we are endorsing; that is, by "Christ-centered" we are not suggesting a focus on Christ to

---

[63] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 316. S.a. Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, 238.

[64] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit, against the Followers of Macedonius* 22 (*NPNF*[2], 5:324).

[65] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 316.

[66] Vidu, *Same God*, 178–79.

[67] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 320.

the neglect of the Father and the Spirit but to the deeper understanding of the Father and the Spirit. . . . Still, the unease some have expressed about Christocentrism is largely unnecessary, for we *are* called to be soundly Christ-centered.[68]

Having discussed the theological warrant for Christocentrism, I proceed to offer historical validation of such Christocentrism from some of the church's earliest voices.

Historical Support

If Scripture is a unity centered on Christ and presents itself as such by means of its internal structures and categories, and if theological conclusions from Scripture support such Christ-centeredness, then one should expect to see affirmations and utilizations of this Christological emphasis in the tradition's hermeneutics—and indeed that is what we find, such as in the writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165) and Irenaeus of Lyon (ca. 130–200).

In his chapter "Reading the Bible as a Unity Centered on Christ," Craig Carter correctly argues that "the prophecy-and-fulfillment approach linking Jesus to the Hebrew Scriptures goes back to Jesus himself and is modeled by the apostles (Luke 24:25–27)."[69] Carter goes on to explain,

> One of the main characteristics of patristic exegesis was a confidence in the authority of Scripture that led the fathers to believe that the apostles themselves [in the New Testament writings] model biblical interpretation for us in the way they interpret the Old Testament. . . . In interpreting the Old Testament christologically, the fathers considered themselves to be faithful followers of the apostles, who were teaching what the risen Lord had taught them.[70]

---

[68] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 318. For the comment on the distinction between Christocentrism and Christomonism, Ortlund cites Lai, *Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 38; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 178–80; Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 196. For the comment on an uneasiness about Christocentrism, Ortlund cites Gerald O'Collins, "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13; Elizabeth T. Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 63.

[69] Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 139.

[70] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, 141.

As an example, Carter highlights Justin Martyr and his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a disputation he had with a Jew over the correct interpretation of Scripture. For Justin, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies—as the New Testament bears witness. Here are some examples: (1) Speaking on passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah, Justin argues that Christ "is indeed the New Law, the new covenant, and the expectation of those who, from every nation, have awaited blessings of God."[71] (2) Justin addresses the correct (i.e., Christian) interpretation of Psalm 22. Employing quotations of and references to both the Old Testament and the Gospels, Justin exposits the psalm to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In short, "the whole psalm referred to Christ."[72] (3) Justin chastises Trypho for not recognizing that Jesus is the Christ foretold by the Hebrew prophets:

> "But Trypho," I continued, "if you had known who he is who at one time is called *angel of great counsel* [by Isaiah], and *Man* by Ezekiel, and the *Son of Man* by Daniel, and a *child* by Isaiah, and *Christ* and *God* [and] *who is to be adored* by David, and *Christ* and *Stone* by many prophets, and *Wisdom* by Solomon and Joseph and Judah, and a *Star* by Moses, and *Dawn* by Zechariah, and the *Suffering One* and *Jacob* and *Israel* again by Isaiah, and a *Rod* and *Flower* and *Cornerstone* and *Son of God*[,] you would not have blasphemed him who has come, and assumed human nature, and suffered, and ascended into heaven. And he shall return again."[73]

In summary, for Justin, Christ is the center of Scripture—the Old Testament prophesied about him, and the New Testament records how Christ fulfilled those prophecies.[74]

Carter also asserts that the Rule of Faith—à la Irenaeus of Lyon—serves as our guide to interpreting Scripture.[75] Articulated in *The Demonstration of the Apostolic*

---

[71] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 11.4 (Falls, 21).

[72] Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 99.1 (Falls, 150).

[73] Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 126.1 (Falls, 189). For all of the Scripture references, see Falls, 189nn1–11.

[74] This same Christological view is exhibited in Justin's *First Apology* (see, e.g., *First Apology* 30–53 [Barnard, 43–61]). As Carter summarizes, "Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy was absolutely central to [Justin's] understanding of the nature of the Christian faith and to its proclamation in the world" (*Interpreting Scripture*, 144). See Carter's discussion of *First Apology* on pp. 143–44.

[75] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, 149.

Preaching, a summary of Christian teaching derived from Scripture, Irenaeus's Rule of Faith is a three-article summation of the faith—the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to be recited at one's baptism.[76] As Mary Ann Donovan explains, Irenaeus "recognizes one canon or rule, the Rule of Faith (also called the Rule of Truth) that serves as the interpretive principle for his reading of the Scriptures. In turn, the Scriptures supply the explanation of the Rule of Faith understood as a kind of 'narrative creed' telling the theological story of Christ the Word."[77] Bryan Litfin summarizes well Irenaeus's conceptualization of the Rule of Faith:

> The Rule taught one creator God who was revealed by the Spirit through the Hebrew prophets. This Father God has been supremely revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, who was incarnate by a virgin for our salvation. The future holds a final resurrection for all, with rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked from the Lord Jesus Christ.[78]

Litfin goes on to conclude, "For Irenaeus, the story of salvation was a comprehensive narrative of God's redeeming work in human history. Irenaeus was one of the earliest patristic writers to see this big picture. The Rule of Faith became the organizing principle of his theology, since it outlined the overarching story of Christian redemption."[79]

Highlighting *The Demonstration*, Carter avers, "For Irenaeus, the apostolic preaching is the proclamation that Jesus Christ has, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, fulfilled the Old Testament."[80] As John Behr explains, "Irenaeus simply

---

[76] Irenaeus of Lyons, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 3–7 (Behr, 41–44). S.a. *Against Heresies* 1.10.1; 3.4.2 (*ANF*, 1:330–31, 417).

[77] Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 11.

[78] Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 90–91. Litfin's doctoral dissertation also highlights Tertullian of Carthage's use of the Rule of Faith and his Christological focus; see Bryan Mark Litfin, "Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*: A Case Study in 'Regular Hermeneutics'" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2002).

[79] Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 91. S.a. John Behr, trans., introduction to *The Demonstration*, 8n1: "Irenaeus is the first patristic writer to maintain the unity of God's dealings with the human race throughout history—the one divine *economia*" (s.a. p. 15).

[80] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, 150.

expounds the apostolic preaching within the framework of the christocentric reading of the Old Testament that characterized second-century Christianity."[81] After a brief preface (§§1–3a), Irenaeus summarizes salvation history from creation to Christ (§§3b–42a), all along the way showing how everything culminates in Christ. Irenaeus then demonstrates the truth of the apostolic preaching by means of scriptural proofs (§§42b–97). Behr summarizes the intent of *The Demonstration* thus:

> It is clear that there were two interrelated projects: first, to demonstrate or unfold the content of Scripture, the Old Testament, as it pertains to the revelation of Jesus Christ as preached by the apostles; second, to recognize the scriptural authority of that preaching by demonstrating that the apostles' proclamation of what has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, shaped as it is by Scripture, was indeed so prophesied.[82]

Here are a few examples of Irenaeus's Christocentric Rule-of-Faith approach to Scripture: (1) In his survey of redemptive history, the bishop transitions from Moses, Jerusalem, David, Solomon, and the temple to the incarnation by means of the prophets:

> Hither the prophets were sent from God; by the Holy Spirit they admonished the people and returned [them] to the God of the patriarchs, the Almighty, [and] were made heralds of the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, announcing that his flesh would blossom from the seed of David, that He would be, according to the flesh, son of David, who was the son of Abraham, through a long succession, while, according to the Spirit, Son of God, being at first with the Father, born before all creation, and being revealed to all the world at the close of the age as man, "recapitulating all things" in Himself, the Word of God, "things in heaven and things on earth" [Eph 1:10].[83]

---

[81] Behr, introduction to *The Demonstration*, 16. Connecting Irenaeus's *Demonstration* with the work of Justin Martyr (i.e., situating Irenaeus's work in its second-century *milieu*), Behr writes,

> That the apostolic preaching is nothing other than the various predictions made by the prophets, proclaimed as having been realized in Jesus Christ, means that, on the one hand, the apostolic preaching is both the key to understanding the Old Testament and the confirmation of its fulfilment, while, on the other hand, it is the Old Testament which shapes the whole of the Christian revelation itself. (p. 13)

[82] Behr, introduction to *The Demonstration*, 17. S.a. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, 152.

[83] Irenaeus, *Demonstration* 30 (Behr, 60); cf. 40–42 (Behr, 66–67). On the subject of recapitulation vis-à-vis redemptive history, first Adam-second Adam typology, and the storyline of Scripture, Litfin notes Irenaeus's Christological bent:

> Irenaeus was the first Christian theologian to develop the Pauline understanding of the fall of humanity through Adam (Romans 5). He even borrowed a Pauline term to describe salvation: recapitulation, or the "summing up of all things in Christ" (see Eph. 1:10). By this term the bishop meant many things, but it all came down to this: *salvation history must be centered on the historical Jesus Christ*, whose obedience unto death canceled the work of Adam. Whereas the first man sinned, and so introduced sin into the world, the Second Adam lived a perfect life, and thereby reordered the

(2) At the end of his demonstration of the eternal existence and divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, Irenaeus offers the following summary as well as evidence of his intratextual approach to Scripture:

> So, that Christ, being the Son of God before the whole world, is with the Father and with men, and King of all, since the Father has subjected all things to Him, and that He is the Saviour of those who believe in Him—these are demonstrated by such [passages of] Scripture. Since it is not possible to draw up an ordered account of all the Scriptures, from these [passages] you can also understand the others, which speak in similar manner, believing Christ and seeking wisdom and understanding from God, in order to understand what was said by the prophets.[84]

(3) Drawing *The Demonstration* to a close, Irenaeus summarizes his redemptive historical approach to Scripture and the Christian faith, placing Christ at the center: "This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the character of our salvation, and this is the way of life, which the prophets announced and Christ confirmed and the apostles handed over and the Church, in the whole world, hands down to her children."[85] Irenaeus is thus a prime example of early-church Christocentrism that arises from faithfulness to Scripture's own voice as well as the tradition's stewardship of that voice.

In sum, one observes in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon how a prophecy-and-fulfillment approach and a Rule-of-Faith approach to Scripture naturally lead to Christocentrism—or a recognition of Scripture's own Christocentric emphasis as the metanarrative progresses from creation to consummation in Christ.[86]

---

cosmos the way it was supposed to be. The cross became the place where ultimate, forgiving love was poured out. Sinful humans and a loving God were reconciled by the one who is both God and Man. *In Irenaeus's doctrine of recapitulation, we discover a comprehensive perspective on the work of God throughout history*. Instead of indulging in theosophical speculations, Irenaeus recounted the biblical story (as summed up in the Rule of Faith) which speaks of creation, prediction, incarnation, redemption, and *the recapitulation of all things through Christ the Lord*. (*Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 91; emphasis added to highlight Irenaeus's Christocentric emphases)

[84] Irenaeus, *Demonstration* 52 (Behr, 74; bracketed content original to Behr's trans.).

[85] Irenaeus, *Demonstration* 98 (Behr, 100). S.a. Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 12.

[86] Wellum extends this conclusion to the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds:

Summary

   The biblical, theological, and historical evidence offered above supports hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism. First, the nature of Scripture and biblical theology bespeak Christ as the center of Scripture and redemptive history, as confirmed by the biblical testimony presenting Christ as the beginning, middle, and end of salvation history. Further, it is only through Christ that we know of and enjoy communion with the Trinity, and the Trinity itself is Christ-centered, as exhibited in the Christ-directed work of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Finally, the tradition's prophecy-and-fulfillment approach and Rule-of-Faith approach to Scripture, as evidenced in the works of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon, validate hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism.

   Thus, a preliminary conclusion can be drawn in relation to the argument of this dissertation: If Scripture and redemptive history are Christ-centered, then pneumatology is necessarily Christ-centered as well. That is, any robust study of the Holy Spirit should be centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. There exist, however, alternative centers for doing theology that merit consideration before this preliminary conclusion can be formalized.

<div align="center">

Alternative Centers for Theology

</div>

   Glenn Kreider and Michael Svigel list the following as possible centers for theology: theocentric, anthropocentric, bibliocentric, ecclesiocentric, eschatocentric, and Christocentric.[87] To this list, one can add paterocentric and pneumatocentric. While some

---

If we approach Scripture according to its own self-attesting claim and within its own worldview, then, from Genesis to Revelation, Scripture teaches us that Christ Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:6–11). . . .

. . . Scriptural teaching demands careful theological thinking and accounting for all the scriptural teaching in the way Scripture teaches it.

In fact, this is what Nicaea and Chalcedon were doing. They were summarizing scriptural teaching and doing so in such a way as to confess, defend, and proclaim the God of the Bible as triune and Jesus as the eternal Son made flesh. ("From Alpha to Omega," 92–93)

[87] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 76–77.

centers are weightier than others, it is helpful to consider them all in order to be aware of

the different options available for doing theology. The goal, therefore, is to compare the

alternative centers to a Christological center in order to determine which one makes the

best sense of the Bible's self-presentation (storyline, structures, categories, emphases).

The order of engagement—more or less in order of importance or potential for

persuasion—is thus: anthropocentric, theocentric, paterocentric, pneumatocentric,

ecclesiocentric, bibliocentric, and eschatocentric.

Anthropocentric

Kreider and Svigel define anthropocentric theology as "centered on humanity's

needs, experiences, and abilities."[88] The authors go on to explain,

> We know of no theologian who would self-identify as "anthropocentric." This
> description is used by critics of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century liberal theologies
> that shifted from traditional confessional Christianity and its sources to a humanity-
> centered interest in religion. Charles Taylor describes four directions of change
> during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that "[reduce] the role and place of
> the transcendent" and contribute to a "striking anthropocentric shift" in theology.[89]

However, it would be fair to characterize, for example, Rudolph Bultmann's theology as

anthropocentric. Referring to the mythical world picture presented by the New

Testament, Bultmann states that "myth does not want to be interpreted in cosmological

terms but in anthropological terms—or, better, in existentialist terms."[90] Thus, as

"moderns" whose "thinking is irrevocably formed by science" and who are "responsible

---

[88] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer for Theological Method*, 76.

[89] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer for Theological Method*, 76–77n11, quoting Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 222–24. Taylor lists the "four directions of change" or "anthropocentric shifts" as follows: (1) eclipse of a further sense of purpose; (2) eclipse of grace; (3) sense of mystery fades; (4) eclipse of the idea that God was planning a transformation of human beings (*Secular Age*, 222–24).

[90] Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation," in *New Testament and Mythology: And Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 9. See also Joshua Jipp, "Myth, Science, and Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann on Creation," Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, February 18, 2018, https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2018/02/myth-science-and-hermeneutics-rudolf-bultmann-on-creation/.

for our own existence," it is our task to demythologize the New Testament; in fact, the New Testament invites us to do just this.[91]

Aside from the Protestant liberal tradition, one *could* argue for an anthropological center for theology from an orthodox Christian perspective. That is, if Scripture is the story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, then one could claim that the story centers on humankind—the creation of *humans*, the fall of *humans*, the redemption of *humans*, and the consummation of God's purposes in creation for *humans*. And in defense of this view, one might ask, Did not God the Son become incarnate in a *human* nature?[92]

Although possible, this kind of anthropocentric reasoning would be imprudent, for it would mistake the object of revelation (humankind) for the subject (God). The subject of theology, and the presentation of Scripture, is God, his works, and his ways as purposed in and revealed by Christ.[93] This move also seems to blur the Creator-creature distinction—in that it elevates the creature to the level of eminence of the Creator. God alone is *a se* (self-existent, self-sufficient); he has no need of creatures, yet in his abundant love, he enacted creation so that creatures could enjoy fellowship with him, the Creator. The story of Scripture emphasizes God's work in creation, redemption, and consummation through Christ. Humankind (and the saints especially) are by God's grace participants in the divine drama that God is unfolding in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, human value and dignity is not *intrinsic* but *extrinsic*—that is, humankind

---

[91] Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," 3, 6, 9, 10.

[92] R. C. Sproul confirms the possibility of this anthropocentric reasoning: "Sometimes a dispute arises concerning the goal or purpose of God's plan of redemption. The question is posed: Is the goal of redemption the manifestation of the glory of God? Or is it the manifestation of the value of fallen humanity? Is the goal man-centered or God-centered?" (*What Is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997], 26).

[93] As Herman Bavinck writes concerning the content of theology, "Dogmatics is the knowledge that God has revealed himself in his Word to the church concerning himself and all creatures as they stand in relation to him" (*RD*, 1:38). N.B.: The language of "God, his works, and his ways" comes from Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer for Theological Method*, *passim*.

does not possess value and dignity in and of themselves but by the creative and declaratory activity of the Creator.[94] The emphasis, therefore, lies with God, not humankind. Hence, theology is not and cannot be anthropocentric.

Theocentric

If theology is not anthropocentric, then certainly it must be theocentric, right? Well, yes and no. Theology *is* theocentric in that God—not humankind—is the subject of revelation, the grand protagonist of the storyline of Scripture.[95] Yet theology *is not* centered on God in the "abstract" sense (God*ness* or divinity) such that, for example, one can divorce the work of Spirit from the work of the Son. Representative of this latter perspective is Paul Knitter, who advocates for a "theocentric Christology":

> The theocentric model proposes what can be called a *relational uniqueness* for Jesus. . . . It affirms that Jesus *is* unique, but with a uniqueness defined by its ability to relate to—that is, to include and be included by—other unique religious figures. Such an understanding of Jesus views him not as exclusive or even as normative but as *theocentric*, as a universally relevant manifestation (sacrament, incarnation) of divine revelation and salvation.[96]

Knitter also understands the work of the Spirit in a theocentric manner. As Todd Miles explains, "Knitter believes that when the relationship between the incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit is understood in a theocentric sense, it will bring 'clarification that would enable a more resolute openness to what the Spirit might be doing in other religious traditions.'"[97]

---

[94] Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, 25.

[95] See, e.g., Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, 23–27.

[96] Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 171–72; s.a. Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son," 34.

[97] Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son," 35–36, quoting Paul F. Knitter, "Can Our 'One and Only' Also Be a 'One among Many'? A Response to Responses," in *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, ed. Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 182. S.a. Miles, "He Will Glorify Me: Evaluating the Pneumatology of Inclusivists and Pluralists," *SBJT* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 78.

But the Son and the Spirit do not relate to "God" generically or independently (Son → divinity; Spirit → divinity). Rather, they are linked to one another and to the Father through their processions in the singular divine essence (filiation, double spiration), they work inseparably in creation, and their missions (incarnation, outpouring) are coextensive.[98] So perhaps one could reasonably argue that theology is centered on God in the triune sense (Trinity-centric). Stanley Grenz and John Franke, for example, make this very point: "The Trinity provides the structuring motif for Christian theology."[99] Yet, this move, too, would be faulty, for—as discussed earlier—the Trinity itself is Christ-centered. That is, the work of the Father and the Holy Spirit revolve around the person and work of Christ Jesus in his first and second coming. Hence, theology is not theocentric. It is more nuanced than that.

Paterocentric

If the Trinity taken as a whole is not the center of theology, then perhaps the Father alone is the center.[100] After all, he is the *fons divinitatis* ("fountain of divinity")—that is, he is the origin or principle from which the Son (filiation) and the Spirit (spiration) proceed, but he himself proceeds from no one.[101] However, this move would mistake redemptive history's ultimate *end* with its *center*. Holmes, for example, argues that the Father is the *telos* of salvation history:

---

[98] These concepts are the subjects of chaps. 4–5.

[99] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 172; s.a., more broadly, chap. 6 ("The Trinity: Theology's Structural Motif" [pp. 169–202]). Greater engagement with Grenz and Franke's postmodern proposal for the trinitarian shape of Christian theology is merited but beyond the scope of the present argument.

[100] As Ortlund inquires, "Does a hermeneutic that centralizes Christ . . . neglect the Father or the Spirit? Why should our reading and preaching of the Bible be *Christo*centric and not *patero*centric or *pneuma*centric?" ("Christocentrism," 312).

[101] See Richard A. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "fons totius divinitatis" (p. 133).

The contours of the economy are Son-centric. . . . And yet the *telos* of the economy cannot be said to be Son-centric in any straightforward way, anyhow. The end of the work of God toward the outside is the Father's being "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). . . .

When Jesus comes again, he will "be subjected to the one who put all things to subjection under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Jesus draws us to the Father through the Spirit, a foretaste of the Father's being "all in all." The saving work of God reveals *theology*. The Son is sent and the Spirit is breathed in order to return us to the one from whom we—and they—come.[102]

So, by means of the Son and the Spirit, the Father is the ultimate end (*telos*) of creation, redemption, and consummation. Everything is summed up in the Father. At the end of the ages, when Christ returns in glory, he will hand over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24; cf. Rev 22:1, 3). Of course, Christ can be understood as the end of redemptive history (as discussed above), but only in the *penultimate* sense. He is the one through whom the consummation of reality in the eschaton takes place (1 Cor 15:22–24), it is through him that the saints have access to the Father (John 14:6; Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 10:19–22), and it is through him that the Father glorifies himself (John 5:19–20; 12:27–28; 13:31–32).

Yet, the storyline the of Scripture emphasizes the person and work of Jesus Christ while largely preserving the mystery of the Father. As Emmanuel Durand argues,

The mystery of the Father as such is indissociable from an eschatological orientation toward him that animates the entire mission of Christ as well as that of his disciples. Divine revelation does not offer its recipients an immediate perception of the Father, but places them face to face with Christ, the mediator and plenitude of revelation. The Father remains in some real sense transcendent of the mission of the Son. Through him, the Father truly makes himself known, even while remaining radically hidden on account of his primacy.[103]

So, a Christocentric understanding of redemptive history affirms a paterological end, *telos*, or summation, but it recognizes Scripture's presentation of Christ as its gravitational center, main character, and principal theme. As Durand summarizes,

---

[102] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 207.

[103] Durand, "A Theology of God the Father," 371. S.a. Ryan Lowell Rippee, "That God May Be All in All: A Paterology Demonstrating That the Father Is the Initiator of All Divine Activity" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 230–31.

"In theological terms one could say that the irreducibly Christocentric character of revelation is simultaneously ordered toward a paternal teleology."[104] Hence, theology is not paterocentric but Christocentric—to the glory and ultimacy of God the Father.

Pneumatocentric

In some ways, that a pneumatocentric theology is not a viable option should be a foregone conclusion, for one of the central claims of this dissertation is that pneumatology should have a Christological center, not the other way around. In addition, chapter 2 already dealt with arguments for third article theology that posit the Holy Spirit as the starting point for theological discourse.[105] Yet Todd Miles's arguments against pneumatological inclusivism merit some attention.[106]

Miles focuses on the arguments of Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong because their "inclusivistic models are more intentionally pneumatocentric."[107] Pinnock's theology of religions rests on "an affirmation of the unbounded and universal love of God for the world."[108] Further, the work of creation "establishes the omnipresence of the Spirit in the world," and the Spirit continues in that role even in redemption; thus, his efforts cannot be subordinated to those of the Son.[109] Finally, Pinnock denies the *filioque*,

---

[104] Durand, "A Theology of God the Father," 372.

[105] See chap. 2, sect. "Third Article Theology" (pp. 34–50).

[106] What follows is a brief summary of extensive argumentation developed most fully in Miles's 2006 dissertation ("Severing the Spirit from the Son") and then updated and distilled in his 2012 article ("He Will Glorify Me"). S.a. Todd LeRoy Miles, *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville: B&H, 2010).

[107] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 78.

[108] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 79; s.a. Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 154, 15.

[109] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 79. Concerning the Spirit's omnipresence in creation, Pinnock details, "Appreciating the Creator Spirit lets us see that God is involved in creation down to the last detail. . . . The Spirit is present in all human experience and beyond it. There is no special sacred realm, no sacred-secular split—practically anything in the created order can be sacramental of God's presence" (*Flame of Love*, 63). Concerning the Spirit's omnipresence in redemption, Pinnock states, "Creator Spirit keeps the link between creation and redemption open and alive. . . . The cosmic functions keep before us the unity of God's work in creation and redemption. . . . The whole creation is a field of the Spirit's operations and thus sacramental of God's presence" (pp. 62–63).

which allows him to "establish a measure of independence for the work of the Spirit from that of the Son" and even to view "Christ as an aspect of Spirit's mission."[110] The result is, according to Miles, that "the sanctifying work of the Spirit is not limited to Christians. This also suggests that saving faith depends only ontologically on the work of Christ, not epistemologically."[111]

Similar to Pinnock, Yong "wants to conduct a Christian investigation of other religions, not through the lens of Christology, but of Pneumatology."[112] As Miles avers,

> He [Yong] believes that a pneumatological theology of religions will reframe the soteriological question, by allowing serious regard for the person and work of Jesus, without subordinating that work to the church. When the redemptive work of the Spirit is not limited to the confines of the church, then the offer and application of salvation become available to those outside the reach of the church as well.[113]

Further, Yong refuses to subordinate the Spirit's work to that of Christ; instead, he recognizes "the economies of the Word and the Spirit as overlapping dimensionally."[114] And "like Pinnock," Miles explains, "Yong's model is built on the omnipresence of the

---

[110] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 79–80; s.a. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 80, 196–97. Pinnock himself states, "Spirit has always longed to make human begins the friends of God . . . . What is being offered at Jesus' birth is the same grace that has always been there since the foundation of the world and is now being decisively manifested" (*Flame of Love*, 82); "Viewing the Son's incarnation as an event in the history of the Spirit lets us consider particularity [i.e., the mystery of God revealed in Jesus] in the context of universality [i.e., the Spirit's working in creation and history prior to the incarnation]" (p. 197).

[111] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 79–80; s.a. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 195. By "sanctifying work of the Spirit," Miles is referring to Pinnock's notion of the Spirit's universal prevenient grace. For example, Pinnock comments, "Spirit works ceaselessly to persuade human beings to trust and open themselves up to love. Those with eyes to see can discern the Spirit's activity in human culture and religion, as God everywhere draws people to friendship" (*Flame of Love*, 195).

[112] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 80–81. Yong offers "a pneumatological approach to theology of religions." He asks, "What if one begins with pneumatology rather than Christology?" (*Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 27). His answer is this: "I submit that a pneumatological starting point for Christian theology of religions provides this kind of alternative categorical framework that remains resolutely Christian and still theological on the one hand, even while allowing for the religions to be heard on their own terms on the other" (p. 29).

[113] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 80; s.a. Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 21–22.

[114] Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 62; s.a. Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 81. According to Yong, such an overlap allows for—among other things—non-Christian faiths to be understood as "belonging to both economies, but in different respects. For starters then, it allows that they be conceived in pneumatological terms, related but not subordinated to or redefined by the economy of the Word" (*Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 62).

Holy Spirit, who was poured out on all flesh, to bless all humanity in a universalistic fashion, at Pentecost."[115]

In evaluating the proposals of Pinnock and Yong, Miles states, "Pneumatological inclusivism rests upon a theological method that demands that Scripture be read through a pneumatological lens."[116] He goes on to explain,

> It is speculative and illegitimate to view Christ "as an aspect of the Spirit's mission," because it ignores the categories, structure, and plot of the Bible. . . . Pneumatological inclusivism fails because it has been developed from an unwarranted and illegitimate theological method; that is, it fails on biblical-theological grounds. In short, it violates the way that Christ instructed us to read Scripture.

In summary, "pneumatological inclusivists' and pluralists' theologies of the Spirit are flawed because they disregard the relationship between the Son and the Spirit as played out in special revelation and redemptive history."[117] Specifically, Pinnock and Yong "fundamentally misunderstand the nature of redemptive history and its Christocentric focus." Hence, theology is not pneumatocentric—especially such that it detaches the work of the Son and the Spirit and opens the door for inclusivism apart from knowledge of the saving work of Christ Jesus.

Ecclesiocentric

According to Kreider and Svigel, ecclesiocentric theology is "centered on the redeemed community of the church and its mission."[118] Further, they state that "this has sometimes been the tendency of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic

---

[115] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 81 (N.B.: I have modified the Miles quotation slightly, correcting what I believe is a syntactical error). In Yong's own words, "A pneumatological theology of religions proceeds at least in part from the Pentecost narrative of the Spirit of God being poured out 'upon all flesh' (Acts 2:17). This involves understanding 'all flesh' to have universal application on the one hand, and to include the world of the religions on the other" ("A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World," *Missiology* 23, no. 2 [April 2005]: 176; s.a. 177).

[116] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 82.

[117] Miles, "He Will Glorify Me," 84. Miles's conclusions comport well with the arguments I offered earlier in this chapter.

[118] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 77.

approaches."[119] As an example, they quote cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as saying, "Theology either exists in the church and from the church, or it does not exist at all."[120] One could call this conception of theology *methodological* (or *ontological*) ecclesiocentrism. The Roman Catholic Church can be considered dually Christocentric and ecclesiocentric because it views itself as the prolongation of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ—what Gregg Allison calls the "Christ-Church interconnection."[121] As Leonardo De Chirico explains, according to its self-understanding, "The Roman Catholic Church stands in continuity with the Incarnation and is the new enactment of the law of incarnation, being the post-ascension mediating agent which embodies the aspirations of nature and to which the mission of grace [mediated by Christ] to nature is entrusted."[122]

However, this view represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between Christ and the church. As Allison argues,

> Such a construction posits far more of a continuity between the incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus Christ and the Church as the prolongation of this incarnation than is warranted. The incarnation of the second person of the Trinity was a unique event. . . . [T]here can be no continuation of the incarnation, nor any derivative, secondary instance of it, with respect to the church (or any other reality, for that matter).[123]

The relationship between Christ and his church is that of spiritual-juridical union. By the Holy Spirit, the Lord incorporates individuals into the redeemed community—the

---

[119] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 77n13.

[120] Joseph Ratzinger, quoted in John L. Allen Jr., *Pope Benedict XVI: A Biography of Joseph Ratzinger* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 31.

[121] Gregg R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 56.

[122] Leonardo De Chirico, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism*, Religions and Discourses 19 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 249. As De Chirico expounds, the law of incarnation is the "pattern through which grace meets nature and nature receives grace." Christ's incarnation is the primary example, but the incarnational pattern "surpasses the particularity of the historical event of the mission of Jesus Christ and shapes the whole of salvation history" (p. 249). Thus, the Church is an extension, prolongation, or "analogous manifestation" of the incarnational principle (Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice*, 56).

[123] Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice*, 63. For a fuller presentation of these matters, see, minimally, Allison, pp. 56–66.

church—upon conversion, thereby making them spiritual sons and daughters of God and fellow heirs of the kingdom of God (Rom 8:14–17, 29; 1 Cor 12:12–13, 27; Gal 4:4–7; Eph 1:3, 5; 2:14–22).[124] The church does not *extend* the incarnation (which is radically unique to the Son as a temporal extension of his eternal procession); rather, it *testifies* to the incarnation by the power of the Spirit. Theology, therefore, is not ecclesiocentric—at least not methodologically (or ontologically) such that the church is understood as the extension of Christ's incarnation and mediatorship of grace and, therefore, as the ultimate arbiter of theology.

But what about a kind of *scriptural* ecclesiocentrism that sees the church as the central theme of Scripture and theology? This kind of view could be possible for someone who extends the church's identity to Adam and sees the storyline of Scripture as pointing to and culminating in the work of the church. But to place the church—not Christ—at the center of Scripture and theology would be (roughly) the same mistake as placing humankind—not God—at the center. Scripture revolves around what Christ does *for* the church. Any scriptural emphases on the work of the church are highlights of Christ's work by the Spirit through the *medium* of the church. Further, salvation history focuses not on the redeemed community in and of itself but on the Redeemer who creates a community *in Christ* by the Spirit, drawing the saints into communion with God and fellowship with one another. And the redeemed community does not preach the gospel of *the church* but of *Christ* who is building his church by drawing people to *himself*. Hence, theology is not ecclesiocentric—neither methodologically (or ontologically) nor scripturally. When it comes to the church, theology is definitively Christocentric.

---

[124] See Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 312–13, who discusses these and other passages in relation to adoption. S.a. Adonis Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 45–48, who discusses the Spirit's uniting the saints to Christ from the perspective of the divine missions, particularly the "Christoformation" of the Spirit.

Bibliocentric

Bibliocentric theology is "centered on God's propositional revelation in Scripture."[125] In one sense, this line of reasoning is sound, for—as Edward John Carnell declares, affirming verbal plenary inspiration—"the Bible, and the Bible alone is the Word of God written."[126] Yet—Carnell continues—"unless the claims of orthodoxy are spelled out with care, however, they may connote an odious Biblicism. . . . Orthodoxy has *always* insisted that the written Word does not commend itself unless the heart is confronted by the living Word."[127] That is, although Scripture is the God-inspired—and therefore authoritative—revelation of God, his works, and his ways, its ultimate end is not itself (the text) but God's own self, which is most fully revealed in the divine Son now incarnate, Jesus Christ. Scripture is the *medium* by which people are drawn—by the Spirit—to the Son and, by extension, to the Father. John Webster notes an important distinction: "The Word made flesh and the scriptural word are in no way equivalent realities. . . . [N]o divine nature or properties are to be predicated of Scripture; its substance is that of a creaturely reality . . . ; and its relation to God is instrumental."[128] Therefore, we worship not the revelation itself but the Revealer, not that which was spoken but the One who has spoken. As Carnell explains, "The written Word is the locus

---

[125] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 77.

[126] Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 33.

[127] Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 33. For one definition of "biblicism" (negative connotation), see Tremper Longman III and Mark L. Strauss, *BCDBS*, s.v. "biblicism, bibliolatry" (p. 27). For another definition (negative connotation), see R. Scott Clark, "Resources on Biblicism," Heidelblog, accessed April 11, 2022, https://heidelblog.net/biblicism/. Cf. the positive connotation of "biblicism" articulated by Gregg R. Allison in *BCDTT*, s.v. "evangelicalism " (p. 75).

[128] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, Currents Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23. For a helpful discussion of Scripture as "testimony" and "a means of grace" and of a "theology of mediation," see Webster, 23–25. S.a. Fred Sanders, "Holy Scripture under the Auspices of the Holy Trinity: On John Webster's Trinitarian Doctrine of Scripture," *IJST* 21, no. 1 (January 2019): 4–23, particularly Sanders's comment on pp. 13–14: "[Webster's] motivation for locating the doctrine of Scripture within the doctrine of the Trinity was, of course, not to treat Scripture as somehow divine; Webster always insisted on the creatureliness of Scripture itself. Instead, what he intended by placing bibliology within trinitarian theology was to emphasize that its ontology was constituted by the Trinity's action and work."

of confrontation with the living Word," but "fellowship [with God] knows *Christ*, not *about* Christ."[129] Perhaps the distinction is obvious, but it is a distinction Christians must nevertheless make and continually keep sight of, lest we mistake *sola Scripture* for *ipsa Scriptura*. Hence, theology is not bibliocentric.

Similarly, theology is not gospel-centric. Even though the storyline of Scripture revolves around the *good news* of Jesus Christ, Christians do not worship the gospel message itself but the One about whom the message testifies. Believers must take care that they do not lose sight of the Truth himself (Christ; John 14:6)—and true communion with him—for mere intellectual assent to or epistemological integration of the truth claims contained in the gospel message. In our commitment to the gospel, we must keep Christ himself at the center of our proclamation, for true eschatological rest (Matt 11:28; Heb 3:7–4:13) is found in the *person* of—not the *message* about—Jesus Christ. Hence, theology is neither bibliocentric nor gospel-centric but Christocentric. Christians follow the storyline of Scripture, which, focusing on the person and work of Christ, directs us outside of the text to God's own self. In fact, according to Webster, Scripture heralds the self-communicative presence of the resurrected Christ himself: "Scripture is to be read as what it is: a complex though unified set of texts through which the risen Christ interprets himself as the one in whom the entire economy of God's dealings with creatures has its coherence and fulfilment."[130]

---

[129] Carnell, *Case for Orthodox Theology*, 34.

[130] John Webster, "Resurrection and Scripture," in *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew T. Lincoln and Angus Paddison, Library of New Testament Studies 348 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 138. Moreover, Martin Luther argues that the gospel *is* Jesus Christ—his work of salvation leading to justification: "Whenever you consider the doctrine of justification and wonder how or where or in what condition to find a God who justifies or accepts sinners, then you must know that there is no other God than this Man Jesus Christ"; "Faith in its proper function has no other object than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was put to death for the sins of the world"; "[True faith] takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself"; "Three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present . . . . And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness" (*Luther's Works*, vol. 26, *Lectures on Galatians 1–4 (1535)*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen [Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1963], 29, 89, 129, 132).

Eschatocentric

  Finally, eschatocentric theology is "centered in the culmination of all things in the new creation."[131] For instance, Jürgen Moltmann, well known for his eschatological theology, quotes Ernst Kasëmann favorably as saying, "The end of history is not only its consummation, but also its key, the basis for understanding it."[132] Further, Moltmann himself states, "Christian theology begins with the eschatological problem, introduced by Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and the appearances of the risen one," and, "Theology as eschatology understands man and the world in view of the future which both shall find in the coming of God. It is a thinking between cross and parousia and holds up the hope for God's coming in the painful realities of this world."[133]

  However commendable this position may be, an eschatocentric theology mistakes the end for the center. The Christian hope is not the eschaton itself but Christ himself. The storyline of Scripture includes but does not revolve around the narratival arc of *consummation*. It instead revolves around Christ through the biblical progression of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Certainly, Christians have eschatological hope, and that hope is both an incentive and a reward for obedience and faithfulness (Heb 3:7–4:13; 1 Pet 1:3–25). But Christ himself is our hope, and he has already inaugurated eschatological reality in his person and by the work he completed during his first advent. The eschaton is indeed God's consummating all of his purposes for creation and salvation. It is the destined *denouement* of the grand metanarrative of Scripture.

---

[131] Kreider and Svigel, *Practical Primer on Theological Method*, 77.

[132] Ernst Kasëmann, review of *Das Evangelium Johannes*, by Rudolph Bultmann, *Verkundigung und Forschung* (1947), 147, quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. Frederick Herzog (New York: n.p., 1970), 7.

[133] Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 7, 8. Moltmann means very specific things when he says "the eschatological problem" and "the coming of God" (see pp. 1–50). Moltmann's vision of eschatology is too complex to treat fairly here. Instead, I merely critique the notion of an eschatological center (as exhibited, e.g., by Moltmann) instead of a Christological center. S.a. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1996).

Yet while we look forward to the full actualization of all of God's promises for creation, redemption, and consummation, we take heart in Christ *now*, for we know that our covenantal God is faithful and, therefore, that the consummation of reality is as good as already done. While we pine for Christ to "come quickly" (Rev 22:7, 20) in order to set all things aright and to make all things new, we must take care not to miss the *person* (Christ, fellowship with God himself) for the *place* (heaven or the new creation). So, whatever boons an orthodox eschatological theology may offer are only realized in the person and work of Christ—the beginning, middle, and *end* of redemptive history. To overemphasize eschatology, therefore, is to miss or neglect the Bible's self-presentation, centered on Christ. Hence, theology is not eschatocentric—though there is a certain eschatological bent to the progressive storyline of Scripture.

Summary

The storyline of Scripture revolves around God, his works, and his ways, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ in his first and second coming. The grand metanarrative of Scripture unfolds around Christ as the center—not humankind, not abstract divinity or the Trinity as a unit, not the Father or the Spirit individually, not the church, not the Bible or the gospel message, and not the eschaton. The completion of this survey of the available centers for theology now allows the preliminary conclusion to be formalized: Christ is the center of Scripture and theology; therefore, pneumatology is necessarily Christocentric—hence, a Christological pneumatology.

Conclusion

This chapter has set forth the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology—Christocentrism. Specifically, I argued that hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism possesses sufficient warrant to support—and even *necessitate*—that pneumatology be Christ-centered. As Miles asserts, "All systematic formulation must be Christocentric. . . . Even pneumatology, developed from exegesis

and a proper understanding of biblical theology[,] will find its center in Christ, and the relationship between the Son and the Spirit will reflect that Christological center."[134] To arrive at this conclusion, I first demonstrated the biblical, theological, and historical viability of this two-pronged conception of Christocentrism and then surveyed alternative centers for doing theology (anthropo-, theo-, patero-, pneumato-, ecclesio-, biblio-, and eschatocentric theologies) to determine whether they out-merit a Christological center. They do not. Instead, as Ortlund puts it, "while cheerfully affirming the co-equality, co-eternality, co-divinity and soteriological co-necessity of Father, Son, and Spirit, a Christ-centered approach to the Bible, history, and Christian living is not only illuminating for us but incumbent upon us in light of God's own self-revelation in Scripture."[135] Consequently, a trinitarian *Christological* pneumatology must be consciously Christocentric.

---

[134] Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son," 288–89.

[135] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 321.

CHAPTER 4

INSEPARABLE OPERATIONS AND A TRINITARIAN
CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

The second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology is the doctrine of

inseparable operations—and its associated theological freight, namely, the divine *taxis*

and distinct personal appropriations. The inseparability principle affirms that all external

works of the triune God are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*).[1] That is,

in every divine act *ad extra* (i.e., in the world; "toward the outside"), all persons of the

Godhead work together as one, by virtue of their one shared nature—and thus singular

knowledge, will, and power—*ad intra* (i.e., who God is in himself; "toward the inside").[2]

Thus, when the Trinity acts, there is only one action, not three. Further, the eternal

subsisting relations within the Godhead reveal the irreducible *taxis* (or order): the Father

eternally begets the Son, and the Father and the Son together eternally spirate the Spirit

(Father → Son → Holy Spirit).[3] The trinitarian *taxis* represents not only the eternal order

---

[1] This paragraph is adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," *JETS* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 537–38. Used with permission.

[2] N.B.: I am taking for granted the version of inseparable operations known as "hard" inseparability, "meaning that every *act token* of any Trinitarian person is also an act token of the other persons" (Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021], xv). This view is to be distinguished from "soft" inseparability, "meaning only that the divine persons participate in shared and collective actions together" (Vidu, xv; s.a. xiii, 116–22). S.a. Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 296; Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 108–9. Although they do not use the terms "hard" and "soft" inseparability, Barrett and Swain are clearly thinking in similar terms, affirming the former and rejecting the latter. Because a trinitarian Christological pneumatology is founded upon classical trinitarianism (see chap. 2), soft inseparability is automatically out of bounds—and rightly so.

[3] For a graphic depiction of the double procession of the Holy Spirit as well as a defense of the Latin *filioque* addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, see Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 237, 258–64.

of subsistence (*ad intra*) but also how God acts in the world (*ad extra*). Hence, every triune act of God is accomplished from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation).[4] Attendant to the inseparability principle and the *taxis* is the doctrine of distinct personal appropriations, which posits that an act (or attribute) common to all three divine persons can be attributed to—or appropriated by— one particular person *ad extra* if that act (or attribute) especially reflects the unique property of that person *ad intra*: unbegottenness (Father), filiation (Son), and spiration (Holy Spirit).

To summarize, in the words of Scott Swain,

> As God's being is simple and indivisible, so his works are undivided and inseparable. As three distinct persons eternally exist within God's simple, indivisible being, so there is a threefold order of operation within God's undivided, inseparable works. . . .
>
> . . . Because the one God is three persons, the mutual relations between the persons of the Trinity exhibit themselves within God's indivisible external works. . . . The one God's distinct personal modes of existing as Father, Son, and Spirit are inflected in the Trinitarian shape of God's indivisible action: God's external actions proceed from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. . . .
>
> . . . That said, certain divine works are often specially associated with certain persons of the Trinity.[5]

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a biblical, historical, and theological articulation and defense of the doctrine of inseparable operations and its associated grammar—the trinitarian *taxis* and distinct personal appropriations—and to explicate the significance of this theological triplex for pneumatology. Specifically, I argue that a healthy, robust understanding of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations is essential for a healthy, robust theology of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. First

---

[4] Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering, TRS 1 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 161–68. The single arrows (→) represent movement within the life of God (*ad intra*), while the double arrow (→→) represents the action of God toward the created order (*ad extra*).

[5] Swain, *The Trinity*, 109–11. S.a. Stephen J. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 154.

and most importantly, I supply the biblical foundations—sourced in the Old Testament, fully developed in the New—for the theological grammar of divine inseparability *ad extra*. Next, I show the strong historical attestation to inseparable operations, canvassing the fourth-century pro-Nicene theological consensus. Finally, I address some theological concerns regarding the grammar of inseparability in order to demonstrate its coherence and—by extension—its fecundity for contemporary theological construction, especially vis-à-vis pneumatology.

I devote the most space to biblical foundations, for it is on them that the historical attestation and theological coherence depend. That is, theologians throughout history derive inseparable operations primarily from Scripture, and the theological soundness of the taxonomy of inseparability is fundamentally tied to its faithfulness to the biblical data and the categories and characterizations that arise therefrom.

Biblical Foundations

In what follows, I detail the biblical foundations for inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations—in that order. It should become quite clear that these theological concepts are fundamentally derived not from theological speculation but scriptural revelation. As such, they are indispensable for a holistic understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Inseparable Operations

While Scripture manifests or indicates the three divine persons to readers separably (i.e., distinctly), it presents all divine action as inseparable.[6]

---

[6] On readers' phenomenological experience of divine action in Scripture as separable versus Scripture's holistic presentation of divine action as inseparable, see Adonis Vidu, "Why Is Inseparable Operations Such a Hard Sell?," *Credo* 11, no. 1 (April 2021), https://credomag.com/article/why-is-insepara ble-operations-such-a-hard-sell/. S.a. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon* 52 (*NPNF*[1] 6:259–66); cf. Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.30 (Hill, 220–21). In *Sermon* 52 and *The Trinity*, Augustine is discussing the inseparable activity yet separable manifestation of the divine persons at Jesus's baptism (Matt 3:13–17).

Old Testament: The One God—YHWH

The doctrine of inseparable operations is sourced in the Old Testament's conceptualization of the one God of Israel.[7] One God equals one work. First and foremost, the Old Testament presents God as the Creator: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Further, Scripture identifies the Creator as the one true God. As Isaiah 45:15 reads, "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it . . . : 'I am the LORD, and there is no other'" (s.a. vv. 5–8).

The one God is also a covenantal God. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of Israel (Exod 3:6; 6:2–8). And the one God has a name. When Moses asks God for the name of the One who sent him to the Israelites, God announces, "I AM WHO I AM. . . . Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exod 3:14). With this declaration, God reveals his personal name: YHWH.[8] The name of the Lord is holy (Ps 145:21), and he will not share his glory with another (Isa 42:8; 48:11).

Scripture identifies YHWH not only as Creator but also as Redeemer—in particular, he is the One who rescues the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. As Exodus 6:6–7 records, God tells Moses,

> Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will

---

[7] What follows is a biblical (canonical) survey of God's oneness and uniqueness as expressed in the Old Testament. For a discussion of the nature of Jewish monotheism (especially with regard to agency and divine identity), see Vidu, *Same God*, 1–11, following Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). The conversation concerning the nature of Jewish monotheism is a substantial one; Vidu engages, among others, N. T. Wright, Thomas McCall, Larry Hurtado, Aubrey Johnson, Christopher Rowland, Crisp Fletcher-Louis, and James McGrath.

[8] Concerning the designation YHWH, Swain explains, "The Bible's primary way of signaling God's uniqueness is by means of God's proper name, YHWH, often referred to as the 'tetragrammaton' because it is composed of four letters" (*The Trinity*, 29). For greater discussion on the relationship between "I AM" and "YHWH," see Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 121–22. S.a. Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 19 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 48.

take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

Consequently, the Redeemer of Israel expects his people to worship him and no other, as evident in the enduring words of the first commandment and the Great Shema: "And God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me'" (Exod 20:1–3; s.a. Deut 4:35, 39; 32:39; cf. Mark 12:32); "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:4–5; cf. Mark 12:29–30).

In sum, the revelational emphasis of the Old Testament lies with God's oneness and uniqueness, which includes his aseity, simplicity, eternality, sovereignty, and other almighty attributes.[9] As the Lord declares in Isaiah 46:9–11,

> I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose," calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

Although God often works through intermediaries (e.g., angels [1 Kgs 19:5–7; Dan 6:22], human servants [Exod 3:10–12; 2 Sam 3:18]), he is in an entirely separate category— there is the Creator, and then there is everything else. Hence, there is one God who acts in creation in powerful and majestic ways, and those mighty acts reveal him, glorify him, and—in so doing—elicit praise from his creatures and creation (Ps 148).

But while the Old Testament hints at God's tripersonal identity (e.g., the Spirit of God [Gen 1:2; 1 Sam 16:13], the Servant of the Lord [Isa 42:1–9; 52:13–53:12]), the full blossoming of trinitarian revelation—including the doctrine of inseparable

---

[9] For more on the attributes of God (esp. singularity, aseity, immutability, and infinity vis-à-vis simplicity), see Steven J. Duby, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 30 (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 91–175; s.a., more recently, Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), chap. 1 (esp. sect. "Revisiting God's Perfections" [pp. 22–32]).

operations—awaits the New Testament and its witness to the work of the incarnate Son and indwelling Spirit.

*New Testament: Jesus and the Holy
Spirit Identified with YHWH*

In short, Christ and the Spirit do the works of God and are identified with YHWH.[10] Jesus manifests food and feeds the hungry, heals the sick and afflicted, works on the Sabbath, forgives sin, makes atonement for sin, and raises the dead.[11] The Holy Spirit is responsible for miraculous conception, grants new life, sanctifies believers, empowers believers for ministry, and speaks divine revelation.[12] It would be a mistake, however, to identify these acts as the works of God *through intermediaries*. These are not simply God-*like* acts (i.e., similar action *types*); they are the very acts of God, the self-same actions of YHWH (i.e., same action *tokens*).

That the works of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are divine works is further corroborated by the fact that Christ and the Spirit are identified with YHWH himself. As Vidu notes, "Were it not for the fact that Scripture ascribes specifically divine actions to Christ and the Spirit, they would not have been identified as divine."[13] The earliest pages of the New Testament identify Christ with the God of Israel by name: Jesus ("God

---

[10] See Vidu, *Same God*, 11–23 (sect. "Jesus and the Spirit Identified with the God of Israel").

[11] Provides food: Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–15; cf. Exod 16:1–36; Num 11:31–32; Pss 78:15–29; 105:40–41. Heals the sick: Matt 4:23–25; 8:16–17; 11:5; 14:35–36; Mark 1:34; 6:55–56; Luke 7:22; cf. Exod 16:26; Ps 103:3; Isa 35:5–6; 53:4. Works on Sabbath: Matt 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–3:6; Luke 6:1–11; John 5:1–17; cf. Gen 8:22; Ps 104:1–35. Forgives sin: Matt 9:1–8; Mark 2:5–12; Luke 7:48–29; cf. Exod 34:6–7; Ps 32:5; Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34. Makes atonement for sins: Matt 26:28; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:18–20; Rom 3:23–26; Heb 10:10–18; 1 John 2:2; cf. Isa 52:13–53:12; Ezek 16:63. Raises the dead: Matt 5:39–43; Luke 7:14–15; 8:52–56; John 11:1–44; cf. Deut 32:29; John 5:21; cf. Ps 16:10; Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:4–14.

[12] Miraculous conception: Matt 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35; cf. Gen 18:9–15; 21:1–7. Grants new life: John 3:1–8; Rom 8:11; Titus 3:5; cf. Ezek 36:26–27; 37:13–14. Sanctifies believers: Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13–14; 1 Pet 1:2; cf. Exod 31:13; Lev 20:8; Ezek 37:28. Empowers believers: Acts 1:8; 2:1–11; 1 Cor 12:1–11; Heb 2:3–4; cf. 1 Sam 10:1, 6–7; Num 11:25; Judg 3:10. Speaks divine revelation: Mark 12:36; John 16:13; Eph 3:5; 2 Pet 1:20–21; cf. Exod 20:22; Pss 99:7; 119:160; Ezek 12:24–28.

[13] Vidu, *Same God*, xv; s.a. 36–49 (sect. "The Works of the Trinity in the Gospel of John" [Vidu focuses on John 5, 10, and 14]).

99

saves") and Immanuel ("God with us"; Matt 1:21–24; cf. Isa 7:14).[14] Moreover, Jesus

explicitly equates his work with the work of Father, saying to his Jewish opponents, "My

Father is working until now, and I am working" (John 5:17).[15] Christ goes on to explain,

"The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For

whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and

shows him all that he himself is doing" (vv. 19–20; s.a. v. 36). Jesus even offers an

example of such inseparable divine activity: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives

them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will" (v. 21).

Similarly, when Philip tells the Lord, "Show us the Father," Jesus responds,

> Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?
> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I
> say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me
> does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else
> believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:8–11)

In addition, Jesus equates himself with God by virtue of action (salvation from

death), knowledge (internal knowledge of the Father), and name (YHWH). Responding

to the Jews' questions, objections, and accusations, Jesus asserts, "If anyone keeps my

word, he will never see death" (John 8:51); "You have not known him [the Father]. I

know him" (v. 55); and "Before Abraham was, I am" (v. 58; ἐγὼ εἰμί, drawing on Exod

3:14 LXX).[16] Finally, that Christ equates his work with that of the Father is evident in the

nature of the Holy Spirit's sending; although only one sending is in view (i.e., Pentecost),

Jesus says that *he* will send the Spirit and that *the Father* will send the Spirit:

---

[14] S.a. Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 40, 61–62, 80, 148–49.

[15] Christ's opponents understand the lofty claim Jesus is making: "he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Cf. Christ's claim in John 14:10: "The Father who dwells in me does his works."

[16] Once again, Christ's opponents understand the implications of Jesus's words, as their response indicates: "So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple" (John 8:59). In the Old Testament, the punishment for blasphemy is death by stoning: "Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him" (Lev 24:16). S.a. Mark 6:50 ("Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid"; θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε), whose language parallels the words of the Lord in the Old Testament (see, e.g., Gen 15:1; Exod 3:14; 14:13; Isa 41:10).

Christ: "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father. . . ." (John 15:26)

Christ: "If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." (16:7)

Father: "And I [i.e., Jesus] will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper." (14:16)

Father: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my [i.e., Christ's] name . . . ." (14:26)

Ultimately, the Father and Son *work* as one because they *are* one (John 10:25, 30, 27–38; 14:10–11).[17]

Correspondent with Jesus's self-identification with the Father (and, therefore, with YHWH) is Jesus's identification of the Holy Spirit with himself (and, therefore, with YHWH).[18] Christ calls the Spirit "another Helper" (John 14:16; s.a. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7)[19] and the "Spirit of truth" (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The implication of the Spirit's being *another* Helper sent by the Father is that Jesus himself is *the* Helper, the first sent by the Father and now the saints' Helper—or Advocate—with the Father in heaven (1 John 2:1). Further, Christ himself is "the truth" (as well as "the way" and "the life"); as such, "no one comes to the Father except through me [i.e., Christ]" (John 14:6). Hence, the Spirit of truth is the Spirit of Christ and, by extension, the Spirit of God.[20]

Additionally, Jesus connects the Spirit's divine *identity* vis-à-vis Christ and the Father with the Spirit's divine *activity* vis-à-vis Christ and the Father:

---

[17] Vidu rightly comments on the relationship between divine inseparability *ad intra* and *extra* as follows: "Trinitarian monotheism [i.e., one God, three persons] and the doctrine of inseparable operations mutually entail one another. That is, one can argue from the exegetical datum of inseparable operations to the doctrine of the Trinity" (*Same God*, 91).

[18] One of Vidu's biblical warrants for the doctrine of inseparable operations is the inseparability of Christ and the Spirit (*Same God*, 31–36). The inextricable identification of Christ and the Spirit aligns with the Christological emphasis (and center) of Scripture and, by extension, a Christological pneumatology.

[19] Or "Advocate" (NIV, NET, NRSV), "Comforter" (KJV, ASV), "Counselor" (RSV, CSB), or "Paraclete" (Grk. παράκλητος).

[20] Spirit of Christ: Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11. Spirit of God: Matt 10:20; Luke 4:18 (cf. Isa 61:1); Acts 5:9; Rom 8:9, 11, 14; 15:19; 1 Cor 2:11, 12, 14; 3:16; 6:11; 7:40; 2 Cor 3:3; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 John 4:13.

> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13–15)

Just as Jesus works as he sees the Father's working (John 5:17, 19–20, 36; 14:10–11), so also the Spirit speaks as he hears the Father's (or the Son's) speaking (16:13–15; s.a. 14:26), for in both cases, the divine persons are working inseparably as from one principle (i.e., the divine nature). Similarly, if all that the Father possesses is Christ's (e.g., knowledge, teaching, works), then the fact that the Holy Spirit will take what is Christ's (i.e., the Father's) and give it to the disciples is indicative of the Spirit's divine identification with the Father—in essence and in operation.[21]

Such identification is also apparent in Christ's equating the Spirit's indwelling of believers with his and the Father's indwelling:

Spirit: "He [the Spirit] dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:17)

Father and Son: "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23)

The same work—divine inhabitation of the saints—is equally attributed to all three persons. In fact, the Father, Son, and Spirit all equally participate in this operation because they mutually indwell one another in the divine nature (*perichoresis*; John 10:38; 14:1011; 17:21; s.a. 1 Cor 2:10).[22]

And related to the Spirit's indwelling is his sending (i.e., his being sent). As mentioned above, the Spirit is sent *by* Christ *from* the Father (John 15:26; 16:7; s.a. Mark 12:6; Acts 2:33) as well as *by* the Father *at the request of* or *in the name of* Christ (John

---

[21] See J. T. English's related reflections on triune communicative agency vis-à-vis the Son and the Holy Spirit in "Thus Says the Lord: A Trinitarian Account of the Authority of Scripture" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), chaps. 3–4 (see esp. pp. 84–105 [re: Son], 138–55 [re: Spirit]).

[22] For more on *perichoresis*, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 278–79; Gregg R. Allison, *BCDTT*, s.v. "*perichoresis*" (pp. 161–62); Richard A. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "circumincessio" (p. 64), "emperichōrēsis" (p. 105); D. Glenn Butner Jr., *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), chap. 5 (pp. 133–52).

14:16, 26; s.a. Gal 4:6). The Spirit's sending reflects his divine identity: in the divine life, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. So, ultimately, the Spirit *works* inseparably with the Father and the Son because he *is* inseparable from the Father and the Son.[23]

Scripture's Ascription of Self-Same Actions
to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Another way of apprehending the inseparability principle from Scripture is to take a divine action and discern how all three divine persons participate in that action. The single most important example of inseparable operations is the act of creation. While intermediaries *could* be at work in various divine acts, only the Creator can be at work in creation *ex nihilo* because there is nothing but the Creator "prior to" the act of creation.[24] And as it turns out, Scripture ascribes the act token of creation to all three divine persons. The preeminent example, of course, is Genesis 1:1, which—presumably, per the creeds— attributes creation to the Father: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Indeed, Scripture is replete with attributions of creation to the Father (or the one God).[25]

In addition, Scripture ascribes the self-same work of creation to the Son and the Holy Spirit. Just as it is the Father "from whom are all things and for whom we exist," so also it is the Lord Jesus Christ "through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor 8:6). Truly, "by [the Son] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things

---

[23] For more on the Holy Spirit's deity and personhood, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 239–43.

[24] As Vidu avers, creation is "precisely the one act where YHWH works directly and without intermediaries" (*Same God*, 11; s.a. 50–51).

[25] See, e.g., Gen 1:26–27; 2:7; Neh 9:6; Job 38:4–40:2; Pss 19:1; 90:2; Isa 42:5; 44:24; 48:12– 13; 64:8; Jer 10:11–13; 32:17; Rom 1:20; Eph 3:9, 14–15; 1 Tim 6:13; Jas 1:17–18; Rev 4:11.

were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16; s.a. Heb 1:2–3; 2:10).[26] Moreover,

Scripture attests the Son's creative agency as the divine Word of the Father, evoking the

language of Genesis 1:1 (Ἐν ἀρχῇ): "In the beginning was the Word [ὁ λόγος], and the

Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All

things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"

(John 1:1–3).[27]

The Spirit of God (וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים; πνεῦμα θεοῦ) is said to be present at creation as

well, "hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2).[28] In addition, Psalm 104:30

declares, "When you send forth *your Spirit* [רוּחֲךָ; τὸ πνεῦμά σου (103:30 LXX)], they are

created, and you renew the face of the ground" (s.a. Job 33:4). Further, Psalm 33:6 speaks

to both the Son's and the Spirit's creative agency: "By *the word* [בִּדְבַר; τῷ λόγῳ (32:6

LXX)] of the LORD the heavens were made, and by *the breath* [וּבְרוּחַ; τῷ πνεύματι] of his

---

[26] The divine passive in this verse is especially noteworthy. As David W. Pao explains,

In the passive "were created" (ἐκτίσθη), one finds an explicit focus on God's act of creation, one that is embedded in the presence of its nominal form in v. 15 ("creation"). In the biblical times, discussion of creation can often be found in contexts where power relationships are defined (e.g., 1 Chr 29:10–19; Ps 89:9–14; Isa 40:18–24; 1 Cor 10:26; Rev 4:11). The Creator is the Supreme Being to whom all creatures are to submit and worship. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the focus on creation in a hymn that highlights the power and status of Christ. (*Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 96; s.a. 97, 115)

S.a. G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 91–95; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 100–26.

[27] If the Son is also understood as the Father's Wisdom (see, e.g., 1 Cor 1:24, 30), then additional biblical data evinces the Son's creational agency: "O LORD, how manifold are your work! In *wisdom* have you made them all" (Ps 104:24); "The LORD possessed me [*Wisdom*] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth" (Prov 8:22–23; s.a. vv. 24–31). As this understanding is hotly contested, I do not engage or defend it further. Note, however, that it does have a rich heritage in the tradition (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas).

[28] Referencing Myk Habets's observation of the Holy Spirit's presence in Gen 1:2, Vidu notes, "To speak about the Spirit in this sense is to refer to nothing else but YHWH in his relations to creation, or his people" (*Same God*, 31–32; s.a. Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, PTMS 129 [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010], 135). S.a. Torey J. S. Teer, "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, The Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God," *BSac* 177, no. 707 (December 2020): 405–6 (see esp. 405n13).

mouth all their host."[29] Hence, all three divine persons work inseparably in the one work of creation.[30]

Another noteworthy example of inseparable operations in Scripture is the divine work of redemption, which includes forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, adoption, and more. Ephesians 1:3–14 speaks to this inseparable activity in detail: *the Father* predestined the saints unto adoption *in Christ*, through whose blood we come to enjoy the forgiveness of our trespasses, and sealed us with *the Holy Spirit*, the guarantee of our salvific inheritance (cf. Rom 8:26–30; 2 Cor 1:21–22; 2 Thess 2:13–17; Titus 3:4–7). Similarly, Galatians 4:4–6 attributes redemption to all three divine persons: "But when the fullness of time had come, God [*the Father*] sent forth *his Son*, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent *the Spirit* of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (s.a. Rom 5:1–11; 8:15–17). Hebrews 9:14 also attests the inseparable activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in salvation: ". . . how much more will the blood of *Christ*, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered himself without blemish to God [*the Father*], purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Coextensive with salvation is sanctification, and Scripture attributes the sanctification of the saints to all three divine persons: "may the God of peace [i.e., *the Father*] sanctify you completely" (1 Thess 5:23); "to those sanctified in *Christ Jesus*" (1 Cor 1:2; s.a. v. 30; Heb 2:11); "through sanctification by *the Spirit*" (2 Thess 2:13–14); "in the sanctification of *the Spirit*" (1 Pet 1:2). The inseparable activity of the triune God not only sanctifies Christians but equips them for ministry as well: "Now there are

---

[29] While these mentions of "Spirit" and "word" and "breath" are not exactly discernible references to the Son and the Holy Spirit based on a solely Old Testament reading of these passages, they are likely references to the Son and Spirit based on a whole-Bible theological reading of Scripture.

[30] For further discussion of the inseparability principle vis-à-vis creation, see Allison Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 279, 299; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 293, 300–304, 345n5; Swain, *The Trinity*, 68–69, 110; Vidu, *Same God*, 23–31.

varieties of gifts, but the same *Spirit*; and there are varieties of service, but the same *Lord*

[i.e., *Christ*]; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same *God* [i.e., *the Father*]

who empowers them all in everyone" (1 Cor 12:4–6).

Finally, all three divine persons work as one in the resurrection of the saints:

"But if *Christ* is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit* is life because

of righteousness. If *the Spirit* of *him* [i.e., *the Father*] who raised Jesus from the dead

dwells in you, *he* who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal

bodies through *his Spirit* who dwells in you" (Rom 8:11; cf. John 10:17–18; 11:25). So,

the whole work of redemption—from reconciliation to resurrection—is the self-same act

of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[31]

Summary

While Scripture manifests the three divine persons to us separably (i.e., as

distinct persons), it presents all divine action as inseparable. According to both the Old

and New Testaments, there is one God (YHWH, the self-existent Creator and Redeemer),

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are identified with YHWH (in essence and in action), and

Scripture ascribes the self-same actions (e.g., creation, redemption) to the Father, Son,

and Spirit.

Trinitarian *Taxis*

While every divine act is common to all three persons of the Godhead, those

operations are not "flat," so to speak, but bear unique inflections by each divine person

that reveal a distinctive ordering (or *taxis*) to divine action. As Swain notes, "God's

external works exhibit a Trinitarian shape, proceeding from the Father, through the Son,

---

[31] For further discussion of the inseparability principle vis-à-vis redemption, see Allison Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 280–81; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 295, 304–10; Swain, *The Trinity*, 69, 109–10.

in the Spirit."[32] Two examples—taken from scriptural texts discussed above—suffice to illustrate the divine *taxis ad extra*.

First, the act of creation originates with the Father; it is from him: "There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist" (1 Cor 8:6). Moreover, creation transpires through the agency of the Son: "[There is] one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor 8:6; s.a. Ps 33:6a). Finally, the act of creation comes to completion by the Holy Spirit: The Lord made the heavens and all of their hosts by the breath of his mouth, that is, the Spirit (Ps 33:6b; s.a. 104:30).[33]

Second, the sending of the Son and Spirit for us and our salvation arises from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and finds its completion in the Holy Spirit. According to Galatians 4:4–6, the Father sends the Son (the Father himself is not sent), the Son is sent (i.e., from the Father) to complete redemption, and then "the Spirit of [God's] Son" is sent (i.e., through Christ) to apply redemption to the saints.[34] In addition, Ephesians 1:3–14 shows that salvation finds its origination in the Father's predestining purposes (vv. 3–6, 8–10, 11–12), its actualization in the forgiveness of sins secured by Christ's sacrifice (v. 7), and its culmination in the Spirit's inhabitation of the body of Christ, the church (vv. 13–14).[35]

Divine operations in creation exhibit this ordering (*taxis*) because such activity is correspondent with the eternal ordering of the divine persons. That is, the persons of

---

[32] Swain, *The Trinity*, 107.

[33] N.B.[1]: The persons' modally distinct roles in every operation are not indicative of a division of labor. With inseparable operations ("hard" inseparability), per Allison and Köstenberger, "it is not as though each of the three persons does his own part, with the Father being responsible for a third of the creation, the Son being responsible for another third of the creation, and the Holy Spirit being responsible for the final third of the creation" (*The Holy Spirit*, 279). N.B.[2]: It is not the presence of certain prepositions (whether Greek or English) in the biblical text but the manner of agency indicated by the biblical text that supports the *taxis*.
[34] The same notion of sending and being sent is also evident, e.g., in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

[35] These salvific concepts also appear, e.g., in Rom 5:1–11 and 2 Thess 2:13–14.

the Godhead participate in inseparable activity *ad extra* according to their subsisting

relations *ad intra*. The Father acts from himself because he is eternally unbegotten, yet he

acts through the Son and by the Holy Spirit because he eternally generates the Son and

eternally spirates the Spirit.[36] The Son acts from the Father and by the Holy Spirit

because he is eternally generated by the Father and because he eternally spirates the

Spirit.[37] The Spirit acts from the Father and the Son because he is eternally spirated by—

or eternally proceeds from—the Father and the Son.[38]

So, when all three divine persons work in creation, they work as one, yet they

do so in a particular manner (*taxis ad extra*), according to their eternal subsisting

relations (*taxis ad intra*). Or as Vidu puts it, in reverse order, "Just as ontologically [the

divine persons] are distinguished as relations with the unity of the essence, so [also]

operationally they are distinguished as modes of activity within the single yet

undifferentiated work of God."[39]

Appropriations

Although the persons of the Trinity work inseparably yet in a distinctly ordered

manner, Scripture often specially associates—or appropriates—certain divine actions (or

---

[36] Eternally unbegotten: Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 6:15–16; Rev 4:11. Acts through the Son and by the Spirit: Ps 33:6; John 14:10; Rom 8:1–11. Eternally generates the Son: Ps 2:7 (cf. Heb 1:5); Mic 5:2; John 1:1–2, 14, 18; 3:16; 17:5; 1 John 4:9. Eternally spirates the Spirit: Matt 10:20; Luke 4:18 (cf. Isa 61:1); John 15:26; 1 Cor 2:10–14. For more on the Father's unique personal property of unbegottenness or paternity, see Ryan Lowell Rippee, "That God May Be All in All: A Paterology Demonstrating That the Father Is the Initiator of All Divine Activity" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), esp. chap. 2. For more on how the Father works through the Son and by the Spirit, see Rippee, chaps. 4–7.

[37] Acts from the Father: John 5:19–30; 6:38; 7:16–18. Acts by the Spirit: John 3:34; 14:16–21; 16:5–15; Acts 10:38. Eternally generated by the Father: see preceding note. Eternally spirates the Spirit: John 15:26; 20:22; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; 1 Pet 1:11. For more on eternal generation, see Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 155–211; Swain, *The Trinity*, 77–81; Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 140–41, 150–52, 154–56; Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 47–73; Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 51–96.

[38] Acts from the Father and the Son: John 16:13–15; Acts 2:1–38; Gal 4:6; Titus 3:5–7. Eternally spirated by the Father and the Son: see preceding two notes. For more on eternal procession, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 258–64; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 261–85; Swain, *The Trinity*, 89–102; Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 47–73, 101–31.

[39] Vidu, *Same God*, 104; s.a. 106.

attributes) *ad extra* with certain divine persons in accord with—and as a revelation of—that person's personal property *ad intra* (paternity, generation, spiration).

Scripture typically associates the Father with election (and related concepts). For example, in Ephesians 1:3–5, Paul praises the Father because he "chose us" and "predestined us for adoption." Indeed, according to the Father's good purposes before the ages began, he "foreknew" and "predestined" us (Rom 8:28–30), he "chose" us (2 Thess 2:13–14), he "saved us and called us" (2 Tim 1:9). In addition, to the Father is often appropriated the act of creation. For instance, in the heavenly throne room scene in Revelation 4, the twenty-four elders worship the Father, proclaiming, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (v. 11). Paul (Eph 3:9) and James (Jas 1:17) likewise attribute creation to the Father.

Next, Scripture often specially identifies the work of redemption with the Son. For example, in the heavenly throne room scene, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures praise the Lamb for his salvific work: ". . . for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed a people for God" (Rev 5:9). Indeed, "worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5:12), for "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7; s.a. Rom 3:24–25). According to Hebrews 7–10, moreover, Christ is both our high priest who offers a sacrifice for sins as well as the sacrifice itself; he is the mediator of the new covenant in his blood as well as our intercessor with the Father.[40]

Finally, to the Holy Spirit is most often appropriated regeneration and sanctification (and related concepts). Paul credits "the washing of regeneration and renewal" to the Spirit (Titus 3:5). Through the Spirit, Paul pronounces, we are enabled to

---

[40] For Christ as our high priest, s.a. Heb 2:17; 4:14–5:10; cf. Ps 110:4; Zech 6:13. For Christ as a sacrifice for sins, s.a. John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 5:2; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2. For the new covenant in Christ's blood, s.a. Matt 26:27–28; Mark 14:23–24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; cf. Jer 31:31–34. For Christ as our intercessor with the Father, s.a. 1 Tim 2:5; 1 John 2:1.

declare, "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3), and cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

Indeed, no one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless he or she is born again of the

Spirit (John 3:3–8; 6:63; 7:37–39; cf. Rom 8:9–10). Paul likewise credits sanctification

and holy living to the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:13). Truly, the Spirit produces in us a holy

character (viz., "the fruit of the Spirit") so that we "will not gratify the desires of the

flesh" (Gal 5:16–26) and so that we can "put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13;

s.a. 8:5–6; 14:17). As a matter of fact, Scripture identifies this regenerating and

sanctifying Spirit as the seal of our salvation, the guarantee of our heavenly inheritance

(Eph 1:13; 4:30; s.a. Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6).

In summary, Scripture often appropriates election and creation to the Father,

redemption to the Son, and regeneration and sanctification to the Spirit. In fact, Peter

offers a kind of threefold appropriation all at once: ". . . according to the foreknowledge

of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for

sprinkling with his blood" (1 Pet 1:2).

So far, I have discussed particular appropriated divine works in relation to

particular divine persons yet without recourse to the personal properties of paternity,

filiation, and spiration. This approach is due to Vidu's caution: "It must be understood

that appropriation is not the way to get to the personal properties. Appropriation is not

individuation. The personal properties must already be established in order for them to be

discerned in the operations. One only finds them, in other words, when one knows what

to look for."[41] And one knows what to look for because Scripture offers a framework—or

lens—for viewing divine action. As Vidu goes on to explain,

> From Scripture, we learn in faith about the distinctions between the persons, namely
> that the Father begets the Son and spirates (with the Son) the Holy Spirit. Having
> established these propositions of faith and their mutual coherence, we then return to
> the material of Scripture in an exercise of *redoublement*: reading the same texts

---

[41] Vidu, *Same God*, 114.

twice, under the aspect of unity [inseparable operations] and under the aspect of plurality [appropriations].[42]

With the "eyes of faith," therefore, one can return to Scripture and observe that certain divine actions *ad extra* bear a kind of fitting resemblance to certain divine persons' personal property *ad intra*.[43] For example, election and creation are specially identified with the Father because he is and operates from no one but himself and, consequently, is often seen as the *initiator* of all divine activity. Therefore, as election and creation are a sort of "first fruits" of divine activity, they bear a kinship to the Father's personal property of paternity—the unbegotten One who begets and spirates. As Swain avers, creation exhibits an affinity with the Father because it "involves a kind of 'fathering' of all creatures (Ps 90:2; James 1:17)."[44]

Next, redemption is specially associated with the Son because he is and operates from the Father and, therefore, is often understood as the *agent* of divine action who works by or through the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Hebrews 2:10 calls Christ the founder of the saints' salvation. Hence, as Christ is responsible for turning slaves to sin into "sons" of God (Gal 4:4–7) as well as for "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10), redemption bears a unique congruence with the Son's personal property of generation—the begotten Son who spirates.[45]

Finally, regeneration and sanctification are specially identified with the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is and operates from the Father and the Son and, consequently, is often regarded as the *perfector* of all divine activity in the world. Thus, as regeneration

---

[42] Vidu, *Same God*, 115–16. Said another way, "While the appropriated operations do not anchor the distinction between the persons, they are a sort of a [*sic*] second naïveté, a semantic ascent where we glimpse more of the mystery of the persons by dwelling on their common operations" (p. 115). Dominic Legge expounds a similar point in *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 37.

[43] Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 297; Swain, *The Trinity*, 111.

[44] Swain, *The Trinity*, 112.

[45] Swain speaks similarly: "In the work of redemption, a work that involves making 'sons' out of slaves, the Son's personal property of 'filiation' is manifest in a special way" (*The Trinity*, 112–13).

and sanctification are a sort of crowning glory of redemption in that the Spirit applies the salvation secured by Christ to the saints by breathing new life into them, these two coextensive operations bear a unique affinity with the Spirit's personal property of spiration (the culminating divine operation *ad intra*)—the proceeding or breathed-out One.[46]

To review, Scripture attests indivisible yet orderly divine activity in creation in accord with the inseparable yet personally differentiated divine nature, though it often manifests the divine persons and actions distinctly—that is, a given biblical text appropriates a certain divine action with a certain divine person, without excluding the other two. With the "eyes of faith," then, Christian interpreters complete an intellectual exercise—what Vidu calls a "semantic ascent"[47]—whereby they discern the personal property of the divine person in view of the scriptural text. The procedure of appropriation, then, according to Swain,

> is the special association of certain works of the Trinity with certain persons of the Trinity based on the way certain works specially manifest personal properties of the Trinity (paternity, filiation, and spiration). Thus understood, appropriation not only concerns the works of the triune God. It also concerns the attributes and effects of the triune God.[48]

As Vidu sums up,

> To know the persons, we pull the common [inseparable operations] toward what is proper [eternal subsisting relations], yet without leaving sight of the unity. Since the persons do not act separably, we cannot individuate the persons on the basis of exclusive actions. . . . [But in reflecting on the way of appropriation,] there is real contemplation of the divine persons precisely by learning to discern within the unity of their operation (the only place any person may be found!) the modal trace of each person.[49]

---

[46] S.a. Swain, *The Trinity*, 113.

[47] Vidu, *Same God*, 71. Elsewhere, Vidu states that the *taxis ad intra* "warrants the procedure of appropriation as semantic ascent into the personal character of the persons" (p. 116).

[48] Swain, *The Trinity*, 113.

[49] Vidu, *Same God*, 125.

Summary

In this section, I have outlined the biblical basis for the theological triplex of inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations. The doctrine of inseparable operations is sourced in Scripture's presentation of the one God of Israel (self-existent, simple, sovereign)—with whom and with whose actions both the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit are biblically identified. Further, holistically, Scripture discloses that all three divine persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) participate in the self-same divine activities (e.g., creation, redemption), yet they do so in a distinctly ordered manner in accord with the irreducibly ordered intradivine life: Father → Son → Holy Spirit. Finally, Scripture often specially associates particular divine acts with particular divine persons (e.g., election = Father). Equipped with a biblical framework for understanding divine agency, then, Christians can perceive the personal property of a given divine person manifest in a given divine operation—the procedure of appropriation.

Because pneumatology is so closely tied to—or perhaps derivative of—trinitarian theology, a hearty grasp of the biblical foundations for inseparable yet distinct trinitarian action in creation is essential for a robust understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The great tradition, too, discerned the scriptural grounding of the grammar of inseparability, which is why its legacy—both in the East and in the West—is so rich.

Historical Attestation[50]

In recent decades, it has become increasingly popular to argue in favor of a distinction between early Eastern and Western trinitarian theology, suggesting that the East emphasized the three distinct persons within the Godhead, while the West

---

[50] This section is adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?," *STR* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 38–43. Used with permission.

emphasized the unity of the Godhead.[51] Some scholars have even critiqued or rejected the

doctrine of inseparable operations on such grounds.[52] On the other hand, certain

theologians have repudiated the East-versus-West proposal, instead affirming a shared

trinitarian vocabulary between the East and the West—what scholars today call pro-

Nicene theology.[53] In light of such competing historical claims and in favor of the latter

position, I survey several fourth-century proponents of inseparable operations and its

associated elements, showing that there was indeed a pro-Nicene theological consensus

that supported this theological taxonomy.[54] Such strong historical attestation to the

inseparability principle aligns with Scripture's presentation of divine action in creation

---

[51] E.g., Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 196–97, 210; Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898), 4:84, 113–34; Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8–12; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 10–12; Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 33; Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, rev. and exp. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019), xxviii–xxxv.

Theodore de Régnon, in his late nineteenth-century work *Études de théologie positive sur la sainté Trinité*, is often credited as the origin of the East-versus-West paradigm. For more on this subject, see D. Glenn Butner Jr., "For and against de Régnon: Trinitarianism East and West," *IJST* 17, no. 4 (October 2015): 399–412.

[52] E.g., LaCugna, *God for Us*, 97–100; Alan Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 135–36; Arie Baars, "'*Opera Trinitatis Ad Extra Sunt Indivisa*' in the Theology of John Calvin," in Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres*: Papers of the International Congress of Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, Reformed Systematic Theology 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 131–41. S.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 82–89 (sect. "The Abrogation and Amendment of the Inseparability Rule in Contemporary Theology").

[53] E.g., Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *TheolS* 56 (1995): 237–40; Bradley G. Green, *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 169–201; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 264–83; Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 20–21, 51–54; Kyle Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," *JETS* 56, no. 4 (December 2013): 781–800.

[54] Although I survey fourth-century evidence in favor of inseparable operations, language *resembling* or *anticipating* the inseparability principle appears in earlier authors such as Justin Martyr (100–165), *1 Apology* 63 (*ANF*, 1:184); *Dialogue with Trypho* 61 (*ANF*, 1:227–28); Tertullian of Carthage (160–225), *Against Praxeas* 2–3, 8, 19 (*ANF*, 3:598–99, 603, 614–15); Origen of Alexandria (184–253), *On First Principles* 1.2.6, 1.2.12, 1.3.7 (*ANF*, 4:248, 251, 255). All dates listed in this section are approximate.

For another historical treatment of inseparable operations, see Vidu, *Same God*, chap. 2 ("The Rise and Decline of Inseparable Operations" [pp. 52–90]). Vidu engages the following: Pope Dionysius, Athanasius of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and Maximus the Confessor.

and further buttresses the essentiality of the nomenclature of inseparability for pneumatology.

Eastern Support

Athanasius of Alexandria (296–373) writes against the Sabellians, who argue for a kind of modalism, and the Arians, who argue that Jesus is a created being. Though Athanasius elsewhere addresses the co-eternality of the Holy Spirit,[55] his espousal of the inseparability principle typically appears in his discussion on the co-equality of the Father and the Son: "The divine teaching knows Father and Son, and Wise and Wisdom, and God and Word; while it ever guards Him indivisible and inseparable and indissoluble in all respects."[56] Further, Athanasius recognizes that the indivisibility of the divine nature entails the indivisibility of divine operations, for he attributes creation to both the Father and the Son—indeed *from* the Father *through* the Son: "For by the Word and the Wisdom all things have come to be, and all things together remain according to His ordinance [cf. Col 1:15–17]. And the same concerning the word 'Son'; if God be without Son, then is He without Work; for the Son is His Offspring through whom He works [cf. John 14:10]."[57]

The Cappadocian fathers also support the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Basil of Caesarea (329–379), in his treatise demonstrating the divinity of the Holy Spirit, reflects upon Scripture (viz., 1 Cor 12:24–25 and Acts 5:1–10) and asserts, "In every operation the Spirit is closely conjoined with, and inseparable from, the Father and the

---

[55] E.g., Athanasius of Alexandria, *Discourse against the Arians* 4.13, 14, 29 (*NPNF*[2], 4:427–38, 444–45).

[56] Athanasius, *Discourse against the Arians* 4.9 (*NPNF*[2], 4:436); s.a. 4.1, 10 (4:433, 436).

[57] Athanasius, *Discourse against the Arians* 4.4 (*NPNF*[2], 4:435). S.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 53–54, 56–57.

Son."[58] The bishop proceeds to contemplate the divine *taxis*—in reverse order—vis-à-vis Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1–11: the Holy Spirit is the "distributor," the Son the "sender," and the Father the "foundation and cause of the [blessings]." Then, Basil considers the unity of the divine persons in the act of creation (s.a. Col 1:15–17), this time reflecting upon the *taxis* per its standard order:

> From the things created at the beginning may be learnt the fellowship of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. . . . And in the creation bethink thee first, I pray thee, of the original cause of all things that are made, the Father; of the creative cause, the Son; of the perfecting cause, the Spirit; so that the ministering spirits subsist by the will of the Father, are brought into being by the operation of the Son, and perfected by the presence of the Spirit.[59]

Elsewhere, responding to charges of tritheism and Sabellianism, Basil asserts the Spirit's co-equality with the Father and the Son by affirming indivisible divine agency in the work of regeneration:

> In the quickening power whereby our nature is transformed from the life of corruption to immortality, the power of the Spirit is comprehended with Father and with Son, and in many other instances as in the conception of the good, the holy, the eternal, the wise, the right, the supreme, the efficient, and generally in all terms which have the higher meaning, He is inseparably united.[60]

Gregory of Nyssa (335–396) likewise embraces the inseparability axiom and its attendant grammar. In his endeavor to demonstrate the co-divinity of the Son and the Spirit alongside the Father without espousing three distinct gods, Gregory avows,

---

[58] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37 (*NPNF*[2], 8:23); s.a. 26.63 (8:39); *Against Eunomius* 3.2–4, trans. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, FOTC 22 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 187–91.

[59] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38 (*NPNF*[2], 8:23).

[60] Basil, *Letter* 189.5 (*NPNF*[2], 8:230). John L. W. James treats Athanasius's and Basil's espousal of inseparable operations at length, concluding, "Athanasius and Basil establish inseparable operation and divine unity by establishing both ontological equality and relational subordination as necessary outcomes of the relations in question. In doing so, they counter their subordinationist opponents without slipping into the opposite heresy of polytheism" ("An Examination of *Homotimia* in St. Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit*, and Contemporary Implications," *WTJ* 74, no. 2 [Fall 2012]: 256n51). In addition, I engage Basil's treatment of inseparable operations (along with the wider suite of trinitarian grammar) vis-à-vis the divinity of the Holy Spirit in Torey J. S. Teer, "Basil of Caesarea, Inseparable Operations, and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit: A Pro-Nicene Case Study," *EQ* 92, no. 4 (2021): 312–27. S.a. Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 282; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 295–96, 301–2, 308; Vidu, *Same God*, 58–59.

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. For this reason the name derived from the operation is not divided with regard to the number of those who fulfil it, because the action of each concerning anything is not separate and peculiar, but whatever comes to pass . . . comes to pass by the action of the Three, yet what does come to pass is not three things.[61]

Elsewhere, contemplating the act of creation in particular, Nyssen affirms inseparable yet personally differentiated divine operations in accord with the inseparable yet personally differentiated divine nature:

The fountain of power is the Father, and the power of the Father is the Son, and the spirit of that power is the Holy Spirit; and Creation entirely, in all its visible and spiritual extent, is the finished work of that Divine power. And seeing that no toil can be thought of in the composition of anything connected with the Divine Being . . . , we should be justified in calling all that Nature which came into existence by creation a movement of Will, an impulse of Design, a transmission of Power, beginning from the Father, advancing through the Son, and completed in the Holy Spirit.[62]

Gregory of Nazianzus (330–390) writes on the unity of the Godhead more with respect to nature than operation.[63] He does, however, affirm the undivided power of the Godhead in the three persons—as, for example, he does when summarizing trinitarian theology and showing how unity and distinction coexist in the Godhead:

We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. *They are not sundered in will or divided in power.* You cannot find there any of the properties inherently in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided.[64]

---

[61] Gregory of Nyssa, *On "Not Three Gods"* (*NPNF*[2], 5:334); s.a. *On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit* 5–7 (5:327–33).

[62] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit* 13 (*NPNF*[2], 5:320). S.a. Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 281; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 293, 298–99; Vidu, *Same God*, 58–62.

[63] E.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 29.2–3, 10 (*NPNP*[2], 7:301–2, 304); *Oration* 31.9–10 (7:320–21); *Oration* 34.8–9, 15 (7:336, 338).

[64] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 31.14 (Wickham, 127 [emphasis added]; cf. *NPNF*[2], 7:322).

Nazianzen also recognizes the aptness of distinct personal appropriations. For example, he appropriates the work of regeneration to the Holy Spirit as a means of demonstrating his divinity: "From the Spirit comes our rebirth, from rebirth comes a new creating, from a new creating a recognition of the worth of him who effected it."[65] Gregory goes on to ask a rhetorical question: "Is there any significant function belonging to God, which the Spirit does not perform?"[66] No, Nazianzen answers, "all that God actively performs, [the Spirit] performs."[67] So, Gregory of Nazianzus affirms the notions of inseparable operations and appropriations in tandem—and he does so based on the biblical data with which he is working.

A final example of Eastern attestation to the grammar of inseparability is Cyril of Jerusalem (313–386). For instance, immediately after acknowledging all three persons of the Godhead, Cyril articulates the one God's unity of operations: "For though He is called Good, and Just, and Almighty and Sabaoth, He is not on that account diverse and various; but being one and the same, He sends forth countless operations of His Godhead, not exceeding here and deficient there, but being in all things like unto Himself."[68] Further, Cyril recognizes the appropriation of divine works to particular persons as well as the orderliness of indivisible divine operations. For example, in one instance, Cyril attributes the work of creation to the Father *through* the Son (quoting John 1:3), while in another instance, he attributes creation to the Son directly (quoting Col 1:16).[69] Similarly, in one instance, Cyril ascribes the imparting of spiritual gifts and grace to the Holy Spirit (reflecting on various passages of Scripture but ultimately 1 Cor 12:1, 4), while in

---

[65] Gregory, *Oration* 31.28 (Wickham, 139; cf. *NPNF*², 7:327).

[66] Gregory, *Oration* 31.29 (Wickham, 139; cf. *NPNF*², 7:327).

[67] Gregory, *Oration* 31.29 (Wickham, 140; cf. *NPNF*², 7:327). S.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 58–62.

[68] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture* 6.7 (*NPNF*², 7:35); s.a. *Catechetical Lecture* 27.5 (7:125).

[69] Compare Cyril, *Catechetical Lecture* 6.9 (*NPNF*², 7:35 [former]), and *Catechetical Lecture* 11.21 (7:70 [latter]).

another instance, he states that "the Father through the Son, with the Holy [Spirit], is the giver of all grace; the gifts of the Father are none other than those of the Son, and those of the Holy [Spirit]; for there is one Salvation, one Power, one Faith; One God, the Father; One Lord, His only-begotten Son; One Holy [Spirit], the Comforter."[70]

Western Support

Hilary of Poitiers (315–367), like Nazianzen, focuses more on upholding the Godhead's essential unity rather than its operational unity.[71] Yet Hilary sometimes hints at the unity of operations,[72] and he even explicitly mentions the unity of power in operation—regarding the Father and the Son—in his comments on John 5:19: "If Both have the same power in operation, and both claim the same reverence in worship, I cannot understand what dishonour of inferiority can exist, since Father and Son possess the same power of operation, and equality of honour."[73] Moreover, Hilary recognizes Scripture's presentation of appropriations. For instance, on the one hand, he attributes the distribution of spiritual gifts to the Holy Spirit just as to the one God (contemplating on 1 Cor 12:1–11), while on the other hand, he ascribes the giving of such gifts to the Son just as to the one God (contemplating on 1 Cor 12:2 and Eph 4:7–12).[74] Further, reflecting on the language of "one God" (i.e., the Father) and "one Lord" (i.e., the Son) in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 4:5–6, Hilary affirms both inseparability and orderliness within the Godhead: "But in fixing the order of the Church's faith, and basing our faith

---

[70] Compare Cyril, *Catechetical Lecture* 16.22 (*NPNF*[2], 7:121 [former]) and 16.24 (7:121 [latter, quoted]).

[71] E.g., Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity* 5.35, 38; 8.4, 41 (*NPNF*[2], 9A:95–96, 97; 138–39, 149).

[72] E.g., Hilary, *On the Trinity* 8.13 (*NPNF*[2], 9A:141).

[73] Hilary, *On the Trinity* 9.46 (*NPNF*[2], 9A:171); s.a. 7.21 (9A:126–27). Hilary would, of course, include the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead's essence and external operations; see 2.1 (9A:51–52).

[74] Compare Hilary, *On the Trinity* 8.31 (*NPNF*[2], 9A:146 [former]) and 8.32–33 (9A:146–47 [latter]).

upon the Father and the Son, [the apostle Paul] has uttered the mystery of that indivisible and indissoluble unity and faith in the words *one God* and *one Lord*."[75]

Ambrose of Milan (339–397), too, affirms the inseparability principle. In his work on the Holy Spirit, he expounds upon the unity of divine nature and action. For example, he writes,

> As the Father and the Son are One [cf. John 10:30], because the Son has all things which the Father has [cf. John 16:15], so too the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, because He too knows all the things of God [cf. 1 Cor 12:10–11]. . . . Therefore, if He works all these things, for one and the same Spirit work[s] all [cf. 1 Cor 12:11], how is He not God Who has all things which God has?[76]

Similarly, in his *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, Ambrose recognizes that though the divine persons are manifested to us distinctly in the work of salvation, they are all united in their operations:

> We have learn[ed] that the power of the Trinity is one, as we are taught both in and after the Passion itself: for the Son suffers through His body . . . ; the Holy Spirit is poured upon the apostles: into the Father's hands the spirit is commended; furthermore, God is with a mighty voice proclaimed the Father. We have learnt that there is one form, one likeness, one sanctification, of the Father and of the Son, one activity, one glory, finally, one Godhead.[77]

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is perhaps the most well-known proponent of inseparable operations. In one instance, he quite comprehensively explains,

> For the union of Persons in the Trinity is in the Catholic faith set forth and believed, and by a few holy and blessed ones understood, to be so inseparable, that whatever is done by the Trinity must be regarded as being done by the Father, and by the Son, and by the Holy Spirit together; and that nothing is done by the Father which is not also done by the Son and by the Holy Spirit; and nothing done by the Holy Spirit which is not also done by the Father and by the Son; and nothing done by the Son which is not also done by the Father and by the Holy Spirit.[78]

---

[75] Hilary, *On the Trinity* 8.34 (*NPNF*[2], 9A:147); s.a. 2.11 (9A:55); 11.33 (9A:212–13).

[76] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit* 3.19.146 (*NPNF*[2], 10:155); s.a. 1.1.25 (10:96–97).

[77] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Exposition of the Christian Faith* 2.10.85 (*NPNF*[2], 10:235).

[78] Augustine of Hippo, *Letter* 11.2 (*NPNF*[1], 1:47); s.a. *Sermon* 52 (*NPNF*[1], 6:259–66); *Tractate* 20.3, 13 (*NPNF*[1], 7:132–33, 137).

The bishop of Hippo affirms the inseparability principle while also recognizing that the divine persons are manifested to us distinctly. Reflecting on several verses in John 14 (and elsewhere), Augustine comments, "But in order to intimate the Trinity, some things are separately affirmed, the Persons being also each severally named; and yet are not to be understood as though the other Persons were excluded, on account of the unity of the same Trinity and the One substance and Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[79]

Final Thoughts and Summary

The pro-Nicene theological consensus concerning the doctrine and attendant grammar of inseparable operations (especially as articulated by Augustine) is embraced by many later theologians, such as Maximus the Confessor (580–662),[80] Thomas Aquinas (1224/26–1274),[81] John Calvin (1509–1564),[82] John Owen (1616–1683),[83] Francis Turretin (1623–1687),[84] Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706),[85] and Herman Bavinck (1854–1921).[86] Hence, in the words of Kyle Claunch, "the doctrine of inseparable

---

[79] Augustine, *On the Trinity* 1.9.19 (*NPNF*[1], 3:28); s.a. 1.4.7 (3:40). For more on Augustine vis-à-vis inseparable operations, see Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 291–92, 312–13; Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 785–91; Vidu, *Same God*, 63–69; Tyler R. Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology," *IJST* 15, no. 3 (July 2013): 287–89.

[80] E.g., Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Knowledge* 2.1 (Berthold, 147–48). S.a. Vidu's treatment of Maximus vis-à-vis the grammar of inseparability in *Same God*, 74–82.

[81] E.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels*, vol. 6, *St. John* (Oxford: James Park, 1874), commentary on John 5:19–20 (pp. 180–86); *ST* I.39.7–8. S.a. Vidu's treatment of Thomas vis-à-vis the grammar of inseparability in *Same God*, 69–74.

[82] E.g., John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.17–19; 3.1.1 (Battles, 1:141–44, 537–38).

[83] E.g., John Owen, *WJO*, 3:93–95, 198, 208–9.

[84] E.g., Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 3.27.11, 16, 20 (Giger, 1:278, 280–81, 281–82).

[85] E.g., Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology* 2.24.10, 2.25.6–7, 2.26.11, 2.27.11 (Rester, 2:504–5, 529–31, 549, 574–75).

[86] E.g., Herman Bavinck, *RD*, 2:318–22; 3:215, 570.

operations has been a staple of orthodox trinitarian reflection for many centuries. Therefore, it is not wise to ignore it or dismiss it lightly."[87]

In sum, the great tradition has largely spoken with one voice concerning the Trinity: the Godhead is inseparable both in nature and in operation, yet divine action is personally differentiated just as is the divine essence. Theologians East and West thus echo the Bible's affirmation of the inseparability principle and its corollaries;[88] oftentimes, they do so when discussing the Holy Spirit, his divinity, and his manner of operation. Hence, the historical attestation to the taxonomy of inseparability further exhibits just how crucial it is to include such grammar in any robust formulation of pneumatology.[89]

While the doctrine of inseparable operations possesses a rich heritage in the tradition, it has not gone unchallenged, especially in more recent times. Further, there remain some details to work out concerning how indivisible divine action coheres with a Christocentric emphasis concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, I move on to engage the inseparability principle's theological coherence and fecundity.

---

[87] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 799. Vidu comes to the same conclusion: "The ancient pedigree of the *opera ad extra* rule . . . is undeniable" ("Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," *JAT* 4, no. 1 [May 2016]: 106). S.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 63, 82, 89; Michel René Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic," in *Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica, Historica*, Studia Patristica 29 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 205–23.

[88] "Against the East-West paradigm," Johnson avers, "it is important to recognize that Augustine and [the] Cappadocians share in common all the core elements of pro-Nicene theology . . . (common power, common operations, common nature)" (*Rethinking the Trinity*, 54). Johnson goes on to say, "A case in point is inseparable operation. Augustine and the Cappadocians have virtually identical accounts of the inseparable operation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (54n18).

[89] In fact, the distinct legacy of inseparable operations can serve well for contemporary theological construction beyond just pneumatology. The pro-Nicene consensus on the Trinity in general and inseparable operations in particular well suits ongoing efforts at "retrieval theology," or, broadly speaking, "resourcing contemporary systematic constructive theology by engaging historical theology" (Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019], 45).

Theological Coherence and Fecundity[90]

In order to demonstrate the theological soundness of inseparable operations and, thus, the axiom's aptness and fruitfulness for pneumatology (and contemporary theology more broadly), I must address two concerns: First, the unity of the Godhead's *ad extra* operations may seem to undermine personal distinctions among the three persons in creation, redemption, and consummation (unity-distinction problem).[91] This concern is not arbitrary. In his discussion concerning John Owen's argument that the Holy Spirit is a distinct divine person due to his "peculiar subsistence" in the Godhead, Alan Spence asks, "But does not an unqualified doctrine of the indivisibility of God's external activity . . . preclude such an argument? How can an undivided activity demonstrate distinct persons?"[92] Catherine Mowry LaCugna articulates a similar critique: "Once it is assumed that the Trinity is present in every instance where Scripture refers to God, and once the axiom *opera ad extra* is in place, no longer, it seems, is there any need for the plurality of divine persons *in the economy*. At least it is no longer possible to single out any one person in relation to a particular activity."[93] Vidu summarizes the modern ambivalence concerning the inseparability rule thus: "The primary interest of modern Trinitarianism is to recover the personal distinctiveness of the triune hypostases, correcting the perceived one-sidedness of the traditional emphasis on unity."[94]

Second, since the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology is hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism (as argued in chap. 3), how can

---

[90] This section is adapted from Teer, "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," 38–43. Used with permission.

[91] Vidu explains, "Beyond doubt, the principal kind of objection to the [inseparability] rule is epistemological: It blocks knowledge of the divine persons. If every work *ad extra* is common to the divine persons, it is both impossible to distinguish between the persons—let us call this the *individuation problem*—or to know them in their personal character—the *personal description problem*" (*Same God*, 83).

[92] Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration*, 129–30, referring to Owen, *WJO*, 3:67.

[93] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 99.

[94] Vidu, *Same God*, 90.

such an emphasis square with the inseparability principle (the second pillar)? It may seem

that too much emphasis on one divine person (viz., the Son) would undercut the one

indivisible work of the triune God as well as diminish the personalizing property of the

other divine persons (Christocentrism-inseparability problem). I explore this latter

concern with respect to the Holy Spirit in particular due to the pneumatological focus of

this dissertation—not to mention the coextensive nature of the divine missions of the Son

and Spirit (the subject of chap. 5).[95]

      The solution to these apparent difficulties comes by cohering the theological

notions of inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations.

Of course, I already discussed the biblical foundations for these doctrines in the first

section of this chapter. However, circling back to those concepts and reflecting on them

anew with additional theological insight and reasoning will help to show *how* these

concepts cohere. Vidu helps understand this process:

> While it is natural that one starts with the divine economy [as revealed in Scripture]
> and proceeds to an understanding of the imminent Trinity, the knowledge of the
> divine economy should be regarded as provisional, as a sort of first naïveté. Having
> "known" the imminent Trinity by way of the economic operations, one must return
> in a second naïveté, to the economic works.[96]

Executing such theological reflection will help demonstrate the theological soundness of

the grammar of inseparability and its fecundity for the study of the Holy Spirit.

      One significant way to discern the coherence of inseparable operations, the

taxis, and appropriations is to inspect one of the chief concerns regarding the

inseparability rule: only the Son became incarnate; or, the incarnation is a peculiar work

of the Son, not a common operation of the Three. In Vidu's words, "A hard version of the

doctrine of inseparable operations stands or falls with its ability to account for the

---

[95] Recall that I have already addressed why Scripture and theology are Christocentric—not paterocentric or pneumatocentric—in chap. 3 (sect. "Alternative Centers for Theology" [esp. pp. 82–86]).

[96] Vidu, *Same God*, 92–93.

orthodox claim that it was the Son of God alone who became incarnate, suffered, died, and was resurrected on the third day."[97] Kyle Claunch, Tyler Wittman, and Vidu all argue convincingly against this objection by demonstrating the congruity of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations, focusing primarily on John Owen's articulation of the theological concepts in accord with the Augustinian tradition.[98] What follows is a summary.

According to Wittman, "Owen explicitly argues [that] the Son alone became incarnate by appealing to the order of subsistence."[99] Indeed, Owen himself says, "But as to the manner of subsistence [in the divine essence], there is distinction, relation, and order between and among [the divine persons]; and hence there is no divine work but is distinctly assigned unto each person, and eminently unto one."[100] Relatedly, though concerning the language of "principle" and "subject," Claunch avers,

> Neither Augustine nor Owen makes this distinction explicit, but they utilize it in their discourse. It is the distinction between the *principle* of divine action and the *subject* of divine action. The principle of all divine action is the one undivided essence [*principium*, or "source or origin"]. The subject of divine action is either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. . . . For Owen, the Son is the unique *subject* of the assumption of the human nature. It is by the observance of this distinction between the *principle* of divine action—the one divine essence—and the subject of divine action—one of the divine persons—that the coherence of the doctrines of inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations is maintained.[101]

Concerning Owen's use of *terminus* language, Wittman comments,

---

[97] Vidu, *Same God*, 158.

[98] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together"; Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation"; Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation." Wittman perhaps says it best: "Far from innovating or weakening the received grammar of trinitarian theology, Owen is in basic continuity with the Augustinian tradition as it came through Aquinas and was articulated by Reformed Orthodoxy" ("The End of the Incarnation," 298).

[99] Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation," 297. Said another way, "[Owen] affirms the traditional use of appropriations to ascribe particular works distinctly to the Father, Son and Spirit. Such distinctions arise because each person acts in accordance with the order of their subsistence" (p. 293).

[100] Owen, *WJO*, 3:93. Later, Owen explains, "The only singular immediate *act* of the person of the Son on the human nature was the assumption of it into *subsistence* with himself" (3:160).

[101] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 797–98.

Owen's phrase "term of the assumption" immediately recalls Aquinas's language (*terminum assumptionis*) and is a clear affirmation of the *terminus operationis* principle: certain triune works *ad extra* terminate on one person. The Son's assumption of the human nature is the *terminus*, or end, of the undivided trinitarian act of the incarnation.[102]

Vidu essentially follows Wittman on this matter.[103] Yet, Vidu's unpacking of the language of termination is helpful. He discerns three uses of such language in the literature:

[Sense 1] One person is the terminus of the action in the sense that such a person, besides sharing in the common trinitarian causality (and thus agency) is also the passive recipient of this action, as this action necessarily involves an external term. In the case of the . . . "incarnation," the end that is brought about is the existence of a relationship between a divine person and a created reality (the Word's *esse secundarium*).[104]

[Sense 2] The terminus is the divine person at the far end of a divine agential chain. . . . In this sense of the notion, it is the Holy Spirit that seems to invariably serve as the terminus of divine actions, since he is the perfecting cause, in addition to the originating (or efficient) cause (Father) and "moulding" (or formal) cause (Son). As perfecting cause, the Spirit applies the agency of the three persons, and is thus in a sense, most proximal to its terminus.[105]

[Sense 3] The third and final sense of "terminus" has to do with the appropriation of various actions to distinct persons. In this case the personal property of one of the persons has a special affinity to the end that is brought about by the action of all. . . . [footnote] I am suggesting that the language of appropriation and of terminus are in this context interchangeable. An action is appropriated to one divine person if that action terminates in that person. Conversely, an action which is appropriated to a person (in view of an affinity between that person's *propria* and the created effect) is also said to terminate in that person.[106]

Hence, according to Vidu,

to say that the incarnation is a work that terminates in the Son does not rule out other modes of the same action that may be said to terminate in other Trinitarian

---

[102] Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation," 298, quoting Owen, *WJO*, 1:225. S.a. p. 295, where Wittman, vis-à-vis Aquinas (*ST* 3a.3.4), states that "this distinction between the divine nature as *principium* and the divine person as *terminus* enables Aquinas to uphold both the unity of the divine nature and the distinction of the divine persons in the incarnation."

[103] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 118–19, citing Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation," 298.

[104] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 114; s.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 167–68.

[105] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 115; s.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 168.

[106] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 115, 115n18.

persons. The language of *principium-terminus* is not an ontologically univocal way of differentiating between divine actions. Rather, it belongs to our *modus significandi*, such that for the selfsame actions we are able to distinguish (under different perspectives) different persons who terminate and to whom these actions are appropriated. In virtue of the state of affairs that it accomplishes, the assumption of a human nature *terminates*1 in the Son; in virtue of the proximity, it may be said, according to the Scriptures themselves, that it *terminates*2 in the Holy Spirit.[107]

In sum, an examination of the issue of the incarnation of the Son alone, with the help of principle-subject and *principium-terminus* language, helps inform the coherence of the taxonomy of inseparability.

Another important manner of discerning the coherence of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations is to investigate the nature of the divine missions, for "the doctrine of inseparable operations heavily informs that of the divine missions."[108] The divine missions (incarnation of the Son, indwelling of the Holy Spirit) are new modes of existing in creation; they are created effects added to divine processions.[109] As Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger elaborate,

> The temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit express and are reflective of their eternal processions: There is an appropriateness to the incarnation and salvation as the particular mission of the Son as eternally generated by the Father. And there is an appropriateness to the outpouring and indwelling as the particular mission of the Holy Spirit as eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.[110]

In short, the divine missions represent the *taxis ad extra* just as the processions represent—or *just are*—the *taxis ad intra*.

But the missions relate to inseparable operations and appropriations as well. Missions, strictly speaking, are not divine operations but temporal extensions of divine

---

[107] Vidu, *Same God*, 171; s.a. Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 122.

[108] Vidu, *Same God*, 72. Because the divine missions are the subject of the next chapter (the third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology), what follows is but a brief treatment of the subject as it relates to the present discussion.

[109] Aquinas, *ST* I.43, art. 1 co.; art. 2 ad. 3. S.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 72–73; Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 16; Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*, TRS 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 536–39.

[110] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 276–77; s.a. 282–83.

processions. As such, they are not appropriated but *proper* to the divine persons.[111] "Now

a mission," Vidu points out, "may result in operations, that is, in effects of efficient

causality. Insofar as certain effects flow from a mission, appropriation has its jurisdiction.

Additionally, insofar as the term of the mission is created, it is the operation of the whole

Trinity."[112] To summarize, again invoking Vidu,

> The reality of the divine missions focuses the critical question in regards to the
> inseparability doctrine. On the one hand, the missions are said to extend the
> processions and to make the persons known [in their *propria*]. On the other hand,
> the missions imply the existence of a created reality, which is understood to be the
> effect of the inseparable divine [efficient] causality.[113]

Hence, the divine missions help further inform the coherence of the grammar of

inseparability.

The harmonization of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations thus

demonstrates that a particular act appropriated to—or that terminates in—one person of

the Godhead is "simultaneously the unique act of the one person and the common act of

all three."[114] Consequently, the two above-mentioned concerns regarding the

inseparability principle ([1] unity-distinction problem and [2] Christocentrism-

inseparability problem) are unsustainable. First, the unity of the Godhead's *ad extra*

operations does not undermine the distinctiveness of each divine person in creation-

redemption-consummation because, as Claunch explains, "the distinct hypostatic identity

---

[111] The procedure of appropriation draws what is common *toward* what is proper
(appropriations are *expressive* of the processions), whereas the missions *are* proper (they *are* the
processions—with the addition of a created effect). As Vidu explains, "A mission is the extension of the
mode of existence of a divine person to incorporate a created reality. The Son comes to exist in the human
nature. The Spirit comes to exist in the soul of the faithful" (*Same God*, 73). Aquinas defines appropriation
as "nothing other than to draw what is shared toward what is proper" in *Quaestiones Disputatae de
Veritate*, trans. Robert Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), q. 7, a. 3 (quoted in Vidu, *Same God*,
71).

[112] Vidu, *Same God*, 73. Vidu later states, "Aquinas had also insisted on the nonappropriated
character of the missions. When considered in terms of the procession, a mission is not appropriated, but
unique to the person sent. That is why the Father has no mission, because he does not proceed. . . . [E]very
mission entails an operation, since every mission includes a created effect, which—as created—is produced
by the common Trinitarian efficiency [i.e., efficient causality]" (p. 87).

[113] Vidu, *Same God*, 73.

[114] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 797 (original emphasis removed).

of the three persons in the Godhead . . . entails the observable distinction between the actions of the three persons in the economy of salvation."[115] Further, according to Matthew Levering, "The processions enable us to distinguish the persons without eviscerating the divine unity, while the missions add 'a specific relationship to the creature' without conflating the economy of salvation with the intratrinitarian life."[116] Relatedly, Vidu instructs,

> While the common actions of the Trinity are "appropriated" to this or that divine person, the missions are proper and not so appropriated. A mission, Aquinas shows, is nothing but a relationship to a created term added to a procession. As Neil Ormerod puts it, "The inner relatedness of the divine persons becomes the basis whereby a contingent created reality or temporal effect can become a term for the procession." . . . The created effects are what they are precisely because of the inner-relationality of the Trinity, and thereby because of the unique personal identity of each of the persons. . . . There is a very real sense, then, in which the effects truly reveal the distinctiveness of the persons.[117]

In sum, the persons of the Godhead are unified in essence and operation, just as they are personally differentiated in essence and operation. Unity and distinction are two sides of the same coin, as it were, with respect to both God's internal existence and his external operations. When we wrestle with divine unity and distinction, there is a kind of circularity to reflecting on God's acts and God's being. Yet, "only by making our

---

[115] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 790n39. Here, Claunch is summarizing Augustine's view on the relationship of the divine persons *ad intra* versus their actions *ad extra*, which he concludes is the same position appropriated by John Owen and, ultimately, the position that best aligns with historic orthodoxy. More comprehensively (and more relevant to my present argument), Claunch details,

> For Augustine, the distinct actions of divine persons in the world *reveal* the eternal intra-Trinitarian order of subsistence of the three divine persons . . . . Each action performed distinctively by each divine person is appropriate only to that person as a revelation of the eternal and irreversible *taxis* present in the Godhead. . . . When one divine person acts in the economy of salvation (e.g. the Son assuming a human nature), he acts by the one power of the one divine substance, shared equally by the three persons, making the act of the one person an act of all three. The act is appropriated to one person as distinct from the other two *ad extra* because there is a fixed order of subsistence *ad intra*, which God reveals by his actions in the world. (p. 791)

[116] Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 169, quoting Bruce D. Marshall, "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question," *Thomist* 74, no. 1 (January 2010): 8.

[117] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 123, quoting Neil Ormerod, "The Metaphysics of Holiness: Created Participation in the Divine Nature," *ITQ* 79, no. 1 (February 2014): 68–82. S.a. Aquinas, *ST* I.43.2 ad. 3; Vidu, *Same God*, 95.

129

beginning with the processions will we properly be able to bear witness to the divine economy. . . . Failure to regard [divine] actions from the perspective of the processions invites mythologizing the agents, regarding them as objects in the world"[118]—objects to be distinguished as separable agents, as we would distinguish, for example, one human person from another. But because the inseparability principle accords with the divine *taxis* (*ad intra* and *ad extra*) as well as distinct personal appropriations, we can distinguish the divine persons in the economy while recognizing that they are inseparable and work inseparably.

Second, a Christological emphasis vis-à-vis Scripture and theology does not conflict with the inseparability axiom because the one indivisible work of the triune God (creation-redemption-consummation) centers upon the Son, especially as seen in the divine missions. While there are two temporal missions (the Son's incarnation [reflective of eternal generation], the Holy Spirit's indwelling [reflective of eternal spiration]), due to the inseparable operations of the Trinity, the two missions (i.e., their *effects*) are coextensive with each other and, thus, inextricably linked.[119] The Father sends the Son to secure salvation (the Father himself is not sent), and the Spirit cannot come until the Son completes his mission and returns to the Father (John 7:39; 16:7).[120] From his resurrected, glorified, and ascended humanity, the Son (together with the Father) sends (or pours out) the Spirit at Pentecost to apply the redemption obtained by Christ to the

---

[118] Vidu, *Same God*, 95.

[119] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275; Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 21; Stephen R. Holmes, "Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, ECD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 71–74. S.a. Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 144.

[120] For why the Son must ascend before the Spirit can descend, see Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 43–48 (esp. sect. "Why Must the Son First Ascent?" [pp. 44–45]).

saints.[121] Hence, the missions themselves, constitutive elements of the indivisible activity of the Godhead, find the Lord Jesus Christ as their gravitational center.

Furthermore, a Christological emphasis, in accord with the inseparability principle, does not detract from the distinct hypostatic identity of the other divine persons in the economy because all divine action takes place according to the *taxis* (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation). In particular, such an emphasis does not diminish the person and work of the Holy Spirit because the one work of the Godhead terminates and finds its completion in the Spirit.[122] As the perfecting cause of all divine works, the Holy Spirit has an essential—not diminished or insignificant—role in those works (see John 16:13–15). Indeed, as Allison and Köstenberger note, it is through the continual agency of the Spirit that "the triune God dwells in his people."[123] Thus, a pneumatology featuring a Christocentric emphasis as well as the taxonomy of inseparability immediately and continually acknowledges the Holy Spirit's distinct life-giving work—both in the world and, especially, in the life of the church.

In summary, the nomenclature of inseparable operations is theologically coherent and, as such, fruitful for pneumatology. The grammar of inseparability does not confuse or complicate the personal distinctions among the three divine persons in their

---

[121] In their discussion of the divine works that terminate in the Holy Spirit, Allison and Köstenberger speak on the Spirit-appropriated act of "recreating" (i.e., the application of salvation) thus: "All of the benefits of Jesus Christ come to Christians and the church through the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ and his saving work" (*The Holy Spirit*, 290). Consistent with this point, the authors affirm

the Holy Spirit's eternal relation of procession from the Father and the Son, expressed correspondingly in the mission of the Spirit (beginning with his outpouring on Pentecost) and characterized by temporal fulfillment (of the Father's will *centered on the gospel of the Son*). On this latter point, Owen offered, "The Holy Ghost doth immediately work and effect whatever was to be done in reference unto the person of the Son or the sons of men, for the perfecting and accomplishment of the Father's counsel and the Son's work, in an especial application of both unto their especial effects and ends." (277n8; emphasis added; quoting Owen, *WJO*, 3:159)

[122] This understanding accords with sense 2 of Vidu's definition of "terminus" discussed above ("Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 115; *Same God*, 168). For more on the Spirit as the perfector of all divine works, see Teer, "The Perfector of All Divine Acts," 402–21.

[123] Allison and Köstenberger, The Holy Spirit, 292; cf. Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 28; Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 2015), 2:101.

united work, nor does it conflict with a Christ-centered understanding of Scripture and theology, because the indivisible activity of the Godhead is personally differentiated according to the divine order of subsistence. That is, every undivided act of the Trinity originates with the Father, proceeds through the Son (the one upon whom all divine activity *centers*), and is perfected by the Holy Spirit.[124]

Conclusion

This chapter has expounded the second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology—the doctrine of inseparable operations and its associated grammar. In particular, I argued that a rich understanding of inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations is essential for a healthy, robust pneumatology. To arrive at this conclusion, I first unfolded the biblical foundations upon which these theological concepts are based. As revealed in Scripture, there is one God, with whom and with whose operations the Son and the Holy Spirit are identified. All three divine persons participate inseparably in all divine actions, yet they each do so in accord with their personal property, and certain actions are often particularly associated with certain persons. Next, I canvassed the fourth-century pro-Nicene theological consensus affirming the grammar of inseparability. In the East: Athanasias, the Cappadocians, and Cyril. In the West: Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine. As seen, the doctrine of inseparable operations and its corollaries possess a rich heritage in the great tradition. Finally, I addressed some concerns about the theological soundness of the inseparability principle as it relates to one's being able to differentiate the divine persons in the created order as well as to a Christocentric emphasis vis-à-vis Scripture and theology. Just as the divine persons are indivisible yet personally differentiated and ordered in the divine nature, so also their operations are indivisible yet personally differentiated and ordered in the

---

[124] See Gregory of Nyssa, *On "Not Three Gods"* (*NPNF*[2], 5:334).

economy of salvation that centers on Christ. Thus, the vocabulary of inseparability allows for personal distinctions among the Trinity in creation, redemption, and consummation and aligns with hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism. Without a firm grasp on inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations, one's pneumatology—indeed, one's entire theology—will be greatly malnourished. Hence, it is essential that a *trinitarian* Christological pneumatology include the nomenclature of inseparability as a part of its balanced diet.

CHAPTER 5

THE DIVINE MISSIONS AND A TRINITARIAN
CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

The third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology is a theology of

the divine missions. The divine missions (or "sendings," from the Latin *mittere*, *misisse*,

missum, meaning "to send or dispatch"), two in number, are special works of God in the

economy of salvation. Specifically, they refer to (1) the Father's sending of the Son to

take on a human nature and thereby accomplish redemption and (2) the Father and the

Son's sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to indwell the saints and thereby apply to

them the redemption achieved by the Son. The missions are temporal reflections and

extensions of the eternal processions. The Father is eternally unoriginate (i.e., he

proceeds from no one); therefore, he is never sent. The Son is eternally begotten by the

Father; therefore, the Son is sent by the Father in time. The Holy Spirit is eternally

spirated by the Father and the Son; therefore, the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son

in time. The temporal missions are the *epistemological ground* for the eternal

processions, while the eternal processions are the *ontological ground* for the temporal

missions. And just as the eternal processions are ordered, so too the temporal missions

exhibit a fixed order.[1]

Missions, strictly speaking, are not divine operations but temporal elongations

of divine processions. As such, they are not appropriated but *proper* to the divine

persons—that is, they make the persons known in their *propria* (that which is unique to

them, their processions). Yet insofar as the term (e.g., the human nature of the Son) of a

---

[1] This summary is my own, but s.a. Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, NSD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 112–13; Adonis Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), xiv–xv.

mission is created, the creation of that term is an inseparable operation of the triune God. Further, insofar as a mission results in operations (i.e., certain effects flowing from a mission), all three divine persons indivisibly participate in those consequent operations, and those inseparable operations can be appropriated to this or that divine person in accord with the intratrinitarian order of subsistence.[2]

It is the purpose of this chapter to present a full-orbed theology of the divine missions and demonstrate its import for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology. Specifically, I argue that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are *central* to trinitarian theology, as they represent the self-revelation and self-giving of God in the gospel. Consequently, a robust theology of the divine missions is *crucial* for having a well-rounded understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, especially with respect to their relationship to the person and work of Christ, the centerpiece of Scripture, theology, and—as it turns out—the divine missions themselves. I carry out this hefty task in six steps. First, I unpack the biblical basis for the divine missions as disclosed (primarily) in John's Gospel. Second, I explicate Augustine of Hippo's (354–430) in-depth apprehension of the missions as revealed in Scripture, especially his observation that the missions reveal the processions. Third, I engage Thomas Aquinas's (1225–1274) nuanced development of the tradition's theology of divine missions, especially his understanding that the processions are extended into creation by the missions. Fourth, I evaluate and, in some instances, augment the Johannine, Augustinian, and Thomistic contributions in order to synthesize a holistic theology of the divine missions. Fifth, I show how the mission of the Spirit is Christocentric—that is, keyed to the mission of the Son. Sixth, I explain how a Christ-centered emphasis vis-à-vis the divine missions neither

---

[2] Vidu notes the relationship between missions and inseparable operations thus: "The missions reveal a Trinitarian origin and end to the divine action [of salvation], which is the flip side of its unified character correctly specified by the axiom *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*" ("*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," in *The Third Person of the Trinity*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, ECD [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020], 21).

diminishes the eminence of the Spirit nor detracts from the preeminence of the Father. In the end, it will be clear that a trinitarian pneumatology (divine missions, inseparable operations, and the rest) accords with a Christological pneumatology (Christocentrism)—hence a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

Johannine Theology of Divine Missions[3]

The language reflective of or related to the "sending" of the Son and the Holy Spirit appears in various places throughout the New Testament,[4] yet the most prominent, sustained language appears in the Gospel of John. One could even argue that "sending" (or "being sent") is one of the major themes of the Gospel. Andreas Köstenberger asserts this very point: "John's mission theology is an integral part of his presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit," and his trinitarian theology is a function of his mission theology, instead of vice versa.[5]

Jesus's mission is to take on human flesh and thereby accomplish redemption. John 3:16–17 sums up his mission: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Jesus self-identifies as being "sent" from the Father over a dozen

---

[3] This section is adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," *JETS* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 540–42. Used with permission.

[4] See, e.g., Mark 12:6; Acts 2:33; Rom 8:3–4; Gal 4:4–5; 1 Tim 1:15; 1 John 4:9–16.

[5] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 540. S.a. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, NSBT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 149. In addition to the missions of the Son and the Spirit, the evangelist also mentions the mission of John the Baptist: "There was a man *sent* from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light" (John 1:6–8). Further, as I discuss shortly, the Gospel of John speaks to the mission of the disciples: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has *sent* me, even so I am *sending* you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld'" (20:21–23).

times throughout the Gospel.[6] He also declares that he is "from God [the Father]" (6:46), "from above" (8:23), and "from heaven" (6:33–35, 38, 50–51, 58)—language indicative of his "sentness." John himself articulates Christ's mission in his prologue: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son [μονογενοῦς] from the Father. . . . No one has ever seen God [the Father]; the only God [μονογενὴς θεὸς], who is at the Father's side [i.e., the Son], he has made him known" (1:14, 18).[7]

The Holy Spirit's mission is to indwell the redeemed and thereby apply salvation to them. However, before he can come, Christ must ascend to heaven and return to the Father.[8] Jesus intimates as much when he responds to the Pharisees, saying, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come" (John 7:33–34). Then, a few verses later, Christ proclaims, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (v. 38). John himself provides the interpretation of this remark, connecting Christ's ascension to the Spirit's descension (i.e., his being sent): "Now this [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (v. 39; cf. Acts 2:33).[9]

---

[6] E.g., John 4:34; 5:36–38; 6:29, 38–39, 44, 57; 7:16–18, 28–29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24. S.a. Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, ITS (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 154–55.

[7] S.a. Steven J. Duby's comments on John 1:14, 18 in *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 53–54.

[8] Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 361–62n29; Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 148–50, 158.

[9] Though the Spirit is not sent until Pentecost (i.e., the "fullness of time"; Gal 4:4; s.a. John 16:7; Acts 2:33), he is still active in the Old Testament and the throughout the life of Christ—what one can refer to as the Spirit's proleptic activity or "pre-mission." For a discussion of the Spirit's (and the Son's) proleptic activity, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 347–66 (esp. 347–50). S.a. Vidu's categorization of the progressive manifestations of God in *Divine Missions*, 6–7, 12; cf. Vidu, "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," 29–30. Vidu also discusses the nature of the Spirit's presence in the

Christ provides greater detail about the Spirit's coming in relation to his departure in the Farewell Discourse (John 14–17). Shortly after describing his return to the Father and promising his second advent (14:1–4; s.a. vv. 12, 18–19, 28), Jesus tells his disciples, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" (vv. 16–17). Later, Christ makes the connection more explicit: "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (16:7).[10] Therefore, after Christ's ascent, the Father and the Son will send the Holy Spirit to Christ's disciples, and the Spirit will be with them via indwelling. As Köstenberger explains,

> When the Spirit comes to dwell in believers, it is as if Jesus himself takes up residence in them (14:18). . . . Jesus' departure will not leave them as orphans; just as God was with them through Jesus, he will continue to be with them through the Spirit. The Spirit's role thus ensures continuity between Jesus' pre- and postglorification ministry.[11]

In accordance with a trinitarian Christological pneumatology, then, the mission of the Spirit is Christologically oriented. As Jesus explains in John 16:13–15, when the Spirit comes, he will teach the disciples on the authority given to him (by the Father through the Son), and he will glorify the Son, for he will take all that is Christ's and

---

Old Testament and the life of Christ as well as the rationale for the order of the divine missions: Son, then Spirit (*Divine Missions*, 33–36, 43–48).

[10] S.a. John 14:26 ("But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you") and 15:26 ("But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me"). Whether the Father sends the Spirit at the Son's request (14:16)/on the Son's behalf (14:26) or the Son sends the Spirit from the Father (15:26; 16:7), ultimately, the Father and the Son jointly send the Spirit in time, just as the Father and the Son together spirate the Spirit in eternity. Herein lies the biblical basis for the double procession of the Holy Spirit.

[11] Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 542. S.a. Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 73; Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 153. Similarly, Vidu avers, "Far from being a mere happy ending to a glorious mission, [Christ's resurrection and ascension] are the pivotal point whereby the Spirit emerges from the humanity of Christ. At this point *the mission of the Son introduces the mission of the Spirit*" (*Divine Missions*, 43).

declare it to his disciples.[12] Further, à la Adonis Vidu, the mission of the Spirit is

Christologically shaped:

> The Spirit comes down to us not simply from the divinity of Christ, and thus not simply as an act of the whole Trinity, but from the humanity of Christ, having already permeated it and thus having himself been *shaped* by it for us. . . . Christ gives us the Spirit without measure because he has the Spirit without measure [John 3:34], as John 1:16 declares: "From his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace."[13]

The final missional statement in the Gospel of John involves the mission of the

Son, the mission of the Spirit, and Christ's commissioning of his disciples (i.e., the

mission of the church). John 20:21–23 reads, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with

you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he

breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of

any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'"

Though Augustine and Aquinas, as I discuss below, see Jesus's breathing the Spirit upon

the disciples as a "visible mission" of the Spirit, the *true* mission of the Spirit (in terms of

a *salvific* effect) awaits his outpouring on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Though

interpretations of John 20:21–22 are manifold,[14] it seems best—according to a canonical-

redemptive historical perspective—to regard this moment as representing a "symbolic

promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit," not the Spirit's actual impartation.[15]

---

[12] S.a. Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 234–35; Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 47.

[13] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 45. For more on what Vidu calls the "Christoformation" of the Spirit, see pp. 45–48.

[14] See the summary in Myk Habets, *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 76–77n1; Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 375–76. S.a. the discussion in Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 399–400.

[15] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 77, 234, 259; s.a. Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 399; Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 101–2; *contra* Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentaries 4 (London: Continuum, 2005), who affirms that John 20:21–22 *is* indicative of the Spirit's impartation (see his argument and support on pp. 498–99). Vidu affirms "the coming forth of the Spirit at Pentecost only after the ascension of Christ" (*Divine Missions*, 44), though he does not explicate his view on the meaning of John 20:22 (pp. 44–48).

Alluding to Genesis 2:7, here, Jesus constitutes the disciples "as the new messianic community in anticipation of the outpouring of the Spirit subsequent to his ascension."[16] This passage serves as the culmination of the evangelist's theology of divine missions. In sum, according to John's Gospel, the Son is sent from the Father, the Spirit will soon be sent to the disciples from the Father and the Son (Jesus's breathing on his disciples serves as the promissory sign of that imminent event), and the church will participate in the divine missions (analogically) as they are indwelt and empowered by the Spirit.[17]

The Gospel of John thus provides the primary (but not only) biblical data regarding the divine missions (or sendings). It is from these temporal missions that we reason back to the eternal processions, for—as Augustine instructs—the missions *reveal* the processions. Hence, in the next section, I unpack Augustine's theology of the divine missions.

Augustine on the Divine Missions

Augustine's presentation of the Trinity follows the missions-to-processions approach. Yet, as Fred Sanders explains, this approach did not originate with Augustine:

> If we call this direction [missions to processions] the Augustinian one, it is only because his *The Trinity* is such a classic and consistent working out of it, and not because Augustine invented it. A starting point in the sendings is characteristic of many pre-Nicene fathers, both Latin and Greek. Augustine perfected that method, systematized it, and solved some of the problems involved in its misuse.[18]

Further, this approach has a number of advantages. Chief among them, Sanders submits,

> is the way [this approach] engages the biblical witness by tracking along with the order of discovery. . . . God [in Scripture] did not first describe the Trinity's eternal processions and then display them in missions. So Augustine's presentation flows

---

[16] Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 543; s.a. Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 154.

[17] I develop the point about the church's participation in the divine missions in Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me.'" S.a. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 156–57.

[18] Sanders, *Triune God*, 94.

with the current of revelation, rehearsing its historical sequence as it presents the doctrine of the Trinity.[19]

Augustine's treatment of the divine missions falls across Books 2–4 of *The Trinity*.[20] The bishop is wrestling with Scripture, trying to answer questions that arise from the biblical data and responding to objections from subordinators (i.e., those who argue that "sending" implies that the sender is greater than the sent one).[21] Taking his cues mostly from the Gospel of John (as well as texts such as Matt 3:16–17; Acts 2:1–4; Gal 4:4–6), Augustine understands the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit as special sendings of divine persons "to where they already are"[22]—"events which are put on outwardly in the sight of our bodily eyes"[23]: for the Son, the incarnation (Gal 4:4); for the Spirit, the dove at Christ's baptism (Matt 3:16) and the tongues of fires at Pentecost (Acts 2:3).[24] The Son's mission includes a union with a created form (human nature); not so vis-à-vis the Spirit's mission,[25] the created forms of which are transient manifestations meant to "to signify [the Spirit] and show him in a manner suited to human senses."[26]

---

[19] Sanders, *Triune God*, 94. See Sanders's larger discussion on pp. 93–94.

[20] For a compact summary, see Edmund Hill, trans., introduction to *The Trinity*, by Augustine of Hippo, ed. John E. Rotelle, vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. 1, *Books*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 2015), 8–9.

[21] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.1–2 (Hill, 108–22). S.a. Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*, TRS 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 155–58.

[22] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.8 (Hill, 114). "Not only are the Son and the Spirit 'sent' to where they are," Lewis Ayres notes, "but this 'sending' is also governed by the doctrine of inseparable operations. Just as the Father sends the Son into the world through Mary, the Spirit also sends the Son; indeed, the Son must in some sense send himself—just as the Son sanctifies himself (John 17:19)" (*Augustine and the Trinity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 181–82, citing Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.8–9). Concerning the inseparability principle, Ayres goes on to say, "During the second decade of the fifth century Augustine develops an account of inseparable operation in which the actions of the three are grounded in the Father's eternal generation of Son and spiration of Spirit" (p. 182).

[23] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.9 (Hill, 119).

[24] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.10 (Hill, 120). These outward or visible events leave a special impression upon creatures (e.g., "stir the minds of men").

[25] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.11 (Hill, 120–21).

[26] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.3.12 (Hill, 122–23). S.a. 2.2.11 (Hill, 121): "in order to signify and show him as it was proper for him to be signified and shown to mortal men."

Augustine recognizes the significance of Paul's words in Galatians 4:4: "when the fullness of time had come," the Son and the Holy Spirit were sent. In light of this indicator of these special sendings, the bishop first inquires, What are we to make of the various manifestations of God throughout the Old Testament?[27] After an examination of Old Testament theophanies,[28] Augustine concludes that such physical or audible manifestations do not present God "as he is in himself [i.e., in his substance], but in a symbolic manner as times and circumstances required."[29] Augustine is not dogmatic about which member of the Trinity (or whether the one God without the distinction of persons) is manifested by those "created forms." God's substance cannot be seen; "by creature control the Father, as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit, could offer the senses of mortal men a token representation of himself in bodily guise or likeness."[30] As Vidu notes, "Even though God remains invisible in himself, he makes us alert to his presence and activity by causing changes in our world."[31]

In a move that may at first glance seem tangential to the divine missions, Augustine then asks whether angels produced the Old Testament manifestations of God.[32] He concludes that God (the primary cause) worked through angels (secondary causes), who represented (or symbolized) God—though God's substance was not revealed, for it

---

[27] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.3.12 (Hill, 123). The bishop cites the following "physical manifestations" as examples: "fire in the bush" (Exod 3:2), "pillar of cloud and fire" (Exod 13:21), "lightnings on the mountain" (Exod 19:16).

[28] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.4–6 (Hill, 126–42).

[29] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.7.32 (Hill, 143).

[30] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.7.35 (Hill, 145). By "creature control," Augustine means that God effects changes in creation that stimulate our senses and, in so doing, signify himself. In Vidu's words, "God deploys created means, whether supernatural creatures such as angels or natural creatures such as clouds, bushes, etc., as instruments for the manifestation of the divine being" (*Divine Missions*, 9).

[31] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 10.

[32] Augustine, *The Trinity* 3.1.4 (Hill, 150). The bishop's investigation into this matter spans the length of Book 3 (3.1–4 [Hill, 149–72]).

is invisible.[33] Prior to the incarnation, Augustine avers, any manifestation of God was the

work of angels:

> Whenever God was said to appear to our ancestors before our savior's incarnation, the voices heard and the physical manifestation seen were the work of angels. They either spoke and did things themselves, representing God's person, . . . , or they took created materials distinct from themselves and used them to present us with symbolic representations of God.[34]

With this conclusion, Augustine settles the matter concerning his second question about

the divine missions and Old Testament manifestations of God.

Augustine's third and final inquiry concerning the divine missions is whether

the Son and Spirit were sent in the Old Testament (i.e., *before* "the fullness of time"; Gal

4:4); if they were not, then—in Edmund Hill's words—what is "special and unique about

their being sent in the New Testament"?[35] In summary form, Augustine's answer is that

(1) the missions *pivot upon* the work of the incarnate Son, (2) the missions *accomplish*

something, and (3) the missions *reveal* something. (1–2) Speaking on the incarnation,

Augustine declares, "Everything that has taken place in time in 'originated' [i.e., created]

matters . . . has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the

Son of God."[36] Hill summarizes what Augustine implies:

> So the Son of God's mission was to be the mediator between man and God; the accomplishment of this mission required him to be incarnate and to offer himself as an acceptable sacrifice on our behalf; he cannot meaningfully be said to have been

---

[33] Augustine, *The Trinity* 3.4.26 (Hill, 171–72). "To see that substance," Augustine explains, "hearts have to be purified by all these things which are seen by eyes and heard by ears" (3.4.26 [Hill, 172]). Hill unpacks what Augustine means here and helps readers understand why he so values the New Testament divine missions: "[Augustine] will elaborate this idea in Book XIII. What the heart needs to be purified by is faith, and faith is a response to the visible, symbolic economy of salvation presented in scripture and culminating in the *flesh* of the incarnate Word" (Hill, 172n44).

[34] Augustine, *The Trinity* 3.4.27 (Hill, 172). S.a. Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 9; Vidu, "Order of Divine Missions," 30.

[35] Edmund Hill, trans., "Introductory Essay on Book IV," in *The Trinity*, 173. Augustine himself states the question this way: we must "see whether the Son and Holy Spirit were also sent in the Old Testament [i.e., in addition to the angels]; and if so what difference there is between that sending and the one we read of in [the Gospels]; or whether in fact neither was sent until the Son was born of the virgin Mary, and the Holy Spirit appeared in bodily guise, whether as a dove or as tongues of fire" (*The Trinity*, 3.1.4 [Hill, 150]).

[36] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.25 (Hill, 213).

sent until he began to accomplish this mission; he did not do this until the New Testament [i.e., the incarnation]; and so we conclude that he was not sent until the New Testament [i.e., the incarnation].[37]

Hence, in Augustine's words, "there you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent"[38]—namely, to mediate reconciliation between God and humankind.[39]

(3) Further, that the Son is sent by the Father does not indicate that the sent one is less than the sender; rather, sending is indicative of "fromness": one is *from* another; sent is *from* sender. This actuality, according to Augustine, rules out any notion of intratrinitarian subordination:

> If however the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son, then there is nothing at all to stop us believing that the Son is equal to the Father and consubstantial and co-eternal, and yet that the Son is sent by the Father. Not because one is greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender. For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son.[40]

Herein lies the key to Augustine's conceptualization of the divine missions: missions *reveal* processions.

According to Augustine, we perceive the missions in the economy of salvation as revealed in Scripture, and because the missions are by nature revelatory of God's inner life, we then reason from the temporal missions to the eternal processions. This missions-to-processions approach is possible for Augustine because he already has in mind a larger

---

[37] Hill, "Introductory Essay on Book IV," 174. Hill continues, "Augustine nowhere explicitly spells out this line of thought; I think he leaves us to assume it with him, and if we do, then Book IV [esp. how chaps. 1–4 relate to chap. 5] becomes coherent."

[38] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.25 (Hill, 213).

[39] S.a. White, *The Trinity*, 158.

[40] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.27 (Hill, 215). Further, according to Ayres, "We can say that the Son was 'sent' without implying that one has the authority to send, while the one sent is merely subordinate, because that the Son will be sent is intrinsic to the Son's generation from the Father. The visible life and ministry of the Incarnate Word is thus founded in the 'interior ordering' of the Trinity." (*Augustine and the Trinity*, 183; s.a. 184–85).

trinitarian grammar as derived from Scripture.[41] For example, the bishop sees John's affirmation that "all things were made through [God's] Son (Jn 1:3)" as indicative of the Son's consubstantiality, co-eternality, and co-equality with the Father (s.a. John 10:30).[42] Because of this fact, whatever it may mean that the "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4), it *cannot* mean that the sent one is less than the sender. If not, then what can this datum mean? For Augustine, the only available option is that the sent one is *from* the sender eternally, just as he is sent from the sender temporally. Hence, the missions reveal the processions.[43]

To take both missions and processions together, then, the Son's being sent from the Father temporally discloses that he is *from* the Father eternally (generation), and the Holy Spirit's being sent from both the Father and the Son temporally indicates that he is *from* both the Father and the Son eternally (procession). In Augustine's own words,

> Just as the Father, then, begot and the Son was begotten, so the Father sent and the Son was sent. But just as the begetter and the begotten are one, so are the sender and the sent, because the Father and the Son are one; so too the Holy Spirit is one with them . . . . And just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him. And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him. Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. . . . [Christ's breathing upon the disciples and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22)] was a convenient symbolic demonstration that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father.[44]

---

[41] E.g., one God, distinction of persons, unity of persons within the substance, inseparable operations.

[42] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.26 (Hill, 214; original italics removed); s.a. 4.5.27 (Hill, 215).

[43] Vidu comes to the same conclusion:

Now, insofar as we suppose the mission reveals something, it is either the substance or the relations within the unity of this substance. In the case of the former, being sent from the Father would indicate an inferiority of the substance in relation to the Father. Were the latter true, being sent from the Father would *only* show that within the unity of the substance, the Son is *from* the Father. The latter is precisely Augustine's solution: the reason the Son is sent is because he is Son, begotten, from the Father. (*Divine Missions*, 11)

See Vidu's larger discussion of this subject on pp. 10–12.

[44] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.29 (Hill, 218–19). Scripture attests the Spirit as "the Spirit of Jesus/Christ/Jesus Christ/[God's] Son" in various places: Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11

And while the Father is known (i.e., revealed) through the missions, "he is not said to have been sent. For he has not got anyone else to be from or to proceed from."[45]

Furthermore, for Augustine, what is truly significant about the missions is that they ultimately offer true saving knowledge of the divine persons (cf. 1 Tim 2:3–6). This point is evident in the bishop's distinction between the visible (or outward) missions and the invisible (or inward) missions—the latter of which is what truly connects the knower to the known. Concerning the Son, Augustine posits,

> [The Word] is precisely sent to anyone when he is known and perceived by him, as far as he can be perceived and known according to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made perfect in God. So the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father, but either in fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world [visible mission] . . . . Or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind [invisible mission]. . . . That he is born means that he is from eternity to eternity . . . . But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time.[46]

Likewise, concerning the Holy Spirit, Augustine articulates,

> If the Son is said to have been sent in that he appeared outwardly in created bodily form while inwardly in uncreated spiritual form remaining always hidden from mortal eyes, then it is easy to understand how the Holy Spirit can also said to have been sent. He was visibly displayed in a created guise which was made in time . . . [as a dove at Jesus's baptism (Matt 3:16) and as tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:3)]. This action, visibly expressed and presented to mortal eyes, is called the sending of the Holy Spirit. Its object was not that his very substance might be seen, since he himself remains invisible and unchanging like the Father and the Son; but

(see my discussion in chap. 1 [2n4]). In addition to John 20:22, Augustine explicitly draws on John 14:26 and 15:26 to support the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son (*filioque*)—though he still acknowledges the Father as the source (*principium*) of all deity and, therefore, the Father's being the ultimate principle of the Spirit's procession. S.a. Hill's explanatory notes (218n95, 218n96, 219n98).

[45] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.28 (Hill, 218); s.a. 4.5.32 (Hill, 223).

[46] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.28 (Hill, 217). S.a. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 184. Elsewhere, in wrestling with how Jesus could say to Philip, "I shall manifest myself to him" (John 14:21) when, in fact, Jesus was standing right in front of Philip, Augustine distinguishes between the visible incarnate Word and the invisible eternal Word: "Surely then it can only mean that he was offering the flesh which the Word had been made in the fullness of time as the object to receive our faith [visible mission]; but that the Word itself, *through whom all things had been made* (Jn 1:3), was being kept for the contemplation in eternity of minds now purified through faith [invisible mission]" (Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.26 [Hill, 215]).
Similarly, Augustine distinguishes between visible and invisible thus: "When the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, he *was sent into this world* (Jn 16:28) . . . . When however he is perceived by the mind in the course of someone's spiritual progress in time, he [i.e., the Son of God] is indeed said to be sent, but not into this world, for he does not then show himself perceptibly [but spiritually]" (4.5.28 [Hill, 217–18]).

that outward sights [i.e., perceptible signs] might in this way stir the minds of men, and draw them on from the public manifestations of his coming in time to the still and hidden presence of his eternity sublime.[47]

Further, Augustine contends that John's statement that "the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:29) indicates something special about Pentecost: "the giving or bestowal or sending of the Holy Spirit [after Christ's glorification] was going to have some special quality about it that there had never been before."[48] What was so special about Pentecost? The outward (visible) reality testified to a new, unique inward (invisible) reality. In Augustine's words, the "perceptible signs" (i.e., tongues of fire; Acts 2:3) disclosed that "the whole world and all nations with their variety of languages were going to believe in Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit."[49]

The bishop of Hippo concludes his thoughts on the divine missions thus: In "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), the Son of God was sent to be united in his person with a human nature in order that he may be "the Son of man for the sake of the sons of men."[50] Any manifestation of his person before that time could only have been an angelic (or created) representation of him "in order to foretell him," yet without a union with his person.[51] Similarly, while Augustine acknowledges many "sendings" of the Holy Spirit prior to the New Testament,[52] he prioritizes the visible manifestations of the Spirit as the

---

[47] Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.10 (Hill, 120). S.a. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 183–84.

[48] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.29 (Hill, 220).

[49] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.29 (Hill, 220). S.a. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 185–86.

[50] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.30 (Hill, 220).

[51] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.30 (Hill, 220); s.a. 4.5.31 (Hill, 221).

[52] On the various "sendings" of the Spirit prior to and near Christ's incarnation, Augustine states,

Scripture plainly says and demonstrates in many places that [the prophets] spoke by the Holy Spirit; it was said of John the Baptist, *He will be filled with the Holy Spirit right from his mother's womb* (Lk 1:15); and we find his father Zachary [i.e., Zechariah] filled with the Holy Spirit to utter those words about him; and Mary filled with the Holy Spirit to proclaim that praise of the Lord she was carrying in her womb; and Simeon and Anna filled with the Holy Spirit to recognize the greatness of the infant Christ. (*The Trinity* 4.5.29 [Hill 219–20])

dove at Christ's baptism (Matt 3:16) and as the tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:3),[53]

for they truly reveal the Spirit in his substance—co-eternal with the Father and the Son—

yet without a union with his person.[54] And although the divine persons are inseparably

united in their substance and work inseparably in creation,[55] they are manifested

separably to our senses. Reflecting on the trinitarian revelation of God at Christ's baptism

in Matthew 3:16–17, Augustine avers,

> The trinity together produced both the Father's voice and the Son's flesh and the Holy Spirit's dove, though each of these single things has reference to a single person. Well, at least the example helps us to see how this three, inseparable in itself, is manifested separately through visible creatures, and how the three are inseparably at work in each of the things which are mentioned as having the proper function of manifesting the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit.[56]

Hence, the missions of the Son and the Spirit, though inseparable acts of the triune God,

are "created visible manifestation[s] of the Son and the Holy Spirit" that reveal the

persons and their relations to one another (i.e., the processions).[57]

How is one to comprehend these majestic wonders—especially the

incarnation? Augustine answers, "You must purify your mind with faith."[58] While this

response may seem anticlimactic (or worse, a cop-out), Vidu helps readers understand

---

In addition, regarding Augustine's reflections on Christ's breathing the Spirit in John 20:22 and the Spirit's being sent at Pentecost, Vidu comments, "Augustine all but implies that there existed a mission of the Spirit in the Old Testament saints" (*Divine Mission*, 12).

[53] Note also that Augustine states that Christ's breathing the Spirit upon the disciples (John 20:22) constitutes a real sending and that such a sending certainly means something; however, the bishop lays the matter to the side and moves on (*The Trinity* 4.5.29 [Hill, 218–19]). He picks the point back up in Book 15, where he states that the Spirit's sending in John 20:22 was for "love of neighbor," while his sending at Pentecost was for "love of God" (15.6.46 [Hill, 558]).

[54] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.30 (Hill, 220). Moreover, as discussed above, Augustine acknowledges that the Spirit's sending at Pentecost was special due to its unprecedented nature.

[55] Augustine is unequivocal on this point: "I will say . . . with absolute confidence that Father and Son and Holy Spirit, God the creator, of one and the same substance, the almighty three act inseparably" (*The Trinity* 4.5.30 [Hill, 220]). S.a. my discussion on Augustine vis-à-vis the nomenclature of inseparability in chap. 4 (pp. 120–21).

[56] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.30 (Hill, 221).

[57] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.32 (Hill, 223).

[58] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.31 (Hill, 222).

that Augustine's reply actually accords with his view of the ultimate salvific import of the

missions (esp. their inward effects): In order to grasp these eternal truths, "a higher

perception is needed, a transformation of the mind and the soul, in fact an elevation of

these above their natural powers." When we are so enlightened, says Vidu,

> we are in fact in heaven, since [these truths] are beyond the natural powers of the
> human mind. . . . Such a spiritual perception, however, is precisely the Word's and
> the Spirit's to accomplish. The signs deployed in the manifestations of the persons,
> the flesh, the voice, the dove [Matt 3:16–17], are not ends in themselves, but meant
> to guide us in a process of holistic transformation, a process which naturally starts
> with the senses but ends at a spiritual level.[59]

Just as the missions point to the processions, so also the outward (visible) missions point

to the inward (invisible) missions, which raise creatures into participation with the triune

God.

Augustine contributes many insights to the theology of the divine missions,

chief among which is the observation that the missions—as disclosed in Scripture—

reveal the processions. Lewis Ayres summarizes Augustine's "fromness" *regula* (or

"rule") thus: "The manifestation of the divine Word is a manifestation of the eternal

relationship of Father and Son and, hence, a making known of the Father. The

manifestation of the Father by Son and Spirit is also both a drawing of believers to the

Father, and founded in the Father's eternal generation and spiration of Son and Spirit."[60]

Yet, as Vidu acknowledges, "while Augustine begins to scratch at the idea that the

missions reveal the processions, he does not explain *how* that happens. It will fall on the

shoulders of Saint Thomas Aquinas to illuminate the manner in which the processions are

---

[59] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 14. Vidu goes on to explain, "Now we understand why theophanies could never lead to an understanding of the persons. Not only were the forms produced by the angels not *united* to the eternal persons, but such a perception can take place only through the transformation of the human soul brought about by just such a union with God."

[60] Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 187. S.a. White, *The Trinity*, 158.

extended into creation by the missions."[61] Indeed, expounding upon Thomas's procession-mission paradigm is the task of the next section.

Aquinas on the Divine Missions[62]

The Angelic Doctor's presentation of the Trinity follows the processions-to-missions approach and unfolds in questions 27–43 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologica*. This method is the converse of—but heavily indebted to—Augustine's missions-to-processions approach.[63] As Sander details, "[Thomas's method] presupposes familiarity with the missions of the Son and the Spirit but does not expound them until the end. The processions-to-missions exposition is dependent on the missions-to-processions exposition; without the latter we lack the evidence to pursue the former."[64] As a result, Aquinas's method has one major disadvantage, says Sanders: "The processions-to-missions sequence begins at such a great conceptual distance from salvation history that the exposition can be abstract and remote." And while one finds this point to be often true of Thomas's presentation of the Trinity in the *Summa*, one must remember that, as Gilles Emery avers, "the idea of the missions of the Son and the Spirit [in Aquinas's thought] is thoroughly biblical. The *Summa Theologica* does not give detailed expositions of the Johannine and Pauline passages which he had expounded in his commentaries, but Thomas indicates that he is working from Scripture."[65] Therefore,

---

[61] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 15 (emphasis added). S.a. Christopher R. J. Holmes, who notes, "Augustine goes further than any of his predecessors (Latin or Greek) in indicating how the missions of Son and Spirit reveal their eternal processions; Thomas modifies and extends—among other things—Augustine's account along the lines of persons as relations" (*The Holy Spirit*, NSD [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015], 202).

[62] This section is adapted from Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me,'" 543–50. Used with permission.

[63] Thomas Aquinas references Augustine's *The Trinity*, e.g., in *ST* I.43 art. 3 arg. 3 s.c.; art. 4 s.c., ad. 2; art. 5 ad. 1, ad. 2; art. 6 s.c., ad. 1, ad. 2; art. 7 arg. 5, ad. 2, ad. 6; art. 8 arg. 1, arg. 3, s.c., co.

[64] Sanders, *Triune God*, 97.

[65] Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 364. Emery acknowledges that Aquinas cites John 8:18; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:4.

no matter how abstract Thomas's musings may appear to be, one must remember that Scripture serves as one of the major pillars of his theological formulation.

For Aquinas, "the mission of a divine person is a fitting thing, as meaning in one way the procession of origin from the sender, and as meaning a new way of existing in another."[66] Commenting on this language, Dominic Legge explains,

> This "new mode of existing in another" refers to "some effect in a creature . . . according to which a divine person is sent." There are, therefore, two key elements that constitute a divine mission: (1) the person's eternal procession, and (2) the divine person's relation to the creature in whom this person is made present in a new way, according to some created effect.[67]

Matthew Levering clarifies that a procession plus a mission does not indicate two "comings forth" in God but one eternal "coming forth" that has a temporal (or created) effect.[68] Thus, per Aquinas, "the procession may be called a twin procession, eternal and temporal, not that there is a double relation to the principle, but a double term [or terminus]."[69]

The first aspect of a divine mission (i.e., eternal procession) expresses the divine person's eternal subsisting relation. The Father is the origin or principle of the processions; he proceeds from no one. The Son proceeds from the Father; he is eternally begotten. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; he is eternally spirated.[70] Such relations are "comings forth" that happen in God (i.e., *ad intra*). Since these relations are

---

[66] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.1 co.

[67] Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 15, quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputata de Potentia*, in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2, ed. P. Bazzi et al. (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1949), q. 10, art. 4, ad. 14. S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 364–65.

[68] Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 190.

[69] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.2 ad. 3. S.a. White, *The Trinity*, 539; Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 276; Bruce D. Marshall, "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question," *Thomist* 74, no. 1 (January 2010): 20–23.

[70] See Aquinas, *ST* I.43.4 co.

eternal and uncreated, they are relations of "unseparated equality."[71] Thomas explains

these processions as movements within the divine nature by way of (1) the intellect or

understanding and (2) the will.[72] Legge helpfully unpacks this subject, beginning with the

way of intellect:

> Aquinas understands the first of these, a procession by way of intellect [i.e., the Son], as analogous to the act by which an intellect conceives a word as the "fruit" of its understanding. Such a word is distinct from, yet remains in, the mind that conceives it. In God, the Father "understands himself" by a single eternal act and so generates an eternal Word—as a conception proceeding from his act of understanding—that "expresses the Father" [*ST* I.34.3 co.].

Legge then turns to the way of will in Aquinas's thought:

> The procession according to will [i.e., the Holy Spirit] is the "procession of love, by which the beloved is in the lover, like the reality spoken or understood through the conception of a word is in the one understanding" [*ST* I.27.3 co.]. This procession is ordered to the procession of the Word, since "nothing can be loved by the will unless it is conceived in the intellect" [*ST* I.27.3 ad. 3].[73]

Thus, "the term 'procession' . . . designates an immanent action in God that 'does not

tend into something exterior but remains in the agent himself.'"[74]

The second aspect of a divine mission is the temporal side of a procession in

which a divine person is sent to and present in a creature in a new mode; "it includes the

eternal procession, with the addition of a temporal effect."[75] As Legge summarizes, "A

divine mission is the sending *of a divine person* as really present in time according to a

created effect,"[76] and "not just any created effect will serve: it must somehow imply 'a

relation [of the person sent] to the terminus to which he is sent, so that he begins in some

---

[71] Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 365.

[72] Aquinas, *ST* I.27.5 co.

[73] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 15. The close ordering of the processions—not to mention the missions—supports a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

[74] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 15, quoting Aquinas, *ST* I.27.3 co.

[75] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.2 ad. 3.

[76] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 17–18. For a discussion of the difference between a generic (e.g., human) mission and a divine mission, see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 365–66; s.a. White, *The Trinity*, 536–38.

[new] way to be there.'"[77] Thomas employs the notion of a "mixed relation" to explain the new mode in which a divine person is truly present in a creature: "The relation is 'real' in the creature, in whom the mission brings about something new, but it has a being of 'reason' in the divine person."[78] Furthermore, on account of inseparable operations, creatures experience a real relation not only to one divine person but also to the entire Godhead:[79]

> All three divine persons together efficiently cause a divine mission's created effect, so . . . there is a real relation [in the creature] to all three divine persons as a single principle. (For example, all three divine persons efficiently cause Christ's human nature to be united to the Son in person.) But a divine mission's created effect has a second relation, also "really in" the creature, by which it "terminates to" the one divine person [i.e., the subject] who is sent—and *not* to the others.[80]

Next, the missions do not signify a change in the divine persons themselves—that is, in the intradivine life. But the missions do change creatures, who experience God in a novel manner. As Aquinas explains, "That a divine person may newly exist in anyone, or be possessed by anyone in time, does not come from change of the divine

---

[77] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 18, quoting Aquinas, *ST* I.43.1 co.

[78] Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 368. For a more detailed discussion—plus a helpful example—of "mixed relations," see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 19–21; s.a. White, *The Trinity*, 426–28; Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 93, 212.

[79] This actuality is also related to and supported by the mutual indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—called "perichoresis." See Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 228, 278–79, 353–54; Gregg R. Allison, *BCDTT*, s.v. "*perichoresis*" (pp. 161–62); Richard A. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "circumincessio" (p. 64), "emperichōrēsis" (p. 105); D. Glenn Butner Jr., *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), chap. 5 (pp. 133–52).

[80] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 22. S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 370–72; Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering, TRS 1 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 2. Of the "four causes" (efficient, material, formal, and final), the efficient cause (from the Latin *efficere, efficisse, effectum*, meaning "to effect, bring about"; a.k.a. the agential cause) is that which—or the agent who—*makes* a thing to be what it is or *brings about* an effect. Efficient causality is associated with inseparable operations because the agent of all divine action is the united Godhead (singular will, knowledge, and power). For helpful teaching on the four causes, see Dominic Legge, "Aquinas 101: Lesson 18: The Four Causes," video, 4:11, Thomistic Institute, accessed May 5, 2022, https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/the-four-causes; s.a. Muller, *DLGTT*, s.v. "causa" (pp. 56–57). For discussion of the "four types of causality in habitual grace" (efficient, exemplar, final, and disposing), see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 36–42.

person, but from change in the creature."[81] Moreover, according to Levering, "The change described by a divine 'mission' consists in a creature gaining a new real relation to the Son or Holy Spirit, a relation of intimacy that elevates the creature into a participation in the trinitarian community."[82]

Vidu explains this divine-human distinction—where the latter experiences change, while the former does not—in terms of the lack of sequentiality between the acts of God:

> This is where the inseparability principle [i.e., inseparable operations] meets the doctrine of divine simplicity. . . . The action of God is one, and that is to be Godself. However, as this action is "refracted" in the medium of human history, it fans out, so to speak; it is stretched and *appears* to be composed of a variety of divine actions. It is tempting, yet a mistake, to take this sequentiality as basic.[83]

Vidu concludes his discussion on sequentiality with the following thesis: "The economic works of God originate in an eternal unity of intention and execution in the 'divine counsel.' Their temporal ordering to one another is a 'consequent condition' of their 'externalization' in time and is in no way part of their 'immanent constitution.'"[84] But, though the divine person who is sent (Son or Spirit) does not change *in se*, he still maintains a real relation to the creature—he is *truly present* in the one to whom he is sent.

To summarize, a divine mission is an eternal procession plus a created effect. It involves a real relation—to the whole Godhead (as its principle or source) and to the one

---

[81] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.2 ad. 2. S.a. Adonis Vidu, "The Place of the Cross among the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," in *Locating Atonement*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, ECD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 32; Tyler R. Wittman, "On the Unity of the Trinity's External Works: Archaeology and Grammar," *IJST* 20, no. 3 (2018): 369.

[82] Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 189. S.a. Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275n3; Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 27.

[83] Vidu, "The Cross among Inseparable Operations," 35–36.

[84] Vidu, "The Cross among Inseparable Operations," 36. Wittman similarly avers,

Though external works [of creatures] have some intermediary existence between their subjects and objects, God's external works do not because God acts *per se*. This means that when God acts externally, God posits effects. That is to say, God's activity is not a "successive" motion that develops and has an intermediary existence; God acts simply by disposing effects, among which are included creatures' self-movement. ("Unity of the Trinity's External Works," 370)

S.a. Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 21.

sent person (as its terminus or subject)—in which a divine person is truly present in the creature according to a new mode of being. The relation is a "mixed relation"; the creature experiences change (i.e., something new), whereas the divine person does not (his is a relation of reason). Consistent with their respective immanent processions, then, the two temporal sendings—the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit— represent new modes in which the Son and the Spirit relate to the created order:[85] "The human nature of Jesus is the created effect through which the Son is present to us in a new way,"[86] and the outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are the created effects indicative of the Spirit's new mode of presence.[87] Thus, the mission of the Son consists of his temporal sending by the Father to become incarnate and accomplish redemption, and the mission of the Holy Spirit consists of his temporal sending by the Father and the Son to apply redemption to the saints. These divine missions represent salvific realities that believers experience, and they are consistent with the biblical (mainly Johannine) language of missions as well as Augustine's treatment thereof discussed above.

However, Aquinas distinguishes between the visible missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and their invisible missions, on the other.[88] To take the Spirit first, the visible mission of the Spirit consists of his powerful manifestations as a dove at Jesus's baptism (Matt 3:16; s.a. Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33); the cloud of glory at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:5); the breath Christ breathed upon his disciples after his resurrection (John 20:22); and the sound of a great wind, the tongues of fire, and the disciples' speaking in tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4).[89] The invisible mission of

---

[85] Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 367–68, 373.

[86] Vidu, "The Cross among Inseparable Operations," 34.

[87] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 276–77.

[88] On Emery's account, Thomas took this distinction from Peter Lombard, who, in turn, took it from Augustine (*Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 372). And as I have shown in the previous section, Augustine did indeed distinguish between the visible and invisible missions.

[89] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.7 ad. 6.

the Spirit consists of his impartation of sanctifying (or habitual) grace to believers via indwelling—indeed, the Spirit *is* the gift (i.e., the gift of charity; Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6).[90] Next, the visible mission of the Son is the incarnation (John 1:14; Rom 8:3–4), and his invisible mission is the illumination of the mind by the impartation of wisdom—and Christ *is* Wisdom (John 14:23; s.a. Wis 9:10).[91] Notably, the visible mission of the Son "is necessarily accompanied by the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit to Christ's humanity,"[92] and an invisible mission of the Son to a creature ("the illumination of the intellect") is inseparable from a corresponding invisible mission of the Holy Spirit ("the kindling of the affection").[93]

To take the invisible missions together, then, an "'invisible mission' refers to the sending of a divine person to a human being (or an angel) 'through invisible grace,' and it 'signifies a new mode of that person's indwelling, and his origin from another.'"[94] Because the Son and the Spirit are sent from another, it is fitting that they are sent invisibly through grace.[95] Thus, their new modes of presence—the created effects of their processions—are according to sanctifying (or habitual) grace. "In these created effects," Legge articulates, "the divine persons are sent in person and really begin to dwell in the

---

[90] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.3 ad. 1–2. According to Thomas, sanctifying grace is the gift by which the creature is perfected so that he or she can enjoy a divine person inwardly (ad. 1); sanctifying grace "disposes the soul to possess the divine person" (ad. 2). S.a. Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 191–92; Marshall, "Unity of the Triune God," 20; Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 55–56, 116.

[91] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. In ad. 2 and ad. 3, Thomas says that the created effect of the Son's invisible mission is the illumination of the intellect that breaks forth into love. In ad. 1 and ad. 2, Thomas cites Augustine: "The Son is sent, whenever He is known and perceived by anyone" (*The Trinity* 4.5.28). See my discussion on Augustine's distinction between the visible and invisible missions on p. 146 above.

[92] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 17.

[93] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5 ad. 3. S.a. Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 192. This fact also supports a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

[94] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 25, quoting Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 373.

[95] The Father also indwells human beings through grace (through the Son by the Spirit), though he is not sent because he is not "from another" (Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5 co.). Augustine makes a similar point: the Father is revealed (and therefore known) via the missions, yet he is not sent, for he proceeds from no one (*The Trinity* 4.5.28, 32); see my discussion on p. 146 above.

creature: the Son in wisdom, and the Holy Spirit in charity."[96] However, undifferentiated

sanctifying grace only imparts the presence of the whole Trinity.[97] The distinct

processions of the divine persons are disclosed when the gifts imparted by sanctifying

grace (i.e., "perfection" of the intellect [vis-à-vis the Son] and the will [vis-à-vis the

Spirit]) assimilate—or conform—the soul of the creature to the Son and the Spirit

according to their eternal processions.[98] "The charity that always is given in habitual or

sanctifying grace is the created dimension of an invisible mission of the Holy Spirit in

person. (The same can be said for the Son's invisible mission by the gift of wisdom

informed by love)."[99]

Next, a visible mission is similar to an invisible mission: they both include a

divine person's (1) being sent from another and (2) being present in another according to

a new mode of presence. However, a visible mission adds a third element: *either* (1) *or*

(2) is manifested through some visible sign.[100] When the eternal Son assumes a human

---

[96] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 25 (original emphasis removed). On pp. 27–29, Legge goes on to explain that when the habitual grace elevates the creature's nature (to participation in the divine nature), the creature receives supernaturally infused habitual gifts (such as the theological virtues of faith and charity). "These gifts are included *virtualiter* in habitual grace but are really distinct from it; habitual grace (which is 'in' the soul's essence) is their principle and root, and they flow from it" (p. 28). "Habitual grace elevates human nature . . . , while the infused virtues . . . perfect its powers" (p. 29).

[97] Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. S.a. Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 30; Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 373–74.

[98] As Emery explains,

The divine person is sent to transmit a participation in his eternal property: the Son conveys a likeness or resemblance to the modality through which he is referred to the Father; the Holy Spirit communicates a resemblance to the mode through which he proceeds. This resemblance is the imprint with which the Son and Holy Spirit mark the saints, for their union to God will come about through being integrated into the personal relations which Son and Holy Spirit have with the Father. (*Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 376–77)

S.a. Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 66–67.

[99] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 42. S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 375–79. In addition, both Legge (pp. 36–48) and Emery (pp. 377–78) point out Thomas's distinction between efficient and exemplar causation—the former relates to the united act of the whole Trinity, whereas the latter relates to the single sent divine person to whom a creature is assimilated. S.a. White's two qualifications regarding the invisible missions and sanctifying grace in *The Trinity*, 539–41.

[100] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 48–49. Here, Legge is drawing from Aquinas's commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros*

nature, he makes an invisible divine person visible—and truly present—as a man (element #2; see, e.g., 2 Tim 1:9–10). Furthermore, in accord with the Johannine and Augustinian accounts of divine missions articulated above, Christ manifests his "being sent from the Father" (element #1).[101] The visible mission of the Spirit, however, is different:

> The Holy Spirit is not united to the visible creature that serves as a sign. Rather, that sign points to the Holy Spirit's invisible presence according to a new mode [element #2] that also remains unseen in itself. . . . For example, the dove at Christ's baptism [Matt 3:16] points to the Spirit's [invisible] mission to, and presence in, Christ, and the tongues of fire [Acts 2:3] point to the Spirit's [invisible] mission to, and presence in, those gathered in the upper room.[102]

The significance of the visible missions cannot be overstated. "They constitute the summit of the historical revelation of the Triune God within the manifest events which give rise to the New Covenant."[103] As Legge explains, "The visible missions are therefore (1) a revelation of the divine persons, making known the invisible things of God, and (2) the historical events at the center of the economy of grace (since all grace comes to us through, and in virtue of, Christ's incarnation)."[104] The visible missions are, therefore, ordered to the invisible missions, the former being the visible, sensible manifestations of the latter. "The two visible missions of Son and Spirit are drawn together in their being oriented to the *sanctification* which an invisible mission brings about."[105] Thus, it is the invisible missions that are ultimately salvific, though they have the visible missions as their grounding, or basis in reality. Finally, "the missions of the

---

Sententiarum, ed. Pierre Mandonnet (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929), Book 1, d. 16, q. 1, art. 1. S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 405–7.

[101] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 50.

[102] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 50–51.

[103] Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 405.

[104] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 54.

[105] Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 407 (emphasis added).

Son and Spirit in sanctifying grace are reciprocal, and hence simultaneous and inseparable."[106]

There remains one more crucial aspect of Aquinas's theology of divine missions to discuss, and that is Thomas's dual conception of *exitus* and *reditus*.[107] Legge articulates that "Aquinas builds his theology of the divine missions on the fundamental principle that the eternal processions ground both the *exitus* ["going out"] of creatures from God and their *reditus* ["return"] to God."[108] Legge continues, "The scope of St Thomas's principle is vast: it extends to the whole range of the divine missions, both visible and invisible. The eternal processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are the path of our return to the Father, as those persons are 'sent' to us in time."[109] According to Thomas, says Legge, "the visible mission of the Son in the incarnation—accompanied by the missions of the Holy Spirit to Christ and, at Pentecost, to the Church—are the means, 'the way,' by which all of creation is brought back to the Triune God as its final end."

Commenting on Romans 5:5, Aquinas discusses the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit. He reasons that the two "loves of God" (i.e., God's love toward us and our love toward him) "are poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and of the Son, to be given to us is for

---

[106] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 151. Legge then cites, as an example, Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5 ad. 2. The close ordering of the missions of the Son and Spirit supports a trinitarian Christological pneumatology. For more on the visible and invisible missions, as well as the relationship between them, see Emery, *The Trinity*, 178–94; Vidu, *Divine Missions*, chaps. 2–3.

[107] Here, I depend on Legge's work on Thomas's *exitus-reditus* paradigm. For more, however, see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 359–60, 363, 375, 377–78, 412–14.

[108] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 12 (original emphasis removed). On p. 12, Legge offers a lengthy yet deeply informative quotation from Aquinas's commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* (Book 1, d. 14, q. 2, art. 2). On p. 13, Legge explains that the *exitus-reditus* paradigm is "part of the common Dionysian heritage that [Thomas] received from his master, Albert the Great (and that he shares with St. Bonaventure)"; however, Aquinas extended the paradigm so that the processions ground "creation *and the Trinitarian dispensation of grace*."

[109] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 13. See 13n11 for several citations from Thomas's *Sentences* commentary (and other writings). Elsewhere, Legge expounds, "The rational creature's *reditus*, like its *exitus*, has those eternal processions as its origin, *ratio* ['reasoning' or 'cause'], and exemplar" (p. 33). S.a. Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 375, 213–14.

us to be drawn into a participation in the Love who is the Holy Spirit, by which participation we are made lovers of God [*reditus*]."[110] Concerning the Son's visible mission, then,

> the Word occupies a unique place in the *dispensatio* ["economy"] because he is the one through whom the Father [and, thus, the whole Trinity] is manifested to the world . . . . [T]he Word's special role of manifestation [through the incarnation] is conceived there as the heart and the completion of the whole movement of the procession of creatures from God [*exitus*] and their return to him [*reditus*].[111]

The *exitus-reditus* paradigm is simply expressive of the trinitarian *taxis*. Concerning the *exitus*, just as God exists (*ad intra*) according to eternal subsisting relations (Father → Son → Holy Spirit), so also does all divine action (*ad extra*) occur (inseparably) from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation). Concerning the *reditus*, just as the Holy Spirit's temporal missions reflect his eternal procession (Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit) and the Son's temporal missions reflect his eternal procession (Father ← Son), so also creaturely participation in the divine nature—via created effects—reflects the trinitarian agential chain (Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit ←← creation).[112] As Tyler Wittman summarizes, "God's missions will not return to him void because they repeat the ordered fullness of love that is God's perfect life."[113]

With this treatment of Aquinas's understanding of and contribution to the theology of the divine missions, I now turn to evaluation, augmentation, and synthesis of the developments heretofore discussed—Johannine, Augustinian, Thomistic.

---

[110] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Romanos Lectura*, in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, vol. 1, ed. R. Cai (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953), quoted in Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 46. S.a. Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 50; Wittman, "Unity of the Trinity's External Works," 371.

[111] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 79. Elsewhere, Legge submits, "Aquinas deploys [the theme of the Son as Wisdom] to great effect to explain that the Son is at the center of the entire movement of *exitus* and *reditus*" (p. 69).

[112] For this language of trinitarian agency, I am indebted to Adonis Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," *JAT* 4, no. 1 (May 2016): 115.

[113] Wittman, "Unity of the Trinity's External Works," 372.

Biblical-Theological Synthesis of Divine Missions[114]

The Gospel of John provides the primary biblical data regarding the divine missions (or sendings). According to John, the Father sent the Son (the eternal Word) to assume a human nature, reveal the Father, and accomplish redemption through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Once Christ has ascended, the Father and the Son together will send the Holy Spirit to the saints. The Spirit who was *with* Christ's disciples will be *in* them (via indwelling, together with the Father and the Son), and he will glorify Christ (and, by extension, the Father) by preserving and continuing the Lord's salvific work among the elect. Empowered with the Holy Spirit, Christ's disciples will themselves be sent on mission for God—the gospel work of evangelism and discipleship. Other New Testament passages complement and supplement this Johannine portrait of the divine missions. For example, Matthew 28:18–20, Luke 24:46–49, and Acts 1:4–8 further detail Christ's sending (or commissioning) of the saints. Acts 2 recounts the paradigm-shifting outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (s.a. 5:32). Romans 8:1–17, Galatians 4:4–6, and 1 John 4:9–16 supply stunning snapshots of the divine missions and the benefits they yield for believers (e.g., redemption, adoption, glorification). Scripture certainly speaks more on the nature of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, but I move on to Augustine's thought.

Augustine contributes much to the theology of the divine missions. He recognizes the paradigmatic difference between Old Testament and New Testament manifestations of God; he acknowledges the centrality and priority of God the Son, his incarnation, and his redemptive work; he concludes that sending does not indicate eternal subordination but only eternal procession; and he distinguishes between the visible (outward) and invisible (inward) missions of the Son and Spirit, highlighting the salvific significance of the latter. Of course, Augustine's crucial contribution to the theology of

---

[114] This section is adapted from Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me,'" 550–53. Used with permission.

divine missions is that the missions—as disclosed in Scripture—*reveal* the processions. Yet, the bishop's conceptualization of the divine missions is not without its problems. For example, while Augustine acknowledges the significance of the Spirit's sending at Pentecost, he is not firm on the difference between the Spirit's Pentecostal and pre-Pentecostal sendings, especially his Old Testament manifestations. Further, while he discusses the visible and invisible missions, he does not have a sophisticated system in place concerning the formality (or nature) of the two categories of mission.

Vidu critiques Augustine's understanding of the missions as merely manifestations of divine persons, but he perhaps does not give the church father enough credit. For example, Vidu states that the "mere manifestation" view would entail that the Father has a mission because he is revealed,[115] but Augustine expressly denies that the Father is sent.[116] In addition, Vidu contends, "What Augustine's framework did not catch was the *directionality* of a mission. Missions are not simply manifestations of this or that person but precisely of a trinitarian relationality."[117] However, while Augustine does not explicitly state that the missions *just are* the eternal processions extended into creation (as Aquinas does),[118] he certainly views the missions as indicative of relations of origin (e.g., the Father's sending the Son discloses the Father's eternal paternity and the Son's eternal generation). Of course, Aquinas builds upon the tradition's theology of the divine missions, as I proceed to discuss, but Augustine surely paved the way.

The Angelic Doctor's formulation of the procession-mission paradigm is a lofty achievement, for it advances the theology of divine missions that Aquinas inherited

---

[115] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 16.

[116] Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.5.28, 32 (Hill, 218, 223). I discussed this point on p. 136 above.

[117] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 16.

[118] Vidu notes another point concerning which Aquinas surpasses Augustine: "The human nature [of Christ] does not merely designate the Son, or represent the Son, or manifest the Son [so Augustine], but rather it acquires the Son's specific mode of existence, of being from the Father. The human nature is *elevated* beyond its natural capacities to acquire the mode of existence of the Son specifically [so Thomas]" (*Divine Missions*, 18).

from Augustine (and Peter Lombard). Thomas demonstrates how to reason from the mystery of the Trinity to the economy of salvation; he understands a mission to include the sent person's eternal procession (sender-sent relation) extended into creation via a new mode of presence (sent-receiver relation); he maintains divine simplicity, eternality, immutability, and the like; he acknowledges the unique salvific significance of Christ's incarnation and the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost; he offers a robust distinction between the visible and invisible missions; his procession-mission paradigm accounts for both the sent person's (and the entire Godhead's) true presence in the creature (i.e., the receiver of a mission) as well as the creature's elevation into participation in the divine life; and his *exitus-reditus* paradigm further shows how the missions return creatures to their Creator.

While Thomas's procession-mission paradigm has much to commend it, it exhibits a potential deficiency that I must address in service of constructing a more robust theology of divine missions: (1) Aquinas's overemphasis on sanctifying grace and, correspondingly, (2) his seemingly higher valuation of the invisible missions over the visible missions. For example, Thomas supposes that the Son's visible mission as man "leads to another coming of Christ, which is into the mind. It would have been worth nothing to us if Christ had come in the flesh unless, along with this, he would come into the mind, namely, by sanctifying us."[119] I label this concern #1. "In fact," Legge argues, commenting on the same passage, "all of Christ's activity in his earthly life—the whole of his visible mission—is ordered to, and reaches its accomplishment in, the invisible missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, and the Father's indwelling presence that accompanies them."[120] I label this concern #2. Based on what Legge details elsewhere in

---

[119] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelism S. Ioannis Lecture*, ed. R. Cai (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952), quoted in Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 55.

[120] Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 55.

his exposition of Thomas's theology of divine missions,[121] it is evident that Aquinas values the appropriate salvific realities. In fact, the magisterial Reformer John Calvin shares Aquinas's concerns. The French theologian supposes, "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us [concern #1]. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us [concern #2]."[122] Thus, it is not Thomas's *formulation* of the divine missions with which I take issue but one of his *presuppositions*.

Thomas blends sanctification with justification.[123] In Michael Horton's words, for Aquinas, "justification—at least the first justification—is an unmerited gift, but it is indistinguishable from sanctification."[124] Final justification, then, would come at the end of the sanctification process, which likely would not follow until an individual completed a certain duration of refinement in purgatory.[125] Furthermore, as Horton contends, "the primary emphasis in scholastic theology—specifically that of Aquinas—is more Dionysian: union with God as the telos of the justifying process. The Reformers, by contrast, focus on union with Christ and see this union as the source rather than the goal of final salvation."[126]

---

[121] See, e.g., Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 56 (the visible missions found the economy of grace and establish the pattern of our return to God), 77 (the more we are conformed to Christlikeness [i.e., wisdom], the more we participate in the life of the Trinity), 86 (filial adoption conferred by the Spirit [Rom 8:14–17] allows us to participate in the Son's filial adoption), 88 (the Spirit renders union with and conformation to Christ as well as filial adoption), 190 (all that Christ did in the flesh is salvific for us; he gives grace to us by the Spirit), 224 (the Holy Spirit makes Christ [and, therefore, the Father] known by faith and allows us to share in Christ's sonship and holiness).

[122] John Calvin, *Institutes* 3.1.1 (Battles, 1:537). Michael Horton frames Calvin's concern as a question: "What does it mean that the entire focus of our salvation is Christ and his redemptive work in history, apart from us, if we do not participate in that accomplishment?" (*Justification*, vol. 1, NSD [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018], 195).

[123] See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST* I-II.113 art. 1 co.; art. 4 ad. 1; art. 6 co.

[124] Horton, *Justification*, 1:124.

[125] Aquinas, *ST* "appendix 2."

[126] Horton, *Justification*, 1:199–200. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the Roman Catholic Church formalizes its definition of justification-sanctification in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Aquinas and the Reformers share many of the same salvific concerns. Hence, I want to keep Thomas's procession-mission paradigm intact (inasmuch as it accords with the biblical data and builds upon Augustine's work), except with the order of justification and sanctification flipped: justification is not the *telos* of sanctification but the basis of sanctification—albeit also its guarantor. Therefore, one should view the created effect of the invisible missions not according to the Roman Catholic conception of "sanctifying grace"[127] but in a distinctly Protestant light: on Calvin's account, it is the "double grace" effected by union with Christ:

> Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a *double grace*: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's [S]pirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.[128]

As J. Todd Billings explains in greater detail, "In union with Christ we receive two distinct yet inseparable gifts: justification, in which we are declared righteous before God as ones who are clothed with Jesus Christ, and sanctification, the gift of a new life, a new creation, which manifests itself in Spirit-empowered gratitude."[129] With this substitution in place, I now offer a biblical-theological synthesis of divine missions.

See James Waterworth, trans., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London: Burns and Oates, 1848), "Decree on Justification" (pp. 30–49).

[127] See Vidu's discussion of sanctifying grace as the created effect of the invisible missions (*Divine Missions*, 55–56, 116). He notes that the Roman Catholic "reification of the notion of sanctifying grace is not necessary even for Aquinas," and then he unpacks this point (pp. 55–56). Vidu also distinguishes between a Protestant and Roman Catholic understanding of grace (p. 116 [glossary]).

[128] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.1 (Battles, 725–26; emphasis added). Horton summarizes this concept thus: "All of our justifying righteousness is found in Christ, not in us. The Reformers did not thereby exclude the process of becoming holy. Rather, they argued that through union with Christ we receive both justification and sanctification, and these distinct acts must never be confused or separated" (*Justification*, 1:25). Indeed, Calvin himself avers, "As Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the [S]pirit of adoption [Rom 8.15], by whose power he remakes them in his own image" (*Institutes* 3.11.6 [Battles, 732]).

[129] J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 26. S.a. Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107–8. However, Horton's caution should be heeded: "Union with Christ does not provide a basis for God's discerning in us a righteousness imparted; rather, on the basis of justification we partake of Christ's vivifying life. The same

Prior to the incarnation, God manifested himself in creation at many times and in many ways (often called theophanies).[130] Such manifestations were inseparable operations of the triune God either indicating the one God (without the distinction of persons) or symbolizing this or that divine person in an appropriated sense. These operations are distinguished from missions, for the former do not involve the self-communication of divine persons to creatures as the latter do.[131] Hence, the various operations of God that symbolize (by appropriation) a divine person or foretell a proper mission (i.e., divine self-communication) may be called previews, pre-missions, or prolepses.[132]

In the fullness of time, however, by the agency of the united Godhead, the Son and the Spirit were *sent* for us and our salvation—the Son to accomplish redemption (John 3:16–17; Rom 8:3–4; Gal 4:4–5a) and the Spirit to apply (or seal) redemption to the saints (John 14–16; Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:5b–7; Eph 1:13–14). The fact that the Son and Spirit are sent does not indicate any kind of inferiority of the sent one in relation to the sender; instead, *sentness* discloses *fromness*. The temporal missions reveal the Son and Spirit's eternal processions. The Son is begotten of the Father *ad intra*; he is sent by the Father *ad extra* (John 5:36–38; 8:16; 12:44–45). The Spirit is spirated by the Father and the Son *ad intra*; he is sent by the Father and the Son *ad extra* (John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The missions of the Son and the Spirit include and are expressive of the eternal processions, with the addition of a temporal effect whereby a divine person is present in a new mode. The visible mission of the Son is the incarnation—that is, his life

---

act of faith that looks to Christ alone for justification looks to Christ alone for sanctification and glorification" (*Justification*, 1:215).

[130] E.g., Abraham's visitors at Mamre (Gen 18); burning bush (Exod 3:2); pillar of cloud and fire (Exod 13:21); thunder, lightning, thick cloud, trumpet blast on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16); the angel of the Lord's appearing to Samson's parents (Judg 13:1–25).

[131] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 6–7, 35; s.a. Vidu, *Same God*, 72–74.

[132] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 348–349; Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 12.

(active obedience), death (passive obedience), and resurrection (victory over sin and death). The Son's assumption of a human nature is the created effect through which the Son is present in creation in a new way.

Upon the completion of his mission, Christ ascended into heaven, whence he and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Pentecost (John 7:29; 14:26; 15:26–27; 16:7; Acts 5:30–32). The Spirit's outpouring (Acts 2:1–4, 32–33) reflects both his visible mission (heavenly sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongue of fires, and the disciples' speaking in tongues[133]) and his invisible mission (indwelling). This unique moment in salvific history institutes the Spirit's primary mission in the world; it expresses his new mode of being according to a created effect. Specifically, the Spirit's indwelling of believers imparts the double grace of justification and sanctification through union with Christ. In union with Christ by the Spirit's inhabitation (invisible mission of the Spirit [Rom 5:5; 1 John 2:27]), believers experience all of Christ and his saving benefits (invisible mission of the Son; e.g., *knowing* Christ [Eph 3:17–19], new identity [2 Cor 5:17], adoption as sons [Gal 4:5–7]). Consequently, believers are assimilated (or conformed) to the person of the Son (through justification, his righteousness is forensically imputed to them [Rom 4:22–25; 2 Cor 5:21]), and they are assimilated to the person of the Spirit (through sanctification, they grow in the holiness characteristic of the Spirit [2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2]). Though truly, they are conformed to the image of Christ *through* the Spirit; because Christ is the God-*man*, believers are increasingly assimilated to his glorified humanity (Rom 8:29–30; 2 Cor 3:18).[134] Finally, by the power of the Holy Spirit through the agency of the Son, believers experience full,

---

[133] As rehearsed above, the Holy Spirit's other visible missions include the dove, the cloud of glory, and the Christ's breath. Vidu notes that these manifestations of the Spirit are sometimes termed "symbolic" missions and that they may even be improperly called "missions," for no final union is formed between the divine person who is sent and the created realities—that is, there is no divine self-communication of the sent person to the creature (*Divine Missions*, 7, 43).

[134] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 46–48, 54–55, 66–67.

uninhibited access to the presence of the Father (Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19–22). In short, the Spirit fills "believers and the church with the presence of the triune God" (John 14:17, 23).[135]

As the Gospel of John testifies, the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit are uniquely tethered.[136] Further, as Christopher Holmes notes, "The mission of the Holy Spirit is coextensive with the mission of the Word (the Lord Jesus Christ)."[137] And really, "though it is common to speak of two missions, . . . because of the inseparable operations of the triune God, these two missions are ultimately the one divine mission"[138] that human creatures experience in temporally successive moments. In other words, since there is genuinely only one eternal act, the temporal effects of the Spirit (i.e., his mission) are intrinsically connected to the temporal effects of the Son (i.e., his mission). And according to the grammar of inseparability, just as the persons of the Trinity jointly undertake the project of creation (*exitus*: Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation), so also they jointly complete the mission of salvation, which draws the redeemed into participation in the life of God (*reditus*: Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit ←← creation).

The significance of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot be overstated. "What is special about a mission," Vidu stresses, "is that a self-communication of a divine person has taken place, involving actions and operations to be sure, but much more than these. . . . The heart of the gospel is the return of YHWH to dwell with his people; it is the very *presence* and not just the operations of God among the people."[139] Hence, in Sanders's words, "[The missions of the Son and the Spirit] must

---

[135] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 294; s.a. Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 47.

[136] See, e.g., John 7:39; 14:26; 15:26–27; 16:7, 13–15; 20:21–23.

[137] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 21; s.a. Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 47.

[138] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275; s.a. Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation*, 142.

[139] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, xiv. S.a. Sanders, *Triune God*, 107: "The Father's sendings of the Son and the Holy Spirit were not merely the next events in a series, not even next events of greater importance. These sendings, or rather this twofold mission, only makes sense as the salvation-historical

be kept central in all our thinking about the Trinity."[140] When referred to the Holy Spirit, the divine missions—in conjunction with the trinitarian grammar discussed in earlier chapters—represent a trinitarian pneumatology. Yet, because Scripture, theology, and—by extension—pneumatology are Christ-centered, a trinitarian pneumatology must cohere with a Christological pneumatology. And such coherence is certainly the case, for the theology of the divine missions comports with a Christocentric emphasis of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the mission of the Spirit is Christ-oriented. Demonstrating this reality is the goal of the next section.

The Christocentric Mission of the Holy Spirit[141]

The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament, sanctifying and empowering believers and rendering within them the triune presence of God and, thus, implicit knowledge of the Son by their faith in God's promises. The Spirit spoke through the prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah to secure redemption (1 Pet 1:10–12; cf. Matt 13:17; 2 Pet 1:20–21). In fact, "the entire Old Testament pointed to the coming of one who would be the ideal Son, Prophet, Priest, King, Messiah, and Suffering Servant."[142] Certain prophecies even link the Spirit with the coming Messiah and with the promised new covenant.[143] Finally, as the life principle of human creatures, the Spirit sustained life and prepared a body for the Lord—from first Adam to second Adam.[144] In

mystery toward which all other divine actions have been oriented. This twofold sending is the self-revelation of God. It was God giving himself in the gospel."

[140] Sanders, *Triune God*, 21; s.a. 93, 113, 118.

[141] This section is adapted from Torey J. S. Teer, "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions, and the Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," *JTS* 72, no. 1 (April 2021): 353–58, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flab042. Used with permission.

[142] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 349.

[143] The Spirit and the coming Messiah: see, e.g., Isa 11:2; 41:1–9; 61:1–11; cf. Luke 4:17–21. The Spirit and the new covenant: see, e.g., Jer 31:31–4; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27; 37:14; cf. Isa 42:3; Joel 2:28–9.

[144] Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri de Vries (1900; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 22–26; cf. John Owen, *WJO*, 3:100–1, 162–62, 283–84. As Horton notes, "One

all of these pre-missions (or prolepses), the Holy Spirit was preparing the way for the Son's mission of incarnation.

When the crux of salvation history drew near, the Spirit's proleptic activity spiked. He came upon John the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth and empowered him for his future role as the forerunner (Luke 1:15–17). Elizabeth herself was "filled with the Holy Spirit," which caused her to bless Mary and recognize the incarnate Son in her womb (vv. 42–43). Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, was also "filled with the Holy Spirit," compelling him to prophesy about his son, John, who would "go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (vv. 67–79). Most importantly, the Spirit was responsible for the miraculous conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary (Matt 1:18–23 [cf. Isa 7:14]; Luke 1:30–35).[145] The Spirit was even upon Simeon, revealing to him that "he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" and leading him to the Jerusalem temple to see the child Jesus (Luke 2:22-35).[146] "Accordingly," Allison and Köstenberger write, "the missions of the Son and of the Spirit, along with the interconnection between the missions, were predicted long before they were enacted and as they were being actualized."[147] In short, the pre-missions of the Spirit point toward and prepare the way for the mission of the Son.

---

way of summarizing the whole Bible is the preparation of a body—a human body, animated by the Spirit. There is a progression from Adam to Israel to Mary to Christ and then to his worldwide ecclesial body" (*Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 82). For a detailed rehearsal of the Spirit's preserving and governing power in directing human events—from Adam to Christ—according to God's ultimate redemptive purposes in Christ, see Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 81–104; Horton, "'Lord and Giver of Life': The Holy Spirit in Redemptive History," *JETS* 62, no. 1 (March 2019): 47–63.

[145] In one sense, the conception of the preborn Jesus is an inseparable operation of the triune God. In another sense, it is an act appropriated fittingly appropriated to the Holy Spirit. The Son's taking on a human nature represents, first and foremost, the visible mission of the Son. In addition, the Spirit's coming upon Mary represents a visible (or symbolic) mission of the Spirit (so Augustine), and the Spirit's sanctifying the incarnate Son represents an invisible mission of the Spirit to Jesus's humanity (so Aquinas).

[146] Although Luke is not explicit, the text perhaps implies that the Spirit was responsible for the providential actions of Anna, the prophetess: "And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38).

[147] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 350.

Next, although the Son already enjoyed full unity with the Spirit owing to (1) their respective subsistences in the divine nature, (2) their intratrinitarian relation of *perichoresis* (i.e., mutual indwelling within the immanent Trinity), and (3) the Spirit's persistent indwelling of the Son's human nature from the moment of his birth, Christ experienced the Spirit in a new, powerful way at his baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33), marking him out as Israel's Messiah.[148] "The Spirit identified Jesus as his Father's Son before the world at his baptism," Sanders comments. "The one conceived by the Spirit is now anointed by the Spirit and just so called and sent by the Spirit on his mission to the cross."[149] Immediately after Jesus's baptism, the Spirit led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1–2). Jesus endured and "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14). Quickly following, Christ proclaimed that he was the long-awaited Spirit-anointed one (Luke 4:16–21; cf. Isa 61:1–2; Acts 10:38). Indeed, the man Christ Jesus is he who possesses the Spirit without measure (John 3:34) and accomplished all of his earthly works through the "indwelling, empowering, and anointing work" of the Holy Spirit.[150] Those earthly works culminated in the crucifixion, wherein Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb 9:14).[151] In other words, the pre-missions of the

---

[148] Aquinas would call this new manner of experiencing the Spirit a visible mission of the Spirit. Augustine would agree. Though see my comment on 167n133 above. S.a. Duby's comments in *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 206–7.

[149] Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation*, 142.

[150] Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, FOET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 327; s.a. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 117–18, 156–58; Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 353–54. Although my focus is on a trinitarian Christological pneumatology, Horton offers a timely caution: "Given the fact that the Spirit's mission is to place the spotlight on Christ, it is not surprising that Christian theology has placed most of its weight on Christology. However, apart from a robust pneumatology, even Christology suffers, as the saving significance of Christ's humanity is eclipsed by the entirely appropriate emphasis on his deity" (*Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 98). Pneumatology, then, both informs and is informed by Christology— and both are extensions of trinitarian theology. S.a. Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation*, 142–44 (sect. "Pneumological Christology and Christological Pneumatology").

[151] Allison and Köstenberger go even further, arguing that on account of inseparable operations, the Holy Spirit is also active in effecting Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven (*The Holy Spirit*, 358–62). In short, "from heaven to earth and back again: the [appropriated] work of the Holy Spirit" (p. 361).

Spirit brought about the mission of the Son and continually empowered the Lord in that mission.

The Spirit's true mission (i.e., his *sending*), however, awaited Christ's ascension into heaven. As Jesus tells his disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Having been "appointed the heir of all things" (Heb 1:2), the Son possesses all that the Father has (John 3:35; 16:15; cf. Matt. 11:27). So, in sending the Spirit at Pentecost, the Son gives him whom he has received from the Father. As Peter testifies, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing" (Acts 2:32–33; cf. Rom 5:5; Titus 3:5).[152]

And what does the Holy Spirit do when he arrives in the fullness of his mission? He points toward the one who sent him—the Lord Jesus Christ—and the work that he accomplished during his earthly mission. The Christocentricity of the Spirit's mission is principally evident in the Gospel of John. Jesus tells his disciples that when the Spirit comes, "he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26); "he will bear witness about me" (15:26); "he will guide you into all truth . . . , and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (16:13–14). Hence, Scripture aptly calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7), the "Spirit of [God's] Son"

---

[152] I have already mentioned above how Scripture speaks of the Spirit's being sent both by the Father and by the Son. This entangling of vocabulary is actually consistent with the trinitarian *taxis*: from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. The Son sends the Spirit *from the Father* (John 15:26; 16:7; Gal 3:5); the Father sends the Spirit *through the Son* (Luke 11:13; John 14:16–17, 26; Acts 5:32; Gal 4:6; Titus 3:5; 1 John 4:13). Hence, just as the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, so also he is sent by the Father and the Son.

(Gal 4:6), the "Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19), and the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:10).[153]

As mentioned above, the Holy Spirit's post-Pentecost mission—his new relationship to creatures—consists of his indwelling of believers, thereby uniting them to the Christ, who is in heaven, and his salvific work. Further, through such inhabitation, the Spirit empowers believers to testify about the risen Lord; in fact, the Spirit himself testifies about Christ *through* believers. As Jesus declares to his disciples, "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27); "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:49). Indeed, Peter and the apostles proclaim, "We are witnesses to these things [viz., the gospel], and so is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:32). By bearing witness to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit fulfils Christ's commitment to build his church (Matt 16:18). That is, in response to the proclamation of the gospel, the Spirit regenerates particular persons to become new creatures in Christ, who baptizes them with the Spirit, thereby incorporating them into his (i.e., Christ's) body, the church (1 Cor 12:12–13, 27; 2 Cor 5:17).[154] In Holmes's words, "The Spirit works tirelessly in the economy of grace to expand the community of those baptized into the Son, the living Lord Jesus . . . . The Spirit is ever extending the borders of the Word's sovereignty."[155] In short, the Spirit

---

[153] These designations do not, of course, detract from the greater biblical witness that refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of God," "Spirit of the LORD," and the like (e.g., Gen 1:2; Isa 11:2). See my discussion of this matter in chap. 1 (2n4). Certainly, the Spirit proceeds both from the Father and from the Son. It is, therefore, correct to call him both the "Spirit of God [the Father]" and the "Spirit of Christ." I am merely pointing out above that given the proximity of the Son and the Spirit in light of the trinitarian *taxis*, there is a certain fittingness to the Christological designations of the Spirit. As Holmes notes, "The Spirit demonstrates profound boldness in promoting another, Jesus Christ. The Spirit's actions are directed to Christ to the glory of the Father. This is what it means to talk about the Spirit as the Spirit *of* Jesus" (Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 22).

[154] As a result of this Spirit-mediated ecclesial incorporation, believers—both individually and collectively—also become "God's temple" or the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21–22).

[155] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 22–23.

builds *Christ's* church (Eph 1:22–23; 2:22); he is the basis for the unity that Christians enjoy with Christ and with one another (Rom 8:15–17; Eph 4:3).

The mission of the Spirit also consists of his sanctifying Christ's church *for Christ* (Eph 5:25–7). Through indwelling, the Holy Spirit conforms believers *to Christ* (2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:13, 15; 2 Thess 2:13–14). "That the Spirit conforms us to another," Holmes argues, "shows the Spirit's other-directedness," his *Christ*-directedness.[156] Or, as Levering avers, "The eschatological people of God depend entirely for their characteristic trait—their conformity to Jesus Christ in charity—upon the free action of the Holy Spirit."[157] Finally, the Spirit sustains the church in the salvific realities that Christ inaugurated in his first advent (i.e., his mission; e.g., Rom 6:1–14) until the consummation of all reality in Christ when he returns in glory and power (Rom 8:18–30). To put it a different way, "Jesus's resurrection inaugurates the epoch of grace. Jesus's return is delayed . . . in order that the gospel can have its full effect over time and space due to the Spirit publicly manifesting the incarnate Son."[158] And so, the Spirit's mission concludes by his bringing everything to consummation *in Christ*, *for Christ*, who, in turn, hands everything over to the Father so that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

With this discussion, one can discern the natural correlation between the two missions. As Vidu summarizes,

---

[156] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 89. Frequently, Holmes calls the Spirit the "other-directed Spirit" and the "Christ-directed Spirit" (e.g., pp. 21–24, 89).

[157] Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 248. Later, Levering adds, "The invisible missions of the Spirit sanctify believers, not least by infusing virtues such as charity and faith as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which believers live in accord with the Spirit's movements" (p. 265). By "gifts of the Holy Spirit," Levering has in mind (mainly but not only) Aquinas's conception of the gifts as enumerated in Isa 11:2–3 (see pp. 253–56; s.a. Aquinas, *ST*, I-II.68); however, a Protestant reading of Levering's points (here and above) comports well with my present argument.

[158] Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 265. Cf. Allison and Köstenberger, who conclude, "As this present world will one day come to an end, the consummation of all things will be the climax of the Spirit's perfecting work. He is the eschatological Spirit whose orientation is always toward the future" (*The Holy Spirit*, 291). For greater discussion on the Holy Spirit's unique role as the perfector of all divine acts vis-à-vis the locus of providence, see Torey J. S. Teer, "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, The Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God," *BSac* 177, no. 708 (October–December 2020): 402–21.

The aim of the missions [of the Son and Spirit] is to draw humanity to participate in the Trinitarian communion. But this sharing is specifically to be realized in Christ. In Christ the Son we occupy our place in the life of the Trinity as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit, who indwells us, is precisely the Spirit who first filled and now overflows from Christ.[159]

Further, weighing the merits of a Christological pneumatology over a pneumatological Christology (and vice versa), Sanders offers,

No Christian pneumatology can be an end run around, or an alternative to, Christ, and Christ's exclusivity and finality are not dissolved in the freedom of the Spirit. God has spoken in many ways, but in these last days he has spoken through his Son. If we can only hear the Son by means of the Spirit, we nevertheless do not hear another or a different word. The Spirit is not another word of God, but the breath in which the one word is heard. Word articulates breath, breath empowers word (Irenaeus). To put it another way, there is one way to the Father, and that way is Christ. If we can only walk that way by the Spirit, the Spirit is nevertheless not another way.[160]

Hence, the mission of the Spirit is Christocentric—it is tethered to and oriented toward the mission of the Son.

Final Concerns[161]

As this chapter nears its end, I must address two critical concerns that can arise in response to my proposal of a Christological pneumatology (esp. with respect to the divine missions): (1) a Christological pneumatology diminishes the prominence of the Spirit compared to that of the Son; (2) a Christological pneumatology detracts from the preeminence of and glory due to the Father.

First, a Christological pneumatology suggests that the person and work of the Holy Spirit are properly understood in Christological (or Christocentric) terms owing to

---

[159] Vidu, "Order of Divine Missions," 34. Vidu also articulates, "The fact that in the immanent Trinity the Spirit is tethered to Christ grounds the economic relation between the Spirit and Christ. . . . The Spirit is Christoformed economically just as he is filioformed immanently."

[160] Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation*, 144. N.B.: I acknowledge—as evident by my discussion on pp. 130 and 168 above—Sanders's comment that "the economy of the Spirit serves that of the Son, and the economy of the Son also serves the Spirit. They serve each other, each ministers to the other, they mutually co-minister. There is one economy constituted by two missions, a complex twofold mission, a co-mission: perhaps the Great Co-Mission."

[161] This section is adapted from Teer, "Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," 358–60. Used with permission.

the Spirit's proximity, so to speak, to the Son in the eternal trinitarian *taxis* and,

consequently, as the *taxis* is expressed temporally through the divine missions. As

Holmes suggests,

> Theology helps us understand why the Spirit's ministry is so Son-centric. Theology teaches us that this is because the Spirit originates from the Father (principally) and the Son (secondarily). . . . Because the Spirit originates from the Son [*ad intra*], the Spirit leads back to the Son [*ad extra*] . . . . The Son and the Spirit work as they do because of their origins; their work [i.e., their missions] expresses their origins.[162]

Further, as Vidu explains, "The Spirit comes down to us not simplify from the divinity of

Christ, and thus not simply as an act of the whole Trinity, but from the humanity of

Christ, having already permeated it and thus having himself been *shaped* [or

Christoformed] by it for us."[163] Vidu goes on to say, "Within the immanent Trinity, the

Spirit's personhood is a function of his spiration from the Father and the Son. In light of

the missions, his personhood is manifested through Christ's humanity."[164] To suggest,

then, that the person and work of the Spirit center on and point toward the person and

work of Christ is not to imply that the Spirit is in any way "shy," "self-effacing," or

"always in the shadow of Christ."[165] Instead, the Spirit's acts in time—especially his

mission—reflect his position in the order of subsistence. Simply put, "The Spirit is

ordered to Christ, just as he proceeds from the Son and the Father."[166] Thus, "we might

---

[162] Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 206. Similarly, Vidu contends that due to the Son and Spirit's relationship in the immanent Trinity, there is no entry point into the divine life other than the one that begins with the Spirit and passes through the Son ("Order of Divine Missions," 34).

[163] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 45. The language of "*Christoformation*" appears on p. 46.

[164] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 46.

[165] To this point, I acknowledge Allison and Köstenberger's concern that the Spirit has often been caricatured thus throughout history (*The Holy Spirit*, 232). I concur with them that

> to move the Holy Spirit into the background of trinitarian operations is surely to (dis)miss the prominent roles he exercises in communicating divine revelation, applying and perfecting the salvation purposed by the Father and accomplished by the Son, and rendering the presence of the Triune God to believers and the church. Highlighting the Spirit's outpouring will ensure that we avoid this oversight.

S.a. Torey J. S. Teer, "Is the Holy Spirit Shy, Self-Effacing, or Always in the Shadow of Christ?" (unpublished manuscript, 2021), https://www.academia.edu/62215346/.

[166] Vidu, *Divine Missions*, 47.

insist," Sanders suggests, "that to be Christocentric is in no way to detract from the person and work of the Holy Spirit—that in fact the Spirit's role in the economy of salvation involves him drawing our attention to Christ as the center of salvation."[167]

Second, although I argue that the Spirit is uniquely Son-centric in light of the divine *taxis*, I would also argue that the Son is Father-centric and that the Father is Son-centric. Concerning the former, the mission of the Son is to do and accomplish the will of the one who sent him (John 4:34; 6:32–40; cf. Heb 10:5–10). The Son only acts as the Father acts, and he only says what the Father says (John 5:17, 19; 12:49–50). Jesus does nothing on his own authority but only on the authority that he receives from the Father; accordingly, he only does what is pleasing to the Father (John 8:28–29; Rev 2:27; cf. John 10:18). Though the Father and the Son are one, Christ recognizes that the Father is "greater than all," and, as such, the Father has entrusted the Son with the "sheep" (John 10:29–30; cf. 14:28).[168]

Moreover, once Christ ascends into heaven, he is stationed at the *right hand of the Father*.[169] Though a position of great honor, the right hand of him who sits on the throne is still a secondary position. Correspondingly, at the end of the ages, the Son will present "the kingdom to God the Father"—that is, having accomplished that which the Father sent him to accomplish (John 17:4), "the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him" (1 Cor 15:24–28). And in the new heavens

---

[167] Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation*, 142.

[168] N.B.: I am not advocating hierarchalism (i.e., subordinationism) among the Godhead but merely that the divine persons temporally act in accordance with the order of subsistence in the divine nature—though, of course, inseparably. Thus, although the Son is equal to the Father *ad intra* with respect to glory, majesty, and divinity (paternity-filiation relation), his role *ad extra* is secondary to the Father (as the sent one, for the Father is not sent). Augustine makes this very distinction in *The Trinity* 4.5.26–27 (Hill, 214–15). Likewise, Wellum notes, "The incarnate Son's obedience is not a violation of his deity but the truest expressions of his eternal filiation relation to the Father" (*Person of Christ*, 156). S.a. Vidu, *DM*, 39.

[169] Acts 2:33; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21. The notion that the ascended Son is stationed at the right hand of the Father is metaphorical, for the Father is not embodied such that he can be spatially located.

and earth, "the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" will reign forever and ever (Rev 21:22; 22:1, 3–5). Again, although the Son, in light of his remarkable sacrifice, enjoys a title of great honor (i.e., "the Lamb"; cf. John 1:29, 36; Rev 5:6–14), he does not bear the title of primary eminence (i.e., "the Lord God the Almighty"). In sum, the Son is Father-centric because the Father, as the unoriginate One, is he from whom all creatures originally come forth (*exitus*) and he to whom all creatures ultimately return (*reditus*).

Conversely, the Father is Son-centric. God the Father "has given all things into [the Son's] hand" (John 3:35; cf. Matt 11:27), "whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb 1:2). "All that the Father has is mine," Christ declares (John 16:15). No one can come to the Father except *through the Son* (John 6:44; 14:6); indeed, to know, see, and believe the Son is to know, see, and believe the Father who sent him (John 8:19; 12:44–45; 14:9; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). The Father gives all judgment to Christ "that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (John 5:22–23). The Father glorifies himself *through the Son* (John 5:19–20; 12:27–28; 13:31–32; 17:1, 5; 1 Pet 4:11; Jude 25); thus, to glorify the Son *is* to glorify the Father (John 11:4; 14:6–13; Rev 5:5–14). Therefore, the Father is self-centric by being Son-centric.

In accord with the trinitarian *taxis*, then, the Father is Son-centric, the Son is Father-centric, and the Spirit is Son-centric.[170] Therefore, a Christological pneumatology does not detract from the honor due to God the Father. Instead, it recognizes the particular emphases of the distinct persons in light of the eternal order of subsistence and the temporal created effects of the one eternal plan—which centers upon the person and work of the Son in his first and second coming. In other words, I am not suggesting an *over*-emphasis on the Son but a *proper* emphasis on the Son in congruity with the

---

[170] Furthermore, reflecting on Aquinas's conception of divine missions, Emery states, "The Father himself is not sent, but the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit culminate in him. And thus the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit present and disclose the Father" (*Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 377).

Christocentric nature of Scripture and theology as well as the merits of inseparable operations and the divine missions.

Vidu arrives at a similar conclusion. Reflecting on both the grammar of inseparability and the theology of divine missions, he concludes that "we shall have to think of Christ as a sort of cipher of the Trinity."[171] He goes on to detail,

> Because the human nature [of Christ] acquires the mode of existence of the Son, and because this mode entails not simply receptivity (from the Father) but also productivity (the procession of the Spirit), the humanity of Christ in its supernatural existence as the Son not only channels the Father (John 14:9) but also delivers the Spirit [in his mission]. This is the true meaning of Christ as the cipher of the Trinity: The complete fellowship of divine persons is accessible precisely in the humanity of Jesus Christ and yet not as intrinsic to it. This announces a Trinitarian Christocentrism where the humanity of Christ plays a foundational hermeneutical role with respect to our understanding and experience of the Trinity, yet only because by acquiring the modality of the Son it also necessarily mediates the modalities of of [*sic*] the Spirit and the Father.[172]

This vision for "a trinitarian Christocentrism" is exactly what I am advancing vis-à-vis the person and work of the Holy Spirit—hence a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

Conclusion

This chapter has explicated the third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology—a theology of the divine missions. Specifically, I argued that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are central to trinitarian theology and, therefore, that a robust theology of the divine missions is vital for having a full-orbed pneumatology—which itself is Christ-centered. To arrive at this conclusion, I first

---

[171] Vidu, *Same God*, 178.

[172] Vidu, *Same God*, 179. Elsewhere, Vidu makes a similar point. Discussing "the *traction* by the whole Trinity of the human nature into union with the eternal Son, resulting in the human existence of Jesus Christ," Vidu explains,

> Christ thus becomes the gateway, the mediator between God and creation. Through his mission we have the self-donation of the Father, as well as the further mission of the Spirit. In and through Christ the whole creation thus returns to its supernatural source to receive its supernatural end [*reditus*], which is nothing less than communion with the Trinity culminating in the beatific vision [2 Pet 1:4]. The first act of this return is the incarnation.

This comprehensive view, says Vidu, results in "a Christocentric approach that is nonetheless thoroughly Trinitarian" (*Same God*, 158).

detailed the biblical basis for the divine missions (the language of "sentness" and "fromness") as found mainly, though not exclusively, in the Gospel of John. Second, I outlined Augustine's missions-to-processions approach to the subject, and, third, I expounded Aquinas's processions-to-missions approach. Augustine observes that the missions *reveal* the processions; Aquinas notes that the missions *extend* the processions into creation. Fourth, I summarized and critiqued the Johannine, Augustinian, and Thomistic contributions then synthesized a holistic theology of divine missions. Fifth, I showed how the mission of the Holy Spirit is keyed to the mission of the Son and, therefore, distinctly Christocentric. Sixth and finally, I explained how a Christ-centered emphasis vis-à-vis the divine missions accords with the prestige due to both the Spirit and the Father as co-equal persons alongside the Son in the majestic Trinity. One must keep Christ at the center of the divine missions and keep the divine missions at the center of trinitarian theology and, by extension, pneumatology. The result is a healthy trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

All of the pieces of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology are now in place: classical (Latin) trinitarianism, Christocentrism, inseparable operations, and the divine missions. Classical trinitarian theology, the grammar of inseparability, and the divine missions, when related to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, produce a trinitarian pneumatology. Similarly, hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism, when linked with the Spirit's person and work, results in a Christological pneumatology. As I have argued in this dissertation, a classically trinitarian pneumatology and an emphatically Christological pneumatology cohere with and mutually entail one another to yield a sound, vibrant, and holistic conceptualization of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The result is a trinitarian Christological pneumatology, which *just is* a biblically faithful, theologically robust, and historically grounded pneumatology.

Chapter Review

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to this study. First, I stated the thesis of this dissertation, which is articulated in the preceding paragraph. Second, I detailed the methodology implemented for this study: (1) biblical preeminence, (2) faith seeking understanding, (3) the "Rule(s) of Faith," (4) Protestant theological retrieval, and (5) classical (Latin) trinitarianism. Third, I surveyed recent evangelical works on pneumatology vis-à-vis my research interests: Sinclair Ferguson, Donald Bloesch, Graham Cole, Christopher Holmes, Michael Horton, Myk Habets, and Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger. Fourth, I suggested the significance of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology for ongoing discourse concerning the Holy Spirit—namely, I formally

181

develop a theological method (or framework) for pneumatology that integrates a Christ-centered approach; inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations; and the divine missions. Fifth, I outlined the rest of the dissertation, a fuller rehearsal of which is given presently.

In chapter 2, I focused on method for trinitarian theology, laying the foundation for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology. In particular, I argued that social trinitarianism and third article theology (and, by extension, Spirit Christology) do not supply sufficient persuasive power to dethrone classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology as the standard and preferred methods for engaging in trinitarian theological discourse and construction.

First, I engaged social trinitarianism in three movements: (1) historical overview; (2) definition, main characteristics, and representative model; and (3) critique. (1) Social views of the Trinity manifested as the fruit of the twentieth-century resurgence in interest in trinitarian theology and the consequent developments made by Karl Rahner, John Zizioulas, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, and others. (2) Social models typically attribute to the Godhead three distinct centers of consciousness, intellect, and will; affirm a relational ontology wherein the personal subsistences of the Godhead are constituted by mutual relationships of eternal perfect love; focus on the Trinity as working and revealed in the economy of salvation; and emphasize the practical relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for the Christian life. These four characteristics are evident, for example, in Scott Horrell's 2004 proposal of a "biblical model of the social Trinity."[1] (3) In 2014, Gijsbert van den Brink proffered five rebuttals of theological objections to social trinitarianism as well as two arguments in support of the social approach. Yet, as I showed, van den Brink has not offered compelling evidence to support social trinitarianism over classical

---

[1] J. Scott Horrell, "Toward a Biblical Model of the Social Trinity: Avoiding Equivocation of Nature and Order," *JETS* 47, no. 3 (September 2004): 399–421.

trinitarianism. Hence, the classical model remains the preferred approach to trinitarian theology.

Second, I engaged third article theology (TAT), also in three movements: (1) historical overview, (2) definition and primary methodological tenets, and (3) critique. (1) TAT is a relatively recent phenomenon originating with the work of D. Lyle Dabney, extended by many proposals from various convictional quarters, and buttressed and exemplified by Spirit Christology endeavors. (2) TAT is a theological enterprise that considers the whole of theology in light of, from the perspective of, or starting with pneumatology. Though the classical trinitarian *taxis ends* with the Holy Spirit, TAT *begins* with the Spirit in carrying out theological reflection and construction. Thus, third article theology precedes first and second article theologies. TAT also tends to emphasize ecumenicism, and of its various tenets, TAT's central commitment is Spirit Christology, which is an approach to Christology that is deeply—perhaps preeminently—informed by pneumatology. (3) Myk Habets is perhaps the defender *par excellence* of third article theology, so it is his vision for TAT that I engaged. As I argued, Habets's granting the Holy Spirit first-order priority in theological formulation, his historical-systematic approach to Sprit Christology, and his commitment to ecumenism at the expense of certain core Christian convictions are faulty. Therefore, third article theology (Holy Spirit → Son → Father) does not represent a viable alternative to traditional *taxis* theology (Father → Son → Holy Spirit). Hence, the Holy Spirit should remain third in the order of trinitarian theological reflection (theology proper → Christology → pneumatology).

Consequently, classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology together form the foundation for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

In chapter 3, I presented the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: Christocentrism. Specifically, I argued that the Christocentricity of Scripture and redemptive history is warranted and that it not only supports a

Christological pneumatology but even *necessitates* that any holistic pneumatology be Christ-centered.

First, I proffered (1) biblical, (2) theological, and (3) historical support for the validity of hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism. (1) The doctrine of Scripture and the discipline of biblical theology denote that Christ is the center of Scripture and salvation history, and the biblical testimony concerning Christ as the beginning, middle, and end of redemptive history supports this notion. (2) As Dane Ortlund argues, "It is only through the Christ that we know *of* the Trinity,"[2] yet it is also only through Christ that we *know* the Trinity. Hence, to borrow Adonis Vidu's term, Christ is "the cipher of the Trinity"[3] in both an epistemological sense and a participative sense. Further, à la Ortlund, "the Trinity itself is Christ-centered."[4] That is, the work of both the Father and the Holy Spirit are Son-directed. (3) Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*) and Irenaeus of Lyon (*The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*) are two examples of very early Christian support for a Christ-centered emphasis vis-à-vis Scripture and theology. The former's prophecy-and-fulfillment approach and the latter's Rule-of-Faith approach to Scripture validate hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism.

Second, I considered the merits of alternative centers for doing theology and found them wanting. Anthropocentrism mistakes the object of revelation (humankind) for the subject (God), failing to recognize Scripture's emphasis of *God's* sovereign work in creation, redemption, and consummation. Theology *is* theocentric in the sense that God is the grand protagonist of the storyline of Scripture, yet it is *not* theocentric in any abstract

---

[2] Dane C. Ortlund, "Christocentrism: An Asymmetrical Trinitarianism?," *Them* 34, no. 3 (November 2009): 315 (emphasis added).

[3] Adonis Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 178, 179.

[4] Ortlund, "Christocentrism," 315.

or generic sense, especially such that one can divorce the work of the Holy Spirit from that of the Son. Theology is not paterocentric, for the Father is not the *center* of redemptive history but its ultimate *end* (or *telos*). Theology is not pneumatocentric, especially not in such a way that allows for pneumatological inclusivism. Scripture is clear: the person and work of the Spirit center on, are oriented toward, and are tethered to the person and work of the Son. Theology is not ecclesiocentric—neither methodologically (or ontologically), such that the church (or Roman Catholic Church) is seen as the extension of Christ's incarnation and mediatorship of grace and therefore the ultimate arbiter of theology, nor scripturally, such that the church is viewed as the central theme of Scripture. Theology is not bibliocentric or gospel-centric, for Christians worship not the God-inspired Bible or the gospel message but the God who inspired the Bible and he about whom the gospel bears witness. Finally, theology is not eschatocentric—such an emphasis would mistake the *end* for the *center*. The Christian hope is not the eschaton in and of itself but Christ himself, who inaugurated the "last days" during his first advent and will consummate eschatological reality at his second advent.

Thus, Christocentrism suitably serves as the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

In chapter 4, I presented the second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: the doctrine of inseparable operations and its associated grammar. Particularly, I argued that a robust understanding of inseparable operations, the divine *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations is essential for a rich pneumatology.

I first unpacked the biblical foundations—sourced in the Old Testament, further developed in the New—for these theological concepts. Scripture discloses that there is one God (YHWH: Creator, Redeemer; self-sufficient, simple, eternal, sovereign), with whom and with whose operations (e.g., healing the sick, granting new life, speaking revelation) the Son and the Holy Spirit are identified. Jesus identifies himself with the Father and his work with the Father's work; Christ identifies the Spirit with himself and

the Spirit's operations with his and the Father's operations. All three divine persons participate indivisibly in every divine action (e.g., creation, redemption), yet each does so in accord with his unique personal property (paternity, filiation, spiration) as befits the eternal trinitarian *taxis* (from the Father through the Son by the Spirit; Father → Son → Spirit), and certain actions are often specially associated with—or appropriated to—certain persons (e.g., creation = Father; salvation = Son; sanctification = Spirit).

Second, I surveyed the strong historical attestation to inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations exhibited by several fourth-century church fathers in both the East and the West: Athanasias of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine of Hippo. These voices (and more) collectively form the fourth-century pro-Nicene theological consensus on trinitarian theology, and this consensus is carried forward through church history by additional voices, such as Maximus the Confessor, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, John Owen, Francis Turretin, and Petrus van Mastricht. As such, the doctrine of inseparable operations and its corollaries possess a rich heritage in the great tradition. Like the biblical foundations, the historical attestation to the grammar of inseparability shows just how crucial it is to include such grammar in any robust formulation of pneumatology.

Third, I addressed two theological concerns about the grammar of inseparability in order to demonstrate its coherence and fruitfulness for contemporary theological construction, especially regarding pneumatology. On the one hand, the unity of the Godhead's *ad extra* operations seems to undermine personal distinctions among the three persons in creation-redemption-consummation (unity-distinction problem). On the other hand, how can hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism square with the inseparability principle, for it may seem that too much attention devoted to one divine person (viz., the Son) would undercut the indivisible work of the triune God and detract from other divine persons' personalizing properties, especially that of the Holy

Spirit (Christocentrism-inseparability problem)? The solution to both of these concerns comes by harmonizing inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations. The operations of the Godhead are inseparable yet personally differentiated and ordered in the economy of salvation centering on Christ *just as* the persons of the Godhead are inseparable yet personally differentiated and ordered in the divine nature. The nomenclature of inseparability thus permits personal distinctions among the Trinity in creation, redemption, and consummation and accords with hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism.

Therefore, inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations together fittingly function as the second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

In chapter 5, I presented the third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: a theology of the divine missions. Specifically, I argued that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are central to trinitarian theology, for the Son's incarnation and the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost represent the self-revelation and self-giving of God. Accordingly, a robust theology of the divine missions is essential for having a well-rounded understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, especially vis-à-vis their relationship to the person and work of Christ.

First, I detailed the biblical basis for the divine missions found primarily in John's Gospel. John employs the language of "sending" and "fromness" to depict several missions: the mission of John the Baptist, the mission of the Son, the mission of the Holy Spirit, and the mission of the church. The central points of the Gospel's revelation are (1) the sending of the Son—by the Father—to become incarnate and secure redemption and (2) the sending of the Holy Spirit—by the Father and the Son—to indwell the elect and apply to them the redemption accomplished by Christ. The Gospel of John portrays the mission of the Son, the eternal Word, as the crux of redemptive history and the mission of the Spirit as Christologically ordered, oriented, and shaped. The Johannine data comports

with the rest of biblical revelation to offer a holistic vision of the nature, purposes, and intricacies of the divine missions.

Second, I unpacked Augustine of Hippo's exposition of the divine missions as he works from Scripture and with pro-Nicene trinitarian categories (e.g., divine unity *ad intra* and *ad extra*). Taking his cues from the "fullness of time" language in Galatians 4:4 (among other things), Augustine recognizes the paradigmatic difference between Old Testament and New Testament manifestations of God. Everything prior to the Son's incarnation was the work of angels symbolizing God, yet not in his essence. Hence, the bishop of Hippo acknowledges the utter centrality and priority of the Son's incarnation and redemptive work. In addition, contrary to his opponents, Augustine concludes from Scripture that sending is not indicative of eternal subordination but only eternal procession—that is, the sent one is not *inferior to* the sender but *from* the sender. Herein lies the church father's chief contribution to the theology of divine missions: the missions *reveal* the processions. In other words, it is from the *ad extra* missions of the Son and the Spirit—as disclosed in Scripture—that we reason back to the *ad intra* trinitarian relations. Augustine also distinguishes between the visible (outward) and invisible (inward) missions of the Son and Spirit, highlighting the salvific significance of the latter category, for what is truly important about the missions is not simply to know *about* the divine persons but to genuinely *know* them in a redemptive and participatory sense, which is what the invisible missions accomplish.

Third, I outlined Thomas Aquinas's theology of the divine missions as he works from the received tradition, building upon Augustine's missions-to-processions approach but working in reverse order. According to Aquinas, a mission consists of a divine person's eternal procession (or eternal subsisting relation; indicative of the sent-sender relation) plus his new mode of presence in creation via a created effect (indicative of the sent-receiver relation). A mission involves a mixed relation: there is a "real" relation in creatures, who experience change, but a relation of "reason" in the divine sent

person, who does not change. Further, creatures experience a real relation not only to the sent person but also to the united Godhead. Like Augustine but in a more comprehensive manner, Aquinas distinguishes between the visible missions (Son: human nature; Spirit: dove, cloud, breath, great wind, tongues of fire, disciples' tongues-speaking) and invisible missions (Son: impartation of wisdom; Spirit: impartation of charity—both by sanctifying grace). The visible missions are the existential grounding for the invisible missions, but it is the invisible missions that are ultimately salvific, for they raise creatures into participation in the divine life. Finally, according to Thomas, the eternal processions are the grounds of creatures' "going out" from God (*exitus*) and—via the missions of the Son and the Spirit—creatures' ultimate "return" to God (*reditus*). That is, creatures have the triune God as their *principium* and *telos*.

Fourth, I summarized and, in some instances, critiqued the Johannine, Augustinian, and Thomistic contributions to the theology of divine missions and then offered a holistic synthesis of the missions based upon these (and other) contributions. While the Gospel of John features the primary biblical data concerning the divine missions, many other New Testament passages complement and supplement the Johannine vision, such as Matthew 28:18–20, Luke 24:46–49, Acts 1:4–8, Acts 2:1–47, Acts 5:32, Romans 8:1–17, Galatians 4:4–6, and 1 John 4:9–16. Augustine is to be applauded for his biblical-theological approach to the divine missions and his observation that the missions reveal the processions. Yet, while Augustine is firm on the nature of the Son's mission (incarnation), he is fuzzy on the distinctions between the Spirit's Pentecostal mission and pre-Pentecostal manifestations. Aquinas's comprehensive processions-to-missions approach to the theology of divine missions is a lofty achievement, especially his observation that the missions extend the processions into creation and his nuanced articulation of the nature of the visible and invisible missions. However, Roman Catholicism's blended understanding of justification and sanctification (where justification is the *telos* of the sanctifying process) must be substituted with a

189

Protestant vision wherein union with Christ by the Spirit (the invisible missions) confers the double grace of justification (the *basis* of salvation) and sanctification (the *fruit* of salvation)—two distinct yet inseparable gifts. These (and other) biblical and theological contributions and augmentations allow for the synthesis of a holistic theology of divine missions that is fruitful for contemporary theological discourse and construction—which I have done. Such a synthesis illustrates just how central and essential the divine missions are to the economy of salvation and, more broadly, trinitarian theology.

Fifth, I articulated how the mission of the Holy Spirit is distinctly Christocentric, for it is tethered to, points to, and carries forward the mission of the Son. The Spirit was actively working throughout the Old Testament, paving the way for and pointing to the incarnation of the Son, the long-awaited Messiah. The Spirit also labored at the dawn of the incarnation, empowering and manifesting himself to the likes of Elizabeth, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Mary, and Simeon (and perhaps Anna). Indeed, the Spirit was responsible for the conception of the Christ Jesus, and he continually indwelt and empowered Jesus throughout his life. All of this activity is representative of the Holy Spirit's proleptic work (or pre-missions), which is more aptly labeled inseparable operations of the triune God *appropriated to* the Spirit. Yet the Spirit's true mission, that which is *proper* to the Spirit and not merely appropriated to him, is his outpouring at Pentecost after Christ's ascension. The Son sends the Spirit from the Father, and the Spirit indwells the saints, thereby uniting them to Christ (and the Father) and building Christ's church, guiding them into all truth in Christ, empowering them to testify concerning the risen Christ, sanctifying them unto greater Christlikeness, and preserving them unto the consummation of all reality at the glorious return of Christ. Hence, the Holy Spirit is fittingly called the Spirit of Christ; his mission is uniquely keyed to the mission of the Son.

Sixth and finally, I explained how a Christ-centered emphasis concerning the divine missions neither diminishes the eminence of the Spirit nor detracts from the

preeminence of the Father. All three divine persons are co-equal vis-à-vis the eternal divine nature and co-operators vis-à-vis all temporal acts. Nevertheless, each person occupies a particular position in the eternal order of subsistence (*taxis*), and that position is expressed in how each person uniquely participates in all divine activity in creation, especially the divine missions. To argue that the person and work of the Holy Spirit should be understood in Christological terms is not to denigrate the Spirit but to highlight the Spirit's proximity to the Son in the intradivine *taxis* and, correspondingly, how the *taxis* is temporally reflected via the divine missions. The Spirit is from the Son (both eternally and temporally), and he leads back to the Son. The same rationale applies to the Father-Son relation. A Christological emphasis concerning the divine missions—not to mention Scripture and theology more broadly—does not depreciate the glory due to the Father but truly appreciates that the Father most fully glorifies himself through the divine missions that center on the Son and that are themselves the center of the economy of salvation. The Son is the center of the missions just as he is the center of the eternal trinitarian *taxis*. He channels the Father, who does not have a mission, and he delivers the Holy Spirit in his mission.

In sum, the divine missions aptly act as the third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology.

The completion of chapter 5 marks the accomplishment of my proposed framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology. Founded upon a classical trinitarian framework and supported by the three pillars of Christocentrism, the grammar of inseparability, and the divine missions, pneumatology is most fully equipped to account for all of the biblical data, their theological entailments, and how both have been engaged and developed throughout the tradition.

Research Implications and
Areas of Future Research

Having summarized my argument up to this point, I now offer a few implications of my research and discuss some potential areas of future research.

This study follows in the vein of the contemporary resurgence of classical trinitarian theology and categories.[5] My research not only draws from and is impacted by this ongoing trinitarian conversation but extends and contributes to it. Moreover, my project is not simply trinitarian theology but the actual application of trinitarian (and Christological) categories to another loci of theology—in this case, pneumatology. However, this dissertation is not a full systematic theology of the Holy Spirit, though one could develop a complete pneumatology based on my framework and following my methodology.

If my trinitarian framework and Christological emphasis are correct, then my method applies not only to pneumatology but also to other loci of theology. Hence, future research endeavors can utilize my trinitarian Christological framework for their own theological construction concerning different theological loci (e.g., anthropology, ecclesiology). I applied this framework to pneumatology because of (1) my personal interest in pneumatology and (2) the deficiencies—either trinitarian or Christological— that I perceived in recent systematic treatments on the Holy Spirit. So, what trinitarian and Christological deficiencies are there in the study of different loci of systematic theology, and how might my framework for doing theology be utilized to fortify such

---

[5] I am thinking, e.g., of the following recent works: Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020); Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020); Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021); Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021); Craig A. Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021); Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021); Vidu, *The Divine Missions: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021); R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022); D. Glenn Butner Jr., *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022); Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

weaknesses? Furthermore, how might my *pneumatological* conclusions impact and be employed by future studies on different theological loci? Future research projects can explore these lines of inquiry.

Researchers can also use my trinitarian Christological pneumatology to assess other models of trinitarian theology. For example, scholars can employ my approach as a framework from which to engage and evaluate pneumatologies and Christologies that are founded upon social trinitarianism, third article theology, and Spirit Christology. While I critiqued each of these three approaches, I did so (1) *presupposing* classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology as the standard and preferred methods (or double-sided foundation) for doing theology and (2) *prior to* developing the three pillars of my framework: Christocentrism, the grammar of inseparability, and the divine missions. Thus, it would be profitable to return to those approaches with my full framework intact, working out in detail how this approach to theology is superior to those. Doing so would also allow for more comprehensive defenses—in a polemical context—of certain trinitarian tenets, such as divine simplicity, impassibility, and *filioque*, than I was able to execute in this study.

Concerning Spirit Christology in particular, while I have reflected on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ vis-à-vis the inseparability principle and the divine missions, I have not spent much time discussing the Spirit-Son nuances that are of such import for Spirit Christologies, such as the Spirit's conception of the Son's human nature, Jesus's experience of the anointing of the Spirit, and Christ's continual dependence upon the Spirit for the completion of his mission. On the one hand, it has not been my intention to tease out the intricacies of these (and other) Spirit-incarnate Son relations, as I advanced the paradigmatic prominence of the Son in pneumatology. On the other hand, previous studies have already accomplished what I bypassed, as they have

193

advanced the paradigmatic prominence of the Holy Spirit in Christology.[6] However, my framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology actually coheres with and complements a sound trinitarian Spirit Christology.[7] Indeed, my conception of pneumatology rightly recognizes—and can adequately account for—the centrality of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Christ, though it is not embarrassed to champion Christ as the center of salvation history. Future studies can explore the intersection of trinitarian Christological pneumatology and trinitarian Spirit Christology in greater detail.

Next, this study did not directly engage in arguments for or against eternal subordination among the persons of the Godhead. It would be fair to say that I largely took for granted a "mere fromness" view (à la Augustine, for example) of intratrinitarian relations—what I would argue is part and parcel of the classical trinitarian superstructure. But in light of the recent—largely online—debates over subordination (yea or nay), how might my framework impact or inform this ongoing conversation? How might anti-subordination proponents utilize my arguments in support of their own? To what questions from subordination proponents does my framework need to respond? I leave these questions for future research endeavors to explore.

This dissertation offers an example of how to engage historical resources for the benefit of contemporary theological discourse and construction. Further, it shows how to charitably engage with Roman Catholic ideas as well as how to incorporate such ideas—in accord with Protestant commitments—into contemporary evangelical theological formulation. However, since my research does not directly engage Eastern Orthodox theologians and their contributions to trinitarian theology, such engagement is

---

[6] See, e.g., Kyle David Claunch's dissertation, in which he surveys and critiques "revisionist" and "Trinitarian" models of Spirit Christology as well as advances his own "Trinitarian Spirit Christology" (à la John Owen): "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise of Spirit Christology in Traditional Trinitarian and Christological Perspective" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). The phrase "paradigmatic prominence" comes from Claunch (*passim*).

[7] A review of Claunch's four "promises" and five "perils" of (trinitarian) Spirit Christology reveals that Claunch and I share many of the same emphases, commitments, and conclusions (see "The Son and the Spirit," 219–25).

needed, both for constructive purposes (i.e., doing theology) and for argumentative

purposes (e.g., debating the merits *filioque*, discussing created effects vs. uncreated

energies).[8] Future research efforts can do just that with respect to my framework for a

trinitarian Christological pneumatology: How might my framework be augmented by the

bounties of the Eastern Orthodox tradition? How might Eastern Orthodox theologians

critically assess the arguments of this dissertation, and how might they utilize my

arguments for their own theological proposals?

Beyond the value and fruitfulness of this dissertation as a whole, each

argument chapter has its own merits. This point is evident, first of all, in that much of this

dissertation has already appeared in published—and therefore peer-reviewed—materials.[9]

In addition, chapter 2 features arguments against social trinitarianism, third article

theology, and Spirit Christology that scholars can either build upon (if they agree with

me) or respond to (if they dissent). Chapter 3's biblical-theological-historical defense of

Christocentrism can serve other research endeavors that work with a Christocentric

emphasis or are founded upon a Christological foundation. Chapters 4 and 5 show how

the trinitarian concepts of inseparability and missions cohere with a Christocentric

emphasis. More specifically, chapter 4 offers a robust biblical-historical-theological

defense of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations that can complement (and

---

[8] Adonis Vidu, for example, is carrying out such work. Constructive: Vidu, *Same God*; Vidu, *Divine Missions*. Argumentative: Vidu, "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," in *The Third Person of the Trinity*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, ECD (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 21–35; Vidu, "Triune Agency, East and West: Uncreated Energies or Created Effects?," *Perichoresis* 18, no. 1 (2020): 57–75.

[9] See Torey J. S. Teer, "Classical versus Contemporary: Engaging Trinitarian and Pneumatological Models for Ongoing Theological Construction," *WTJ* 83, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 355–81 (most of chap. 2); Teer, "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions, and the Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," *JTS* 72, no. 1 (April 2021): 337–61 (parts of chaps. 3 and 5); Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," *JETS* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 535–58 (parts of chaps. 4 and 5); Teer, "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?," *STR* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 37–59 (parts of chap. 4).

in some cases supplement) other recent defenses of this theological grammar.[10] For example, my chapter has the benefit of parsing out the biblical support for the different concepts as well as separating the biblical, historical, and theological defenses from one another. Oftentimes, support for the grammar of inseparability blends together the biblical, historical, and theological defenses.[11] Further, I believe my biblical defense of inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations is quite extensive, perhaps one of the most extensive of any recent biblical treatments of the doctrine.[12] Finally, chapter 5 features a rather lengthy treatment of the divine missions. I developed (and published) most of the arguments found in this chapter prior to—and independent from—other recent studies on this topic.[13] Future research ventures can utilize my chapter arguments to advance and support their own projects.

Final Thoughts

Any faithful study of the Holy Spirit *must* employ—and be grounded upon—the treasures of trinitarian theology. Likewise, faithful pneumatology should not hesitate to affirm a Christological emphasis concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Doing so does not detract from the Spirit's eminence or diminish the significance of the Spirit's role in the economy of salvation when one balances these tenets—classical trinitarianism and Christocentrism—in both hands. It is my hope that this study has done just that. This dissertation has focused mainly on foundational matters for the doing of

---

[10] See, e.g., Vidu, *Same God*; Swain, *The Trinity*; Barrett, *Simply Trinity*; Allison and Köstenberger, *They Holy Spirit*; Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*; Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*; Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*.

[11] E.g., Barrett, *Simply Trinity*; Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*.

[12] True, Vidu devotes an entire chapter of *Same God* to the "a biblical theology of inseparable operations" (chap. 1). However, he engages in a different methodology for expounding the biblical rationale for the grammar of inseparability (along the lines of Jewish monotheism) than—I believe—appeals to most evangelicals. My approach to the biblical data supporting inseparable operations, the *taxis*, and appropriations likely will find greater receptivity among evangelical readers.

[13] E.g., Vidu, *Divine Missions*.

196

pneumatology—a framework for a trinitarian Christological pneumatology. How will subsequent researchers utilize this framework for their own constructive proposals? The future of Holy Spirit studies is promising. I do not know how far contemporary evangelical pneumatology will go, but I am optimistic. Indeed, I look forward to future theological reflection and formulation concerning the *promise of the Father, the Spirit of the Son*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, John L., Jr. In *Pope Benedict XVI: A Biography of Joseph Ratzinger*. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Allison, Gregg R. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016.

_____. *The Church: An Introduction*. Short Studies in Systematic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.

_____. *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.

Allison, Gregg R., and Andreas J. Köstenberger. *The Holy Spirit*. Theology for the People of God. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020.

Ambrose of Milan. *On the Exposition of the Christian Faith*. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 10, *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth, 199–314. New York: Christian Literature, 1896. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *On the Holy Spirit*. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 10, *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth, 91–158. New York: Christian Literature, 1896. Logos Bible Software.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels*. Vol. 6, *St. John*. Oxford: James Park, 1874.

_____. *Quaestiones Disputata de Potentia*. In *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2, edited by P. Bazzi, M. Calcaterra, T. S. Centi, E. Odetto, and P. M. Pession. Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1949. Quoted in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

_____. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*. Translated by Robert Mulligan. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952. Quoted in Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

_____. *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. Edited by Pierre Mandonnet. Paris: Lethielleux, 1929.

_____. *The Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benzinger Bros., 1947.

_____. *Super Epistolam ad Romanos Lectura*. In *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, vol. 1, edited by R. Cai. Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953. Quoted in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

_____. *Super Evangelism S. Ioannis Lecture*. Edited by R. Cai. Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952. Quoted in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Athanasius of Alexandria. *Discourse against the Arians*. Edited and translated by A. Robertson. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 4, *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, 306–447. New York: Christian Literature, 1892. Logos Bible Software.

Augustine of Hippo. *Letters*. Translated by J. G. Cunningham. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 1, *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin, with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, 209–593. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1886. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *On the Trinity*. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. Edited by William G. T. Shedd. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 3, *St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, 17–228. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *Sermons*. Translated by R. G. MacMullen. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 6, *St. Augustine: Sermon on the Mount, Homilies on the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels*, 237–545. New York: Christian Literature, 1888. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *Tractates*. Translated by John Gibb and James Innes. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 7, *St. Augustine: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, 1–454. New York: Christian Literature, 1888. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *The Trinity*. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Translated by Edmund Hill. Vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. 1, *Books*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2015.

Ayres, Lewis. *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

_____. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Baars, Arie. "'*Opera Trinitatis Ad Extra Sunt Indivisa*' in the Theology of John Calvin." In Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres: *Papers of the International Congress of Calvin Research*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis, 131–41. Reformed Systematic Theology 5. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008.

Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Accessed February 8, 2022. https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm 2000/.

Barnes, Michel René. "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology." *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237–40.

_____. "De Régnon Reconsidered." *Augustinian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1995): 51–79.

_____. "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic." In *Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica, Historica: Papers Presented at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1995*, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, 205–23. Studia Patristica 29. Louvain: Peeters, 1997.

Barrett, Matthew. *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1975.

_____. "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher." In *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Basil of Caesarea. *Against Eunomius*. Translated by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz. Fathers of the Church 22. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

Bauckham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

_____. *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 1, *Prolegomena*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

_____. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 2, *God and Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

_____. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006.

Beale, G. K. *Colossians and Philemon*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.

Behr, John, trans. Introduction to *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, by Irenaeus of Lyons, 1–38. Popular Patristics. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Billings, J. Todd. *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

_____. *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Blocher, Henri. "Karl Barth's Christocentric Method." In *Engaging with Barth: Contemporary Evangelical Critiques*, edited by David Gibson and Daniel Strange, 21–54. Nottingham: Apollos, 2008.

Bloesch, Donald G. *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Brink, Gijsbert van den. "Social Trinitarianism: A Discussion of Some Recent Theological Criticisms." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 3 (July 2014): 331–50.

Bultmann, Rudolph. "New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation." In *New Testament and Mythology: And Other Basic Writings*, edited by Schubert M. Ogden, 1–33. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Burk, Denny, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers, eds. *God's Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays on Biblical Theology in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019.

Butner, D. Glenn, Jr. "For and against de Régnon: Trinitarianism East and West." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 4 (October 2015): 399–412.

_____. *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case against the Eternal Submission of the Son*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018.

_____. *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Library of Christian Classics 20–21. London: S. C. M. Press, 1960.

Carnell, Edward John. *The Case for Orthodox Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959.

Carter, Craig A. *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

_____. *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.

_____. Carter, Craig A. "Why We Must Reject Social Trinitarianism: It is Neither Nicene nor Biblical." *Credo Magazine*, July 15, 2021. https://credomag.com/2021/07/why-we-must-reject-social-trinitarianism-it-is-neither-nicene-nor-biblical/.

Carter, Craig A., and Matthew Barrett. "Since When Did the Trinity Go Social?" Credo Podcast, episode 71, April 13, 2021. MP3 audio, 1:27:54. https://credomag.com/2021/04/since-when-did-the-trinity-go-social-craig-carter-and-matthew-barrett-2/.

Clark, R. Scott. "Resources on Biblicism." Heidelblog. Accessed April 11, 2022. https://heidelblog.net/biblicism/.

Claunch, Kyle. "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise and Peril of Spirit Christology." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 91–112.

_____. "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise of Spirit Christology in Traditional Trinitarian and Christological Perspective." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017.

_____. "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (December 2013): 781–800.

Coakley, Sarah. *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

_____. "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion." In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 123–44. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Coffey, David. *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

_____. "The Method of Third Article Theology." In *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, 21–36. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

Cole, Graham A. *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.

Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. 3 vols. Translated by David Smith. New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 2015.

_____. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Complete Three-Volume Work in One Volume*. Translated by David Smith. Milestones in Catholic Theology. New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Cortez, Marc. "What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a 'Christocentric' Theologian?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 2 (2007): 127–43.

Crisp, Oliver D., and Fred Sanders, eds. *The Third Person of the Trinity*. Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Cross, Richard. "Two Models of the Trinity?" *Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 3 (2002): 275–94.

Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures*. Translated and Edited by Edwin Hamilton Gifford. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 7, *S. Cyril of Jerusalem and S. Gregory of Nazianzen*, lix–143. New York: Christian Literature, 1894. Logos Bible Software.

Dabney, D. Lyle. "Starting with the Spirit: Why the Last Should Be First." In *Starting with the Spirit*, edited by Stephen Pickard and Gordon Preece, 3–27. Task of Theology Today 2. Hindmarsh, South Australia: Australian Theological Forum, 2001.

————. "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: Marquette University Press, 2001.

De Chirico, Leonardo. *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism*. Religions and Discourses 19. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003.

Del Colle, Ralph. *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

DeRouchie, Jason S. "What Is Scripture's Storyline?" In *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 29–40. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020.

Dolezal, James E. *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017.

Donovan, Mary Ann. *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997.

Duby, Steven J. *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account*. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 30. London: T&T Clark, 2016.

————. *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology*. Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019.

————. *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.

Dukeman, Jeffrey A. *Mutual Hierarchy: A New Approach to Social Trinitarianism*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019.

Durand, Emmanuel. "A Theology of God the Father." Translated by Thomas Joseph White. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, edited by Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, 371–86. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Dusen, Henry Pitney van. *Spirit, Son and Father: Christian Faith in the Light of the Holy Spirit*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Emerson, Matthew Y., and Luke Stamps. "On Trinitarian Theological Method." In *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application*, edited by Keith S. Whitfield, 95–128. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019.

Emery, Gilles. *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Translated by Francesca Aran Murphy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

_____. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*. Translated by Matthew Levering. Thomistic Ressourcement Series 1. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011.

English, John Thomas, III. "Thus Says the Lord: A Trinitarian Account of the Authority of Scripture." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Holy Spirit*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Gentry, Peter J., and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991.

_____. "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 4–21.

_____. "Biblical Theology as the Heartbeat of Effective Ministry." In *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by Scott J. Hafemann, 280–86. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Goppelt, Leonhard. *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*. Translated by Donald Madvig. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Green, Bradley G. *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.

Gregory of Nazianzus. *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Translated by Lionel Wickham. Popular Patristics. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

_____. *Orations*. Translated by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 7, *S. Cyril of Jerusalem and S. Gregory of Nazianzen*, 202–434. New York: Christian Literature, 1894. Logos Bible Software.

Gregory of Nyssa. *On "Not Three Gods"*. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 5, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, 331–36. New York: Christian Literature, 1894. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *On the Holy Spirit, against the Followers of Macedonius*. In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. 5, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, 315–25. New York: Christian Literature, 1894. Logos Bible Software.

Greidanus, Sidney. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Grenz, Stanley. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Grenz, Stanley J., and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Groppe, Elizabeth T. *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

Gunton, Colin. *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Habets, Myk. Acknowledgments of *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, xi–xii. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

_____. *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010.

_____. "Developing a Retroactive Hermeneutic: Johannine Theology and Doctrinal Development." *American Theological Inquiry* 1 (2008): 77–89.

_____. "*Filioque? Nein*: A Proposal for Coherent Coinherence." In *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, edited by Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday, 161–202. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 148. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.

_____. "Getting beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology." In *Ecumenical Perspectives on the* Filioque *for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Myk Habets, 211–30. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014.

_____. *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019.

_____. "Prolegomenon: On Starting with the Spirit." In *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, 1–20. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

_____. "Spirit Christology: The Future of Christology?" In *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, 207–32. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

_____. "The Surprising Third Article Theology of Jonathan Edwards." In *The Ecumenical Edwards: Jonathan Edwards and the Theologians*, edited by Kyle C. Strobel, 195–212. Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2015.

Harnack, Adolf von. *History of Dogma*. Vol. 4. Translated by E. B. Speirs and James Millar. London: Williams & Norgate, 1898.

Hill, Edmund, trans. Introduction to *The Trinity*, by Augustine of Hippo, edited by John E. Rotelle, vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. 1, *Books*, 1–55. 2nd ed. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2015.

_____, trans. "Introductory Essay on Book IV." In *The Trinity*, by Augustine of Hippo, edited by John E. Rotelle, vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. 1, *Books*, 173–78. 2nd ed. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2015.

Holmes, Christopher R. J. *The Holy Spirit*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

_____. "Three versus One? Some Problems of Social Trinitarianism." *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3 (2009): 77–89.

_____. "Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections." In *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 60–74. Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Horrell, J. Scott. "Toward a Biblical Model of the Social Trinity: Avoiding Equivocation of Nature and Order." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 3 (September 2004): 399–421.

Horton, Michael. *Justification*. 2 vols. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.

_____. "'Lord and Giver of Life': The Holy Spirit in Redemptive History." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, no. 1 (March 2019): 47–63.

_____. *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.

Hurtado, Larry. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. 2nd ed. London: T&T Clark, 1998.

Imes, Carmen Joy. *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 19. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2008.

Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and S. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 315–567. Rev. ed. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by J. Armitage Robinson. Translations of Christian Literature. London: SPCK, 1920.

_____. *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

James, John L. W. "An Examination of *Homotimia* in St. Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit*, and Contemporary Implications." *Westminster Theological Journal* 74, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 257–76.

Jamieson, R. B., and Tyler R. Wittman. *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.

Jipp, Joshua. "Myth, Science, and Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann on Creation." Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, February 18, 2018. https://henryce nter.tiu.edu/2018/02/myth-science-and-hermeneutics-rudolf-bultmann-on-creation/.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Johnson, Keith E. *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011.

Johnson, Randall Kenneth. "The Christological Case for Compatibilism." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021.

Journal of Classical Theology. "About." Accessed July 28, 2022. https://joct.online/?page _id=140.

Justin Martyr. *1 Apology*. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus*, 163–87. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *Dialogue with Trypho*. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus*, 194–270. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Revised by Thomas P. Halton. Edited by Michael Slusser. Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

_____. *The First and Second Apologies*. Translated by Leslie William Barnard. Ancient Christian Writers 56. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*. Vol. 1, *Christ and Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

_____. *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission*. Edited by Amos Yong. New York: University Press of America, 2002.

_____. "The Trajectories of the Contemporary 'Trinitarian Renaissance' in Different Contexts." *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3 (2009): 7–21.

Kasëmann, Ernst. Review of *Das Evangelium Johannes*, by Rudolph Bultmann. *Verkundigung und Forschung* (1947). Quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. Frederick Herzog (New York: n.p., 1970).

Kilby, Karen. "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity." *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432–45.

Kim, Kirsteen. Foreword to *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, edited by Myk Habets, xiii–xiv. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.

Knitter, Paul F. "Can Our 'One and Only' Also Be a 'One among Many'? A Response to Responses." In *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, edited by Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997. Quoted in Todd LeRoy Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son: Theological Revisionism in Contemporary Theologies of Salvation" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006).

_____. *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985. Quoted in Todd LeRoy Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son: Theological Revisionism in Contemporary Theologies of Salvation" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 24. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.

Kreider, Glenn R., and Michael J. Svigel. *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.

Kruse, Colin G. *John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Translated by Henri de Vries. 1900. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

_____. Introduction to *The Trinity*, by Karl Rahner, translated by Joseph Donceel. Milestones in Catholic Theology. 1967; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Lai, Pan-Chiu. *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Study of Paul Tillich's Thought*. Studies in Philosophical Theology. Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994.

Leftow, Brian. "Anti Social Trinitarianism." In *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, edited by Thomas McCall and Michael C. Rea, 52–88. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

_____. "Anti Social Trinitarianism." In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 203–49. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Legge, Dominic. "Aquinas 101: Lesson 18: The Four Causes." Video, 4:11. Thomistic Institute. Accessed May 5, 2022. https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/the-four-causes.

_____. *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Rev. and exp ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019.

Levering, Matthew. *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Lincoln, Andrew T. *The Gospel According to Saint John*. Black's New Testament Commentaries 4. London: Continuum, 2005.

Litfin, Bryan M. *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007.

Litfin, Bryan Mark. "Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*: A Case Study in 'Regular Hermeneutics.'" PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2002.

Longman, Tremper, III, and Mark L. Strauss. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 26, *Lectures on Galatians 1–4 (1535)*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1963.

Macchia, Frank D. *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Macleod, Donald. *The Person of Christ*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Marshall, Bruce D. "The Deep Things of God: Trinitarian Pneumatology." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, edited by Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, 400–413. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

_____. "The Trinity." In *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, edited by Gareth Jones, 183–203. Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

_____. *Trinity and Truth*. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

_____. "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question." *Thomist* 74, no. 1 (January 2010): 1–32.

Martin, Oren R. "How Do the Old and New Testaments Progress, Integrate, and Climax in Christ?" In *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 49–54. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020.

Mastricht, Petrus van. *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. Vol. 2, *Faith in the Triune God*. Edited by Joel R. Beeke. Translated by Todd R. Rester. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019.

Maximus the Confessor. *Chapters on Knowledge*. In *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, translated by George C. Berthold, 127–70. Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985.

McCall, Thomas H. *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.

_____. "Relational Trinity: Creedal Perspective." In *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, edited by Jason S. Sexton, 113–37. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

_____. *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Merkle, Benjamin L. *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

Miles, Todd LeRoy. *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions*. Nashville: B&H, 2010.

_____. "He Will Glorify Me: Evaluating the Pneumatology of Inclusivists and Pluralists." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 74–95.

_____. "Severing the Spirit from the Son: Theological Revisionism in Contemporary Theologies of Salvation." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. London: SCM, 1996.

_____. "Theology as Eschatology." In *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, edited by Frederick Herzog, 1–50. New York: n.p., 1970.

Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Mosser, Carl. "Fully Social Trinitarianism." In *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, edited by Thomas McCall and Michael C. Rea, 131–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Mühlen, Heribert. *Una Mystica Persona: Die Kirche als das Mysterium der heilsgeschichtlichen Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen; Eine Person in vielen Personen*. Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967.

Muller, Richard A. *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

_____. "A Note on 'Christocentrism' and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology." *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 253–60.

Naselli, Andrew David. "Does the Bible Have One Central Theme?" In *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 147–57. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020.

_____. "What Are the Different Ways That Evangelicals Do Biblical Theology?" In *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 101–10. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020.

_____. "What Do We Mean by 'Biblical Theology'?" In *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, 19–28. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020.

O'Collins, Gerald. "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions." In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

O'Donnell, John. "Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments." *Gregorianum* 69, no. 1 (1988): 5–34.

Origen of Alexandria. *On First Principles*. Translated by Frederick Crombie. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 4, *Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, 239–382. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885. Logos Bible Software.

Ormerod, Neil. "The Metaphysics of Holiness: Created Participation in the Divine Nature." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (February 2014): 68–82.

Ortlund, Dane C. "Christocentrism: An Asymmetrical Trinitarianism?" *Themelios* 34, no. 3 (November 2009): 309–21.

Ortlund, Gavin. *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.

Owen, John. *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. 1959. Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995.

_____. *The Works of John Owen.* Vol. 1, *Christologia*. Edited by William H. Gould. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.

_____. *The Works of John Owen*. Vol. 3, *Pneumatologia*. Edited by William H. Gould. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967.

Pao, David W. *Colossians and Philemon*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Parker, Brent E., and Richard J. Lucas, eds. *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*. Spectrum Multiview. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022.

Pennington, Jonathan T. "Biblical Theology." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, 129–31. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

Pinnock, Clark H. *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

_____. *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. Milestones in Catholic Theology. 1967. Reprint, New York: Crossroad, 1997.

Rippee, Ryan Lowell. "That God May Be All in All: A Paterology Demonstrating That the Father Is the Initiator of All Divine Activity." PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016.

Rosner, Brian S. "Biblical Theology." In *New Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, 3–11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Sanders, Fred. *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

_____. "Holy Scripture under the Auspices of the Holy Trinity: On John Webster's Trinitarian Doctrine of Scripture." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 2019): 4–23.

_____. "Invisible Mission of the Trinity." *Scriptorium Daily* (blog), October 3, 2017. http://scriptoriumdaily.com/invisible-mission-of-the-trinity/.

_____. "The Trinity." In *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, edited by Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, and Iain Torrance, 35–53. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

_____. *The Triune God*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Schröter, Jonas. "Preaching Only Christ? The Danger of Christomonism." Translated by Christopher S. Doerr. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 115, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 201–9.

Scobie, Charles H. H. "History of Biblical Theology." In *New Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, 11–20. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Smith, James K. A. *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Spence, Alan. *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology*. New York: T&T Clark, 2007.

Sproul, R. C. *What Is Reformed Theology? Understanding the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.

Stăniloae, Dimitru. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. Vol. 1, *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God: The Experience of God*. Translated and edited by Ioana Ionita and Robert Barringer. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994.

Stuart, Douglas K. *Exodus*. New American Commentary 2. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006. Logos Bible Software.

Svigel, Michael J. *RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Swain, Scott R. *The Trinity: An Introduction*. Short Studies in Systematic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

_____. *The Trinity and the Bible: On Theological Interpretation*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

_____. "The Social Theory of the Trinity." *Religious Studies* 54 (2018): 419–37.

Tanner, Kathryn. *Christ the Key*. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Taylor, John V. *The Go-between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973.

Teer, Torey J. S. "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 535–58.

_____. "Basil of Caesarea, Inseparable Operations, and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit: A Pro-Nicene Case Study." *Evangelical Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (2021): 312–27.

_____. "Classical versus Contemporary: Engaging Trinitarian and Pneumatological Models for Ongoing Theological Construction." *Westminster Theological Journal* 83, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 355–81.

_____. "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?" *Southeastern Theological Review* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 37–59.

_____. "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions, and the Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology." *Journal of Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (April 2021): 337–61.

_____. "Is the Holy Spirit Shy, Self-Effacing, or Always in the Shadow of Christ?" Unpublished manuscript, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/62215346/_Is_the_Holy _Spirit_Shy_Self_Effacing_or_Always_in_the_Shadow_of_Christ_.

_____. "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, The Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 177, no. 707 (December 2020): 402–21.

_____. Review of *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition*, by Myk Habets. *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 181–83.

Tennent, Timothy C. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*. Invitation to Theological Studies. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.

Tertullian of Carthage. *Against Praxeas*. Translated by Peter Holmes. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 597–627. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885. Logos Bible Software.

_____. *The Prescription against Heretics*. Translated by Peter Holmes. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 243–65. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885.

Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. Vol. 1, *First through Tenth Topics*. Edited by James T. Dennison Jr. Translated by George Musgrave Giger. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992.

Van Kuiken, Jerome, and Joshua M. McNall. "Who's on Third? (Re)Locating the Spirit in the Triune *Taxis*." In *The Third Person of the Trinity*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 88–104. Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Vidu, Adonis. *The Divine Missions: An Introduction*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021.

_____. "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions." In *The Third Person of the Trinity*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 21–35. Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

_____. "The Place of the Cross among the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity." In *Locating Atonement*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 21–42. Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

_____. *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

_____. "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation." *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4, no. 1 (May 2016): 106–27.

_____. "Triune Agency, East and West: Uncreated Energies or Created Effects?" *Perichoresis* 18, no. 1 (2020): 57–75.

_____. "Why Is Inseparable Operations Such a Hard Sell?" *Credo Magazine* 11, no. 1 (April 2021). https://credomag.com/article/why-is-inseparable-operations-such-a-hard-sell/.

Vos, Geerhardus. "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline." In *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, edited by Richard B. Gaffin Jr., 3–24. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980.

Ware, Bruce A. "Unity and Distinction of the Trinitarian Persons." In *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application*, edited by Keith S. Whitfield, 17–61. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019.

Waterworth, James, trans. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. London: Burns and Oates, 1848.

Webster, John. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*. Currents Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. "Resurrection and Scripture." In *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Andrew T. Lincoln and Angus Paddison, 138–55. Library of New Testament Studies 348. London: T&T Clark, 2007.

Weinandy, Thomas G. *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.

Wellum, Stephen J. "Editorial: Our Glorious Triune God." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 5–8.

_____. "From Alpha to Omega: A Biblical-Theological Approach to God the Son Incarnate." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 1 (March 2020): 71–94.

_____. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

_____. *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*. Short Studies in Systematic Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.

_____. "Retrieval, Christology, and *Sola Scriptura*." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 35–59.

White, Thomas Joseph. *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*. Thomistic Ressourcement Series 19. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022.

Wittman, Tyler. "The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 3 (July 2013): 284–300.

_____. "On the Unity of the Trinity's External Works: Archaeology and Grammar." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20, no. 3 (2018): 359–80.

Yong, Amos. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

_____. *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000.

_____. "A P(New)Matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World." *Missiology* 23, no. 2 (April 2005): 175–91.

_____. "Poured Out on All Flesh: The Spirit, World Pentecostalism, and the Renewal of Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century." *PentecoStudies* 6, no. 1 (2007): 16–46.

_____. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: World Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

ABSTRACT

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, THE SPIRIT OF THE SON:
A FRAMEWORK FOR A TRINITARIAN
CHRISTOLOGICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

Torey James Scott Teer, PhD
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Chair: Gregg R. Allison

In this dissertation, I argue that a biblically faithful, theologically robust, and historically grounded pneumatology should be founded upon a classical trinitarian framework as well as maintain a distinct Christological emphasis. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this study. In chapter 2, I argue that social trinitarianism and third article theology (which includes Spirit Christology) do not supply sufficient persuasive power to dethrone classical trinitarianism and traditional *taxis* theology as the standard and preferred methods for engaging in trinitarian theological discourse and construction. Hence, it is upon the foundation of the classical approach that my framework is built. In chapter 3, I present the first pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: Christocentrism. I argue that hermeneutical and salvation-historical Christocentrism possesses sufficient warrant to establish—and even *necessitate*—that pneumatology be Christ-centered. In chapter 4, I present the second pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: inseparable operations, the trinitarian *taxis*, and distinct personal appropriations. I submit that a healthy understanding of these theological concepts is essential for a healthy theology of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 5, I present the third pillar of a trinitarian Christological pneumatology: the divine missions. I contend that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are *central* to trinitarian theology; therefore, a robust theology of the divine missions is *crucial* for having a well-rounded pneumatology—which itself is Christ-centered. Chapter 6 concludes this study.

VITA

Torey James Scott Teer

EDUCATION
        BS, Texas A&M University, 2011
        ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2018

PUBLICATIONS
        "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine
            Missions and the Mission of the Church." *JETS* 63, no. 3 (September
            2020): 535–58.
        "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?" *STR*
            12, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 39–61.
        "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions, and the Necessity of a
            Christological Pneumatology." *JTS* 72, no. 1 (April 2021): 337–61.
        "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, the Holy Spirit, and
            the Providence of God." *BSac* 177, no. 708 (October–December 2020):
            402–21.
        "Classical versus Contemporary: Engaging Trinitarian and Pneumatological
            Models for Ongoing Theological Construction." *WTJ* 83, no. 2 (Fall
            2021): 355–81.
        "Theological and Biblical Warrants for the 'Problem' of Divine Indwelling
            vis-à-vis Inseparable Operations." *Academia Letters* art. 2897 (2021).
            https://doi.org/10.20935/AL2897.
        "Basil of Caesarea, Inseparable Operations, and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit:
            A Pro-Nicene Case Study." *EQ* 92, no. 4 (2021): 312–27.
        Review of *God for Us: Discovering the Heart of the Father through the Life of
            the Son*, by Abby Ross Hutto, *SBJT* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 161–63.
        Review of *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture
            and Tradition*, by Myk Habets, *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 181–83.
        Review of *Contemporary Theology: An Introduction: Classical, Evangelical,
            Philosophical, and Global Perspectives*, by Kirk R. MacGregor, *SBJT* 23,
            no. 2 (Summer 2020): 184–86.
        Review of *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin*, by Thomas H.
            McCall, *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 189–92.
        Review of *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for
            Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways*, by Glenn R. Kreider and
            Michael J. Svigel, *Presb* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 148–50.
        Review of *The Trinity: An Introduction*, by Scott R. Swain. *SBJT* 25, no. 1
            (Spring 2021): 173–76.
        Review of *The Person of Christ: An Introduction*, by Stephen J. Wellum.
            Presb 47, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 189–90.
        Review of *The Church: An Introduction*, by Gregg R. Allison. *MJT* 20, no. 2
            (Fall 2021): 125–27.

ORGANIZATIONS
    Evangelical Theological Society
    North American Patristics Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT
    Writing Mentor, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville,
        Kentucky, 2018–
    Garrett Fellow, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville,
        Kentucky, Spring 2019, Spring 2021
    Guest Lecturer, PhD/ThM Graduate Research Seminar, The Southern Baptist
        Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, Summer 2019, Winter
        2020, Summer 2020, Winter 2021, Summer 2021, Winter 2022, Summer
        2022
    Guest Lecturer, EdD Graduate Research Seminar, The Southern Baptist
        Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, Summer 2019, Summer
        2020, Summer 2021, Summer 2022
    DMin/DEdMin Project Methodology Coach, Professional Doctoral Studies,
        The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky,
        Summer 2021, Winter 2021/2022, Summer 2022
    ThM Fellow, Research Doctoral Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological
        Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, Spring 2020–
    Doctoral Style Reader, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville,
        Kentucky, 2022–

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT
    College and Young Adults Ministry Director, Waxahachie Bible Church,
        Waxahachie, Texas, 2014–2016
    Young Adults Ministry Assistant, Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas,
        2016–2018
    Curriculum Developer and Editor, Watermark Community Church, Dallas,
        Texas, 2018–2021