

Edited by  
Wolfgang Vondey

THE HOLY SPIRIT  
AND THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE

*Historical, Interdisciplinary,  
and Renewal Perspectives*



 **Charis**  
CHRISTIANITY & RENEWAL  
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES



## CHARIS: Christianity and Renewal—Interdisciplinary Studies

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*Christianity and Renewal—Interdisciplinary Studies* provides a forum for scholars from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, various global locations, and a range of Christian ecumenical and religious traditions to explore issues at the intersection of the pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal movements and related phenomena, including:

- the transforming and renewing work of the Holy Spirit in Christian traditions, cultures, and creation;
- the traditions, beliefs, interpretation of sacred texts, and scholarship of the renewal movements;
- the religious life, including the spirituality, ethics, history, liturgy and other practices of renewal movements;
- the social, economic, political, transnational, and global dimensions and implications of renewal movements;
- methodological, analytical, and theoretical concerns at the intersection of Christianity and renewal;
- intra-Christian and interreligious comparative studies of renewal and revitalization movements;
- other topics connecting to the theme of Christianity and renewal.

Authors are encouraged to examine the broad scope of religious phenomena and their interpretation through the methodological, hermeneutical, and historiographical lens of renewal in contemporary Christianity.

Under the general topic of thoughtful reflection on Christianity and renewal, the series includes two different kinds of books: (1) monographs that allow for in-depth pursuit, carefully argued, and meticulously documented research on a particular topic that explores issues in Christianity and renewal; and (2) edited collections that allow scholars from a variety of disciplines to interact under a broad theme related to Christianity and renewal. In both kinds, the series encourages discussion of traditional pentecostal and charismatic studies, reexamination of established religious doctrine and practice, and explorations into new fields of study related to renewal movements. Interdisciplinarity will feature in the series both in terms of two or more disciplinary approaches deployed in any single volume and in terms of a wide range of disciplinary perspectives found cumulatively in the series.

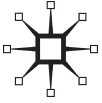
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AND RENEWAL PERSPECTIVES

Edited by  
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## Introduction

# THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCERN

*Wolfgang Vondey*

“Where can I go from your Spirit?” asks the writer of Psalm 139. The answer, of course, is that the Spirit of God can potentially be found in all places of life, even in the most unlikely circumstances. No place is too remote, no situation too difficult for the presence of the Spirit. Moreover, a large portion of the psalm is spent with the presence of the Spirit in the actual life of the psalmist, and his reflection ends with a turn toward the Spirit’s presence in the inner person. The biblical images for the Spirit of God, including wind, breath, fire, water, and love, are expansive metaphors that capture not only the basic elements of the world but also the fundamental necessities of creation. The Old Testament captures these images of the Spirit as metaphors for the life-giving and sustaining presence and activity of God in the world (see Isa. 42:5). The New Testament reaffirms the presence of the Spirit in the life of Christ (Luke 4:18–19) and ultimately proclaims the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17). According to the earliest Christian creeds, the Holy Spirit is called the “Lord and Giver of Life.” The ancient Christian hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, transforms this confession into a request for the coming of the Spirit of God into the hearts and minds of the people of God. The presence of the Spirit communicates the divine life to creation and teaches us to make our own lives a gift to others and to God.<sup>1</sup> As we glorify God, we find our lives saturated with the divine presence. And yet, to say that *the Spirit of God is present everywhere* is far from saying that *we encounter the Spirit everywhere*.

Pneumatology is the search for the spirit (*pneuma*). In theology, pneumatology is that discipline that asks with the words of Psalm 139, “where can I find the presence of God’s Spirit?” In Christianity, the symbol for this presence of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. Throughout



Christian history, the church has given a similar response to this question, always echoing the answers given by the psalmist. Gregory of Nyssa exemplifies the response when he exclaims that the Spirit of God is “everywhere, being present in each, filling the earth, residing in the heavens, shed abroad upon supernatural Powers, filling all things according to the deserts of each.”<sup>2</sup> The deserts of life, Gregory asserts, are filled with the surprising abundance of the Spirit who in turn seeks to bring all things to the glory of God. And yet, Basil of Caesarea reminds us that “the Spirit is not brought into intimate association with the soul by its local approximation.”<sup>3</sup> The Spirit may drive all of creation to God, but that alone does not guarantee that we find evidence of the Spirit’s work in all of creation unless we carefully discern the spirits (see 1 John 4:1). Even when we discover God’s presence, that alone does not guarantee an encounter unless we are touched by the Spirit as by the hand of God.

Irenaeus’s well-known description of the Holy Spirit as one of the two hands of God places the Spirit close to the other hand, Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> This image echoes the description in the Gospels that Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Spirit (Mark 1:8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16) and the proclamation of the apostle Paul that “through Christ we have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). The relation between the Spirit and the Son ultimately culminated in the *filioque* controversy, which would help clarify different conceptions of the nature, person, and procession of the Spirit but also separated the teachings on the Holy Spirit in the East from those in the West. Medieval mysticism and the scholastic age shifted attention to personal transformation and rearticulating the classical doctrine of the Spirit. The Protestant reformers continued to be influenced by pneumatological concerns albeit strongly within ecclesiastical frameworks.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, while the Eastern Orthodox tradition has shaped its pneumatology more consistently within a theology of encounter identified by the central concerns for the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the church,<sup>6</sup> the West has experienced a revival of these two streams only in recent centuries.

Not surprisingly, the classical theological discussions about the Holy Spirit have been rekindled today and reformulated in new contexts. Old questions have been asked anew and new and different questions have been added: What about those places and circumstances, those deserts of life, where the soul does not find itself in local proximity to the Spirit? What about the places where neither one nor the other hand of God are clearly seen? What about those who pursue the hand of God under different names, different traditions, different languages and theological persuasions? How do we discern

what spirit is the subject of our pneumatological quest? How do we speak of the Spirit's presence in places where theological vocabulary is rarely or differently used? Who is included in this "we" that through Christ pursues access to the Father in the Spirit? How can we discover and celebrate the Spirit together? The twentieth century has given a number of answers to these ancient questions along six overlapping developments: (1) the renaissance of pneumatology, (2) the rise of pentecostal and charismatic movements, (3) the emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogues, (4) the effects of globalization, (5) the contextualization of theology, and (6) the rise of interdisciplinary studies. These developments together express that the presence of the Spirit has become a far-reaching concern that extends beyond the immediate interests of the theological symbol of the Holy Spirit.

These extensive interests form the central focus of the series entitled pragmatically *CHARIS: Christianity and Renewal—Interdisciplinary Studies*. In this inaugural volume, the emphasis is placed on the Holy Spirit and the Christian life, arguably the heartbeat of the concern for the transforming presence of the Spirit of God. On the following pages I will provide some insights into the chief concerns of the series as well as the argument and layout of this book. I suggest that the diverse, surprising, and multifarious phenomena associated with the renewing presence of the Spirit invite, even urge, interdisciplinary cooperation. I begin with a brief overview of the key developments that form the context for the series. The renaissance of pneumatology, the rise of pentecostal and charismatic movements, the emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, the effects of globalization and the contextualization of theology are contributing factors to a distinct rise of interdisciplinary studies. My goal is to set this development within a framework that identifies the presence of the Spirit as an interdisciplinary concern. The second section then offers a definition of interdisciplinarity and describes its central principles with regard to the focus of the series on Christianity and renewal. My concern here is to delineate the current state of affairs by bringing into the conversation on the renewing presence of the Spirit the ideas of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary studies. This evaluation of the possibility of interdisciplinary work on the spiritual dimension of life is then followed by an overview of the argument and the essays of the book.

### SPIRITUAL PRESENCE AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCERN

The pursuit of the spiritual dimension does not necessarily presume a confessional set of commitments from the outset. Although this

volume is explicitly focused on Christianity and renewal, this analytical lens invites a kind of inquiry open to multiple confessions, religious, and secular approaches in order to take seriously the universal presence of the Spirit. A helpful symbol for this universal pneumatological quest is Paul Tillich's notion of the Spiritual Presence.

The symbol "Spiritual Presence" uses the dimension of spirit, the bearer of which is man, but in order to be present in the human spirit, the Divine Spirit must be present in all the dimensions which are actual in man, and this means, the universe.<sup>7</sup>

Tillich's emphasis on the Spiritual Presence in potentially all dimensions of the universe makes the physical, biological, psychological, and other dimensions of life cooperative dimensions with the divine.<sup>8</sup> This broad pneumatological interest is hospitable to other inquiries: while manifestations of the Spiritual Presence must ultimately be recognizable as experiences of the revelation of Christ, "within these limits the Spiritual Community is free to appropriate all symbols which are adequate and which possess symbolic power."<sup>9</sup> An encounter with the Spiritual Presence is in principle possible in any particular religious, secular, nonreligious, and other-religious environments. The reality of that encounter is what is expressed in the most rudimentary sense by the term "renewal." The appropriateness of our symbols of renewal for the concerns of Christianity and the compatibility with pneumatology understood as a quest for the Holy Spirit are among the central concerns of this series.

The central development underlying the broad interest in the Spirit is without doubt the contemporary renaissance of pneumatology. In Christianity, the twentieth century has brought a renewed perspective and enthusiasm to the theological conversation, stimulated by a concurrent revival of the doctrine of the Trinity, the emergence of new spiritual movements in the church, interest in pneumatology in the works of important theologians, and new critical questions with regard to the Spirit. The renaissance of pneumatology emphasizes a reformulation of the classical doctrine of the Spirit,<sup>10</sup> the personhood of the Spirit,<sup>11</sup> the advance of Spirit-Christology,<sup>12</sup> the experiences of God's Spirit,<sup>13</sup> the work of the Holy Spirit in social justice and ministry,<sup>14</sup> the theology of creation,<sup>15</sup> ecological perspectives on a theology of nature,<sup>16</sup> the intersection of theology and science,<sup>17</sup> the media appropriate to pneumatological discourse,<sup>18</sup> anthropological and cultural concerns,<sup>19</sup> a universal affirmation of the Spirit,<sup>20</sup> biblical, historical, philosophical, and contemporary perspectives on the doctrine of the

Spirit,<sup>21</sup> as well as other constructive efforts in pneumatology.<sup>22</sup> These and other efforts have combined to form a multidisciplinary pursuit of the Spiritual Presence in and beyond the Christian life. Above all, a large influence on the renewed pursuit of pneumatology comes from the rise of pentecostalism.<sup>23</sup>

The rise of the pentecostal and charismatic movements around the beginning of the twentieth century has shifted the attention with regard to the spiritual dimension. The emphasis on “Pentecost” at the heart of these movements shows the significant interest in the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit in the Christian life.<sup>24</sup> The renewal movements have turned the attention to the Spiritual Presence both in the inner person and in the world. Contemporary pentecostal theology has moved from restatements of biblical narratives to the consideration of spiritual disciplines in theology to a further articulation of a thoroughly Spirit-oriented theology and eventually pneumatological methodology.<sup>25</sup> In so doing, pentecostalism has become a global movement that can be seen as “an emerging theological tradition through which to explore the possibilities and challenges confronting the development of Christian theology for our late modern world.”<sup>26</sup> This perspective has elevated not only pentecostalism as a religious movement but also the focus on the Spiritual Presence and on the renewal of Christianity.<sup>27</sup> The new spiritual movements have raised the awareness for the interconnectedness of pentecostal, charismatic, and pneumatological concerns. The broad extent of these interconnected affairs can also be identified with the term “renewal” as a succinct programmatic reference to the transforming element of the Spiritual Presence across all realms of life. This pursuit of renewal has taken pentecostalism beyond its own theological, sociocultural, historical, and institutional boundaries to the global, ecumenical, and multidisciplinary concerns of the contemporary Christian agenda.<sup>28</sup>

The emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is a third stream that has contributed to the growing attention given to the Spirit. The ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches, and a myriad of local, national, and international ecumenical dialogues have increasingly emphasized the transforming and renewing work of the Spirit of God.<sup>29</sup> Pentecostal and charismatic groups have entered into ecumenical conversations with focus on the Holy Spirit and the renewal of the Christian life.<sup>30</sup> The charismatic renewal became the focus of the assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975, and the Consultation on the Significance of the Charismatic Renewal for the Churches began significant work on pentecostal and pneumatological concerns in the 1980s.<sup>31</sup> The Commission on Faith

and Order issued an important consensus statement with significant pneumatological direction in 1982.<sup>32</sup> And the rise of ecumenical ecclesiology, particularly the emphasis on *koinonia*, begun with the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue in 1985–1989<sup>33</sup> and the Faith and Order Conference in Santiago de Compostela in 1993,<sup>34</sup> has contributed to “a growing consensus that the church is a ‘communion in the Spirit.’”<sup>35</sup> The rise of interreligious conversations has broadened this theme considerably to an emphasis on the universal presence of the Spirit and a pneumatological theology of religions.<sup>36</sup> Pentecostal and charismatic theologies are again closely intertwined with these developments.<sup>37</sup>

The expansion and shift in Christianity from the northern hemisphere and the west to the east and the global south has also contributed to renewed perspectives on the Spirit. The unprecedented growth of spiritual movements, pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa, Latin America, and Asia has invited a cultural diversity, religious plurality, and Spirit-oriented theology into an emerging mix of multidisciplinary quests for a possibly global Spiritual Presence.<sup>38</sup> These global perspectives and their unique blend of mobility, independence, and innovation affect not only the shape of the renewal movements but also of pneumatology. The different cultural, socio-political, economic, and religious heritage of what constitutes world Christianity today tends to direct attention to a variety of new and complementary dimensions of God and the Spirit.<sup>39</sup> Pneumatology, pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal concerns have become part of a global Christian culture.<sup>40</sup> The pursuit of the Spiritual Presence today can avoid neither the interests nor the tensions caused by this global Christian agenda.

Intimately related to the effects of globalization is the contextualization of theology. The global character of the Christian landscape depends heavily on local and contextual forms and vice versa. This interdependence is frequently described with the term “glocalization” as a reference to the eradication of “distance” between global and local pursuits of the Christian faith in order to find the global images *in* the local and vice versa.<sup>41</sup> For the renaissance of pneumatology, this development has led to a number of significant contexts that offer new or alternative interpretations of the Spiritual Presence. Liberation theology in Latin American communities advocates the idea of the Spirit as the pathos of God.<sup>42</sup> African images of the Spirit emerge from a unique blend of traditional religion, local customs, and rituals.<sup>43</sup> Feminist theology in North America has pursued pneumatology in terms of the maternal spirit.<sup>44</sup> Ecological and feminist concerns have

combined to create a unique interdisciplinary approach to the Holy Spirit.<sup>45</sup> Other contexts question the correlation of spirit and power.<sup>46</sup> Again other groups have raised concerns about the consistency, applicability, veracity, and even Christian character of pneumatology in some contexts.<sup>47</sup> In the twenty-first century, the ideas of the renewal of the Spirit and the Christian life have become as broad as the contexts constituted by those engaged.

The culminating overlapping development contributing to the renewed interest in the transforming element of the Spiritual Presence is the rise of interdisciplinary studies. The 1960s and 1970s dramatically shaped the idea of what is today called interdisciplinarity.<sup>48</sup> The studies of religion and theology are by their very nature open to such diverse concerns and have frequently utilized philosophy, psychology, languages, and the arts and sciences.<sup>49</sup> This openness includes the intersection of faith-based and secular studies as well as ecumenical and interfaith conversations. The focus on pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal movements has shaped the study of the Spirit particularly in cooperation with theology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and the natural sciences.<sup>50</sup> The renaissance of pneumatology, the rise of pentecostal and charismatic movements, the emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as the effects of the globalization and contextualization of theology are all shaping the rise of interdisciplinary studies. At this point, pneumatology is still transitioning from a study in the traditional disciplines to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary concerns. The driving force toward the full realization of this interdisciplinarity is the concern for the transforming and renewing dimensions of the Spiritual Presence in all realms of life.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES OF CHRISTIANITY AND RENEWAL

The assertion that the discussion of Christianity and renewal is not yet fully interdisciplinary is intended in part to clarify the motivation for the present series and this volume. A major stone of contention is of course the mere designation of the Spiritual Presence as an “interdisciplinary” agenda. While the idea of interdisciplinarity is widely debated among a number of disciplines, the recent study of renewal has not yet defined itself in interdisciplinary terms. Publications with focus on the Spiritual Presence, including the Holy Spirit and the Christian life, pentecostalism, charismatic movements, and other realms of renewal that invite and engage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, exist only in the early stages.<sup>51</sup> The reference to interdisciplinary

studies must therefore be clarified for its use in the context of a focus on Christianity and renewal.

In the framework of the CHARIS series, interdisciplinary studies may be defined as *the method of pursuing ideas, answering questions, or resolving a problem—broadly related to the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence—that are otherwise too complex to be adequately treated by a single discipline and that unfold in those disciplines with the intention to integrate their insights in the construction of a more comprehensive understanding of Christianity and renewal.*<sup>52</sup>

From this perspective, religious studies may appear to override the concerns of other disciplines. However, the religious concerns underlying Christianity and renewal are already connected to different kinds and modes of thought and experience and thus invite ideas and methods from different disciplines and fields. The traditional fields of biblical, historical, and systematic theology encourage description and critical reflection beyond isolated studies. We regularly cross over into the other disciplines of the sociology of religion, philosophy of religion, literary studies, or ethics. For the most part, our efforts in these disciplines and subdisciplines remain individual pursuits albeit with often significant integration of methods and results.<sup>53</sup> In this young field of renewal studies, the goals and history of interdisciplinarity show at times no more than the placing side by side of insights from different points of view. I will refer to this as multidisciplinary. While multidisciplinary works do not function immediately as integrative or even interactive participations in a mutual pursuit of ideas and questions, multidisciplinary work often constitutes an initial phase toward full interdisciplinarity.<sup>54</sup> In the study of renewal, multidisciplinary work is an indispensable starting point on the way to the full cooperation of disciplines. This groundwork for interdisciplinarity needs to be invited and expected in order to develop and organize more fully the terminology, data, concepts, and methods necessary for discerning the Spiritual Presence.

At other times we reach a correlation and integration of disciplines that may even transcend beyond the fields of study. These rare achievements are generally referred to as transdisciplinary approaches. They overlap with multidisciplinary work only insofar as several disciplines are involved, and yet go far beyond those attempts by seeking an overarching theory that transcends all disciplines.<sup>55</sup> While renewal potentially presents an overarching theory that moves across and beyond disciplinary boundaries, such is not the goal of all interdisciplinary work. Transdisciplinarity requires multidisciplinary approaches; yet while the latter protects the disciplinary system, the former seeks to overcome it.

Interdisciplinarity is therefore defined both by the necessity of cooperation among various disciplines and by a dynamic process that moves beyond those disciplines. The Spiritual Presence may find diverse expressions in interdisciplinary terms, yet the very identification of renewal with the transforming dimension of the Spirit reaches also beyond their immediate reach. Multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity can here be seen as potential integrative processes of interdisciplinary studies that do not exclude each other even if they surpass the original intentions.<sup>56</sup> A few scenarios may illustrate this perspective.

As an initial possibility, disciplinary accounts of renewal can stand on their own among other accounts in a parallel or parallax view.<sup>57</sup> This form of multidisciplinary studies, or of interdisciplinarity as a goal not yet fully achieved, can include alternative accounts without attempts at reconciliation but rather to define problems, to show the scope of disciplinary concerns involved, to identify relevant disciplines or to stimulate and invite involvement, and to identify existing tensions and disagreements. There exists for the study of renewal a certain necessary ease with a plurality of voices, a hermeneutics of many tongues and disciplines and practices that mark the path of interdisciplinarity in the pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal movements.<sup>58</sup> The outcome may not always be identified as a successful *integration* of disciplines but rather as a step toward that goal, a form of *hospitality* toward other disciplines, modes of thinking, conflicting insights, and common ground.<sup>59</sup> The ground and mandate for such hospitality as the essence of interdisciplinarity is precisely the transforming, transcending, integrating, and uniting presence of God's Spirit (see Eph. 4:3).

This hospitality is evident, for example, in a second form of interdisciplinarity that is open to the use of both faith-based and secular approaches to the study of Christianity and renewal.<sup>60</sup> The debate on the need for insider experience or faith-based knowledge on the one hand, and objective study on the other hand, shows that both theology and religious studies are in transition—toward each other and to other disciplines. The study of Christianity and renewal remains indebted in many contexts to a commitment to the beliefs and practices of Christianity and more often to that of a particular tradition. At the same time, the understanding of religious diversity has significantly changed with the advent of religious studies as a form of “academic,” “objective,” or “social scientific” research.<sup>61</sup> The concern whether the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence “should be theological, social scientific, or a new critical, constructive, intercultural method of inquiry demonstrates another way in which religious studies is inherently multidisciplinary.”<sup>62</sup> The study of renewal



will continue to be shaped by this discussion. Even without successful integration at this point, a hospitable multidisciplinary approach will help dismantle stereotypes and existing prejudice, clarify boundaries, develop methodologies, and increase the resources for a joint study and shared knowledge. Renewal here refers also to the experience of the different approaches and the shared struggle between dissonance and acceptance for the sake of understanding (and experiencing) the Spiritual Presence.

A third form of interdisciplinary studies relevant to exploring the transforming work of the Spirit is the deliberate use of ecumenical and interfaith approaches. The influence of the ecumenical movement and interfaith dialogues has significantly shaped the landscape of interdisciplinarity through similar structures, aims, demands, and methods.<sup>63</sup> These similarities are made apparent most of all in a shared experience of the Spiritual Presence across denominations and religious traditions. The different approaches to and experiences of renewal among pentecostals and the charismatic movements in the traditional churches, for example, have opened up the beginning of an ecumenical interest in the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Although presuppositions, doctrines, histories, rituals, and methods differ, the experience of renewal offers a shared agenda and activity that includes the prospects of cooperation, comparison, and reconciliation.<sup>65</sup> The pneumatological approach and interest in renewal has also opened up possibilities for the deepening and transforming of Christian theology in the pluralism of the religious lives of the twenty-first century.<sup>66</sup> Working together in these contexts of interdisciplinarity does not always immediately focus on the disciplines involved but focuses on the opportunity to solve a common problem.<sup>67</sup> Ecumenical collections and interreligious conversations thus serve as stimuli for further interdisciplinary research.

Finally, interdisciplinary studies require research that offers insights into varieties, taxonomies, and definitions of the Spiritual Presence from different disciplines, including identifying differences and agreements among traditional, essential, and normative approaches.<sup>68</sup> The result may be insights into the scripting of renewal theology,<sup>69</sup> reformulations of renewed historiography,<sup>70</sup> surveys of the developing social and religious forms of renewal Christianity,<sup>71</sup> an extension of the scope of renewal studies to the larger spectrum of religious ideas and practices,<sup>72</sup> exposure of exogenous causes and consequences that influence the interpretation of renewal,<sup>73</sup> identifying the difficulties of reconciling the religious sense of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with social, economic, and political renewal,<sup>74</sup> integrating the study of Christianity and renewal in the natural sciences,<sup>75</sup> or showing

the contributions of pentecostal and charismatic Christianity to other fields and disciplines.<sup>76</sup> These and other results of the young field of interdisciplinary research on Christianity and renewal are driven by the shared interest in the transforming work of the Spirit of God.

Starting with the Spiritual Presence (in its symbolic representation of the universal presence of the dimension of spirit) provides a specific (yet not necessarily theological or religious) rationale for interdisciplinary studies. The interdisciplinary concerns of Christianity and renewal constitute a “transcendental” method where “the results envisaged are not confined categorically to some particular field or subject”<sup>77</sup> but exceed each discipline by virtue of the universal possibility to encounter the Spiritual Presence. Interdisciplinary research does not follow an autonomous trajectory or project an exclusive alternative to other disciplinary pursuits but is always marked by integrative efforts identified as much by confessional location and personal beliefs as by pneumatological (and hence transcendental) concerns. Nonetheless, the shared pursuit of renewal drives ultimately toward transformation at the core of any disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary work. Renewal is thus a “journey by way of the Spirit into and transcending the full range of classical expressions and core symbols of the faith toward their transformation.”<sup>78</sup> A similar statement could be made about the study of renewal in the disciplines outside the immediate purview of Christian theology and religious studies. From the perspective of Christianity, at least, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit renews what and how we know as we open our disciplines to the possibility to comprehend and participate in that renewal. Such is the goal of this book.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESSAYS

This brief introduction should be seen as no more than a first attempt to approach the presence of the Spirit as an interdisciplinary concern. In this volume, interdisciplinary studies includes contributions that extend beyond confessional boundaries albeit within the theological subdisciplines that engage theology, history, and philosophy and integrate scholars from confessional and secular research institutions. The path to interdisciplinarity in these essays deploys different approaches from across the theological domain: biblical studies, historical theology, spiritual formation, renewal studies, philosophy, homiletics, ecumenical theology, pentecostal and charismatic studies, hermeneutics, and systematic theology. The essays are ordered historically, when possible, although several themes overlap by virtue of the overall theme.

A complete representation of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life as one dimension of the Spiritual Presence is not intended but rather implied as a goal of future interdisciplinary studies. Some more well-researched themes, as for example the nineteenth-century Holiness movement, classical Pentecostalism, or the Charismatic Renewal movement in the established churches of the twentieth century, have not been included in this collection. Ample resources exist for these and other renewal movements that have attracted the attention of the scholarly community in recent decades. Instead, the modest intention here is merely to map out the terrain, both in terms of content and method, of what can more broadly be termed a concern for the Spiritual Presence in the Christian life. The historical ordering of the few examples found in this book shows a remarkable consistency of the Spirit's transforming and renewing work across ages, places, institutions, and personalities in the Christian world. We invite readers who are thinking along these lines to locate their own work within the pages of this collection.

"The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life" was the theme of the 2013 Annual Conference in Renewal Theology at Regent University. Sponsored by the Regent Center for Renewal Studies, the conference sought to provide venues that foster mutual dialogue among scholars, professionals, and the broader public on the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Toward this end, the theme was chosen to promote research on the renewing work of the Holy Spirit as that has unfolded across the Christian tradition and as that has implications and applications to Christian life. Most of the essays in this collection were presented at the conference or a similar venue with focus on the transforming work of the Spirit, the charisms and the charismatic life in the church and in the world, the role of emotions, the affections, and the passions in religious experience and their relationship to Christian formation, the experience of love and desire in human nature, and the Holy Spirit as a source of renewal, revival, and revitalization in the church today. The broadness of these topics reflects not only the breadth of experiences and validations of the Spirit's presence but also the hospitality of the study of renewal to different perspectives, motivations, methodologies, and disciplines.

The collection opens with an interdisciplinary metaphor of the "hermeneutical sea." With this motif, Steve Sherman illustrates identifiable presuppositions, control beliefs, methods, and theological convictions of various hermeneutical persuasions pertaining to the Holy Spirit's role in interpretation and understanding. He argues that only a robust Spirit-infused hermeneutic funds interpretive integrity and wisdom for evangelical communities. Mapping five hermeneutical

territories, Sherman suggests that although a general agreement exists concerning the importance of pneumatic hermeneutics, the revitalization of interpretation by the Spirit takes on a vastly different form. The heuristic device of the hermeneutical sea opens up space for reading the subsequent chapters and their attention to the Holy Spirit and the Christian life.

Chapter 2 offers a reflection on the Holy Spirit in the monastic life and its impact on today's church. Greg Peters portrays monasticism as a historical instrument of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church by examining the concept of a "Holy Spirit-bearer" and its use in monastic history and investigating the early Christian ascetic and monastic practice known as "spiritual marriage." Both aspects demonstrate the genesis of the Holy Spirit in monasticism, showing that monasticism must flourish in the church in order to become an instrument in the Christian life and the world.

In chapter 3, Daniel Strand focuses on describing the role of "longing" in Augustine's pneumatology. He engages Augustine's sermons on the Psalms, the Gospel and First Letter of John, and other sermons in order to arrive at Augustine's understanding of the Holy Spirit in human desire for the good. Strand argues that longing has primarily an affective character marked by the absence of God's presence, which is structured by both pneumatological and eschatological realities. This affective character plays an important role in spiritual formation and holy living as Christians sojourn to the Heavenly City.

Lisa Millen traces in the fourth chapter the perspective of Hugh of St. Victor and the gifts of the Spirit. A twelfth-century magister of the Parisian school at St. Victor and a prolific writer, Hugh devoted a short treatise to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. In *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Hugh delineated the progressive work of the Spirit whereby the human soul, once captive to sin, is restored to its proper position as a son. Hugh's complementary work, *On the Five Sevens*, provides supporting details in this study. Millen argues that the Christian life from Hugh's perspective is an affective journey wherein the vices become virtues through the infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit who heals, illumines, and vivifies the soul.

In chapter 5, Cheryl M. Peterson asks what Lutherans can learn from John Wesley about the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Peterson's study shows significant overlap between Wesleyan views and the Lutheran tradition that can help Lutherans reclaim their confessional teaching on the fuller work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life as well as to more deeply appreciate Wesley's understanding of the fullness of salvation given through Christ in the power of the Spirit.

David M. Barbee engages in chapter 6 the role of the Holy Spirit in Puritan preaching. An examination of William Perkins's *The Arte of Prophecyng* provides a window into the theological foundation of early modern Protestant religious practice and spirituality. Barbee highlights how the trinitarian function of the Holy Spirit manifests itself in preaching, both in the preparation of the preacher and in the effects of preaching, specifically in the allurements of the auditor to religious conversion.

Janelle Aijian articulates in chapter 7 the role that the Holy Spirit played in the life and philosophy of Blaise Pascal. The chapter involves reconciling what seem to be clear encounters with the work of the Holy Spirit with the puzzling fact that Pascal very rarely mentions the Spirit explicitly. She argues that Pascal's idiosyncratic use of the heart as the receptacle of God's revelation obscures the pervasive and foundational role of the Holy Spirit in his work. This pneumatological approach allows for a discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in Pascal's account, especially for the task of epistemically grounding belief in God and first principles.

Robert Webster speaks in chapter 8 to the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the miraculous with particular focus on John Wesley's egalitarian view of the supernatural. Webster shows how for Wesley the Holy Spirit is creatively involved in the creation of miracles in the life of the community, how a rhetorical understanding of the supernatural fits into Wesley's evangelical strategy for the Methodists, and how the perfectionist controversies in 1760–1762 tested Wesley's affirmation of an egalitarian understanding of the supernatural.

In chapter 9, Christian T. Collins Winn examines the pneumatology of German Lutheran theologian Christoph Blumhardt. Collins Winn explores a pneumatological configuration of the "critique of religion" through an exploration of Blumhardt's apocalyptically structured pneumatology. By seeing the Spirit in Blumhardt's work through an apocalyptic prism, he argues that all religions, including Christianity, are judged and found wanting, but also affirmed as being of some use to the living God who, even now, is pressing into history.

Joshua D. Reichard shows in chapter 10 an improbable bond of the Spirit in pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies. Although process-relational and pentecostal-charismatic theologies have been separated for more than a century by the conservative-liberal divide, a renewed emphasis on the Spirit concentrated in the notion of love in postmodern theological development can reunite the two movements. This analysis reveals that pentecostal and charismatic Christians may have deeper commonalities with process-relational theists than their open-theist counterparts.

In the final contribution, we return to the hermeneutical concerns framed in the first chapter. B. Keith Putt ventures into a comparison of the passion of and the passion for Pentecost as a form of hermeneutics, heterology, and the “hauntology” of the Spirit. He examines the creative tension between the presence of the Spirit in singularity and conformity, and in contrast, plurality, heterogeneity, and disorder. Correlating pentecostal polyglossa with the motif of the Tower of Babel narrative in Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida, Putt is able to relate the translational heterology of Babel/Pentecost to the consistent renewing of existence in John Caputo’s subversive “hauntology” of the Spirit.

The conclusion offers a synthesis of the state of affairs of this interdisciplinary discussion. The objective of this conclusion is to lead the reader from the dialogue on the Holy Spirit and the Christian life to the prospect of participating in the broad interdisciplinary conversations on Christianity and renewal. In a brief afterword, Amos Yong situates the conversations of the essays in this volume in the wider objectives of the CHARIS series and its focus on the study of Christianity and renewal from diverse disciplinary perspectives.

The essays in this volume represent nascent efforts of writers from different perspectives and disciplines to understand the scope of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Illuminating these different accounts is a surprisingly consistent reference across disciplines and traditions to the experience and concept of renewal. At the same time, these brief chapters function in an important sense only as stimuli for the much larger effort to extend interest in Christianity and renewal to other fields of knowledge and disciplines of study. The scope of these efforts is as limitless as the scope of the Spiritual Presence. While many paths, methods, and convictions of the various efforts are not yet clearly defined, and while it may seem questionable which disciplines will in the end participate in the interdisciplinary study of Christianity and renewal, the answer to the question all disciplines pursue is already implicitly understood in the question asked by Psalm 139. Where can we find God’s Spirit? Potentially everywhere.

## NOTES

1. See Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit: Meditations on the Veni Creator*, trans. Denis and Marlene Barrett (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 79–111.
2. Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Holy Spirit: Against the Followers of Macedonius,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 5,

- Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 323.
3. Basil of Caesarea, "The Treatise on the Holy Spirit," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 8, *Basil: Letters and Select Works*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 15.
  4. See Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 4.14.2.
  5. Cf. Paul S. Chung, *The Spirit of God Transforming Life: The Reformation and Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
  6. See Daniel B. Clenendin (ed.), *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 149–92; Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Understanding the Greek Orthodox Church: It's Faith, History, and Practice* (New York: Seabury, 1982), 55–57.
  7. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 108.
  8. *Ibid.*, 3:111–61. Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, "Spirit and Nature as Ultimate Concern: Tillich's 'Radical' Ontology in Conversation with Contemporary Pentecostalism," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 39, no. 1 (2013): 30–35.
  9. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:123–24.
  10. See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
  11. See Heribert Mühlen, *Der heilige Geist als Person: In der Trinität, bei der Inkarnation und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir*, 5th ed. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1988).
  12. See Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
  13. See Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994).
  14. See Bradford E. Hinze (ed.), *The Spirit in the Church and the World*, College Theological Society Annual 49 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).
  15. See Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).
  16. See Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, trans. Douglas Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).
  17. See Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action*, ed. Zachary Simpson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).
  18. See Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, 4.
  19. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:11–282.
  20. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991).



21. See Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (eds.), *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001).
22. See David H. Jensen (ed.), *The Lord and Giver of Life: Perspectives on Constructive Pneumatology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008).
23. See Michael Welker (ed.), *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996).
24. Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 29–47; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187–205.
25. Cf. Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
26. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 18.
27. See Wolfgang Vondey and Martin William Mittelstadt (eds.), *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship: Passion for the Spirit*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 14 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013).
28. Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda*, Pentecostal Manifestos 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1–15.
29. Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 98–104.
30. See Wolfgang Vondey (ed.), *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, vol. 2, *Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013) and Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, vol. 1, *Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010).
31. Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, “Pentecostals and Ecumenism: Becoming the Church as a Pursuit of Christian Unity,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 4 (2011), 318–30.
32. See *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).
33. See Vondey, *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, 1:133–58.
34. See World Council of Churches (ed.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Messages to the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993).
35. Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 104.
36. See Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).



37. See Tonie Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit: A Pentecostal Model for Interreligious Dialogue* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011).
38. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (ed.), *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).
39. Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 147–74.
40. Cf. Karla O. Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).
41. Cf. Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995).
42. See Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, JPT Supplement 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).
43. See, for example, Allan H. Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit from an African Perspective* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994).
44. See Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).
45. See Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist, 1993).
46. See Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeyer (New York: Crossroads, 1985).
47. Cf. Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 29–47.
48. Cf. Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 35–39.
49. See Sarah E. Fredericks, “Religious Studies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Robert Frodeman et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161–73.
50. See Matthew T. Lee and Amos Yong (eds.), *The Science and Theology of GodlyLove* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012); James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong (eds.), *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
51. See for example the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (Glopent) and its journal *Pentecostudies* or the Society for Pentecostal Studies and its journal *Pneuma*; also significant are the monograph series *Studies in Pentecostal and Charismatic Issues* (Paternoster), *Pentecostal Manifestos* (Eerdmans), *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* (Brill), *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement* (Deo), and the *Australian Pentecostal Studies* (ISSUU).
52. This definition is adapted from Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 16. However, I do not hold his sharp distinction between inter- and multi-disciplinary studies and see the latter as a necessary step to full interdisciplinarity.
53. See Julie Thompson Klein, “A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity,” in Frodeman et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, 15–30.

54. For this distinction see Klein, *Interdisciplinarity*, 56–63.
55. Ibid., 63–73; Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, 20–21.
56. Although I am indebted to the vocabulary, here I differ from Repko whose sharp distinctions of multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinarity are too static to give insight into the *development* of interdisciplinarity on the ground; see Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, 16–21.
57. See Steve Fuller, “Deviant Interdisciplinarity,” in Frodeman et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, 50–64; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
58. Cf. Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 109–11.
59. See Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008).
60. See Linell Elizabeth Cady and Delwin Brown (eds.), *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2002).
61. Cf. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2001).
62. Fredericks, “Religious Studies,” 167.
63. See *ibid.*, 161–73.
64. See for example Kilian McDonnell (ed.), *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980).
65. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1989)* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998).
66. Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow Through the Middle Way?* Studies in Systematic Theology 11 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2012).
67. Cf. Christian Pohl and Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn, *Principles for Designing Transdisciplinary Research* (Munich: Oekom, 2007).
68. See Allan Anderson et al. (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
69. See Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010).
70. See Jörg Haustein, *Writing Religious History: The Historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2011).
71. See Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
72. See Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
73. See Steven A. Gritzmacher, Brian Bolton, and Richard H. Dana, “Psychological Characteristics of Pentecostals: A Literature Review and Psychodynamic Synthesis,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 16 (1988), 233–45.

74. See Bernice Martin, "The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion," in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*, ed. Richard K. Fenn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 52–66.
75. See Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).
76. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).
77. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 14.
78. Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, 17.

MAPPING THE HERMENEUTICAL  
WATERS: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE  
REVITALIZATION OF INTERPRETATION

*Steven B. Sherman*

Navigating today's hermeneutical waters is demanding. The sheer variety of different approaches, presuppositions, texts, interpretations, methods, and communities is difficult to grasp. It is an even greater challenge to locate the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical landscape of the Christian world. This chapter seeks to map the current topography of Christian hermeneutical approaches with the help of a metaphor of the hermeneutical sea in order to chart the course for a Spirit-oriented interpretation. Hermeneutics, or in a more general sense, interpretation, refers to an exploration of "how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or in a context of life different from our own."<sup>1</sup> For our particular purposes, Christian hermeneutics focuses on the interpretation of the biblical scriptures amidst the challenges of vast hermeneutical waters—a mix of revelation, texts, techniques, methods, communities, and interpretations constituting divergent tributaries, bays, and estuaries. All communities along the hermeneutical waters maintain particular presuppositions and practices, including theological and hermeneutical commitments.<sup>2</sup> Some members in the broader evangelical world, particularly pentecostal and charismatic interpreters, emphasize the significance of the Spirit in providing truthful and relevant ecclesial and individual interpretations of God's word and world. However, not all communities place equal importance on the pneumatic and pneumatological dimension of hermeneutics. In this chapter, I suggest that a Spirit-oriented hermeneutic is essential for successfully navigating the interpretive waves in the hermeneutical sea.

My focus is on the Evangelical Estuary, although the metaphor could be widened to Christian hermeneutics in general, to suggest that the Spirit is an essential source for powering the revitalization of hermeneutics in the Christian world. Put differently, faithful Christian interpreters are called to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church and the churches. This affirmation raises a number of fundamental hermeneutical questions: What is the place of the Spirit in our community? How are we to know what the Spirit is saying to the church and the churches? How do we facilitate the Spirit's activity amidst the broad range of hermeneutical positions? What role does the community and the individual play in this interpretive process? Does the pneumatological warrant demand a discerning of spirits in order to ascertain the truthfulness of our interpretations?

To address these concerns, I map five hermeneutical territories and their respective "topography" with regard to Spirit-oriented hermeneutics. The metaphor of mapping (or remapping) is useful to reveal not only the existence and extent of boundaries, but also the possibility of cooperation and participation in other locales (i.e., fields or disciplines) of the hermeneutical task.<sup>3</sup> Within this metaphor, the Christian map of hermeneutics has generally emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit for knowledge, interpretation, discernment, and understanding (see Rom. 8:22–27; 1 Cor. 2:15; 12:10, etc.). Identifying the Spirit as "wind" in this metaphor not only affirms a foundational biblical motif but also suggests that the Spirit is always involved in navigating the hermeneutical waters in some form—ranging from gentle breeze to whirlwind—amidst the particular hermeneutical communities. We might say that the Spirit hovers over and penetrates the whole estuary. Immersion in Christian hermeneutical waters depends deeply on the use made of the wind. Thus, the estuary represents both pneumatic ontology and activity (e.g., the presence, power, and prompting of the Spirit) and human being and performance (e.g., the trust, thinking, and teaching of the community and the interpreter). Although a panoramic Christian lens might show agreement that the Spirit is involved in some way in interpreting God's word and world, the different ways in which this is understood has not yet been fully charted. This chapter focuses on the specifically pneumatological emphasis of contemporary Evangelical hermeneutics and attempts to map those zones and their range of interpretations.

The Evangelical Estuary's toponymy includes five communities mapped on the following pages. These communities are distinguished by their deliberate engagement with the sea, their depth of engagement with the hermeneutical waters and the wind of the Spirit: Land-dwellers (Community 1), Shallow-enders (Community 2), Surfers

(Community 3), Sailboaters (Community 4), and Open-sea Swimmers (Community 5). These communities are somewhat porous, and members are free to “move” out of and into different locations. While various factors challenge and complicate such moves from one hermeneutical community to another, acknowledging the dissimilar mobility of participants in different groups is a central task of this exercise. The procedure for mapping these communities encompasses identifying and evaluating general and distinctive hermeneutic topographies, showing how different communities make use of pneumatology, and assessing (in light of the above sightings) how each community contributes toward interpretive revitalization by way of the Spirit. My central concern is therefore to characterize how particular confessional locales can best understand the Spirit as a source for revitalization. My modest goal is to create no more than a metaphor for different hermeneutical approaches and perspectives that allows for integration and assessment of the pneumatological lens of interpretation. I hope to present this metaphor as an illustration for the kinds of hermeneutical exercises carried out in the remainder of this collection. This essay is therefore more imaginative than prescriptive; it needs to be filled in with the various hermeneutical positions of the subsequent chapters.

### COMMUNITY 1: LAND-DWELLERS

Land-dwellers are landlubbers who dislike the perceptible hazards of the hermeneutical waters with its multiplicity of authorities, instruments, and methodologies. The hermeneutical waters represent murky, unstable, unnecessary, and potentially treacherous sources, authorities, and ways of thinking—all of which must be avoided in order to preserve the purity of both the fresh water and the land. Land-dwellers believe that the world of hermeneutics is too problematic, complicated, agnostic, deceptive, toxic, or evil to be encountered. In short, it is the part of the world that Land-dwellers are called to shun. The full reliance on the land represents the affirmation of divine revelation and core Christian dogmas and doctrines (such as the Trinity, the centrality of Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, and the significance of conversion) including disputed secondary and tertiary doctrines (such as theological methods, atonement theories, forms of church government, and cultural engagement). Leaders of this community typically see themselves as the “watch group” of the whole estuary, although most often they focus attention exclusively on conformity within their own community. The primary bond among Land-dwellers is belief in the absolute correctness of their doctrinal

position; they confidently assert flawless understanding, having no need for critique or correction from other communities. Thus, many variant smaller groupings within this land-based community may be at odds with one another despite their agreement on central or foundational theological and hermeneutical commitments.

While the Spirit blows across the territory, some landlubbers seem to detest the wind, especially as it exerts force to drive them away from the fruitless obstructions (intransigent doctrines) and injurious entanglements (divisive dogmas) of the land. To meet this challenge, these Land-dwellers construct barricades that keep out the Spirit and the demands and effects of a Spirit-oriented hermeneutics. Their fortresses defend against all challenges while attempting to control and channel the wind of the Spirit for interpretive purposes that support exclusively landlubbing (i.e., subsidiary doctrine-oriented) exegesis. For these Land-dwellers, the Spirit seems largely constrained within the pages of the Bible or to soteriological concerns understood in particular (doctrinal) ways. Pneumatology is typically restricted to the inspiration of Scripture and in service to individual conversion to Christ and sanctification of the church (especially particular models of inspiration, conversion, and sanctification). Thus, the Spirit is understood as involved mainly in particular salvific and ecclesial activities. There is little room for expanding the Spirit's role further toward the hermeneutical waters. For many in this community, the Spirit ceased long ago from imparting gifts, healings, miracles, and other present and eschatological manifestations. Spiritual movements and outpourings were no longer necessary with the completion of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for these Land-dwellers, it seems accurate to say there is "a subordinate, secondary role assigned to the Holy Spirit, who is thrust aside and controlled."<sup>5</sup> Pentecostal and charismatic interpreters, despite their pneumatic emphasis, can also reside among Land-dwellers when wind and water—Spirit and hermeneutics—are disconnected; interpretation and spiritual discernment are then seen as unrelated tasks. In extreme cases, the Spirit is credited with building newly formed deposits (i.e., doctrines) made of sand particles (exceptionally divergent articles).<sup>6</sup> For these members, there is no need for study, reflection, or interpretive evaluation since the Spirit is directly guiding each Land-dweller's life. They are reluctant to remember the Spirit as the constant source of life, the wind that swept over the water in the beginning of creation (a plausible translation of Gen. 1:2), thus forgetting their continuing dependence on the power and cosmic activities of the Spirit by means of a pneumatologically reductionist hermeneutic, which attempts to calm the wind and to shrink its effects.

Nevertheless, there remain real possibilities for hermeneutical revitalization in this community. First, renewal may come primarily via deeper and wider exegetical study and application of biblical teachings concerning the Spirit's work in conversion, gifting and helping leaders, sanctification, proclamation, and convicting the world of sin.<sup>7</sup> Engaging in a more systematic study of pneumatology—especially via Scripture and ecumenical creeds as well as Christian intellectual history and constructive contemporary approaches within other communities—could serve to help revitalize the churches in this community.<sup>8</sup> Second, some revitalizing effects may be experienced by Land-dwellers willing to explore other parts of the land—stepping outside (even if temporarily) ensconced, exclusionary confessional or denominational strictures and relationships and into other landlubbing ecclesial communities closer to the water. The risks include losing the comfort of land and its associations, for instance, reliance on dogmas, institutions, and friends. Nevertheless, by increasing exposure to other hermeneutical groups also affirming core Christian dogmas and doctrines, yet holding fast to divergent secondary, tertiary, and discordant doctrines, the Spirit can propel authentic, transformational relationships that carry the possibilities of dismantling divisive views while forging more cooperative and wider vistas of understanding and mutual interpretation.

Ultimately, Land-dwellers need to step into the hermeneutical waters to experience more of the wind and waves of the Spirit. Short of this, they must permit the gentle breeze to blow across the land more freely, allowing the Spirit's prodding to eliminate more problematic and destructive obstacles from the territory, such as doctrines that deny the conjoining of interpretation and spiritual discernment.<sup>9</sup> Land-dwellers can experience hermeneutical revitalization in their churches by increased sensitivity to the wind's presence, including the Spirit's desire to bless them with fresh experiences of divine immanence—drawing them into a deeper love for God and others, growth in wholeness, increased power for living, and joy unspeakable.

## COMMUNITY 2: SHALLOW-ENDERS

Nearest to Land-dwellers are the Shallow-enders. The hermeneutical stance from this ankle-to-waist-deep locale is appreciably different from that of the land. Shallow-enders intentionally seek to get wet—even if not fully immersed in hermeneutical demands. They recognize the backshore as a reductionist, defensive, and intransigent beachhead of doctrine that avoids the challenges of understanding and interpreting texts in a Spirit-oriented community. Not content to dwell



on land, Shallow-enders have propelled forward into aqua blue and greater participation in the Spirit's hermeneutical calling, cautiously venturing out into the warmest bay water just inside the breaking hermeneutical waves and in close proximity to the perceived safety of the shoreline. Members engage in hermeneutical "wading" (for example, utilizing various Bible study tools such as commentaries and background materials sometimes authored by members of alternative communities) to enhance their understanding of the original content and context of biblical writings and how such might be applied today. Exposure to the wind entails hermeneutical waiting—lingering expectantly for the wonders and signs of the Spirit.

The community as a whole is unified by shared commitments including an allegiance to Scripture and central dogmas and doctrines of the Christian faith and a basic level of hermeneutics that includes moderate openness to a critical acceptance of interpretive and contextual diversity in the church. Shallow-ender tools for entering the bay waters include modest personal safety devices in case stepping out too far results in losing contact with the submerged soil and one wishes to return to shore. In our metaphor, these devices represent various language tools, select Bible commentaries and background materials, and perhaps theological and pastoral resources—exclusively (or mostly) of a conservative Evangelical outlook. Shallow-enders comprise both renewalists and non-renewalists, and depending on the particular group, these sources may include decidedly Spirit-oriented approaches. Pentecostal and charismatic communities are found in these shallow waters typically in ways that portray a self-gratifying interest in biblical interpretation without full commitment to the hermeneutical task.

For Shallow-enders, the Spirit is the agent of God, preeminently active in connection with the gospel of Christ, effecting personal conversion, and sanctifying the church (perhaps primarily focusing on individual members). The Spirit is present, illuminating the Word—embodied and written, and for some, proclaimed—"drawing people to God and Christ and revealing the work and love of God for humanity."<sup>10</sup> And while the Spirit is viewed and discussed routinely in ecclesial terms (gifting leaders or leading believers) rather than theological concerns (extending God's reign in the world), doctrines concerning the Spirit's ubiquity and role in creation are widely affirmed.

Consequently, Shallow-enders occasionally and cautiously allow deeper hermeneutical waves (e.g., the Hermeneutical Circle or Spiral) to impact their outlook. Distinctions emerging on the water's surface include beliefs about the wind's (i.e., Spirit's) value and purpose in the exegetical, interpretive, and hermeneutical work involved in

interpretation (even if shallow). Differences are evident among the wading community in response to pneumatological questions; for example, “Is waiting on the Spirit valid and vital?” Nevertheless, Shallow-enders remain convinced that they accurately interpret biblical bedrock and theological sediment, including pneumatic impressions, without engaging further in deep hermeneutical commitments. Most waders tend to subject secondary, tertiary, and other peripheral doctrines to the Spirit-inspired Scriptures and the core theological content arising from the Bible as widely recognized by their Christian heritage. The Spirit can use this recognition to increase hermeneutical humility, further exposing submerged hubris and interpretive intolerance in hopes of generating hermeneutical hospitality.<sup>11</sup> The community remains guardedly open to supplemental insights from other communities and therefore to the Spirit’s revitalizing moves.

This openness to assimilation—albeit rarely viewed as a corrective to a deficient system but instead as additional backing, support, or warrant for it—progresses in a more hopeful hermeneutical direction as it deepens and augments otherwise static interpretive views and provides for increased receptivity to the Spirit’s work. Incorporating insights from deeper hermeneutical commitments can serve to supplement the Shallow-enders’ exclusive reliance on the inspiration and illumination of Scripture and early ecclesiastical reflection. While Spirit-infused revitalization for this community likely will remain at more select local or territorial levels, this guarded welcoming of the hermeneutical wind raises the prospects for renewing the community—including moving the more enthused members into deeper interpretive places.

Regrettably, many Shallow-enders remain in a perennial “state of wading” without diving deeper and being immersed in critical interpretive engagement with other hermeneutically involved communities. Mere wading can increase propensity for misperceiving the actual depth of understanding (of word and world). For instance, possessing knowledge of biblical languages and backgrounds without correspondence to the broader theological and hermeneutical demands can leave waders trusting naively in biblical exegesis apart from the spiritual discernment necessitated by the deep hermeneutical waters. Overcoming these misperceptions requires the community to abandon its reluctance to reenvision its hermeneutical framework and to follow methodological undercurrents that deepen its hermeneutical imagination.<sup>12</sup> Together, Shallow-enders can experience revitalization of hermeneutics through greater emphasis on exploring more deeply the core doctrines, dogmas, and conversion experiences found in the fresh waters (i.e., Scriptures) dispensed by the Spirit, and well

as by attuning to the Spirit's direction upon the hermeneutical waters toward new and renewed understandings in different sociocultural contexts. Hermeneutics in community and collaborating with other interpretive communities can serve to expand the Spirit's mission in bringing interpretive improvement and hermeneutical hospitality to the household of God. Still, little room exists for a more expansive and robust Spirit-infused hermeneutic that would further revitalize interpretation unless the state of wading is replaced by delving more deeply into the hermeneutical waters stirred by the Spirit.

### COMMUNITY 3: SURFERS

In the middle of the estuary we find a community of hermeneutical Surfers, located far from the two opposites of Land-dwellers and open-sea Swimmers and between two adjacent, less polarizing populations. Surfing is a delicate combination of wind and water, involving the Spirit in navigating the challenges of the hermeneutical voyage. Surfers consistently endeavor to ride the incoming various Spirit-formed waves of interpretation (the variegated biblical and cultural issues requiring explanation and understanding). The waves range from ripples to big breaks (varying magnitudes and differing levels of difficulty), with the biggest ones making for seemingly perilous rides. The wind blows across the whole hermeneutical community, stirring them to experience the "thoroughgoing interplay of Spirit, Word, and Community in the processes of theological interpretation."<sup>13</sup>

For Surfers, the Spirit is relational—a divine person of the Trinity and divine relationality that governs also God's relationship with humanity. In this relational community, the Spirit's call is for unity, not uniformity—unity in diversity.<sup>14</sup> Surfers comprehend that the Spirit's cosmic role includes Lord and giver of life—in both original creation and its continued government. The continuing wind of the Spirit, including "evangelization, justice, and healing,"<sup>15</sup> shapes the waves of the hermeneutical waters. This broad understanding of the Spirit's activity in the world is reflected in the Surfers' open stance to engage the spiritual powers and cultural problems with poise; they trust that by effectively surfing the wind-energized waves, they are contributing to the Spirit's work of actualizing God's mission in the world.<sup>16</sup> The community confesses that the wind is the Spirit of truth that is making the words of divine revelation actual and effective in concrete situations and circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

Surfers see the Spirit as the divine agent in the church, actively working to bring all to repentance (see 2 Pet. 3:9) and to grow in

spiritual formation (see 1 Thess. 4–7).<sup>18</sup> They appreciate the Spirit’s various activities to bring about unity in the whole estuary and beyond (see Eph. 4:2–5). For Surfers, the Spirit is the catalyst, wind, or power in the interpretive process, and thus essential to their hermeneutical method.<sup>19</sup> They seek to listen to the stories of fellow Surfers encountering the Spirit and its effects on the waves of interpretation, which include the important reminder not to forsake the waters for dry land or to get lost in the open hermeneutical sea. While the community sees the Spirit as continuing to speak through and enliven the biblical text—helping them grasp its significance and potentially opening up revelation for immediate applications today—they also affirm the Spirit’s original testimony in Scripture as valid for all time; it cannot be replaced or canceled by later authority since it constitutes the criteria for discerning spirits and evaluating revelations encountered in the midst of the waves today.<sup>20</sup>

Surfers embrace the pneumatological demand that the Spirit desires their dependence on God and interdependence in community (see 1 Pet. 4:8–10). A self-denying concern for fellow Surfers is linked with personal experimentation and expertise (see Phil. 2:1–4), creating interpretive opportunities and discovery within a Surfer’s “rule”<sup>21</sup> reflecting the Christian “rule of faith.”<sup>22</sup> The wave-riding community is able to contribute a sort of hermeneutical “map,” pointing out orthodox convictions and discerning present pneumatic activity on the waves.<sup>23</sup> As Surfers continually seek hermeneutical discernment and interpretive abilities, they can serve as “cartographers” for the community (and other communities) as they map various interpretive methods and practices in the hermeneutical sea.<sup>24</sup> Rugged individualism detracts from the community’s efforts by casting off the basic rule of discipline (see Titus 3:10–11) and hermeneutical responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

Pentecostal and charismatic Christians are found in this locale in the churches and in the academic community. Hermeneutical knowledge, understandings, and skill-levels ebb and flow among these Surfers; inexperienced grommets are wise to follow more experienced wave-riders. In this way they learn the essential criteria for various stages of interpretive wave-catching. As part of this training, grommets acquire a greater ability to discern and respond to the Spirit’s current moves while also not being blown off course or crashing onto sand (for example, losing sight of the Spirit-infused tributaries of divine revelation and core Christian beliefs). Taking the drop (i.e., getting up on the interpretive wave and dropping down the face of it) demands intentional commitment and Spirit-oriented hermeneutical effort—while also learning to handle the occasional wipeout. “Squid”

(new Surfers) first must apprentice to more seasoned Surfers if they hope to lead and teach others one day (see 2 Tim. 2:1–3). In this way, all wave-riders may maneuver fruitfully the hermeneutical waters—yearning and learning to discern the direction of the Spirit together.

Most Surfers acknowledge their interpretive limitations and tendencies, keenly aware of the hermeneutical environment.<sup>26</sup> When this humility surfaces, deep understanding and wisdom arises from knowing both the Spirit and the self, as well as the demands of the waters.<sup>27</sup> The few Surfers who appear territorial (as if owning the hermeneutical waters<sup>28</sup>) need to consider carefully that not all hermeneutical boards, waves, breaks, or conditions are the same; the wind gives and blows as it wills (see John 3:7–9). Surfers habitually update hermeneutical skills and equipment. New helpful tools available today can be incorporated into current wave-riding (interpretation) methods,<sup>29</sup> while some older interpretive systems need replacing (e.g., exclusive word-study approaches). Avoiding stagnation within the community requires (re)commitment to Spirit-directed revitalization of interpretation.<sup>30</sup> After all, surfing is neither wading nor swimming. These core theological and pneumatological commitments shape interpretive waves for Surfers—encouraging Spirit-directed discipleship within the community, while spilling over into other hermeneutical groups.<sup>31</sup>

#### COMMUNITY 4: SAILBOATERS

Hermeneutical Sailboaters are located further out than Surfers on the hermeneutical sea yet still inside the outermost boundaries of the estuary bay. Sailing is utterly dependent on the wind, not only for movement but also for direction. Where the conditions for wind and water vary so widely, hermeneutics is naturally identified by a wide spectrum of positions, generally more engaging and subject to wind-driven interpretations than communities closer to land. Sailboaters are more comfortable with the challenges of texts, interpretations, and methods than with perceived inadequacy of purely scriptural and doctrinal commitments closer to land.<sup>32</sup> Yet, disagreements among Sailboaters persist aboard and between each craft: especially concerning the type of sail (method for making use of the Spirit for interpretation) and other gear (for instance, scientific theories) deemed best for encountering variations in the wind and maneuvering across the waters. Protracted disputes and sometimes radical changes of position occur among vessel occupants, entailing new or unpredictable directions for the boats (for example, trajectories toward process, liberal, liberationist, post-evangelical, or other strong currents). Still, willingness to bring

aboard a plethora of interpretive models, including dialogue with others holding diverse presuppositions or contrasting convictions about the way of the hermeneutical waters, tends to make generous and tolerant engagement centermost for many passengers.

For Sailboaters, the Spirit is understood more in the broad terms of the “spirit of truth” than the confessional insistence on the “Spirit of Jesus.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, the concept of “truth” can vary substantially among Sailboaters; for instance, according to process navigators, theology—including pneumatology—is preeminently about immanence and dynamism.<sup>34</sup> While this pneumatic insight holds true in some ways similar to aspects of the surfing community (the wind constantly blows over the hermeneutical waters), pneumatology farther out can also function in ways quite different from (and sometimes against) the more historically prevailing winds of the Spirit understood in trinitarian, salvific, and ecclesial terms. In the sailboating community, the wind is right only when it blows in ways consistent with the current contextual situation (for instance, the latest scientific findings or cultural shifts). Consequently, the sail must remain wide open at all times so that it may move the vessel in the desired interpretive direction. Depending on the particular hermeneutical vessel or its crew members, hermeneutics entails maintaining at least minimal sight of the surf and warmer bay waters (distinctly Christian), tributaries, and land (doctrinal convictions) while exploring potentially wind-caused (Spirit-induced) waves further out in the hermeneutical sea. Sailboaters stay keenly aware that losing even a marginal view of the wave-surfing area (and inward) can result in a serious hermeneutical occlusion. A hermeneutics of the Spirit thus expanded always requires interrelationality with a hermeneutics of the Word of God, “most clearly seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the living Word of God” and a hermeneutics of community, forming together a crucial “trialectic interplay of Spirit, Word, and Community.”<sup>35</sup>

Interpretive openness and flexibility are asserted as ideals for hermeneutical sailboating. Benefits of this approach include the ability and willingness to explore new territory; to engage in numerous stimulating interpretive encounters, and to embrace (at least some level of) tolerance for fellow navigators in sometimes risky conditions. This broad perspective offers members a sense of hope grounded in the possibilities for “knowing reality” and “finding truth” anew in different and wider interpretive possibilities—many of which require an expansive pneumatological imagination.<sup>36</sup> The journey itself is an important part of the hermeneutical process, since those aboard are seeking understanding and truth—even if some view these commitments as more

local and contextual than universal and objective. For others, there indeed remains absolute “Truth” to be sought, found, and followed—even in these deeper hermeneutical waters and sometimes despite the unpredictable leading of the Spirit (or other spirits).

In these conditions, Sailboaters are regularly at risk of being swept out to sea by unfamiliar winds—losing themselves in hermeneutical riptides and being tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine (see Eph. 4:14). Their position is neither anchored (categorically connected to the dogmas and doctrines of the tributaries and the land) nor intentionally committed to purely open-ended drifting into the all-inclusive hermeneutical ocean. Pneumatology here is essential to hermeneutics yet frequently lacking commitment to definition by Christian tradition, history, and biblical revelation.

The Spirit-orientation of Sailboaters is characterized by generally more wide-ranging hermeneutical approaches—including the Spirit’s immediate activities in the community and the individual. Pentecostal and charismatic interpreters are found in this community whenever the pneumatological warrant of hermeneutics is interpreted in broad spirit-oriented terms beyond traditional, historical, and doctrinal convictions. Consequently, it is not unusual for Sailboaters to invite and engage with different (and dissonant) interpretive voices. Such hermeneutical hospitality creates opportunities for dialogue—on pneumatological matters as well as others—with members identifying with different persuasions.<sup>37</sup> These interdisciplinary, interrelational, and interdenominational encounters may contribute to further (re)forming of pneumatological perspectives. On the other hand, Sailboaters must at least maintain clear connections with the wind-formed waves and tributaries of land in order to contribute to a Christian pneumatologically funded hermeneutical revitalization.

Pneumatological persuasions among some Sailboaters, however, do not commit them to charting a distinctively Christian Spirit-oriented course. Tasting broader hermeneutical seas infects some passengers with a functionally non-confessional, non-evaluating interpretive ethos. In extreme instances, Sailboaters expose this bias against universal or objective claims respecting the Spirit’s hermeneutical involvement, which may demonstrate preference for dialogue and diplomacy over declaration and disciple-making, for mapping without measuring, describing without prescribing, and comparing without confessing. Ultimately, Sailboaters affirm the Spirit’s ontological immanence—perhaps even as source for interpretive revitalization. However, such affirmation may not always preclude divergence from authoritative biblical and theological sources and authorities as to the

identity and salvific and ecclesial activity of the Holy Spirit. Thus, pneumatic interpretation within this community can appear inconsistent or even unfaithful to the estuarial touchstones. Nonetheless, the Spirit-directed hermeneutic shared by Sailboaters, when enabled by the Spirit to utilize the sail appropriately (along with other boating gear), and remaining linked with the bay's hermeneutical waters and tributaries, provides both the possibility for pneumatically infused interpretation, and protection from capsizing or misadventures further out in the hermeneutical sea.

### COMMUNITY 5: OPEN-SEA SWIMMERS

At the furthest end of the spectrum, out on the hermeneutical sea and beyond the specifically Christian hermeneutics of the estuary bay, we find the community of open-sea Swimmers. While all communities except Land-dwellers engage more or less regularly in some form of swimming amidst the hermeneutical waters, open-sea Swimmers have moved out beyond the shoreline and past the wave breaks in the bay to the unrestrained but turbulent waters of the sea. Some Swimmers in the open sea rejoice in the nondirectional, open-ended "freedom" experience of hermeneutics at sea; others recognize and regret the perilous situation, but no longer look for wave breaks, land that "can't be seen," or for rescue. More hopeful Swimmers occasionally look to the sky with faith that seems to well up from within. The more pessimistic curb their enthusiasm as dominant group thinking controls all hermeneutical imagination. Some swimmers simply follow the communitarian motto, "Just being together is enough"—a reductionist catchphrase functioning as the hermeneutical answer to all interpretative problems.<sup>38</sup> On the open sea, swimmers are at the mercy of the wind with no sufficient tools to interpret, discern, or direct the waves of the hermeneutical ocean.

Some Swimmers seem out of position to see the tributaries or land necessary for guiding them in the midst of contrary (i.e., contradictory) winds blowing out at sea. This far away from the estuary, there is less opportunity to make use of the wind of the bay—the Spirit of the Christian tradition affecting other groups closer to shore. Few ocean Swimmers are gifted or trained in discerning the divine wind amidst other winds; perhaps even fewer effectively contend with the many prevailing winds of the current.<sup>39</sup> While open-sea swimmers often come with the experience of other communities, they generally lack hermeneutical equipment or tools (such as a sail or a board) that could make use of the wind. The bay now seems far inland, and the



tributaries and land have all but disappeared from view. And for the most distant Swimmers, ultimately all wind is seen as one sort of ubiquitous *Zeitgeist* that is part of the natural state of affairs of the world. Pentecostal and charismatic groups are rarely found in this locale, although individuals may have succumbed to risky pneumatic persuasions and replaced the safety of the Word, community, and doctrine with an extreme individualist sense of divine calling and anointing. Attempting to distinguish the particular wind of God's Spirit from others spirits is difficult and distracts from the central affirmations of swimming on the open sea: unrestricted tolerance, unbridled freedom, and in some cases, relativistic religious pluralism. For the most extreme Swimmers, no ultimate horizon beckons and the estuary is longer home or haven.<sup>40</sup>

Several buoyant features of the community surface that deserve attention as reinterpretations and replacements of a Christian Spirit-oriented hermeneutics. First, Swimmers treasure hermeneutical openness, intentionally utilizing alternative interpretive approaches (theological and otherwise); they cannot be accused legitimately of uninformed narrow-mindedness (unless residents view any other approach as entirely spurious). The Swimmers' hallmark is the "freedom of the Spirit" on the hermeneutical open seas yet uncritically instituted to circumvent or even cast off tests of fidelity to divine revelation that all other estuary communities deem essential to authentic Christian interpretive practices. Spiritual discernment and pneumatological imagination become openness and tolerance that uncritically respects all other hermeneutical directions.

Second, open-sea Swimmers are engaged in hermeneutical responsiveness and thought across various disciplines and fields while perhaps in some cases seeking to find connections with Christian faith. No mere landlubbing here! However, the Christian pneumatological imagination has typically made way for a general pneumatological imagination. Openness to hermeneutical approaches, disciplines, communities, texts, and interpretations aids in understanding the numerous, diverse factors involved in the interpretation process, and in gaining further knowledge and competence that might prove to contribute insights to interpretations of God's word and world. At the same time, while these interdisciplinary efforts may demonstrate commitment to the traditional Christian philosophical claim that "all truth is God's truth,"<sup>41</sup> such commitment requires neither a distinctly Christian pneumatological warrant nor a confession of faith.

Third, some open-sea Swimmers mistake Spirit-oriented hermeneutics for hermeneutical boundlessness. These Swimmers find themselves

in the deeper waters for perhaps less justifiable reasons (e.g., peace with divergent estuaries at any hermeneutical price), a few of the more theologically and hermeneutically fit freestylers possess impressive dexterities for discerning the apparent convergence of diverse hermeneutical contexts at certain points. This exertion requires both dialogical depth and conceptual demarcation; and when completed successfully, the groups involved stand to benefit.<sup>42</sup> These Swimmers have provided substantial inlets for interreligious dialogue and insights into various factors shaping interpretive presuppositions and practices (e.g., one's religious background and affiliations).<sup>43</sup> However, the dangers are as deep as the benefits. Extensive swimming in unrestricted hermeneutical waters may well contribute toward utter sea-dependence: provoking fear of returning to dominant or dogmatic positions on land and the commitments of other communities. Ideological dogmas and relativistic dithering routinely form opposing ends of the location in the hermeneutical waters beyond which open-sea Swimmers ought not to proceed further—the resulting consequences of crossing the hermeneutical Rubicon are enormous.<sup>44</sup>

In this visibly vacillating and nonconforming community, the Spirit as source for hermeneutical revitalization is identified neither within a particular interpretive tradition nor in the Christian tradition generally. For many Swimmers, the Spirit “blows where it will”—without clearly communicated hermeneutical pathways or purposes. Open-sea swimming is an individualistic exercise (although done by many) outside the mechanisms of a hermeneutical community. Each interpreter must be unreservedly “open” to affirming practically anything as the Spirit's activity—including what may reverse previous revelation (understood by some as inferior, paternalistic, mythological, etc.). Unrestricted swimming invites contradictory theologies of the Spirit both within and beyond ecclesial boundaries, including various alternatives to Christian pneumatological interpretations. Other Swimmers see the Spirit through ideological eyes, linking the Spirit's activity to their preeminent philosophical program seemingly driven by vested particular interests. Consequently, amidst these commitments the Spirit emerges radically constrained rather than loosed—knotted to ideological liferaft moorings—serving as “cheerleader” for selected concerns and causes: confined by an advocacy straitjacket rather than released as a flawless life jacket for Swimmers possibly perishing in ever-chaotic hermeneutical waters. In its extreme, this outermost hermeneutical location may appear altogether beyond hope for interpretive integrity and understanding of the Spirit's activity to bring hermeneutical revitalization.

In the hermeneutical world of the open sea, the substantive pneumatological problem is a “hermeneutical drift.” Constrained little by the “pull” of the land or the commitments of other communities in the bay, some Swimmers find themselves drifting endlessly in the open ocean of hermeneutical possibilities. For Christian Swimmers, an intentional hard swim back to some boundary marker or safety zones will suffice to avoid perishing in unforgiving waters of texts, interpretations, applications, and methods. A return to a Christian pneumatological orientation ultimately recognizes the existence of multiple hermeneutical methods and practices both inside and outside of the estuary and privileges Christian hermeneutical methods and practices, which trust in the resources of the estuary’s fresh water tributaries (divine revelation) and foundations of the land (dogma and doctrines). A return from the open sea must inevitably not only lead through the waters but also depend on the invitation of and participation in the clear hermeneutical direction given by the wind of God’s Spirit.

### THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL TASK OF REVITALIZING HERMENEUTICS

In this chapter, the metaphor of the hermeneutical sea has served as an instrument of mapping various hermeneutical approaches in the Evangelical Estuary. Each community utilizes a particular hermeneutic for interpreting God’s word and world, composed of some shared and some unique presuppositions, commitments, and contexts that contribute to shaping their interpretation and its application. The topography of Evangelical hermeneutics, here cast in very broad strokes, reveals a variety of approaches to Spirit-oriented hermeneutics ranging from exclusively doctrine-centered to open-ended persuasions and practices. The analogy to hermeneutical waters reveals that in this pursuit, hermeneutical and theological location is distinctly identified by interaction with other communities and a discerning of spirits. For the goal of hermeneutical revitalization, faithful Christian interpreters must become attuned to both the hermeneutical waters and the wind of the Spirit that blows across the wide range of the estuary.

The metaphor of the hermeneutical sea is offered here as a heuristic rather than analytical device, a conceptual shortcut not designed to yield optimal and exhaustive results and at times close to stereotyping. Variations in each hermeneutical community will yield slightly different impressions and often show disagreements on which course is the best choice of interpretation. As such, the hermeneutical waters are in a sense an artificial construct merely designed to assist in the

exploration of the use of Spirit-oriented approaches to texts, communities, interpretations, methods, and practices. Nonetheless, the explanatory value of the analogy allows for its use as a preliminary analysis for the state of affairs of Evangelical hermeneutics and its use of the Spirit. The results may be surprising, indicating extremes of both blatant ignorance of the pneumatological dimension of interpretation and replacement of Christian pneumatology with a general spiritualized form of hermeneutics. The various positions in between may serve to illustrate the range of meaning associate with the Spirit. More importantly, however, they remind us of the important fact that not all Spirit-oriented hermeneutic is equal. Much remains to be done until Evangelicals can speak together about the Spirit in the task of interpreting and understanding God's word and world. The revitalization of hermeneutics may appear clearly as a task involving the Holy Spirit. The realization of this task, however, takes a widely different shape in our different communities.

## NOTES

1. Anthony Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 1, 4; Anthony Thiselton, "Hermeneutics," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 283–87.
2. See Werner G. Jeanron, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); Jens Zimmermann, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006); Steven B. Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014).
3. Cf. Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 27–28.
4. See Jon Mark Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*, rev. ed. (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2011).
5. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 17.
6. For instance, the "born again Jesus" teaching known to have arisen within some Word of Faith circles.
7. See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986; repr.), 531–32.
8. See Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 15–16.

9. See Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable: Power & Renewal in the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984).
10. Cf. Steven B. Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 257.
11. See W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006).
12. See Anthony Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).
13. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 316.
14. See Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 245.
15. *Ibid.*, 240.
16. Surfers also recognized that there are other spirits (who are not the Spirit), which must be discerned (See 1 Cor. 12:10–11, 1 John 4:1).
17. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 223.
18. *Ibid.*, 241.
19. See Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 123–217.
20. See Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 228.
21. See official rules for surfing and surfing etiquette, available at <http://www.aspworldtour.com/pdf/asprulebook.pdf> and [http://www.surfing-waves.com/basic\\_rules\\_surfing.htm](http://www.surfing-waves.com/basic_rules_surfing.htm), accessed August 28, 2013.
22. See D. H. Williams (ed.), *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).
23. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); Jack Levison, *Fresh Air: The Holy Spirit for an Inspired Life* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete, 2012).
24. See Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright (eds.), *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 294–300.
25. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 233.
26. See Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 13–16.
27. See Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.1.1., 35.
28. See, for instance, [http://www.surflife.com/video/webisodes/bra-boys-on-localism\\_11560](http://www.surflife.com/video/webisodes/bra-boys-on-localism_11560), accessed August 6, 2013.
29. For example, considering more closely the relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation, as exemplified in D. H. Williams, *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

30. See Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 414–50.
31. See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).
32. See John B. Cobb and Clark H. Pinnock (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
33. Cf. Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 147–74.
34. See *ibid.*, 149–50.
35. See Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 24.
36. See *ibid.*, 123–217.
37. See the insightful interaction in John B. Cobb and Clark H. Pinnock, (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
38. See J. Budziszewski, “The Problem With Communitarianism,” in *First Things* (March 1995), available at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/08/001-the-problem-with-communitarianism-1>, accessed August 30, 2013.
39. For a clear exception, see Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000). Yong, however, seeks to maintain clearly Evangelical (Pentecostal) Estuary moorings; thus he likely inhabits Community 3 or 4, rather than 5. John Hick, on the other hand, represents certain Swimmers who have moved beyond even the most extreme edge of Community 5.
40. See John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile* (New York: HarperOne, 1998); John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1987).
41. See Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, II.2.15; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.2.15. Cf. A. G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, trans. Mary Ryan (Cork, Ireland: Catholic University of America Press, 1987); Arthur Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977).
42. See, for instance, Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997); Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007).
43. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).
44. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)* (New York: HarperOne, 2010).



MONASTICISM: INSTRUMENT OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT IN THE RENEWAL OF  
TODAY'S CHURCH

*Greg Peters*

For two thousand years the Holy Spirit has been calling Christian men and women into monastic communities that are dedicated to prayer, the cultivation of holiness, sacrificial service, and mission (both within and outside the Christian church). Yet, after the Reformation of the sixteenth century, this divine instrument of renewal largely disappeared from the Protestant landscape.<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, the Holy Spirit has been breaking through the five-hundred-year-old boundaries (theological and otherwise) that have kept the institution of monasticism from reemerging in Protestant Christianity, calling a new generation of men and women to dedicate themselves to a monastic life. This renewal is evident not only in the so-called New Monastic movement or in “secular monasticism” but also in other communities and groups.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I want to investigate the institution of monasticism as a historical instrument of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. I will devote space to two biblical form(s) of monasticism as well as to an etymological examination of a significant Syriac word. I will then examine a Christian concept that I believe explicates monasticism as a gift of the Holy Spirit as well as a concrete manifestation of monasticism that illustrates its Holy Spirit-inspired genesis. This examination suggests that monasticism must be allowed to flourish in the larger Protestant and evangelical traditions in order for the Holy Spirit to use it as an instrument of God's ongoing work in the life of the church and the world.



## A DEFINITION OF MONASTICISM

When considering monasticism, it is important to start with definitions, since many forms of religious life are oftentimes wrongly labeled “monastic.” The English word “monk” derives from the Latin word *monachus*, which is a transliterated form of the Greek word *monachos*. The original meaning of *monachos* may or may not have been more equivalent to the English word “solitary,” that is, one who dwells alone (as opposed to the English word “monk” with its myriad of connotations). By the fourth century, however, as evidenced in a letter of Jerome to a female ascetic named Eustochium, the term was also applied to those “solitaries” who lived in communities.<sup>3</sup> The oxymoron that a solitary would live in a community shows the elasticity of monastic vocabulary.

Around the sixth century, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a Syrian monk and spiritual theologian, preserved the sense of *monachos* as solitary when he writes that the word “monk” should be retained “because of the purity of their duty and service to God and because their lives, far from being scattered, are monopolized by their unifying and sacred recollection which excludes all distraction and enables them to achieve a *singular mode* of life conforming to God and open to the perfection of God’s love.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, according to an anonymous monk of the monastery of Bec in the twelfth century, the word “Monk’ [*monachus*] is in fact Greek and means ‘solitary’ [*solitarius*] in Latin.”<sup>5</sup> Another anonymous author from twelfth-century Belgium writes that the “name [monk] means ‘one’ or ‘alone.’”<sup>6</sup> Thus, historically “monasticism” typically refers to those men and women who either live alone, in a solitary manner, or to a group of men or women who live alone yet together in community.<sup>7</sup> By this definition, however, many institutions could receive that label that are clearly not monastic, such as prisons, boarding schools, university dormitories, or even live-in drug rehabilitation centers. What needs to be added to this definition is that the community lives together according to a rule of life, as evident in the various monastic rules, which includes vows, that is, an explicit institutionalization of the contours of their shared life and apostolate.<sup>8</sup> It seems therefore reasonable that monastics would have a self-understanding that would define them as monastic. This is another way of saying that one does not become a monk or nun by accident but becomes one by intention. Consequently, “monasticism” refers to those persons who intentionally live alone individually or in a community under a rule of life and vows, which gives shape to their daily routine and shared mission in life.

It is important, before going any further, to emphasize the fact that the monastic life, at least in its clearest expressions, must not be viewed as a superior manner of life to non-monastic expressions of the Christian faith. In the words of Petro Bilaniuk, “a monk or nun is seeking nothing more than to become a perfect Christian in a *particular* way.”<sup>9</sup> The monastic life is not meant to be a higher form of being that emphasizes a greater interiorization of the Holy Spirit that is somehow in tension with the exterior ongoing mission of the church in the world. There is no gulf between a so-called ordinary Christian life and an “extraordinary” monastic life; both callings and vocations are spiritual and essential. In the words of the eleventh-century Greek monk Symeon the New Theologian,

Many people hold the eremitical life in high esteem, others the common or the cenobitic life, and others the governance of the people, or education and teaching, or the administration of churches. Different persons earn their bodily and spiritual sustenance in all these ways. For myself, I cannot judge in favor of any one of these states. I would not exalt one kind and deprecate another. In any case, whatever our works or activities, the most blessed life of all is one that is [lived] for God and according to God in each single act and deed we do.<sup>10</sup>

## A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO MONASTIC LIFE

The monastic life is one particular way to live for God. My concern here is, in what ways can we see that the institution of monasticism, in particular, is a movement of the Holy Spirit? My first way of getting at an answer to this question will be to examine two form(s) of the monastic life that are present in the Christian scriptures. I will then look at the use of two particular terms deriving from the biblical images: the Syriac word *ihīdayā* and the Greek word *pneumatophóros*. The former is tied to the Greek word *monachos*, the latter is used regarding the monastic life in relationship to the Holy Spirit.

The beginnings of Christian monasticism are rooted in an individual and/or community’s zeal for holiness. That a Christian would take the commands of the New Testament seriously in these matters is not in itself surprising, but that a whole institution would arise as a result of the ethical commands of the Scriptures and God’s call to “be holy as I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16) is something of note. Yet, when we turn to the Scriptures in order to discern if there are biblical roots for monasticism (which would be one way of discerning its pneumatic inspiration) we are met with some amount of silence. It is nonetheless

generally acknowledged that there are biblical bases for the *form(s)* of monastic life if not for instituting the monastic life itself. That is, if virginity, for example, is constitutive of the monastic life, then the biblical teaching regarding virginity (such as that in 1 Cor. 7) is biblical teaching about monasticism. Similarly, if having all things in common (see Acts 4:32–35) is fundamental to monastic life then it, too, can be considered a biblical teaching that supports, and perhaps even mandates, the institution of monasticism. This way of looking for biblical support for monasticism has an obvious weakness: one needs to know what one is looking for *before* one is able to find it in the Scriptures. Again, read in its context, the biblical teaching supportive of virginity does not seem to legislate it for all people at all times and in all contexts. In fact, it does not seem to have any connection at all to the institution of monasticism as it came to be known historically. Nonetheless, once it has been decided that virginity is a *sine qua non* of the institution of monasticism, then these biblical passages seem to support the character of the monastic life. There is some value, therefore, in examining the forms of monastic life that have been historically recognized in light of the Scriptures. I will examine two: celibacy and withdrawal.<sup>11</sup>

During the New Testament era, there appear to have been some sects (perhaps Jewish, Christian and/or Gnostic) that denigrated the institution of marriage. 1 Timothy 4:3 speaks out against those who “forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” The distinction here seems to be between voluntary and compulsory asceticism.<sup>12</sup> Nowhere in the New Testament or in the orthodox Christian tradition has celibacy been compulsory (except for the office of bishop in the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic priesthood). What we do see in the New Testament and in the Christian tradition is a long history of voluntary celibacy. Even Jesus records that there were some who remained celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matt. 9:12) and in like manner the apostle Paul has a vision for celibacy (1 Cor. 7:25–38) for the sake of the gospel. Otherwise, marriage has been the order of the day for most Christians of the past two millennia.<sup>13</sup> The New Testament gives two potential justifications for remaining celibate: intimacy with God and consecration to Christian service. One example will suffice. 1 Timothy 5:9–16 provides information that in the first century there was already a formalized group of women consecrated to God. These women had voluntarily “enrolled” as widows within the church and appear to have remained celibate, given that younger widows were

forbidden to enroll because their “passions draw them away from Christ.” The purpose of these widows is detailed in 1 Timothy 5:5 where we are told that the widow “has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.” It appears that these widows did not only exist for charitable work but also to draw closer to God.<sup>14</sup> So, in imitation of these widows (and for many other reasons), monasticism almost always adopted the practice of celibacy, which came to be seen as one of *the* defining characteristics of the monastic life.<sup>15</sup>

Second, throughout the biblical record, and especially in the New Testament, there are many examples of withdrawal: Elijah withdrew into the wilderness to avoid the madness of Ahab and Jezebel; Jonah withdrew to the shade of a booth and tree in order to sulk about the Ninevite revival; the earliest disciples withdrew into the upper room after Jesus’s ascension awaiting the arrival of the promised Comforter; and Jesus himself often withdrew into the wilderness to avoid the throng of crowds that followed him as well as to pray to his Father. The model of withdrawal most associated with the monastic life is that of Jesus’s withdrawal into secluded spaces in order to pray and renew his spirit (see Luke 5:16). Prayer, of course, can happen anywhere, but the history of monasticism is replete with examples of monks and nuns relocating to the “desert” in order to pray in emulation of the practices of Jesus. This, in part, explains why the deserts of Egypt and Palestine became so-called cities of monks.<sup>16</sup> Like celibacy, withdrawal became an essential aspect of monasticism early in its history, and monastic scholars often point to the scriptural examples of withdrawal as evidence of either a biblical justification for monasticism itself or at least of a monastic ethos in the Christian scriptures.

These biblical examples or justifications for monasticism do not unquestionably establish the biblical-centered origin of the institution of monasticism, much less that it was a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is *not* to say that monasticism, or at least the *form(s)* of monasticism, are not biblical. It is to say that one can only look to these biblical examples as evidence of monasticism when one already knows *what* defines monasticism. Jesus’s withdrawal into the wilderness is *not* monastic *per se*, but it does provide a biblical basis for such withdrawal. Likewise, celibacy in the Scriptures does not represent the fullness of the monastic life, but it does show that the biblical writers placed value on the discipline of celibacy for those called to such a lifestyle (i.e., voluntary celibacy). It is possible to conclude then that the essential form(s) of monasticism, at the least, are biblical and thereby suggest a genesis inspired by the Holy Spirit.

## MONASTICISM IN SYRIAC CHRISTIANITY

What else might suggest that the monastic life is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church? Perhaps the most well-known verse of the Christian Scriptures is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The English phrase “only begotten Son” comes from the Greek compound *monogené*, literally “alone begotten” or “singly begotten.” The term is also used in John 1:18: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son [*monogenés theos*], who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.” Given that theologically there is so much wrapped up in the word *monogené*, it is no wonder that it has received attention, especially in early Christian literature.<sup>17</sup> For our present purpose, the most important thing to notice is that the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, was begotten “alone” or “singly.” He alone is begotten of the Father and this alone-ness has provided a model for the monastic life, especially in the early Christian church of Syria.

One of the traits that characterized early Syrian Christianity was its harsh asceticism, especially in the form of celibacy. From its foundation, as pictured in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, whose provenance is Syrian, the church of Syria valued celibacy as a distinctive sign of holiness.<sup>18</sup> Although the place of celibacy was often expressed through the explicit rhetoric of rejecting intercourse, there was also a peculiar group in the early Syrian church that clearly demonstrated the emphasis placed on the gift of celibacy: the *ihidayá* (“single one”).<sup>19</sup> The scholarly literature on these ascetic groups is plentiful, and one can easily get lost in the minutiae. For the purposes of this essay I will follow the arguments and conclusions of Sidney Griffith and Robert Murray.<sup>20</sup> Griffith’s main arguments regarding the *ihidayá* are as follows:

- (1) “the term *ihidayá* regularly appears in the earliest texts . . . to designate a class of people in the believing community who occupied a special status in the church”,<sup>21</sup>
- (2) “the *ihidayá* occupied a position comparable to that assigned to widows and virgins already in the New Testament. . . . In fact, the term *ihidayé*, in general, came to include both male and female virgins”,<sup>22</sup>
- (3) “The earliest texts in Syriac to which one may turn for help in the effort to explore the meaning of the term *ihidayá* . . . are from the fourth century, the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat . . . and the hymns and homilies of Ephraem”,<sup>23</sup>

- (4) “For Aphrahat, it is clear, the *ihidayâ* were certainly celibates. . . . Ephraem the Syrian’s remarks are even more to the point. For him, of course, as for Aphrahat, the *ihidayâ* is celibate”,<sup>24</sup> and, most importantly,
- (5) Ephraem refers to Christ as the heavenly *Īhīdayâ*.<sup>25</sup>

Griffith then concludes that “the Syriac term *ihidayâ*, unlike the Greek term *monachos*, which shares part of its range of meaning, is a scriptural term that in the Christian usage applies first of all to Christ. . . . Secondly, in Syriac, this term is also used by writers such as Aphrahat and Ephraem to designate the so-called ascetics in the community.”<sup>26</sup> Murray concludes that there are three Greek words that correspond in meaning to *ihidayâ*: (1) *monachos* (single, as in unmarried); (2) *monotropos* or *monozōnos* (singleness of heart); and (3) *monogenēs* (united to the Only Begotten).<sup>27</sup> At the risk of oversimplification, the point is this: the *ihidayâ* is one who, like the Greek *monachos*, is “alone” or “solitary” and is such in imitation of Jesus Christ himself. In short, in Syriac Christianity, Jesus is *the Īhīdayâ*, *the* solitary, *the* monastic one; therefore, all *ihidayê* are ultimately following the example of the Savior. By extension, then, it seems that Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate exemplar for all “single ones.” Men and women become *ihidayê* because Jesus was an *ihīdayâ*. This tradition suggests that at least some early monks and nuns saw themselves living in the exact manner in which Jesus lived—as a “single one.” They live as single-minded singles because Jesus was singly begotten. The biblical support for the form(s) of monastic life is extended through words with a semantic range that suggests the biblical-centered (and thereby Holy Spirit-centered) nature of monasticism.

## MONASTICS AS SPIRIT-BEARERS

There is a second term that moves our consideration further. As early as the eighth century BC, there was an understanding that individuals could be “spirit-bearers.” In the Old Testament this manifests itself in the writings of the prophets Hosea and Zephaniah. In Hosea 9:7 we read,

The days of punishment have come,  
the days of recompense have come;  
Israel cries,  
“The prophet is a fool,

the man of the spirit is mad!”  
 Because of your great iniquity,  
 your hostility is great.

The word that the English Standard Version translates as “the man of the spirit” (LXX *pneumatophóros*) can be translated as “spirit-bearer,” though in this context it seems that the word means “one who is carried by the wind,” or more bluntly “a deranged man.”<sup>28</sup> This is also the sense of the word in Zephaniah, where he speaks of those “prophets [who] are reckless” (Zeph. 3:4). The term is used again in early Christian literature where it gains a new meaning. The *Shepherd of Hermas*, from the first or second century CE, writes, “You now have descriptions of the life of both kinds of prophets [i.e., true and false prophets]. Therefore test by his life and his actions the man who claims that he is spirit-inspired [*pneumatophóron*].”<sup>29</sup> From the context, we can see that the negative connotation of the word found in Hosea and Zephaniah has now been replaced with a spirit-bearer who is “inspired by the Holy Spirit,” or a “Holy Spirit-bearer.” A true prophet will be a Holy Spirit-bearer whereas a false prophet will not. This understanding is what passes into the later Christian tradition and comes to be associated, in time, especially with the monastic life.

A way in which it is possible for human beings to be Holy Spirit-bearers is explained by a text likely from the pen of Marcellus of Ancyra or Didymus the Blind: “And therefore the Logos and the Son of the Father united to the flesh, became flesh, and perfect man in order that human beings united to the Spirit might become one Spirit. He himself, therefore, is flesh-carrying (*sarkophóros*) God, and we human beings the carriers of the Spirit (*pneumatophóroi*).”<sup>30</sup> From this we see that the incarnation of the Logos, the Son of God, made possible by the Holy Spirit, makes it possible for humankind, in a similar manner, to bear the same Spirit. The Son of God was in-carnated (in-fleshed) whereas humans are in-spirited. This connection is clearly reflected in the understanding of the monastic life with the so-called first monastic hermit, Anthony of Egypt. In the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* we read: “Some say of Saint Anthony that he was ‘Spirit-borne’ (*pneumatophóros*), that is, carried along by the Holy Spirit, but he would never speak of this to men.”<sup>31</sup> This pneumatological emphasis of the monastic life continues especially in the writings of Basil of Caesarea where “the monk is portrayed as a *pneumatophore*, that is, an active receptacle, carrier and distributor of the Holy Spirit

and His charisms.”<sup>32</sup> Of course, saying that a monk or nun bears the Holy Spirit is not the same as saying that the institution of monasticism is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, I would argue that these texts strongly suggest that there is a direct correspondence between the two. Just as we can be inspirited in the same way that the Logos was incarnated, it was monks who seem to have personified this, or at least that is the opinion of some Christian writers. Thus, to be a Holy Spirit-bearer is a sign that one has been given the Holy Spirit, thereby suggesting that the Holy Spirit’s presence and empowerment is necessary for the monastic life.

A few examples must suffice. The desert monk Macarius the Great is referred to as “the Spirit-bearer” (*pneumatophóros*) in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.<sup>33</sup> The desert monk Evagrius was described as a “[Spirit-]inspired [*pneumatophóros*] and discerning man.”<sup>34</sup> In the early thirteenth century, we read in the *typikon* for the *Monastery of the Mother of God of Machairas in Cyprus*, written by Neilos, bishop of Tamasia, that there was “a bearer of the Spirit [*pneumatophóros*], Neophytos by name, who was leading the ascetic life, practicing asceticism in the deserts beside the [river] Jordan, and had become a consummate ascetic, celebrated for his moral excellence.”<sup>35</sup> In the twelfth-century Western church, the monk Idung of Prüfening refers to the founders of the Cistercian order as “agents of the Holy Spirit” (*qui organum erant spiritus sancti*), implying that they are also bearers of the Holy Spirit. From these examples we can see that there is a tradition in Christian history that refers to monastics as those who bear the Holy Spirit, suggesting that the existence of monasticism itself is a gift of the Spirit of God.

## THE MONASTIC LIFE AS A SPIRITUAL ACT

Evidence of tying the Holy Spirit to the foundation of the monastic life is often derived from the pages of the New Testament, where a kind of early Christian monasticism seems to have been known to the apostle Paul. The idea of “spiritual marriage” (*syneisaktism*) as found in 1 Corinthians 7:25–38 becomes in later exegesis a reference to the practice of “female Christian ascetics who lived together with men, although both parties had taken the vow of continency, and were animated with the earnest desire to keep it.”<sup>36</sup> In the Greek-speaking church, the participants of this practice were termed “beloved” (*agapetai* or *agapetoi*), and in the Latin-speaking church, the participants were known as *agapetae* or “virgins secretly introduced” (*virgines*



*subintroductae*).<sup>37</sup> The earliest non-biblical reference to the practice is from the first century CE, and there are numerous references to the practice from the second century onwards. Both orthodox and heterodox ecclesiastical authors as well as secular emperors<sup>38</sup> were familiar with the practice, which had spread to most church provinces in ancient Christianity by the fourth century.<sup>39</sup> Although references to the practice are scarce in comparison to other ancient ascetic phenomena, it is certain that celibate men and women lived together in a chaste relationship for mutual support and encouragement. The praxis of asceticism was embraced by both Christian men and women,<sup>40</sup> but “the fervor with which large numbers of early Christian women pursued lives of asceticism and renunciation is a curious fact in the history of women in late antiquity.”<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested that the renunciation of marriage and family life presented women the opportunity to move outside the restraints of both society and family, extending to them the prospects of a degree of self-determination that was unavailable to them in marriage.<sup>42</sup> This arrangement was necessary since they were unable to obtain such support and encouragement outside of marriage in the prevailing Roman culture.

In Roman society, marriage was a private act that did not require the sanction of a public or religious authority.<sup>43</sup> A marriage that was contracted according to the civil laws of the time was recognized by the Christian church. The undertaking of this private act was primarily for legal purposes since ultimate proof of a marriage often rested on the intention of the parties involved and not on the vows performed.<sup>44</sup> Within this custom of marriage, women found themselves in a difficult situation. Since they were often married at a very young age, they were unable to avoid the demands of married life that included the pains of childbirth, nursing and, at times, the death of their infant children.<sup>45</sup> Besides these burdens, there was also the double standard for men and women concerning adultery. It was accepted that men had intercourse with women other than their wife.<sup>46</sup> However, married women were not permitted similar indulgences. As Peter Brown writes, “Despite harsh laws punishing married women for adultery, infidelity by their husbands incurred no legal punishment and very little moral disapprobation.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the adoption of a celibate life allowed women the opportunity to free themselves from this “double standard.” With the renunciation of marriage they were able to move outside the restraints of the social and sexual expectations associated with it. It was within this milieu that spiritual marriage developed and flourished.

The origin of *syneisaktism* can be summarized by the well-known passage on virginity in 1 Corinthians 7:25–38, in particular vv. 36–38: “If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée, if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry. But if someone stands firm in his resolve, being under no necessity but having his own desire under control, and has determined in his own mind to keep her as his fiancée, he will do well. So then, he who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.” Hans Achelis suggests that the situation here is that two persons of the opposite sex are living in a difficult situation. Though they initially agreed to live together in a celibate marriage, they are tempted beyond their limits of control. The question is then raised, “Can such a virgin, vowed to virginity in a spiritual marriage, be free to marry?” Paul concludes that the virgin can marry if necessary, and in this she would not be sinning. This understanding of the text holds that Paul was familiar with *syneisaktism* and, because he does not condemn it, grants it his approval.<sup>48</sup>

Historically, there have been at least four ways to interpret the passage: (1) Paul is writing about a young man and his fiancée; (2) Paul is writing about a father and his virgin daughter; (3) Paul is discussing a levirate marriage; and (4) Paul is describing spiritual marriage.<sup>49</sup> Though there is not enough space to discuss all of the views here, the one that is the most ancient, and the one that is frequently accepted by modern commentators, is that Paul is describing spiritual marriage.<sup>50</sup> This view was exhaustively first set forth in the modern era by Hans Achelis. Though many commentators reject the “spiritual marriage” view primarily because the earliest known non-canonical reference to the practice is from the second century CE,<sup>51</sup> Carl von Weizsäcker holds that 1 Corinthians 7 is the first reference to the practice. Simply put, he contends that because the practice existed only in Corinth, there would be no other references to the practice at this time. Achelis goes so far as to conclude that the apostle Paul was the one who developed the practice of *syneisaktism*.<sup>52</sup> Many twentieth- and twenty-first-century commentaries continue to conclude that the spiritual marriage view is the best interpretive option. The opinion of many modern interpreters is that: (1) *syneisaktism* existed in the Corinthian church; (2) Paul was aware of the practice and allowed it to continue, therefore, Paul fully supported *syneisaktism*; and (3) the earliest reference to *syneisaktism* is not the second century, but the 50s CE or earlier, depending on the dating of 1 Corinthians. I am of the

opinion that the practice was not only known and developed by Paul, but that it, or something similar, was also known to other early Jewish and Christian authors, such as Philo,<sup>53</sup> the Shepherd of Hermas<sup>54</sup> and later to Ephraem the Syrian (d. 373).<sup>55</sup> Particularly relevant, though from a later period, is the comment of Ephraem in his commentary on the epistles of Paul. He writes that if “there is someone who perhaps has a virgin, and he remains for a certain time, as long as she be in her vow, and he realizes in himself, ‘I am not suitable,’ he should not feel ashamed about time that has already passed. However, one who is steadfast in his conviction, and has fallen into danger of lust and has chosen in his heart to keep his virgin, does good. So the one who gives up his virgin does good, and the one who does not give her up and is continent does good.”<sup>56</sup> Ephraem believed that a man who gives up a virgin is good, but just as good is one who does not give her up and remains celibate.

With these examples, we are able to see that from the first century of the Christian era there were monastics, and they were known to other early Christian authors. They might not have adopted the more common lifestyles that we now associate with monasticism, but this does not make them any less a fit for the definition given above. Of particular note is Ephraem’s phrase, “as long as she be in her vow.” This emphasis suggests that the practice of *syneisaktism* was more organized than expected. That women were taking vows to live this kind of lifestyle is suggestive of the institutionalization of the practice and its early establishment. The early date and inclusion of the idea in the Christian Scriptures suggests to me that spiritual marriage, and by extension monasticism in general, is a gift of God to the church.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me return to the relative absence of monastic life in the larger Protestant tradition. If I have been convincing in my demonstration that the monastic life is a Christian practice, the presence of which can be attributed to the work of God, in particular the Holy Spirit, or if I have at least created space for that to be possible, then let me suggest that monasticism must be allowed to flourish in the Protestant and evangelical traditions in order for the Holy Spirit to use it as an instrument in his ongoing work in the life of the church and the world. If it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, then it must exist in the church. And if it exists in the church, and it is of God, then I believe that the institution of monasticism can serve as an instrument of renewal and revitalization. In closing, let me paint in broad brush

strokes what an evangelical monasticism should look like, and here I am largely in agreement with the late Reformed theologian Donald Bloesch, who had much to say about monasticism.

First, evangelical monasticism must be based on a theology of justification by faith in God alone and would neither have any hint of being superior to a non-monastic Christian lifestyle nor would it be viewed as salutary. Second, an evangelical monastery would be a center for evangelism throughout the world, either engaged directly in evangelism itself or training others to do the same. Evangelism in this context would not only be about the message of salvation but would also include acts of mercy and social justice. Third, evangelical monastic communities would be intimately connected to the church and would serve as its critic and, by extension, a source of renewal and revitalization. In the words of Bloesch,

[In evangelical monasticism] the accent is not on separation and withdrawal but on the penetration of society with the values and goals of Christian faith. The purpose is not to sunder the lines of communication with the wider church but to make an impact on the church through word and life and thereby contribute to its revitalization. The community must sound the call to periodic withdrawal from the tempests of the world but withdrawal only for the sake of return, this time on a deeper level.<sup>57</sup>

The evangelical traditions could benefit from further exploration and application of the monastic life. To encourage such is the intention of this essay.

## NOTES

1. On monasticism in Protestantism, see François Biot, *The Rise of Protestant Monasticism*, trans. W. J. Kerrigan (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963); Donald G. Bloesch, *Centers of Christian Renewal* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964); Donald G. Bloesch, *Wellsprings of Renewal: Promise in Christian Communal Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974); and Greg Peters, *Reforming the Monastery: Protestant Theologies of the Religious Life* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, forthcoming).
2. On the New Monastic movement see Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What is Has to Say to Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008); and The Rutba House (ed.), *School(s) For Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005). On non-monastic intentional communities see David Janzen, *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites, and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013).

3. See Jerome, *Letter 22.34*. Cf. Greg Peters, "Coenobitism," in Robert E. Bjork, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages, Volume 2: C–J* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 418.
4. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6.I.3; Colm Luibheid (trans.), *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 245. Italics added.
5. Giles Constable (ed.), and Bernard S. Smith (trans.), *Three Treatises from Bec on the Nature of Monastic Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 117.
6. G. Constable and B. Smith (eds. and trans.), *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus qui sunt in ecclesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 19.
7. See Greg Peters, "Monasticism," in Glen G. Scorgie, *Zondervan Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 618–20.
8. See William Humphrey, "The Three Vows," in Orby Shipley (ed.), *The Church and the World: Essays on Questions of the Day in 1867* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 502–22.
9. Petro B. T. Bilaniuk, "The Monk as Pneumatophor in the Writings of St. Basil the Great," in Isabel A. Massey (ed.), *Studies in Eastern Christianity, Volume Two* (Munich-Toronto: Ukrainian Free University, 1982), 45. Reprinted from *Diakonia* 15 (1980): 49–63. Italics added.
10. Symeon the New Theologian, *Theological and Practical Chapters* 3.65; in *Symeon the New Theologian: The Practical and Theological Chapters and the Three Theological Discourses*, trans. Paul McGuckin (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 91.
11. Barnabas Lindars, "The Bible and the Call: The Biblical Roots of the Monastic Life in History and Today," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 66.2 (1984): 228–45 (230).
12. Lindars, "The Bible and the Call," 232.
13. See David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
14. Lindars, "The Bible and the Call," 233–34.
15. See, for example, the defense of celibacy in the monastic life offered by John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 433–54.
16. Athanasius of Alexandria, *The Life of Anthony*, 14: "From then on, there were monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city by the monks." See Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 42–43.
17. See Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2 vols. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975–1995).
18. For example, in the *Acts of Thomas* we read, "as soon as you preserve yourselves from this filthy intercourse (i.e., marriage), you become pure temples, and are saved from manifest afflictions" (ch. 12). See

- A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1962), 70–71.
19. See Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 12–16.
  20. Sidney H. Griffith, “Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism,” in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 220–45.
  21. *Ibid.*, 223.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. *Ibid.*, 223–24.
  24. *Ibid.*, 225–26.
  25. *Ibid.*, 227.
  26. *Ibid.*, 228.
  27. Robert Murray, “The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church,” *New Testament Studies* 21, no. 1 (1974): 59–80 (67).
  28. See Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 1076.
  29. Shepherd of Hermas, *Mandate* 11.16; Michael W. Holmes (rev. and ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 408–9.
  30. Translated in Bilaniuk, “The Monk as Pneumatophor in the Writings of St. Basil the Great,” 55, n. 8.
  31. Benedicta Ward (trans.), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 7.
  32. Bilaniuk, “The Monk as Pneumatophor in the Writings of St. Basil the Great,” 45.
  33. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 136.
  34. W. K. Lowther Clarke (trans.), *The Lausiac History of Palladius* (London and New York: SPCK/Macmillan, 1918), 65.
  35. A. Bandy, “Machairas: Rule of Neilos, Bishop of Tamasia, for the Monastery of the Mother of God of Machairas in Cyprus,” in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, volume 3, ed. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 1113–64 (1127).
  36. Hans Achelis, “Agapetae,” in James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York, 1910), 177.
  37. Antoine Guillaumont, “Le Nom des ‘Agapètes,’” *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969): 30–31. See also Rosemary Rader, *Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 62, n. 2; P. R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church, Volume 2* (London: SPCK, 1966), 613, n. 1; and V. Emmoni, “Agapètes,” in *Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclesiastiques*, Tome I (Paris, 1912), 892–93.

38. "Letter of Honorius and Theodosius II on Clerical Cohabitation and on Delation about Rapists of Consecrated Virgins," in Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church*, 612–14.
39. The number of references to the *agapetae* shows that the practice was rather common. Additionally, the geographical locations of these writers suggest that *synceisaktism* was used in most territories of the antique world.
40. Cf. Susanna Elm, "*Virgins of God*": *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 162–64.
41. Elizabeth Castelli, "Virginité and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1 (1986): 61–88 (61).
42. Rader, *Breaking Boundaries*, 70.
43. See Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: iusti coniuges from the time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
44. Gillian Cloke, "*This Female Man of God*": *Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 101–9. Cf. Willy Rordorf, "Marriage in the New Testament and in the Early Church," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969): 209–10; and David Hunter (trans. and ed.), *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).
45. Most girls were married by the age of 16. See Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 14.
46. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 28–29. These women were often of the lower servant classes.
47. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 23.
48. Hans Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae: Ein Beitrag zu I Kor. VII* (Leipzig, Germany: J. D. Hinrich, 1902).
49. For a summary of these four positions see Roland H. A. Seboldt, "Spiritual Marriage in the Early Church: A Suggested Interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:36–38," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 30, no. 3 (1959): 103–19.
50. See Greg Peters, "Spiritual Marriage in Early Christianity: 1 Corinthians 7:25–38 in Modern Exegesis and the Earliest Church," *Trinity Journal* 23 (Fall 2002): 211–24.
51. For example, see J. Massingberd Ford, "Levirate Marriage in St. Paul (1 Cor. VII)," *New Testament Studies* 10, no. 3 (1964), 361–65 (363); C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 183; Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 588; and Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1958), 121.
52. Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae*, 26.
53. See Philo of Alexandria, *De vita contemplative*, 3 and 8.

54. See “Shepherd of Hermas,” 9.11.
55. See Peters, “Spiritual Marriage in Early Christianity,” 222–24.
56. S. *Ephraemi Syri Commentarii in Epistulas Divi Pauli a patribus Mekhitaristis in latinum sermonem translate*, 62.
57. Donald Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 217.





ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW:  
LONGING AND THE SPIRIT IN THE  
THEOLOGY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

*Daniel Strand*

Affections and emotions have come to the fore of our cultural attention once again. After a long dogmatic slumber from serious intellectual reflection, scholars have awoken to the fundamental importance of the affective dimension of human life. Recent interest in affections and moral judgment within moral philosophy, social sciences, and cognitive sciences have coincided with the worldwide emergence of pentecostal and charismatic movements that stress affective forms of spirituality and worship. It strikes me as no coincidence, either, that the work of Augustine of Hippo has also experienced a major resurgence. However, aside from the capaciousness of Augustine's interests, few within the Christian tradition have probed the nature and integration of the affections within a theological framework with more depth and complexity.

In the work of Augustine, especially within his preaching, longing (*desiderium*), which is the homesick heart's deep yearning for fulfillment and rest, is a primary aspect of his understanding of spirituality and moral activity. Longing straddles the divide of nature and grace in significant ways, connecting human desire to love of neighbor, bodily and worldly goods, and the love of God. Whereas many contemporary accounts of the affections offer explanations that are resolutely disconnected from teleological accounts of human affections, Augustine helps us to see how our deepest longings and yearnings are connected to both our created nature and the supreme ends for which we were created, the worship and enjoyment of the eternal God. In this way, Augustine offers a complex and discriminating way of talking about

the affective dimensions of our lives, without succumbing to reductive accounts that assign to affections either a leading or a supporting role. Desire itself is a nuanced philosophical and theological concept that needs to be appreciated from many angles. I have decided to focus on one aspect of Augustine's theology of desire, longing, so that we can begin to take account of the many layers and complex connections that Augustine draws between the human affections and the works of God.

In this chapter, I will not argue for a comprehensive definition of longing, but will rather chart a spiritual course that displays the manifold functions that longing has in Augustine's theology. My discussion is situated among three sections: First, I situate longing within the virtue of *caritas* (charity) and the creational and eschatological framework that illuminates it. Second, I discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in initiating the longing process and its relationship to the important metaphors of hunger and thirst, which relates directly to the vital role that pleasure has for Augustine. Lastly, and as a consequence, I sketch a few of the basic ways that Augustine talks about longing as a practice that Christians must cultivate in various ways. Through these three sections I hope to provide a primer of how Augustine understands the place of longing in the Christian life.

## THE REALITY OF LONGING

Longing is a response to reality, to the way things are, and so we must situate longing first within the world as Augustine envisioned it. *Caritas* is Augustine's term for rightly ordered love of God and neighbor. In a now familiar dialectic devised by Anders Nygren, *caritas* in this life can never be a dispassionate, purely altruistic *agape* that is contrary to all *eros*.<sup>1</sup> This dialectic has done much to shape our discussions of love in ways that would be quite foreign to Augustine. Nygren's rather reductive account of love as an either/or excludes desire from any positive account of love. Desire is reduced purely to *eros*, which is longing "centered in the self and its interests,"<sup>2</sup> thereby distorting Augustine's conception of the link between psychology and metaphysics. To make desire out to be a purely self-centered, egocentric craving within the human person is to miss how desire is placed within the human being as a God-given orientation toward reunion with God, who is the absolute good of all people. If *caritas* is the right ordering of our loves, with attention to the order of things as they are, then longing is the aspect of love that makes love go, it is what springs us into motion, seeking its final end. Now, that longing may become

misguided and disordered along the way, but the desire that fuels our longing and love is designed to be fulfilled in the final consummation of the lover with the beloved.

From the outset of Augustine's writings in the early dialogues, longing has already surfaced as a recurrent theme in connection with *caritas*. In a work as early as the *Soliloquies*, Augustine describes virtue in terms of vision that requires the theological virtue of love "which longs to see and enjoy,"<sup>3</sup> the ultimate vision of God. One gets a sense of the restlessness and yearning of the Augustinian heart from the early works that will find its most poignant expression in the *Confessions*. The whole life of a Christian can simply be described as "holy desire,"<sup>4</sup> "as a questioning appetite"<sup>5</sup> seeking to rest in its end.<sup>6</sup> The form of love in the world, that is, within the conditions of this life, shall always take the form of desiring for that which the heart longs to enjoy. "As long as we are in the body we are on pilgrimage and away from the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6). If you were on a journey and far from your human father, you would be unhappy: can you be a pilgrim, away from the Lord, and feel pleased about it?"<sup>7</sup> The instability and the temporality of earthly goods marks them off as goods not fit for enjoyment but for use only, a distinction made clearly in Book 1 of *On Christian Teaching*, though Augustine softens that stringent distinction in his subsequent work.<sup>8</sup> The satisfying of the human heart will not come through delighting in temporal and mutable persons or things for which it was not created. In his earlier years, Augustine may have thought that happiness on earth was attainable through a program of moral training, but in his later and more mature works, experience and a profound shift in his theological bearings made such sentiments impossible.

Longing and desire are never general for Augustine, because we are always longing for something. This longing is a mark of our created nature and the ends for which we were created. Oliver O'Donovan, in distinguishing various forms of love in Augustine, labels this general longing "cosmic love."<sup>9</sup> It is cosmological because it is love expressed as a natural law of the universe. Augustine describes this best through the analogy of love as weight:

A body by its weight tends to move towards its proper place. The weight's movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards. . . . They are acted on by their respective densities, they seek their own place. Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest. My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me.<sup>10</sup>

Like a scientific law that describes the way the world works, our love carries us toward the end for which we were created. The emphasis in this analogy, with its unmistakable echoes of Plotinus, is on the objective working of the cosmos. It does not, at least on Plotinus's account, have an ethical interest, because it merely describes the way things in the universe work: we are carried by our loves.<sup>11</sup> Longing, at its base, is not merely a desire of the human will, though it is that, but is also an objective force that pulls on the human will, the soul, and draws it back to the source of its being. In this cosmic sense, our longing is an expression of the soul's created purpose to be united with God.

Augustine's account of *desiderium* is placed within a metaphysical framework of ordered goods. The one who longs does not face the created order as an undifferentiated mass that makes no legitimate claims on his love. In fact the longing person finds himself in a world of goods, made by a good Creator, which are to be loved with regard to their place within that creation. Most famously and succinctly, Augustine lays out this Platonic-inspired metaphysics of order in Book 1 of *On Christian Teaching*.<sup>12</sup> His discussion of order takes place within the larger discussion of the distinction between use and enjoyment: "Enjoyment, after all, consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining."<sup>13</sup> God alone is to be enjoyed because the only things that are eternal and unchanging are proper objects of enjoyment, though in his later works he will make neighbors, under the influence of the dual commandment to love God and neighbor, objects of enjoyment, but only with reference to God.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Augustine identifies the necessity of an ordering principle outside of the human will for determining the proper ordering of loves.<sup>15</sup>

For bodily beauty is indeed created by God; but it is a temporal and carnal, and therefore a lower, good; and if it is loved more than God is, Who is the eternal, inward and everlasting Good, that love is as wrong as the miser's when he forsakes justice out of his love for gold. The fault here, though, lies not with the gold, but with the man; and this is true of every created thing: though it is good, it can be loved well or ill; well when the proper order is observed, and ill when the order is disturbed. . . . Hence, it seems to me that a brief and true definition of virtue is "rightly ordered love." That is why, in the holy Song of Songs, Christ's bride, the City of God, sings, "Set charity in order in me."<sup>16</sup>

In this discussion of the fall of the Sons of God recorded in Genesis 6, sin is described as enjoying one's wife rather than God, as a disturbing

of the order of charity, that is the order of “delight” (*delectationis*) and “love” (*amor*), which are both synonyms used interchangeably for *desiderium*. The order of longing had been perverted because the Sons of God sought to enjoy a good in a way that was inappropriate to its order in the ontological hierarchy. In a more succinct fashion, he declares in a sermon, “Whatever God has made is good. Some are great goods, some are small goods, but all are goods. Some are celestial good things, some are earthly good things, some are spiritual goods, some are bodily goods; some are eternal goods, some are temporal goods. But they are all good, because the one who is good made them good.”<sup>17</sup> The longing of the lover is set in a teleological ordering of created goods, with the greatest good being the uncreated God, who alone is to be longed for.

But longing lacks the sense of immediacy and fulfillment that “delight” and “enjoyment” possess. Our love in heaven shall not contain any trace of longing or need, for the instability of our enjoyment of God here shall be replaced by “the enjoyment without interruption of the immutable Good which is God.”<sup>18</sup> Delight and enjoyment will always take the form of longing within the conditions of this world, because longing exists where delight and enjoyment go unfulfilled, where the absence of that which we desire persists. Our enjoyment of God in this life can hardly be called enjoyment in comparison with the enjoyment of God in eternity where we shall enjoy him forever without disturbance. Observing the order of love, even under the most ideal of situations, will never allow true happiness, in its fullest sense, to be achieved because the sinfulness of humanity and the suffering of this life preclude absolute delight in God. Here we find that teleology becomes qualified substantially by eschatology. “As, therefore, we are saved by hope, it is in hope that we have been made happy; and as we do not yet possess a present salvation, but await salvation in the future, so we do not enjoy a present happiness, but look forward to happiness in the future, and ‘with patience’.”<sup>19</sup>

Happiness (*beatitudo*) is possible only through the eternal enjoyment, without interruption, of God,<sup>20</sup> a state that Augustine disallows to our earthly sojourn. Indeed, it is the prominence of longing in connection with the metaphor of the Christian life as a sojourn that increasingly marks Augustine’s later theology. The *Confessions* is significant in this regard as a hinge point in Augustine’s theology of longing. The younger Augustine seems to have been more willing to allow a certain classical understanding of human society as being part of an all-embracing world order that could be achieved through the proper ordering of the self and society to the divine pattern. The

ancient conviction about the connection between cosmological, political, and individual order held that happiness and harmony were comprehensible and achievable on earth, in varying degrees.<sup>21</sup> Whether Platonic or Aristotelian, this assumption was the belief that the good life and perfection of the individual could come about through the right ordering of political community. More importantly, human happiness and perfection could come about through human means. Although Augustine never completely bought into this vision, its traces in his thought are unmistakable. With the *Confessions* we see a distinct turn away from human ability and reason to divine agency and grace. Tensions that had always existed in his thought become more pronounced. The human drive and yearning for rest and fulfillment butt up against the realities of the human condition, its frailty, ignorance, and brokenness.<sup>22</sup> In one of the more memorable lines of the *Confessions*, Augustine exudes the characteristic yearning of a pilgrim sojourning in a foreign land: “Groaning with inexpressible groanings on my pilgrimage, and remembering Jerusalem with my heart extending up towards it, Jerusalem, my homeland Jerusalem my mother.”<sup>23</sup> The theme of the pilgrim en route to his homeland sets the primary eschatological framework for Augustine’s understanding of his life but also the life of all Christians sojourning toward the City of God. One could be tempted to call it a metaphor, but it is actually the nature of life on earth—a heavenward pilgrimage to the city where God is ever present in the company of the heavenly host. Longing within this mortal life exists because of this tension: that we yearn to be present in the heavenly Jerusalem but find ourselves in a foreign land away from our true home.

### SPIRIT, HUNGER, AND PLEASURE

The tone and discussion of longing takes on a very different form in Augustine’s sermons. In the theological treatises, Augustine is often arguing against somebody or some particular view and for the orthodox faith. Works like *The Trinity* are largely speculative, and others, such as *On Christian Teaching*, are more didactic. If we were to only focus on these works, or the *Confessions*, we would miss a significant portion of what Augustine has to say about longing.<sup>24</sup> In his sermonic material, no longer is he advocating a position or explaining the nature of love, he is exhorting and admonishing Christians to live in a particular way in the world. Augustine teases out the ways that longing happens in everyday life, how it is connected with our deep hunger for wholeness, and our natural desire to seek pleasure.

Longing for God, first and foremost, is not the production of the human will, but the gift of God or a participation in the divine love.<sup>25</sup> If our love for God burns brightly and fervently, it is on account of his gift to us as “something uncreated in the soul”; the love of God is the love “by which God makes us his lovers.”<sup>26</sup> Human agency is not swallowed up in divine initiative, but neither is it absolutely free to do as it wills.<sup>27</sup> This is confirmed by Augustine’s constant invocation and admonition of Romans 5:5 to love God and neighbor because God has poured the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Commenting on this passage, O’Donovan rightly draws the pneumatological connection between the Holy Spirit and *caritas*, writing, “For Augustine ‘love’ is not a *nomen actionis*... it is a *nomen personae*, and the ‘love of God’ shed abroad in our hearts is nothing other than the Holy Spirit who sheds it.”<sup>28</sup> In preaching on Psalm 86, where Augustine draws inspiration for his scheme of the two cities, he praises citizens of the City of God as examples to be emulated: “Such ardor was aroused in them by love for the city, and it was the Spirit of God who infused that love, for, as scripture says, *the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom. 5:5). Fired by that same Spirit, let us listen now to what is said about that city.”<sup>29</sup>

The life of the heart, or the “clamoring of the heart,” its vitality and energy, is charity.<sup>30</sup> Charity is not merely affection, but with its presence the heart burns and blazes with a deep affection for God and God’s coming. The heart that “burns so brightly and constantly” is the one consumed with “the great good of loving and longing for the coming Savior.”<sup>31</sup> It is the Spirit that places love within our hearts, but not without the longing that fuels and fans the embers of the heart into a raging fire of charity. On the contrary, when charity is weak and longing absent, our hearts are cold and silent. “The chilling of charity is the heart’s silence.”<sup>32</sup> In the same way that Augustine thinks about evil as privation of goodness, he thinks of charity in terms of our approximation to God’s very self. “If you come close to God, you grow warm; as the Apostle says, you will be ardent in the Spirit (Rom. 12:11)... You can perform no good action unless you are illumined by God’s light and set on fire by God’s Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Just as a stone heats up in the sun or near a fire and cools when it is removed, so our love is set ablaze only through the Spirit, and when we are removed from its presence we grow cold. Just as evil is merely privation of goodness, so our coldness and self-love only make sense in light of our burning love for God. Self-love is a turning away from the true source of love. Our burning is more basic than our coldness. *Caritas* and *cupiditas* (disordered love) mirror each other, because *cupiditas* is the evil imitator



of rightly ordered *caritas*. But the imitation for Augustine becomes obvious because the manifestation of *caritas* is love of God even unto contempt for self, whereas *cupiditas* displays itself eventually through its love of self even unto contempt for God.<sup>34</sup> Two metaphors for longing persist throughout Augustine's preaching about longing: seeing and hunger. The two are connected activities, but Augustine talks about them in different ways.

Seeing is often connected with faith, or the ability to see beyond the material world to the reality that stands behind the immediate material realm, which is God. The ability to see "spiritually" is granted to those who walk by faith, not necessarily seeing that which is present but being able to see that which is not present, which is more true and real than immediate reality. "Let us not be slow to overthrow a sort of idolatry which the frailty of human thought is prone to set up in our hearts," Augustine exhorts, "in consequence of our customary dealing with visible things."<sup>35</sup> As people in the world, our tendency is to fall prisoner to our immediate sensations, images, and ability to grasp things through worldly reasoning. But God cannot be grasped by such means, and such idolatry blinds us to the truth of reality beyond mere physical apprehension of objects and reasoning unaided by faith.<sup>36</sup>

Often Augustine will talk about deceitful illusions and fantasies as the creation of our carnal minds whose vision is not illumined by the light of faith. These fantasies bombard our souls and present reality to us in ways that block the light that would allow us to raise our eyes from the earth to Jesus who illumines our eyes and points us beyond the creation to the Creator.<sup>37</sup> In his Christological reading of the Old Testament, under the influence of the apostle Paul, Augustine reads the Exodus narrative and Israel's wandering in the desert as a symbol and figure of the Christian life. Just as the Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea and wandered in the desert before entering their rest, Christians are baptized, thus spiritually effecting their hearts to understand this present world as a desert in which they live as "wandering exiles, longing for their native land."<sup>38</sup> But the Israelites were unable to see beyond the material world, beholden to a "materialist" understanding.<sup>39</sup> Because the Israelites were unable to break the hold of the "fleshly" vision, they were "materialistic in life, materialistic in faith, materialistic in hope, materialistic in love"<sup>40</sup> enslaved to temporary pleasures and satisfactions, like Esau, who sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils.

Hunger and thirst have a similar connection to longing in Augustine's sermons. We might say that hunger and thirst are forms

of longing or desire, though they are bodily metaphors and are trying to get across the element of necessity that Augustine identifies with our longing; that is, our longing points to a need intrinsic to our being that is as basic and necessary as eating and drinking: "Then there is the charity by which we long, by which we struggle to attain, which kindles our hunger and gives us a raging thirst."<sup>41</sup> And yet, our bodily hunger and thirst are connected only to bodily needs and not to our deep spiritual desire for enjoying God. "What people desire when it comes to food and drink is to stop being hungry and thirsty, but that is only truly provided for by the food and drink which makes those who take it immortal and imperishable."<sup>42</sup> Augustine exploits the visceral sacramental language of the Johannine corpus to great effect, especially Jesus's self-characterization as the "manna from heaven." All people hunger, all people thirst for this bread, thinks Augustine, just as all people naturally desire happiness, a truism that he repeats constantly throughout his writing, so Augustine does not see it as a bad thing that people are driven by a desire for eternal life, justice, or truth for "each of those is Christ."<sup>43</sup>

Intimately connected with the metaphors of hungering and thirsting are questions of the place of pleasure (*delectationis*). In his exposition of the passage from the Gospel of John, "No one comes to me unless the Father draws him" (John 6:44), Augustine puzzles over how the Father can draw us against our wills. Pleasure is the key that unlocks the door. Does God draw us against our will? No, Augustine states, we are drawn by pleasure. "How can I believe by choice?" his imaginary interlocutor retorts. Quite provocatively, Augustine responds "Your will is less important than you think; you are also drawn by pleasure,"<sup>44</sup> attempting to reframe the question. "There is a pleasure of the heart for the one for whom that heavenly bread is sweet," he continues, citing Virgil, "Each one by his pleasure is drawn."<sup>45</sup> Drawing upon Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, what is stressed is not the assent of the will but the intrinsic human attraction towards the truth: "This revelation is the same as attraction. You show a bunch of green leaves to a sheep and you draw her. Nuts are shown to a small boy, and he is drawn: and he runs to where he is drawn, he is drawn by love, drawn without any harm to his body, drawn by the cord of the heart."<sup>46</sup> This is not merely Christian hedonism, because pleasure is not arbitrary; our being drawn to God by pleasure is not for pleasure's sake but because our soul is so constituted as to be attracted to and take pleasure in the truth.

Although Augustine can paint beautifully compelling pictures of God's beauty and the joy of the human person delighting in that

beauty and goodness, he was well aware of the idolatrous temptations of the human heart to “use God in order to enjoy the world.”<sup>47</sup> Our deepest hungers and thirsts are fundamentally oriented toward being satisfied by that which cannot and ought not satisfy it. Our wills are curved in on themselves. In a passage that illuminates this basic Augustinian insight, he warns, “Doubtless, the world is more dangerous when it flatters us than when it afflicts us, and we must be more on our guard when it entices us to love it, than when it warns and forces us to despise it.”<sup>48</sup> It is not despising the world that is the problem, but loving it as a good in itself, rather than as a symbol, a sign, that points toward the creator.

The theatre, which will be a focal point for Augustine’s sustained criticism in many works, most memorably in *City of God*, presents just such a temptation because it plays on human pleasures in a perverse way. By tapping into the deeply powerful control that awe and pleasure have within the human heart, the theater had a magnetic quality that trapped its viewers and kept them coming back.<sup>49</sup> The spectators were addicts of awe and wonder, yet of things that were paltry compared to God’s theatre of glory. In order to draw spectators away from the shows and circus, God has provided a more magnificent spectacle for the addicts of the spectacles: “He used to watch prodigies performed by human beings,” Augustine states, with not a little autobiographical allusion, “let him now watch God’s wondrous deeds.”<sup>50</sup> Augustine understands salvation as something akin to the theater in the way that it presents us with *spectacula* (shows) that ignite our pleasure: “God has put on for you in Christ’s name entertainments [shows, *spectacula*] that have gripped your imagination and held you spellbound, not only kindling your desire for certain things but warning you to avoid others.”<sup>51</sup> Often it is not these base pleasures that are the primary problem, but our satisfaction with counterfeit justice, or righteousness, which is of human origin rather than divine. Augustine sees the human predicament as failing to grasp the meaning of the incarnation, that is, failing to comprehend the justice of God.<sup>52</sup>

## THE SPIRITUAL PRAXIS OF LONGING

The last element I want to examine in Augustine’s theology of longing is the practical nature of his exhortations to long as a form of spiritual and moral formation. Here, the sermons are most important because Augustine moves decisively away from the descriptive posture of his treatises, and even portions of his sermons, where we see him describing the nature of longing, to the strong exhortation

to cultivate “desiring”<sup>53</sup> for God. He will tell his congregations to “send out desire ahead of us”<sup>54</sup> toward heaven, or he will simply call them to “love with me.”<sup>55</sup> The manifold and inexhaustible nature of Augustine’s rhetorical skill expresses the call in many ways, but at the core of his conviction is the belief that longing is a spiritual and moral exercise that must be engaged constantly as both an act of preparation for the future manifestation of God’s presence and a reminder of the nature of the Christian life sojourning toward the Heavenly City. Longing is not just something we suffer but also a spiritual practice done by us; we must intend longing, practice, and cultivate it if we are going to be faithful Christians in this life.

Longing is something that must be cultivated, but contrary to the virtue of charity, or any virtue for that matter, longing thrives and lives only through absence. This negative dimension is key to Augustine’s practical admonitions, for it is by this absence that longing is fueled. In this way, charity is not identical with longing, because longing will pass away, it will not last into eternity in the way that charity will, but, nevertheless, longing is the fuel that causes our love to burn brightly and expand in this life;<sup>56</sup> it is a disposition that is the precondition for true charity. When Augustine admonishes his congregants to long or desire, it is because their greatest good cannot be had in this life, and so to order their loves appropriately toward this good, they must delay their gratification. All of life is one continual act of delaying gratification. Much more than being filled in this life, Augustine imagines, we are stretched and emptied. “Empty what must be filled,” he insists, “what the vessel was carrying must be poured out; the vessel itself must be cleaned: it must be cleaned, even strenuously and by rubbing, so that it may become suitable for a particular thing.”<sup>57</sup> We are exercised through faith, hope, and love, so that we are prepared to receive the object toward which our faith, hope and love are aimed, the object of our longing. “Let us go forward then, walking in hope, hoping for what we do not yet embrace. The exercise of our minds in faith, hope and love makes them fit to grasp what is yet to come.”<sup>58</sup>

A fundamental spiritual problem we face in this life is that we are not yet fit to be filled with God. Our hearts and minds must be reformed in order to receive God at the resurrection of the dead. In a very lucid analogy, Augustine talks about the human soul as a purse being filled to elaborate his understanding of the spiritual practice of longing.

For, if you wish to fill a purse, and you know how big what will be given you, you stretch the purse, whether it is made of cloth or leather or anything else. You know how much you are going to obtain, and

you see that your purse is small; by stretching it you make it that much larger. This is how God stretches our desire through delay, stretches our soul through desire, and makes it large enough by stretching it. Let us desire, then, brothers, because we have to be filled.<sup>59</sup>

He uses the verb “stretching” to describe the effect that longing has on our souls. It is a necessary stretching that is not a mere side-effect of the longing process, because our souls as they are must be reformed in order to receive the good that God shall pour into them. Augustine emphasizes the aspect of delay and desire as a twin criterion for the exercising of the soul. Desire without delay would be heavenly enjoyment, a reality not possible now; delay without desire would mean we are lost and without the object of our longing. Together they create a dynamic tension that creates the flaming love that anticipates, as a lover yearning for his beloved, the fulfillment of longing.

One spiritual practice of longing in the Christian life that Augustine emphasizes often is prayer. Desire and prayer are described in similar terms, and sometimes he makes the two equivalent.<sup>60</sup> As we pray, we desire and long for the Lord’s eternal Sabbath rest, and as we desire our heavenly dwelling, we are in a state of continual prayer. But Augustine is willing to see all the typical practices of the Christian life as in some way or another cultivating our longing. Reading Scripture, being among the church body, singing hymns, participating in baptism, or celebrating the Eucharist are all ways in which our yearning for heaven is increased and cultivated.<sup>61</sup>

Another aspect of the praxis of longing that receives much attention by Augustine is suffering. But suffering is given a new context, for Christians do not suffer in this life meaninglessly, it has been given a purpose and a reason. First and foremost, we suffer because we do have yet to possess what we love. “If we love something and do not possess it, we inevitably feel pain. The only person who loves without experiencing any pain is the one who possesses the loved object; but, as I have said, anyone who loves but does not yet possess must of necessity groan with pain.”<sup>62</sup> Second, and more prominently, suffering has a therapeutic quality. When we enter the service of God, we enter the “wine presses” and “will be bruised, trampled and squeezed, not so that they may perish in this world but to ensure that they trickle down into God’s storage vats. They are stripped of their vesture of fleshly desires as the fruit is denuded of its skin.” For Augustine, “the process of which the apostle speaks has taken effect in them as far as carnal desires are concerned: Strip yourselves of the old self, and be clothed in the new.”<sup>63</sup> For it is the tendency of our flesh to love

the “earthly, worldly, temporal goods, things that were fleeting and perishable.”<sup>64</sup> These things do not bring us joy because they were mutable and changeable, not eternal. They only bring “torments and troubles.” As we enter into the life of a pilgrim in the service of God, we do not escape suffering, but we experience it as both a reality of our station, as pilgrims away from our homeland, and as a sanctifying process that reorients our desires toward lasting eternal things.

Suffering itself is not something that one can will, but a reality that must be recognized so that we might live and desire in a way pleasing to God. If we do not grasp what the purpose of suffering is, what it is designed to do, we will fail to be trained and exercised by it. The metaphors are vivid and brutal: we are crushed like grapes and made into wine; we do not possess health in this life but by being wounded by God’s arrows we will be made healthy;<sup>65</sup> God is a surgeon removing by means of a sharp scalpel the disease in our bodies.<sup>66</sup> But it is Jesus himself who we follow when we walk in the way of suffering, for those “whom God predestined before time began to be conformed to the image of his only-begotten Son, who was an unparalleled mighty grape, pressed out in his passion.”<sup>67</sup> This is the path of the spiritual praxis of longing.

## CONCLUSION

Augustine leaves us, in many respects, with an unsatisfying account of longing, because he pushes against the modern assumption that desires should have some tangible material or worldly correlate so that they be satisfied. To deny the body or mind its fulfillment seems to us to be a cruel and unnatural thing, whereas for Augustine it is just the nature of being in the world prior to the full redemption of our bodies. Paradoxically, when the Holy Spirit is present within us, it increases our longing rather than quelling it. As our love for God increases, so does our longing.

What we see in Augustine is a theologian who connects our bodily desires and affections within a complex psychological, metaphysical, and theological picture involving the Holy Spirit. Augustine is able to locate our human longing outside of mere human desire as a response elicited by our created nature within a cosmological picture of the human being drawn toward God “by the cords of the heart.” The Holy Spirit is the initiator and fuel of all rightly ordered longing, but this does not cancel out our natural hungers and desire for pleasure, which are signs that point us beyond temporal fulfillment to the eternal enjoyment of God. In the end, Augustine helps to describe the nature

of longing as a form of spiritual practice that must be cultivated and practiced in a right way if we are to properly love God and neighbor. The Spirit of God works within our hearts. From a pneumatological perspective, it is to the heart that Augustine will return time and again; since it is within our hearts that faith, hope, and love come together to prepare us and draw us through our longing toward God.

## NOTES

1. See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (London: SPCK, 1953).
2. *Ibid.*, 479.
3. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, 1.13, in *Augustine: Early Works*, ed. J. H. S. Burleigh (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1953), 31.
4. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* (III/14), trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2008), 69.
5. Augustine, *The Trinity* (I/5), trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2012), 438.
6. See John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007).
7. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98* (III/18), trans. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 2002), *Psalms* 83.5.
8. See Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 106–8.
9. Oliver O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 19.
10. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 278. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.1.3 for a similar analogy of the soul and 6.8.1.26 for a talk of the will being “carried away.”
11. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.5.12. The original source, claims John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 173, is Plato’s *Republic* 6.485D6. See also Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 89–91 and O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love*, 19–24.
12. See Rudolf Lorenz, “Die Herkunft des augustinischen *frui deo*,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* (1952–53): 34–60. Cf. Oliver O’Donovan, “*Usus and Fructio* in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 361–97.
13. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1996), 107.
14. See Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19.17.
15. See Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* 27.28.
16. Augustine, *City of God*, 679–80.
17. Augustine, *Sermons* 20–50 (III/2), trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 31.

18. Augustine, *City of God*, 466.
19. *Ibid.*, 924.
20. See *ibid.*, 11.13.
21. R. A. Markus, "Ordinata est publica," in *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 73–74, marks the significant break that Augustine is making with antique political assumptions from his earlier works that were much more congenial to those assumptions.
22. See *ibid.*, 82–83.
23. Augustine, *Confessions*, 257.
24. In this respect I see my article as complementary to other accounts of Augustine's spirituality of desire that take their bearings from the *Confessions*. The *Confessions* is fundamental in every respect to understanding Augustine's view of desire, but it often overshadows his other relevant works, such as his *Expositions of the Psalms* or *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2009), that draw upon longing as a major theme for his preaching.
25. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II.23.2.
26. Augustine, *Spirit and the Letter* 32.56, in *Augustine: Later Works*, ed. John Burnaby (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know, 1955), 241.
27. See Augustine, *Letter* 145.2, in *Letters Volume III* (131–164), trans. Wilfrid Parsons (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953), 162–68.
28. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love*, 130.
29. Augustine, *Psalm* 86.1, in *Exposition of the Psalms* 79–98, 246.
30. Augustine, *Psalm* 37.14, in *Expositions of the Psalms* 33–50 (III/16), 157.
31. Augustine, *Letter* 199.1, in *Letters Volume III* (165–203), trans. Wilfrid Parsons (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953), 356–57.
32. Augustine, *Psalm* 37.14, in *Exposition of the Psalms* 33–50, 157. Cf. *Psalm* 86.1.
33. Augustine, *Psalm* 91.6, in *Exposition of the Psalms* 79–98, 350–51.
34. See Augustine, *City of God* 14.28.
35. Augustine, *Letter* 120.7, in *Letters Volume II* (83–130), 305.
36. See *ibid.*, 306.
37. See Augustine, *Psalm* 37.11.
38. Augustine, *Sermon* 4.9, in *Sermons* 1–19 (III/1), 189.
39. See Augustine, *Sermon* 4.12.
40. *Ibid.*, 192.
41. Augustine, *Sermon* 53.11, in *Sermons* 51–94 (III/3), 71.
42. Augustine, *Gospel of John*, 26.17, in *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 1–40, 463.
43. *Ibid.*, 454.
44. *Ibid.*
45. See Vergil, *Second Eclogue* 65.
46. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 454.
47. Augustine, *City of God*, 644.



48. Augustine, *Letter* 145.2, in *Letters Volume III* (131–164), 163.
49. See the example of Alypius in *Confessions* 3.2.2–4; 6.8.13, who is addicted to the circus, and *Letter* 120.5. See also, Rist, *Augustine*, 178.
50. Augustine, *Psalms* 39.9, in *Expositions of the Psalms* 33–50, 205.
51. Augustine, *Psalms* 80.23, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98*, 170. Cf. *Psalms*, 39.9.
52. See Augustine, *Gospel of John*, 26.1.
53. Augustine, *First John*, 4.6, in *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 69.
54. Augustine, *Psalms* 83.5, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98*, 190.
55. Augustine, *Gospel of John*, 40.10, in *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40*, 603.
56. See Augustine, *Letter* 199.1.
57. Augustine, *First John* 4.6, in *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 70.
58. Augustine, *Sermon* 4.1, in *Sermons* 1–19, 185.
59. Augustine, *First John* 4.6, in *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 69. See also *Psalms* 83.3.
60. See Augustine, *Psalms* 37.14, in *Expositions of the Psalms* 33–50, 157.
61. See Augustine, *Gospel of John* 40.10.
62. Augustine, *Psalms* 37.5, in *Expositions of the Psalms* 33–50, 149.
63. Augustine, *Psalms* 83.1, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98*, 185.
64. Augustine, *Psalms* 83.3, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98*, 186.
65. See Augustine, *Psalms* 37.5.
66. See Augustine, *Psalms* 91.1.
67. Augustine, *Psalms* 83.1, in *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98*, 185.

## HUGH OF ST. VICTOR AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*Lisa Millen*

Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096–February 11, 1141) opens his work, *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, with the following words.

It is written, *For if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good Spirit to them that ask him.* Therefore, the heavenly Father will give the Spirit to children who ask him. Those who are children, seek nothing else: those who do seek something else are hired servants, not sons: Those who seek silver, those who seek gold, those who seek the transitory, who seek things of earth: they seek the service of slavery, not the spirit of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

In this short treatise, Hugh encourages his readers to seek the spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit, which he recognizes as necessary for their spiritual health. *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* must be understood in light of the opening scripture and the explanatory sentences in which Hugh invites his readers to return from their present role as servants to their rightful position as sons, and this can only be accomplished through the healing, illumination, and vivification of the Holy Spirit wherein the soul is restored from its current state of servitude, characterized by sickness, to its rightful position of sonship, characterized by health.

In this chapter, I suggest that for Hugh of St. Victor, the gifts of the Spirit facilitate the healing process in the human person wherein the vices are healed, the virtues are restored, and the beatitudes are experienced. The main focus of this paper is the text, *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (hereafter referred to as *The Seven Gifts*). A complementary

work of Hugh, *On the Five Sevens* (hereafter referred to as *The Five Sevens*), provides supporting details to the study. At the beginning of my essay, I provide the historical context for *The Seven Gifts*. With that background, I present first Hugh's thoughts on the servitude of the soul as a result of the fall. This starting point allows me then to address the work of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of the health of the soul, including the illumination and vivification of the soul, the antidotes of the Spirit, the pain of the healing process, the journey toward health, and the healing of the vices.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The ecclesiastical reforms that had begun in the eleventh century continued on into the twelfth century as the church sought to strengthen itself in a variety of ways. It was the moral reform of the clergy with which the school and abbey of St. Victor was most concerned. In 1108, William of Champeaux established a small community of Augustinian canons along the Seine in Paris. Under the leadership of its first abbot, Gilduin, the abbey flourished and became a center of learning in Paris. It was under Gilduin's leadership that Hugh came to St. Victor sometime between 1115 and 1118. By 1127, Hugh was serving as the magister of the school of St. Victor and had completed one of his major works, the *Didascalicon* (c. 1125).<sup>2</sup> He died in 1141.

The two works of Hugh, which are the focus of this paper, *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* and *The Five Sevens*, were both estimated to have been written between the years 1130 and 1137. By this time, Hugh had completed several works including two of his so-called ark treatises, *Noah's Ark* and *The Making of the Ark*.<sup>3</sup> Around the same time he was writing these short treatises on the Holy Spirit, Hugh was also completing a major work, *The Sacraments of the Christian Faith*.

Joshua Benson provides insight for both *The Seven Gifts* and *The Five Sevens* in his introduction to the English translation of the works. Both works are included in the *Indiculum*, a compilation of Hugh's works created by Gilduin. In one manuscript, the two works are separated by another work, *On the Lord's Prayer*. However, *Patrologia Latina* incorporates the works together.<sup>4</sup> Although most likely written as separate treatises, the texts certainly serve to elucidate each other and therefore shed light on Hugh's theology of the Spirit.

Hugh tells us that he wrote *The Five Sevens* in response to a request from a brother, but otherwise he does not directly state what he hopes to accomplish in the work. Benson suggests the work is a treatise on vices and virtues in the tradition begun among Egyptian monastics and

carried on in the works of John Cassian and Gregory the Great, among others, as a means by which one could reflect upon one's own moral development. He goes on to support a possible view proposed by R. Baron that the work was meant to be part of the *Instruction of Novices* written by Hugh in 1125.<sup>5</sup> The orderly approach that such a treatise traditionally takes would certainly appeal to Hugh's own love of order, which he views as necessary for proper restoration. Margot Fassler points out the great importance Hugh placed on "visualizing complicated theological ideas."<sup>6</sup> *The Five Sevens*, the contents of which can easily be arranged in an orderly chart, could serve as a visual memory device for the way in which vices, prayer, gifts, virtues, and the beatitudes are all interconnected in the work of the soul's restoration.<sup>7</sup>

Hugh does not give an indication as to his purpose for writing *The Seven Gifts*. Because he does not emphasize the hierarchical nature of either the vices or the virtues, the work does not fall neatly into the genre of treatises on vices and virtues.<sup>8</sup> Hugh's intention is not to encourage his readers to fight against the vices on their own, but rather to request help from the Spirit. I would suggest that this work could be read parallel, not only to *The Five Sevens*, which provides a description of the processes alluded to in *The Seven Gifts*, but also to the ark treatises that emphasize the human role in restoration. *The Seven Gifts* reminds readers that, while human agency is important, restoration cannot occur without divine grace.

### THE CONDITION OF SERVITUDE AS A RESULT OF THE FALL

As Paul Rorem points out in his text on Hugh of St. Victor, the idea of restoration, which figures so prominently in Hugh's theology, "presupposes a fallen state, and the fall presupposes a prior state of original creation."<sup>9</sup> *The Seven Gifts* supposes that the "prior state of original creation" was a state of freedom for the sons of God.<sup>10</sup> Hugh suggests the fallen state of humanity to be that of slavery. He defines what he calls "the service of slavery" as the desire for transitory things, such as silver or gold or anything else that is not eternal. Such desires are placed in direct opposition to the eternal, spiritual graces. Slavery is a captivity characterized by the desire for earthly things as opposed to eternal things and as manifested in the seven vices.

While Hugh never lists these seven vices in *The Seven Gifts*, he discusses them in *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*. These seven deadly sins or capital vices, as they are more generally known, are pride, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony, and lust. The vices are

not sins in and of themselves, but a person sins when consent is given to the vices. The vices, on their own, without the consent of the will, are a weakness of spiritual corruption (*infirmetas spiritualis corruptionis*) or a disposition toward sin. That weakness is an illness from which the soul must be healed. If the weakness is not healed, it is only a matter of time before consent is given and “acts of iniquity” are born from the vices. Both the weakness and the following acts of iniquity deserve punishment.<sup>11</sup> Because the vices eventually give way to sinful actions, Hugh calls them the “head waters of the rivers of Babylon” and the “sources of the dark abyss,” because it is from them that all evil actions arise.<sup>12</sup> He then quotes Psalm 137:1–2. The verses are a direct reference to Israel’s captivity in Babylon, the same sort of captivity to which the seven vices inevitably lead in that, without healing, the soul cannot help but eventually commit sinful acts and thus deserve not just one but two forms of punishment.

Hugh presents the captivity brought about by the vices as a progressive journey whereby one vice builds upon another in a process known as *concantenation*.<sup>13</sup> The journey is one of descent whereby the soul, through the progression of the vices, beginning with pride, falls ever deeper into captivity.<sup>14</sup> The descent of the soul is an affective movement wherein the soul, as it is seduced by its appetite for the temporal, begins to dismantle itself as it moves away from itself and toward that which it desires. In a short treatise, *On the Lord’s Prayer*, Hugh calls the seven vices corruptions of the soul’s affection. Here, as well as in *The Seven Gifts*, pride is foundational in that it begins the deformation of affection. Pride drags the affection apart and, in so doing, cuts it off from the whole. As a result, the soul loses its beauty.<sup>15</sup> Hugh defines pride as the “love of one’s own excellence.”<sup>16</sup> To be prideful is to love one’s good as if it were solely its own, without acknowledging the source. Hugh laments, “O pestilent pride, what are you doing? Why do you urge the stream to separate itself from the spring? Why do you urge the ray to turn itself from the sun?”<sup>17</sup> This was Eve’s initial sin in that, as a result of disordered concupiscence, she desired excellence for herself. Eve continued to move away from God when avarice set in, causing her to desire an over-abundance of that excellence. By that time, she was “attracted by her own delight,” and, burning with desire, she ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>18</sup> As a result of her desire, Eve sold herself into slavery. Eventually she took such delight in her desire that she actually enjoyed her captivity.<sup>19</sup>

In the same way Eve moved into captivity, so might the soul of every person, and once the corruption starts, Hugh states, it cannot stop as

the remaining vices, yielding to pride, pour forth grief.<sup>20</sup> Following pride, jealousy sets in as the soul becomes jealous of any good it recognizes in others. From there the soul becomes angry because it cannot possess what its neighbor has. The realization of this lack saddens the soul, which becomes greedy due to its insatiable desire. By this time, all interior joy has been lost and the soul begins to search outside of itself for what it desires, and as Hugh states elsewhere, "Desire is as fierce as hell."<sup>21</sup> The appeal becomes more forceful as gluttony, using the soul's own appetite for the temporal, seduces and lures the soul toward captivity with false promises and flattery. Lust steps in to deliver the final blow. The flesh has become so inflamed and intoxicated that the soul, which itself is weakened and exhausted, has no power to fight against the heat of desire that is quickly overtaking it. As a result, the soul is "disgracefully subdued" and cruelly enslaved.<sup>22</sup>

Hugh sums up the descent into captivity as follows: "Pride puffs up the heart. Jealousy dries it up. Anger cracks it to pieces. Sadness crushes it, and pulverizes it, so to speak. Avarice scatters it. Gluttony infects and moistens it, so to speak. Lust tramples it and turns it into mud."<sup>23</sup> By the time the soul has abandoned itself to lust, the seventh and final vice, it finds itself stuck in mire, unable to move and enslaved to a heartless master. The only way out of this situation is for the soul to cry out to God, and for God to intervene. Otherwise, "there will be no way for its lost liberty to be restored to the captive slave."<sup>24</sup> It is this muddy state of captivity from which the soul, now ruined by vice, cannot rise without divine intervention. If lost liberty is to be restored, the soul must also be restored. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

### THE RESTORING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

According to Boyd Coolman, the process of restoration in Hugh's theology is perhaps best understood as a construction project, or better yet, a reconstruction project.<sup>25</sup> The soul, damaged by vices, must be rebuilt in order to provide a dwelling place for God. The construction motif is a common theme throughout Hugh's works, as it is in the work of the other medieval writers, especially the Victorines. For example, in Richard of St. Victor's *The Mystical Ark*, he instructs his readers to build the ark of the covenant in their souls for the purpose of providing a place for God to dwell. In *Noah's Ark*, it is the responsibility of the individual to build a dwelling place for the divine,

while in *The Seven Gifts*, Hugh places the responsibility on the Holy Spirit, whom he elsewhere refers to as an artisan, who must first build a dwelling place before he can inhabit it.<sup>26</sup> The process of building a dwelling place is an act of restoration, wherein the soul is reformed to its original state of sonship.

This reconstruction works from the inside out, therefore, the Spirit must enter the soul. This entry is not peaceful because what the soul possesses, that is vices, is completely contrary to the antidote that the Spirit possesses, the gifts of the Spirit. As a result, the human soul does not submit to the Spirit but rather bucks against it.<sup>27</sup> When the Holy Spirit comes, by breathing he pours himself into the soul.<sup>28</sup>

The process of restoration or reconstruction involves a twofold work of the Spirit. The Spirit illuminates and vivifies in order to heal the soul. Although, at one point in *The Seven Gifts*, Hugh states that first the Spirit heals and then he illuminates, upon close examination of the work it appears that the Spirit must illuminate the soul before the process of healing can even begin, and yet the Spirit continues to illuminate throughout the healing process.<sup>29</sup>

### ILLUMINATION AND VIVIFICATION BY THE SPIRIT

The fact that the soul is enslaved on account of the vices is manifested in a variety of ways. As a result of the fall, the soul is no longer able to clearly discern the evil that is in it or to recognize the potential evil that lies before it. In *On the Sacraments*, Hugh writes that when humanity was created, the soul possessed three eyes or visions. The eye of the flesh could see the things of the world. Through the eye of reason the soul could see itself and the things within itself. By the eye of contemplation it could see God within itself as well as the things of God. As a result of the fall, the eye of contemplation was completely extinguished, and the eye of reason was heavily blurred. Only the eye of the flesh retained its full sight.<sup>30</sup> Without proper sight, the soul cannot judge properly, nor can the soul ever see God. This shortcoming has strong implications for the work of the Spirit.

Illumination and vivification go hand in hand in *The Seven Gifts*. The purpose of vivification is to restore life to the dead soul, so it can once again sense or feel. Once vivification begins, the soul senses the first evil, the guilt it suffers as a result of original sin. Sensing guilt is essential to the process of healing because, once guilt is perceived, the soul can begin to grieve over it. The soul soon realizes that the guilt it once found pleasing and sweet is actually quite displeasing and bitter because it knows that punishment will soon follow. The purpose of

illumination is to allow the soul to clearly see the evil within itself.<sup>31</sup> This second evil is the punishment that awaits the soul. Illumination of this punishment is essential because once the soul sees the impending punishment, it begins to fear. The first light of illumination is particularly awful, states Hugh. However, he quickly clarifies this. Actually, it is the darkness that is terrifying, for it is only now apparent because of the light. This darkness instills a deep sense of fear because the soul not only recognizes the darkness but also knows it is deserved and cannot be avoided. It is at precisely this moment, when the soul sees its impending punishment, that fear is suddenly born.<sup>32</sup>

In his work, *On Three Days*, Hugh discusses the roles and characters of each person of the Trinity. The Spirit is characterized by kindness that “enflames the cold with the warmth of charity.”<sup>33</sup> Kindness is first manifested on the third day, which Hugh calls the day of illumination. Although light was already present on the second day of creation, the third day, the day of the Spirit, is one of full brightness wherein the illumination of the second day is actually enhanced.<sup>34</sup>

Philosopher Ivan Illich provides an interesting view on the manner in which Hugh would have understood illumination. Illich begins his discussion by comparing the art one would find on a twelfth century codex with a later renaissance painting, such as the well-known work of Caravaggio. Renaissance painters often contrasted areas of darkness, characterized by shadows, with areas of illumination, whereby light illuminates an object. A twelfth-century miniature, however, would have been painted in the tradition of the icon, wherein the painter does not depict outside light illuminating objects. Rather, the objects themselves seem to contain their own source of light. In this sense, when Hugh speaks of the eye being illuminated, he does not mean the eye itself is now visible, but that the eye has its own source of luminosity. That is, the eye itself shines. As Illich states, “Adam and Eve were created with eyes so luminous that they constantly contemplated what one now must painfully look for.”<sup>35</sup> As a result of sin, however, they were condemned to a hazy, murky world because their eyes could no longer radiate light. Once illuminated, however, what the soul sees is frightening.

Fear plays a significant role in the process of restoration. Hugh states that, in a sense, fear could easily be confused with the light because fear does not occur until light is present. Yet, the soul must embrace the fear because the fear the soul presently senses is small compared to the eternal punishment the soul will have to suffer if its guilt is not corrected. If there was nothing to fear, the soul would never take any precautions against its guilt.<sup>36</sup> In a brief discussion on



fear in his *Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, Hugh states that fear can be either good or evil depending upon its object. The fear of evil causes a person to avoid evil things. In such a case, fear is good. However, in a negative sense, the fear of good things can cause one to avoid what is good.<sup>37</sup> In *The Seven Gifts*, the fear the soul senses is certainly a positive form of the affections in that it moves one away from punishment. Fear also causes the soul to grieve over its condition. As a result, the soul moves to correct its guilt. If there was no sorrow or grief, Hugh states, no one would ever be set aright.<sup>38</sup>

Hugh wants to make perfectly clear, however, that the Holy Spirit, the one who illuminates the soul, should not be confused with the object of illumination, which is the punishment. While the punishment frightens the soul, the Holy Spirit intends to bring health. The light of illumination that vexes the sick eye, is the same light that soothes a healthy eye. If the eye were not sick, it would not hurt. If the soul were not tormented, it would not have been illuminated.<sup>39</sup>

### THE MEDICINAL PUNISHMENT: THE ANTIDOTES OF THE SPIRIT

In *On the Sacraments*, Hugh very concisely describes the condition of fallen humanity. “Therefore, a man lying in sins is sick; the vices are wounds; God is the physician; the gifts of the Holy Spirit are antidotes.”<sup>40</sup> Although the Holy Spirit is one substance and one remedy, because there is a plurality of wounds within the soul (pride, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony, lust), the Holy Spirit must address each illness with the appropriate gift, a list that he takes from Isaiah 11.<sup>41</sup> However, Hugh wants his readers to remember that, while the Spirit presents himself in a sevenfold manner, he is of one substance. There are seven gifts or spirits, as Hugh calls them: fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, and wisdom. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself who bestows his very self exactly as he is needed. The Spirit is only one Spirit, but he breathes seven breaths. He cures seven illnesses, but he is only one medicine. There is one nature, but the effect is sevenfold. If the soul were whole, Hugh states hypothetically, the Spirit would come as one. But of course, this is not the case.<sup>42</sup> Instead, the Spirit is multiplied within the sinner, in a manner perfectly fitted for healing.<sup>43</sup>

In other works Hugh also presents the human soul as divided as a result of the fall. In *Noah's Ark*, the soul is unstable precisely because it is divided among too many loves instead of loving its true good.<sup>44</sup> Hugh refers to such an instability when, in the opening paragraph of *The Seven Gifts*, he speaks of a servant as one who loves many things

while a son seeks nothing other than God himself. Thus the son, unified in his love and his desire for his true good, is contrasted against the servant whose love is divided amongst many desires. It is precisely this state of uniformity to which Hugh wants his readers to return by the aid of the Spirit.

Although the punishment is not good in itself, Hugh reminds his readers that the result of the painful punishment is good. Once again, Hugh wants to make clear that the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to restore health. Any pain that the soul feels is caused by the illness, which refuses to leave because it wants to harm the soul. The Spirit, on the other hand, is the soul's health who only wants to bring healing. In fact, the only thing the Spirit wishes to harm is the illness that, according to Hugh, the Spirit destroys. Hugh uses the Latin verb *disrumpit*, which literally means he "bursts it to pieces," thus causing the illness to cease.<sup>45</sup> In an effort to bring unity to the soul, he destroys the unity of the illness. The result of the inspiration of the gifts is an ongoing conflict between the vices and their antidotes. This is the medicinal punishment of which Hugh speaks. The punishment certainly brings pain, but Hugh insists the soul properly acknowledge the source of the pain. The illness must be accused of the pain, not the antidote. If the soul did not fight against the illness, the soul would not feel pain, but neither would it be healed. The soul should not disregard the work of the Spirit because the Spirit who begins this seemingly painful process is the same Spirit who will bring the soul to health.<sup>46</sup>

### THE JOURNEY TOWARD HEALTH

Just as the descent into captivity was characterized by desire, so is the ascent toward freedom. As mentioned earlier, the journey from captivity to freedom must be understood, in these texts, in light of the metaphor of slavery and sonship. Elsewhere, Hugh uses the motif of a bride desiring her groom. The language tends to be fairly erotic in nature as the idea of marital love serves as the basis for reformation. Such language is absent in these two texts, instead language involving a parent-child relationship is used. Although the journey is still driven by desire, it is couched not in erotic language but rather around satiating hunger, a topic perhaps more appropriate to a father-son relationship.<sup>47</sup>

The act of seeking after, and thus desiring, God is essential to the healing or restorative process. *The Seven Gifts* opens with an injunction to ask for spiritual graces. Hugh tells his readers that if they ask appropriately, that is, if their desires are properly ordered, God cannot help

but heed their requests because he is holy. To seek transitory things such as silver or gold is to be a servant, not a son. A son is one who seeks after eternal things. It is certainly to one's benefit to seek eternal things, as Hugh states, for if people seek carnal things only, those are all they will receive. The reward of such seeking is limited. However, by seeking the things of God, the soul will not only receive that which it seeks, but so much more. If the soul is to return to health, the Holy Spirit must be sought above all else. Hugh reminds his readers, "To those of us who pray he promised that he would give the good spirit to heal our wounds and lift the yoke of our captivity."<sup>48</sup> He holds the experience of the psalmist as an example of one who was freed from the mire through his prayers. "I have waited patiently for the Lord, and he was attentive to me. And he heeded my prayers and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of the dregs."<sup>49</sup>

As Benson rightly points out, the opening of the text describes the appropriate posture one must take when petitioning for divine aid as that of a child petitioning a loving and gracious father, an image Hugh uses frequently throughout the text to refer to God. Just as all fathers love to give gifts to their children, this Father is eager to give the gift of the good Spirit to his children. What is important, once again, is that his children seek, and thus desire, the Spirit. There is certainly a place for fear in the process of restoration, as Hugh will point out, but one should not be afraid, on account of one's sinfulness, to ask for healing. Rather one should trust God like a son trusts his father, for the gift itself, he says, will make one worthy.<sup>50</sup>

In *The Five Sevens*, Hugh provides a guideline for how such a request might be presented. Although Hugh does not mention the Lord's Prayer in *The Seven Gifts*, he would certainly have considered it when he wrote his treatise. Luke 11 opens with Jesus's admonition to pray according to the Lord's Prayer and closes with verse 13, the same verse with which Hugh opens *The Seven Gifts*. However, it is in *The Five Sevens* that Hugh provides an example of how one goes about requesting divine aid against the vices. Here the request is presented in the form of the Lord's Prayer, which, fitting with the theme of Hugh's text, opens with "Our Father." For each vice that needs healing, Hugh provides an appropriate portion of the prayer. The first petition, "Hallowed be thy name," is directed against the vice of pride. At this plea, the first gift, the spirit of fear, enters into the heart and produces humility. This begins the initial movement of the soul back toward God and freedom. Each subsequent petition results in the gift of a virtuous spirit, which, in turn, inflames the

soul's desire for more. Just as the vices seduced and lured the soul toward captivity, so the gifts of the Spirit entice the soul with a simple taste of sweet, internal refreshment that leaves the soul desperate for more. In its hunger, it longs to be filled. Although the soul must supply troops to fight against the remaining appetite for the temporal, the spirit of understanding is provided as spiritual food to fill the soul as a defense against gluttony. The prayer culminates with the seventh petition directed against lust, "Free us from evil."<sup>51</sup> The healing gift is the spirit of wisdom, and when the soul tastes this wonderfully sweet, spiritual food, it is overcome and completely gathers itself together, so it is no longer shattered but healed and whole. "Lost freedom has been restored to the captive."<sup>52</sup>

### THE STATE OF HEALTH

To see how the restoration of health is completed, one must turn to the *The Five Sevens* where Hugh moves beyond the gifts to the virtues. When the gifts have successfully healed the vices, the result is virtue. Hugh defines virtue as "an affection of the mind ordered according to reason."<sup>53</sup> The virtues are the *sanitas*, the soundness of the soul, because through the gifts of the Spirit, "vices are made sound (*sanantur*). The soundness of vices is the integrity of virtues."<sup>54</sup> When the gifts have successfully performed their healing, they have restored the soul in such a way that the vices have now actually been transformed into virtues. Hugh delineates this process throughout *The Five Sevens*. Through the gift of the fear of the Lord, pride is restored to humility. Through the gift of piety, envy becomes meekness. Through knowledge, compunction replaces anger. Through fortitude, sadness turns to hunger for justice. Through counsel, mercy replaces avarice. Through understanding, gluttony becomes purity of heart, and through wisdom, lust gives way to peace.

The virtues also produce good works. Hugh writes, "The sound man operates; operating he is remunerated."<sup>55</sup> Thus good works follow after the virtues, and from virtues the works themselves arise.<sup>56</sup> These good works are in contrast to the works of iniquity that would have inevitably followed the vices, had they not been healed. Hugh concludes his treatise on *The Seven Gifts* with the following words:

He who is your true good accomplishes your true good out of what is not your true good. A different good will be achieved for you later that comes not only through him but from him. First he accomplishes your

freedom from your punishment, later he accomplishes your joy from his own sweetness. Nevertheless He is one and the same in both works. In the first work he is the one who acts; in the other he is both the one who acts and the source from which he acts.<sup>57</sup>

According to Hugh, the first good the Spirit accomplishes is freedom from punishment. In this process, the Holy Spirit is the one who acts. Hugh states, "He who is your true good, accomplishes your true good out of what is not your true good."<sup>58</sup> The Spirit does this by freeing the soul from future punishment by means of the medicinal punishment that occurred when the gifts were given.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Hugh's claim is fulfilled that, "To those of us who pray he promised that he would give the good Spirit to heal our wounds and lift the yoke of our captivity."<sup>60</sup> The Holy Spirit has succeeded in building a dwelling place within the soul. This is the health to which Hugh is referring in *The Seven Gifts*. It might seem that this is the end of the story for Hugh. The soul has been freed from captivity, and the treatise is nearly ended. However, earlier in the treatise Hugh notices that first the Spirit builds, then the Spirit will inhabit; first toward health, next toward enjoyment.<sup>61</sup> Such statements tell the reader that there is something beyond simple health. There is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and there is enjoyment. In *On the Praise of the Bridegroom*, Hugh speaks to charity, a term he uses to refer to the Holy Spirit, "Flow into us, therefore O sweet and pleasant charity. Enlarge our heart, expand our desire, unfold the inmost part of our mind and amplify the dwelling place of our heart so that it can receive God as its guest and inhabitant. May . . . the Son of God pour and lavishly distribute you in our hearts through his Holy Spirit."<sup>62</sup> Earlier in the same work, he defines an enlarged heart as a "heart inflamed with love, a heart filled with charity."<sup>63</sup> Rather than the heart swelling with pride, a restored heart swells with love.

It is this indwelling of the Spirit and the enjoyment to which Hugh refers when he says that a different good will be achieved, and that is the joy the soul gains from the Spirit's own sweetness. The Spirit is now not only the one who acts, but is also the source from which he acts. The fact that the Spirit dwells within and that the soul is joyful is a direct result of the renewal of the soul. Inhabitation implies the restoration of the soul to its original state prior to the fall. The soul that is restored can once again recognize the image of God within itself. Hugh tells his readers, "Nevertheless, he comes and illuminates you in order that you might see what you had in you from the very beginning."<sup>64</sup> What the soul had within itself from its very inception

was the image of God, which, as a result of sin, was no longer clearly visible. Illumination serves to restore that image so that the soul can once again recognize itself. In *Noah's Ark*, Hugh likens the lost image of God in humanity to a treasure hidden in a field.

And this treasure was hidden in the field of the human heart when man was created in the image and likeness of his Maker. For the heart of man was so created that from it, as from His mirror, the divine wisdom should be reflected back, and that which of itself could not be seen should in His image be made visible. Great indeed was the honour of man, thus to bear God's image, always to see in himself the face of God, and through contemplation to have Him ever present.<sup>65</sup>

After the first parent sinned, the treasure was concealed from sight, and the darkness intercepted the light. Yet, when the mind is illuminated, the treasure is found.<sup>66</sup> As Hugh continues on in this passage, his emphasis is on the soul's responsibility to dig for the treasure with the instrument of compunction. However, this is not the focus of *The Seven Gifts* where Hugh emphasizes the work of the Spirit in illumination so that the soul might recognize the divine image within itself.

Hugh concludes the chapter by saying, "For the soul on whom the Holy Spirit breathes is gladdened with an unaccustomed joy; and, when a mere fragrance so refreshes it, it wonders what the taste itself can be."<sup>67</sup> This is the joy to which Hugh refers when he says that the Spirit "accomplishes your joy from his own sweetness." The day of illumination mentioned earlier is not the only day designated to the work of the Spirit. The day of resurrection is also attributed to the Spirit. On that day, Hugh states, the soul will rise, revived through the desire of divine love. It is a day characterized by joy because all good has been restored.<sup>68</sup>

In the final steps of the restoration process, Hugh connects each of the virtues with a beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount. These beatitudes, Hugh says, are the joy of happiness. As a result of the restoration of the virtues, the soul now possesses the kingdom of heaven, as well as eternal inheritance, consolation, fullness of justice, mercy, and a vision of God. Hugh writes, "When the Spirit comes into the heart it cleanses and purifies the heart. With the knowledge of the Word of God, as if with a certain salve, that spirit heals the interior eye and renders it so luminous and clear that it becomes penetrating enough to contemplate the very glory of God," and he goes on to say, "The spirit of understanding heals the vice of gluttony and restores the lost virtue of purity of heart."<sup>69</sup> Such purity, Hugh claims,

deserves a vision of God, which has been present in the soul all along. The second to final beatitude or joy is a vision of God.<sup>70</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Through the gifts of the Spirit, the soul, “aided by grace,” has escaped the “yoke of unjust rule.” This escape has occurred because the soul has had a taste of what Hugh calls, “internal sweetness.” Once having tasted that internal sweetness, the soul no longer desires what is outside of itself, because the sweetness of wisdom, the final virtue, has quieted concupiscence. The soul, now “fully and perfectly reformed in the image of God,”<sup>71</sup> is at rest. No longer forced to fight against the external desires of concupiscence, it is filled with the internal joy of the Holy Spirit. It is at this point that Hugh concludes: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”<sup>72</sup>

Through the healing power of the gifts of the Spirit, the vices have been healed, the virtues have been restored, and the beatitudes have been experienced. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, both the eye of reason and the eye of contemplation have been restored. Through the revivification of the Spirit, the soul has been restored to its original image of the divine. Finally, the captive soul has been freed from slavery and restored to its rightful position of as a son of God.

## NOTES

1. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Joshua C. Benson in *Victorine Texts in Translation 4* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), I.
2. Dale Coulter, *Per Visibilia ad Invisibilia: Theological Method in Richard of St. Victor* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 235–36.
3. Margot Fassler provides the general date of mid to late 1120s in Margot E. Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth Century Paris*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 213. Coulter offers the more precise dates of 1126 or 1127 for *Noah's Ark*, and 1128 or 1129 for *The Making of the Ark*, in Coulter, *Per Visibilia ad Invisibilia*, 238–39. See Hugh of St. Victor, “Noah’s Ark,” in *Hugh of Saint-Victor: Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. a Religious of C. S. M. V. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 45–155; Hugh of St. Victor, “A Little Book about Constructing Noah’s Ark,” in *Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 41–70.
4. Joshua C. Benson, “Introduction to *On the Five Sevens*,” In *Victorine Texts in Translation 4* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), 342.

5. Ibid., 326–27. The date for the *Instruction of Novices* comes from Coulter, *Per Visibilia ad Invisibilia*, 238.
6. Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 215.
7. Boyd Taylor Coolman, “Hugh of St. Victor,” in *The Sermon on the Mount Through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II*, ed. Jeffery P. Greenman, Timothy Larson, and Steven Spencer (Adi, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 77. Benson demonstrates such a chart in his introduction to *The Five Sevens*, 330.
8. Joshua C. Benson, “Introduction to *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*,” in *Victorine Texts in Translation 4* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), 343.
9. Paul Rorem, *Hugh of St. Victor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 77.
10. I will use the term “sons” here since Hugh uses the masculine Latin term for sons—*fili*.
11. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 2.13.I. See Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007).
12. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Five Sevens*, trans. Joshua C. Benson in *Victorine Texts in Translation 4* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), II.
13. According to Joshua Benson, the term “concatenation,” which refers to the manner in which sins as well as virtues can build upon each other to produce a specific outcome, comes from John Cassian. This is a technique that Hugh uses elsewhere in his writings as well. Joshua C. Benson, “Introduction to *On the Five Sevens*,” 324, note 9.
14. Coolman, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 65, in which, as Coolman points out, Hugh follows a medieval tradition of John Cassian, Gregory the Great, and Augustine when he makes pride the foundational vice.
15. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Lord’s Prayer*, IV. PL, 177. 775A.
16. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, II.
17. Ibid., II.
18. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, I.7.708.
19. Ibid., I.7.708.
20. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Lord’s Prayer*, IV.
21. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Praise of the Bridegroom*, trans. Hugh Feiss in *On Love, Victorine Texts in Translation*, vol. 2 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), 3.
22. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, II.
23. Ibid., II.III.
24. Ibid., II. III.
25. Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Theology of Hugh of St. Victor: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.
26. See Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 1.6.17.
27. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, II.
28. Ibid., III.
29. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, I.



30. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 1.10.II.
31. Hugh uses the word *lippientes* to refer to the blurred eye. It means oozing and suggests that healing is necessary.
32. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, III.
33. Hugh of St. Victor, *On Three Days*, trans. Hugh Feiss in *Trinity and Creation, Victorine Texts in Translation I* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010). Dominique Poirel states that Hugh inherited the idea of a triad for distinguishing the roles of the Trinity from Basil's *Hexaemeron*. Dominique Poirel, *Livre de la nature et débat trinitaire au XIIe siècle: "Le de tribus diebus" de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, Bibliotheca Victorina, 14 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002).
34. *Ibid.*
35. Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 19–21.
36. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, IV.
37. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 2.13.III.
38. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, IV.
39. *Ibid.*, III.
40. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 2.13.II.
41. *Ibid.*, 2.13.II.
42. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, II.
43. *Ibid.*, III.
44. Hugh of St. Victor, *Noah's Ark*, 1.3.
45. *Ibid.*, I.
46. *Ibid.*, III. Hugh uses a periphrastic verb, *accusandus est*, to emphasize the necessity of accusing the punishment of causing the pain rather than the medicine.
47. Gregory the Great stated in a sermon that only those who are filled with the seven graces of the Spirit will be able to partake of the heavenly banquet. See Gregory the Great, "Homitiae xl in Evangelia," 24.6 in John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
48. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, III.
49. *Ibid.*, III.
50. Benson, "Introduction to *On the Seven Gifts*," 343.
51. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, III.
52. *Ibid.*, III.
53. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments*, 1.6.XVII.
54. *Ibid.*, 2.13.II.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, IV.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, II.
60. *Ibid.*, III.
61. *Ibid.*, I.
62. Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Praise of the Bridegroom*, 16.

63. Ibid, 8.
64. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Seven Gifts*, III. The translation is mine.
65. Hugh of St. Victor, *Noah's Ark*, 3.6.
66. Ibid., 3.6.
67. Ibid.
68. Hugh of St. Victor, *On Three Days*.
69. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Five Sevens*, III.
70. Ibid., III.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.



A LUTHERAN ENGAGEMENT WITH  
WESLEY ON THE WORK OF  
THE HOLY SPIRIT

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When Lutherans speak about the Holy Spirit, someone inevitably will quote the first line of Luther's explanation of the "Third Article" of the Apostles' Creed in his Small Catechism: "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith."<sup>1</sup> Lutherans stress the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the believer to faith, the means through which one is justified and receives the forgiveness of sins. However, too many Lutheran theologians neglect the fuller role and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian beyond justification. This essay is part of a larger project that will bring the Lutheran tradition into dialogue with Christian traditions that have had a larger place for the Holy Spirit in their theologies, particularly the Wesleyan tradition on the one hand, and charismatic and pentecostal traditions on the other.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I consider and critically engage from a Lutheran perspective the role and work of the Holy Spirit in John Wesley's doctrine of salvation. I suggest that a comparative study can help Lutherans to appreciate more deeply Wesley's understanding of the fullness of salvation given through Christ in the power of the Spirit. To this end, the following pages outline a comparative reading of Wesley and the Lutheran tradition on the relationship between justification, regeneration, and sanctification; the relationship between faith and love (and good works); and finally, the relationship between holiness and sin in the "process" of sanctification. Along this path, we discover that Wesley and the Lutheran tradition share much in common in how

they view the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life (though also with some clear differences), and that the Lutheran Confessions offer a rich teaching on the fuller work of the Holy Spirit that contemporary Lutherans would do well to reclaim.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION, REGENERATION, AND SANCTIFICATION

These two traditions have emphasized different doctrines relating to salvation: Lutherans have been largely concerned with justification and Wesleyans with sanctification. Each has been, at least in part if not wholly, suspicious of what the other has taught. Wesley feared that the Lutheran emphasis on the forensic nature of justification—whereby a sinner is declared but not really “made” righteous—and Luther’s idea of “*simul iustus et peccator*” (that the believer is simultaneously justified and sinful) has led to quietism and even antinomianism. If the “justified sinner” can just go on sinning as before, there seems to be no regeneration of the sinner whereby she is enabled by the Holy Spirit to love God and the neighbor through following the commandments. The Lutheran fear is that by giving so much emphasis to the process of sanctification, this may negate or at least obscure the sufficiency of Christ for the believer’s salvation.

While Wesley strongly affirmed Luther’s teaching on justification,<sup>3</sup> he stressed that the redeemed life includes justification, regeneration, and sanctification, leading to Christian perfection. For Wesley, justification refers to a change in our standing before God, effecting a relative change whereby our guilt is removed and we are adopted as God’s children. In sanctification, we experience a real change in which the Spirit renews our fallen nature and restores in us the *imago Dei*. Sanctification is the immediate fruit of justification, a distinct gift from God through which the believer is enabled to live as God intended, in perfect love and obedience, the process by which “such a love of God and [others] as produces all inward and outward holiness.”<sup>4</sup>

Regeneration (or the new birth) occurs simultaneously with justification, taking away the power of sin in our lives and beginning the process of sanctification.<sup>5</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who brings about this change in the believer. As Randy Maddox writes, the new birth is “the instantaneous restoration of our responsive participation in God,” and sanctification proper consists in “the resulting gradual therapeutic transformation of our lives.”<sup>6</sup> Once regenerated, the believer can and must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification.<sup>7</sup>

For Lutherans, while justification cannot be separated from sanctification, they must be distinguished so that any human works (including the

cooperation of the human will before justification) are not “mixed” into justification, lest one think that human cooperation is required in order to be justified.<sup>8</sup> While justification and regeneration seem at times to be equated in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession,<sup>9</sup> a clearer distinction is offered by the later Formula of Concord (1577). Acknowledging that the word, regeneration, can be used to include both the forgiveness of sins and adoption as God’s children on account of Christ alone (justification) and the renewal that follows from the righteousness of faith (sanctification),<sup>10</sup> the Formula of Concord stresses that to be born anew does not mean that sinners have been “made” righteous in an ontological sense, but rather that we are regarded as righteous on account of Christ even though we will be sinners to the grave.

The Formula goes on to affirm that the Holy Spirit has been given to those who have been pronounced righteous, in order to renew and sanctify them, creating in them love toward God and the neighbor, and enabling them to respond in righteous living.<sup>11</sup> The Formula describes this process in transformational language:

The Holy Spirit effects new birth and the inner reception of another heart, mind, and disposition. He opens the mind and the heart so that they understand Scripture and are attentive to the Word. . . . He is a Spirit “of rebirth and renewal” (Titus 3:[5]). He takes away our hard and stony hearts and replaces them with new, soft hearts of flesh, that we may walk in his commands. (Ezek. 11:[19], et al.)<sup>12</sup>

This renewal, which results from justification, can never be confused with it, even though the term “regeneration” broadly can be inclusive of both.

Both the Lutheran and Wesleyan traditions teach that with the gift of pardon and forgiveness, the believer also receives the Holy Spirit to empower a new life of love and obedience to God’s commandments. Wesley stressed that this new life is included in what the Bible means by “salvation.” While Lutherans normally do not speak this way, it is important to note Luther’s refrain in the *Small Catechism* that “where there is forgiveness of sin, there is life and salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

Both traditions also point to the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of renewal and sanctification and offer a very similar view of the Holy Spirit in this regard. Luther’s pneumatology was forged over and against the medieval notion of “created grace,” whereby the Spirit was understood to infuse grace as a supernatural power or substance into the believer’s heart, enabling one to love God and to become “righteous,” thereby being justified by God.<sup>14</sup> Luther and Wesley both reject views of grace as a substance infused into the believer,

and instead define grace relationally as the personal presence of the Holy Spirit in and with the believer, imparting God's favor and mercy, enabling the believer to love God (and the neighbor) in return. For Luther, "the Holy Spirit is God's real, personal presence," not a transcendent cause of a new supernatural nature in a believer, or a manifestation of divine power.<sup>15</sup> Wesley "identified grace as the personal Presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, not some standardized commodity bestowed upon us."<sup>16</sup>

Both traditions distinguish between the righteousness that belongs to Christ and that which is "ours": Wesley uses the language of implanted righteousness, the fruit of imputed righteousness; Lutherans speak of the alien righteousness of Christ that justifies and the righteousness of the believer, seen in good works. In Lutheran theology, righteousness proper belongs to Christ and only relationally belongs to the believer through faith; it is not something that is "implanted" in the believer, though the righteousness of faith results in the gift of the Holy Spirit who renews and sanctifies the believer, leading to the second kind of righteousness. The one who is declared righteous simultaneously receives the presence of the Holy Spirit who brings renewal and enables us to love God and the neighbor. For Wesley, righteousness is not only something that Christ has and imparts; it is also something that human beings once had but lost in the Fall. The righteousness of Christ makes us righteous and we "are renewed in the image of God 'after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness.'"<sup>17</sup>

While the two traditions differ on the understanding of Christ's righteousness as it "belongs" to the believer, a bridge may be made by stressing the relationality of our being "made" righteous. Clearly, both traditions affirm that something changes "in" the believer, and not just "for" the believer, when one is justified and regenerated. The Holy Spirit brings about righteousness, which for Lutherans is understood in terms of good works and obedience, and for Wesleyans, the renewal of the *imago Dei*. Both views of "righteousness" can be understood in relational, rather than ontological, terms.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND LOVE (AND WORKS OF LOVE) IN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Both the Lutheran and Wesleyans tradition affirm not only justification by grace through faith but also sanctification by grace through faith. Lutherans may be surprised that for Wesley, sanctification is by

faith and not by works—be they works of piety or works of mercy. Although good works contribute to sanctification, faith is the only condition of our sanctification;<sup>18</sup> without faith, there is no ability to love God or the neighbor.<sup>19</sup> Wesley highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in his striking description of the relationship between faith and love in the sanctified life: the Holy Spirit is “breathed into the newborn soul; and the same breath which comes from, returns to God. As it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love.”<sup>20</sup>

This affirmation offers an interesting connection to the Lutheran tradition; while sanctification includes love, it is not grounded in our loving actions, but always in God’s love for us, which we receive through faith and with which we cooperate (though Lutherans would add—and stress—“encumbered with great weakness”<sup>21</sup>) by repentance and good works. Lutherans and Wesleyans agree that in sanctification, we can only love as we are being loved by God; God’s love for us precedes and grounds our love for God and the neighbor. In both traditions, faith thus “works by love.” While we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law, good works are an immediate fruit of that faith.<sup>22</sup> Wesley held that we preach faith not to supersede but to produce holiness—holiness of the heart and life. By holiness of heart, Wesley meant a heart set on God, what one might call “inward holiness.” Holiness of life means a life manifest in good works that serve the neighbor. Only good works that “spring out of a true and living faith” are good in the sight of God.<sup>23</sup> We cannot love God or neighbor until we have received God’s love and justification by faith: “And this love cannot be in us until we receive ‘the Spirit of adoption, crying in our hearts,’ Abba, Father.”<sup>24</sup>

In a similar vein, Lutherans also teach that faith sanctifies. Throughout the Lutheran Confessions, the Reformers teach—in contrast to their Roman opponents—that faith, and not love, justifies.<sup>25</sup> Although we receive justification and forgiveness through faith alone—and not through love or any other virtues of the law—love necessarily follows faith as a work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> We see this clearly in Luther’s Smalcald Articles: “Love is a fruit that certainly and necessarily results from true faith.”<sup>27</sup> For Melancthon, faith regenerates and brings the Holy Spirit into the believer’s life, enabling her to love and fear God.<sup>28</sup> Further, “because faith truly brings the Holy Spirit and produces new life in our hearts, it must also produce spiritual impulses in our hearts,” enabling us to love our neighbors.<sup>29</sup> Faith, then, is active in love in two directions for Wesleyans and Lutherans: to God through works of piety, and to our neighbor through service and works of mercy.



The distortion that “construed the Lutheran emphasis on faith alone to mean that expectations of good works should be avoided even within the Christian life, because these works might mislead folks to trust in their own ‘merits’”<sup>30</sup> was frequently challenged by Wesley, and rightly so; it was challenged also by the Formula of Concord in addressing a controversy that erupted over the statement that good works were “necessary” to salvation. The article states that while faith alone lays hold of Christ’s righteousness, good works always follow faith and, in this sense, are necessary.<sup>31</sup>

Both traditions teach a faith working by or active in love, love as the immediate and necessary fruit of justification by faith,<sup>32</sup> and teach that good works do not lead to justification, but flow from it, the result of the Spirit’s working in our hearts through faith. Both also teach that the Holy Spirit can be withdrawn through active sin or rejection of God’s love.<sup>33</sup>

It is a mark of Wesleyan teaching to emphasize the ways that the believer is active in the Christian life of holiness, “working out her salvation.” This “synergism” is often cited as that which differentiates him from Luther and Calvin. Although God always initiates, Wesley puts emphasis on human cooperation with the Spirit in the process of sanctification. The believer is not only able but also obligated to work with God’s grace in the growth of holiness.<sup>34</sup> However, Wesley takes great pains to stress that this activity is possible only because of the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts and in our lives. Any “work” that believers are capable of is solely because “God works in us.”<sup>35</sup> Maddox affirms that “Wesley was convinced that, while we *can* not attain holiness (and wholeness) apart from God’s grace, God *will* not effect holiness apart from our responsive participation.”<sup>36</sup> The question remains as to how “active” this human participation need be. At least one Methodist theologian, David Shipley, interprets the “working together” of the Holy Spirit and the human will in terms that are more passive than active. With the Holy Spirit as the predominant partner in this relationship, he proposes that “the human will co-operates by providing no opposition to the divine initiative, by concurring passively in the work of the Holy Spirit. The dynamic of the Holy Spirit strengthens man’s will so that he is able to accept the offer of and co-operate with the work of salvation.”<sup>37</sup>

According to Kenneth Collins, it is Wesley’s stress on human participation in the process of sanctification that distinguishes his theology from those “theologies that diminish the importance of human activity in their overwrought fear of detracting from the grace of God.”<sup>38</sup> The Lutheran Confessions do hold a place for human cooperation after

initial regeneration. While there can be no human cooperation before conversion, “God makes willing people out of rebellious and unwilling people through the drawing power of the Holy Spirit, and how after this conversion of the human being the reborn will is not idle in the daily practice of repentance but cooperates in all the works of the Holy Spirit that he accomplishes through us.”<sup>39</sup> The Confessions further admonish believers “not to let God’s grace have no effect in us, but to exercise ourselves diligently in considering what a grievous sin it is to impede and resist the working of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup> This view is found not only in the Formula of Concord, but also in Luther, who had strong words for anyone who took his teaching on justification as an excuse not to live a life of obedience and love.<sup>41</sup>

Both the Lutheran and Wesleyan traditions can affirm that holy living is only possible because of the Holy Spirit at work in the believer and in ways that do not let the believer “off the hook.” For Wesley, as we have seen, faith cannot supersede the necessity of holiness (defined as the activity of the Holy Spirit in the “heart and life” of the believer, with which the believer cooperates) but instead grounds it. While this is not an emphasis of Lutheran theology, it is an area in which Lutherans need to more clearly articulate their own theological tradition, especially in light of the danger of antinomianism in their theology and church practice.

A helpful resource in this regard is the work of Danish Lutheran theologian Regin Prenter.<sup>42</sup> He argues that Lutherans can affirm both an “active” as well as a “passive” holiness as long as the “chief article,” the doctrine of justification, is not contradicted.<sup>43</sup> Prenter distinguishes between righteousness and holiness, which together comprise sanctity. As already noted, in Lutheran theology, righteousness belongs to Christ and only to the Christian relationally through faith; however, the righteousness of Christ enables the believer to receive holiness from God, the quality of spiritual life given in the new birth that grows and ripens.<sup>44</sup> In his commentary on Galatians, Luther states that sanctity is passive, but this means receptiveness, not inaction. Since receptive sanctity cannot enter into a believer unless self-righteousness and self-love have been destroyed, it therefore “includes patiently enduring God’s judgment upon our self-righteousness and God’s mortification of our self-love.”<sup>45</sup>

Prenter goes on to say that this passive sanctity—the mark of which is the cross—is the beginning of “active holiness,” a new life (Gal. 5:6). Luther’s most famous description of this active holiness of “faith working by love” is found in his *Preface to the Romans* (which warmed John Wesley’s heart). The activity of “faith working by love”

is holy because it is the work of the Holy Spirit. There is, then, for Luther, such a thing as “active holiness,” a really holy life lived by a Christian, which has both an interior (Godward) and exterior (humanward) dimension. Prenter cautions that “The holiness of this active life is no holiness at all if it is separated from the passive sanctity of faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup> For Luther, the believer “as he stands in the process of sanctification is both passive and active; he is crucified with Christ and he rises with Him to live a new life.”<sup>47</sup> It is this receptive element of sanctity—and its mark of the cross—that distinguishes the Lutheran view of holiness.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOLINESS AND SIN IN THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION, AND THE QUESTION OF “CHRISTIAN PERFECTION”

While both Wesleyans and Lutherans both affirm that the believer is “made holy” by the work of the Holy Spirit and that the ultimate goal of the Christian life is perfect holiness, they differ in how they understand the process of “growing” or “progressing” in holiness, as well as how much of this holiness or perfection can be had in this life. John Wesley believed that there could come a point in a Christian’s earthly life in which they were “entirely sanctified,” and made “perfect.”<sup>48</sup>

It is important for Lutherans to understand what Wesley meant—and did not mean—by Christian perfection or entire sanctification.<sup>49</sup> It does not mean perfect knowledge, freedom from ignorance, error, or infirmity, or freedom from temptation. Positively, it means “perfect love,” that is, to let love so rule in one’s heart that one thinks not of oneself, but only of God and the good of the neighbor. Negatively, it means the ability not to commit habitual sin, to willfully sin, or to act on sinful desires. It even means freedom from evil thoughts and sinful desires.

Because believers can always grow in holiness of heart and life (that is, one can always love more), he explains that there is no absolute perfection on earth; one can never say one is “completely” perfect or holy (see chapter 8 in this collection for more detail on the discussion of Wesley’s view). Perfection is not a “state” that is reached, but a quality of life that one lives out daily, as one still needs to daily advance in the knowledge of and love of Christ.<sup>50</sup> For Wesley, Christian perfection is “relative,” not absolute;<sup>51</sup> it is dynamic and relational. As Randy Maddox puts it, it is the promise that “God’s loving grace for us and working in us can transform our lives to the point where our own love for God and others becomes a ‘natural’ response.”<sup>52</sup>

Although the language of “perfection” is not customarily found in Lutheran theology, the term appears in the Lutheran Confessions in two places. In his Large Catechism, Luther speaks of perfection in the absolute sense: as the eschatological reality in which justified sinners, now only “halfway pure and holy” become “perfectly pure and holy people, full of integrity and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all misfortune, living in new, immortal, and glorified bodies.”<sup>53</sup> This is the work of the Holy Spirit who will “perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve it in us.”<sup>54</sup> Because Luther equates perfection with complete sinlessness, he denies the possibility of perfection in this life.<sup>55</sup> Some scholars suggest that the difference between Luther and Wesley is attributable to their respective definitions of perfection: Wesley’s Greek notion of perfection, which has more dynamic connotations as compared to the more static Latin concept, which Luther and the Reformers likely had in mind.<sup>56</sup>

However, a second understanding of perfection that is more “this-worldly” is found in the Augsburg Confession. Melancthon contrasts the Lutheran view with that of the medieval Catholics, on the one hand, who taught that monks are in a state of perfection because they are celibate and live as mendicants, and that of the Anabaptists, on the other hand, who taught instead that “evangelical perfection” came from abandoning civic responsibilities. Perfection here is understood not as an eschatological state of pure and sinless existence but as a way of life that is pleasing to God. For the Reformers, “perfection” is not located in externalities, in lifestyles that take one “out” of the world, but in fearing God earnestly with the whole heart, having confidence in God’s grace because of Christ, expecting help from God in all affliction, and diligently doing good in our various callings.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, perfection is first and foremost a state of the heart, not of one’s station in life or choice of dress. While this “perfection” is rooted in fear of God and of faith (rather than love, though as we have seen, love cannot be separated from faith), it comes closer to what Wesley means by Christian perfection than the eschatological state of sinlessness presumed elsewhere in the Lutheran Confessions.

If we take this second Lutheran view of “evangelical perfection” alongside of Wesley’s view of “Christian perfection,” the question remains: What is the relationship between sin and holiness in the process of sanctification? For Wesley, as we have seen, the process of sanctification is part of the “way” of salvation. The fullness of salvation includes salvation from both the guilt and the power of sin, “through Christ formed in his heart.”<sup>58</sup> This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who frees believers from the power of sin to keep them in bondage, and “sheds

the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all [hu]mankind; thereby purifying their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life."<sup>59</sup> Lutherans agree that following justification, the believer is sanctified by the Holy Spirit who rules in the heart, enabling one to die to the power of sin and live in love toward God and others.

Although Wesley's views on the question of the residual presence of sin in a Christian life evolved during his life,<sup>60</sup> his mature position acknowledged that although the power of sin is broken in justification and regeneration, one will struggle with the remains of sin until one is "entirely sanctified." Wesley recognized that the view that there is no inward sin in a regenerated believer contradicts the Word of God and the experience of ordinary Christians.<sup>61</sup> Because Christ cannot reign where sin reigns; the sin that remains in a justified believer is constantly being battled by the believer in the process of sanctification. Within each justified believer, there are two contrary principles, the "flesh" and the "spirit." Although we receive the new birth the moment we are justified, we are only sanctified in part; we are not yet wholly purified, for "the flesh, the evil nature, still remains (though subdued) and wars against the spirit. So much more let us use all the diligence in 'fighting the good fight of faith'."<sup>62</sup> Wesley thus describes sanctification as a gradual process of spiritual progress, but not one without struggle.<sup>63</sup> While a completely entirely sanctified person is not incapable of sin, the believer is so ruled by the love of God that not sinning becomes a natural way of life.

The process of sanctification, then, always moves forward, toward the goal of Christian perfection (which also serves as the impetus for the believer's cooperation with her sanctification). Reflecting Wesley's dynamic understanding, perfection is at the same time something that can be achieved, but that is always in the process of being retained. If one is not going forward, then one will go backward. There is, as Collins says, "no standing still."<sup>64</sup> This leads the mature Wesley to acknowledge that it is possible for one who has been entirely sanctified to fall again into sin.<sup>65</sup>

The view of sanctification as the progressive journey in responsive cooperation with the Holy Spirit is characteristic of Wesley's theology in a way that it is not for Lutherans; further, Wesley's distinctive idea that one may be entirely sanctified in this life will likely strike most Lutherans as overly optimistic if not outright delusional.<sup>66</sup> However, some of the ideas underlying Wesley's schema may also be found in Lutheran theology, in ways that may surprise Wesleyans. For example, Lutherans affirm the distinction Wesley makes between the guilt and

power of sin, and between the sin that rules and the sin that is ruled.<sup>67</sup> The faith that justifies is not an “idle thought,” but “frees us from death, produces new life in our hearts, and is a work of the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, it does not coexist with mortal sin, but “as long as it is present, it brings forth good fruit.”<sup>68</sup>

The Lutheran teaching that a Christian is “*simul iustus et peccator*” does not teach that although a Christian has been forgiven, sin still rules in the Christian’s heart. Sin is not only forgiven, its power is also broken. While the “pervasiveness of sin” may be a distinctive teaching in Lutheran theology, so is the pervasiveness of the Holy Spirit to battle the “sin that remains.”<sup>69</sup> In the Formula of Concord, we read that “The Holy Spirit does not allow sin to rule and gain the upper hand so that it is brought to completion, but the Spirit controls and resists so that sin is not able to do whatever it wants.”<sup>70</sup>

Both Luther and Wesley refer to the “sin that remains” in reference to the spirit/flesh distinction in Paul and as that which can be cleansed through repentance and the work of the Holy Spirit. Luther writes that “this repentance endures among Christians until death because it struggles with the sin that remains in the flesh throughout life. As St. Paul bears witness in Romans 7[:23], he wars with the law in his members, etc.—not by using his own powers but with the gift of the Holy Spirit which follows from the forgiveness of sins. This same gift daily cleanses and sweeps away the sins that remain and works to make people truly pure and holy.”<sup>71</sup> Wesley sometimes describes the sin that remains in more essentialist terms, as something that be “rooted out,”<sup>72</sup> where Luther and the Confessions frequently use the language of the “old Adam” or “old creature” that remains.<sup>73</sup> Though weakened by repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit, the old creature must be struggled with until death.

This struggle brings some “victory” over the power of sin in Lutheran thought: “Although those born anew come *even in this life* to the point that they desire the good and delight in it and even do good deeds and grow in practicing them, this is not... a product of our own will or power, but the Holy Spirit, as Paul says himself, ‘is at work in us to will and work’; (Phil 2[:13]).”<sup>74</sup> Obviously, this is a far cry from Wesley’s “entire sanctification,” but it does show that Lutheran theology has room for a more transformative understanding of the Spirit’s work in the sanctification of the believer than is commonly thought.

However, this transformation comes in ways that are not easily measurable or even always discernible. While “sanctification is a constant progress, a growing mastery of the Spirit over the flesh... *this*

progress is not the same as the increase of empirical piety.” Empirical piety—the observable ways that faith expresses itself in prayer, praise, and service—is to be encouraged (see, for example, Luther’s *Treatise on Good Works*); however, Luther warned against identifying empirical piety with the progress of sanctification, for such piety “may in every moment be either an expression of the Spirit or of the flesh, whether the man in that particular moment is either Spirit or flesh.”<sup>75</sup> The Formula of Concord similarly observes: “For one can detect not only a great difference among Christians—one is weak, another strong in the Spirit—but within each Christian, who is at one moment resolute in the Spirit and at another fearful and afraid, at one moment ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak.”<sup>76</sup>

Further, empirical piety is not in itself “the new person” nor is it our righteousness before God; it is only a fruit of the Spirit, an expression of Christ in us.<sup>77</sup> The only “righteousness” that can struggle against the “sin that remains” is the righteousness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. As noted above, the new life “begins by the crucifying of the old man when he through inner conflicts is made to conform with the Christ of humiliation.” As Luther himself states, “it is the nature of God first to destroy and tear down whatever is in us before He gives us His good things.”<sup>78</sup>

The process of sanctification, then, can be described in terms of “progress” for Lutherans, but in a significantly different way than for Wesleyans. Progress involves a struggle with the “sin that remains” for both; however, for Luther, the struggle is not between the “renewal” that has begun and the sin that remains—as if two parts of the same person—in the sense that he, in his renewed self is able now to battle the vestiges of sin in his “old self.” Rather, the struggle is described as between the “old creature” (our whole selves—sinful and justified) and the “new creature,” that is, the alien righteousness of Christ in us through faith, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our groaning as the “old creature” is crucified.<sup>79</sup>

For Lutherans, this progress is less linear and more circular. In fact, it is better described as a “progress of return,” a constant going back to the alien righteousness of Christ. In this sense, it is not a progress marked by time, although it has its beginning in baptism (where the promise of justification traditionally is given) and its destination in the resurrection. The dynamic is not one of “getting better and better all the time” but “losing all that is our own and starting anew again and again. This constant starting anew which embodies the essence of progress embraces the constant taking refuge in the righteousness of Christ.”<sup>80</sup> Finally, for Wesley, there can be a point at which the struggle

against the old Adam (or Eve) is completed in this life: what Wesley called entire sanctification or Christian perfection. For Lutherans, this “process” only ends when the Christian dies; and perfection comes only at the resurrection on the last day.

## CONCLUSION

What Lutherans could learn from the Wesleyan tradition in the first place is that sanctification is nothing to fear, as long as we remember that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Christian’s life. Wesley’s theology offers a picture of sanctification that is thoroughly pneumatological; even where there is a place for human “cooperation,” it is always accomplished by and through the work of the Spirit, which not only begins with but is also grounded in the gift of faith. For the most part, Wesley also avoids language of essence and substance, speaking of grace and the Holy Spirit in relational terms. The Lutheran Confessional writings have strikingly familiar language regarding the Spirit’s role not only in justification, but also in sanctification—though one would hardly know it from reading most contemporary Lutheran theology. By engaging Wesley on the question of sanctification, Lutherans could reclaim this important biblical theme in their own theology.

Lutherans also can learn from Wesley that there is “more” to the Christian life than being justified. Lutherans can be so focused on the center that they forget the whole, that salvation includes not only the “forgiveness of sins,” but new life as well. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to create faith in the believer, through which one grasps and clings to the promise of the gospel and so is justified, but also to bring the new birth and the power to resist sin. While Wesley is far more optimistic than Luther and the other Reformers about the possibility of “Christian perfection” in this life, the Wesleyan tradition reminds Lutherans that salvation from sin includes salvation from the power of sin over our lives in the present.

Finally, Lutherans also can learn from Wesley that the Christian life is dynamic. Although Luther and Wesley describe the “progress” of sanctification in different ways, there is no “standing still” if one has received the Holy Spirit. As God’s personal presence, the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in the Christian’s life, keeping the believer in faith and creating spiritual impulses in her heart. Lutherans do not need to fear the role of the believer “cooperating” with grace; there can be an active role as well as a passive role, as long as the focus remains on the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of love and good works.



## NOTES

1. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 355.6. Hereafter, *BC*.
2. This is a revision of my paper, "A Wesley Lutheran Could Appreciate? What Lutherans Can Learn about Holiness from the Wesleyan Tradition," presented at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 22–24, 2013.
3. John Wesley, "The Lord is our Righteousness," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 383, Hereafter, *Sermons*.
4. Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 174.
5. John Wesley, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," in *Sermons*, 184.
6. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 145.
7. John Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in *Sermons*, 485–92.
8. *BC*, 568.35, 37.
9. See for example, *BC*, 132.72.
10. *BC*, 56564.17–565.21.
11. *BC*, 566.23.
12. *BC*, 549.26.
13. *BC*, 362.5–6.
14. Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953), 19.
15. *Ibid.*, 19, 176.
16. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 156.
17. John Wesley, "The Lord is our Righteousness," in *Sermons*, 388.
18. John Wesley, "Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Sermons*, 376–77.
19. John Wesley, "The Law Established through Faith, Discourse II," in *Sermons*, 282–83.
20. John Wesley, "The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God," in *Sermons*, 186.
21. Formula of Concord, Epitome IV, in *BC*, 499.13.
22. John Wesley, "The Law Established through Faith, Discourse I," in *Sermons*, 273.
23. John Wesley, "Justification by Faith," in *Sermons*, 117.
24. *Ibid.*, 117.
25. See *BC*, 145.159a; 148.1641a.
26. *BC*, 143.151. See also Philip Watson, "Wesley and Luther on Perfection," in *The Ecumenical Review* 15, no. 3 (1963): 299.
27. *BC*, 566.27. Lutherans also teach that only the "good works" done out of faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit are truly "good" before God.

28. *BC*, 127.45.
29. *BC*, 140.125.
30. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 150.
31. For example, “The justified necessarily produce good works or fruits.” *BC*, 171.370A.
32. *BC*, 143.151.
33. John Wesley, “The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God,” in *Sermons*, 191; Formula of Concord, Epitome IV, in *BC*, 499.19–500.20.
34. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997), 154.
35. Wesley, “On Working Out Our Salvation,” 491.
36. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 148.
37. Cited in Lycurgus M. Starkey Jr., *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (New York and Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962), 120–21.
38. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, 154.
39. *BC*, 561.88. See Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 120.
40. *BC*, 558.72.
41. See Martin Luther, “On the Councils and the Church,” in *Luther’s Works: American Edition*, vol. 41, ed. Eric Gritsch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1966), 113–114. Hereafter, *LW*.
42. To date, Regin Preter has written the only book-length study of Luther’s pneumatology. See fn. 14.
43. Regin Preter, “Holiness in the Lutheran Tradition,” in *Man’s Concern with Holiness*, ed. Marina Chavchavadze (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970). 123.
44. Preter, “Holiness,” 124.
45. *Ibid.*, 126.
46. *Ibid.*, 141.
47. *Ibid.*, 144.
48. The Wesley brothers disagreed on this point: Whereas Charles believed that perfection happened at death for all Christians, John believed that while this was true for many (or even most) Christians, some could experience “Christian perfection” yet in this life. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 186.
49. For the following, see Wesley, “Christian Perfection,” in *Sermons*, 70–84.
50. *Ibid.*, 73.
51. Watson, “Wesley and Luther on Perfection,” 301.
52. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 188.
53. *BC*, 438.57–58
54. *BC*, 439.59.
55. In the Augsburg Confession, Article XXII, the Anabaptists are condemned for teaching that “some may attain such perfection in this life that they cannot sin.” *BC*, 45.8.

56. Watson, "Wesley and Luther on Perfection," 301.
57. *BC*, 88.49, cited in "Confessing our Faith Together," 7.
58. John Wesley, "Salvation by Faith," in *Sermons*, 41, 44.
59. John Wesley, "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," in *Sermons*, 140–41.
60. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 163.
61. John Wesley, "The Repentance of Believers," and John Wesley, "On Sin in Believers," in *Sermons*, 415 and 363.
62. Wesley, "On Sin in Believers," 369.
63. This is why repentance has an essential place in the Christian life. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 165–66.
64. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, 155.
65. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 183.
66. *Ibid.*, 190.
67. See Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 71, 73.
68. *BC*, 139.115–16; 131.64–65.
69. *BC*, 148.164A.
70. *BC*, 319.44. The Formula of Concord further states that, "However, when sin does whatever it wants, then the Holy Spirit and faith are not there," and affirms that faith and the Holy Spirit can be lost through active sinning. *BC*, 579.33.
71. *BC*, 318.40.
72. Watson, "Wesley and Luther on Perfection," 300.
73. See for example, *BC*, 360.12; 588.7.
74. *BC*, 551.39. Emphasis added.
75. Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 70.
76. *BC*, 557.68.
77. Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 68.
78. *LW* 25, 365.
79. See Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, 98. See also *ibid.*, 66.
80. *Ibid.*, 74.

## THE ALLURER OF THE SOUL: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PURITAN PREACHING

*David M. Barbee*

Conforming English clergy during the Elizabethan period critiqued Puritan preaching for attempting to manipulate their auditors emotionally. Here, one might think of the preface to Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, where he accused Puritans of propagating Presbyterianism by the means of a duplicitous multiphase plan. First, Presbyterians stirred the emotions of their auditors against the perceived faults of the Church of England. Then, they positioned Presbyterianism as the remedy to the aforementioned transgressions. Finally, they fell back upon special revelation from the Holy Spirit as an explanation as to why Presbyterians alone correctly interpret Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Puritans likely considered the conformist critique to grant entirely too much credit to their homiletical skills, but the final point of Hooker's critique does get at a central axiom of Puritan preaching. Puritans, like William Perkins, placed the power of the Holy Spirit central in their estimate of efficacious preaching.

In this essay, I would like to take a closer look at Perkins's theology of preaching as it relates to his pneumatology and soteriology. Perkins's pneumatology provides the actuating power that communicates the salvific work of Christ through the preaching act. Initially, this is contingent upon the Holy Spirit's work in illuminating the preacher so that Scripture is properly understood. In the act of preaching itself, the preacher's words serve as a medium for the voice of God through the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit. Through special illumination, the Holy Spirit applies the words of the sermon to the specific condition of each auditor. This is most tangible in the event of conversion facilitated through preaching. At this juncture, it is most evident that Perkins's homiletical theory, although presented

in rhetorical garb, is a functional account of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. That Perkins's pneumatology provides the connective tissue between his doctrine of salvation and his theory of preaching is shown first in his account of the Holy Spirit and the interpretation of Scripture, followed by a parallel investigation of the Spirit in the task of preaching. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Spirit's place and function in the *ordo salutis*.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Perkins is best remembered for his study of the *ordo salutis* in his *Golden Chaine*, but he had little to say about the role of the Holy Spirit in this work. Early on, he stated that the Holy Spirit's "proper manner of working is to finish an action, effecting it, as from the Father and the Sonne."<sup>2</sup> Just as it is in the nature of the Son to serve as mediator, so it is in the essence of the Spirit to proceed from the Father and the Son. He did not mention the Holy Spirit again until after his elaboration of Christological doctrine, his analysis of the Ten Commandments, and his discussion of the sacraments as the outward means of election. Finally, when he turned to the inward means of election, he examined the role of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

While little time was spent discussing the Holy Spirit in *Golden Chaine*, Perkins developed his pneumatology in other works, particularly in his *Exposition of the Apostles' Creed*. Here he explains that just as it was in the nature of the Son to save, it is the task of the Spirit to sanctify or to renew the church of God.<sup>4</sup> To that end, the Spirit bestows an assortment of gifts different from those granted to all human beings and intended to assist in the actualization of Christian character.<sup>5</sup> Perkins still did not have as much to say about the Holy Spirit as he did about Christ, but what he did say is nearly entirely in terms of the economy of salvation.

One of the most important roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church is cooperating with Christ in the exegesis of Scripture. Perkins argued that Christ himself fulfilled the office of scriptural interpreter on behalf of the church. In his explanation of why Christ was described as doctor, lawgiver, and counselor of the church, Perkins concluded: "Therefore the Sovereigne authoritie of expounding the Scripture, onely belongs to Christ: and the Church hath onely the ministry of judgement and interpretation committed unto her."<sup>6</sup> Perkins accused the Church of Rome of robbing Christ precisely because they had dared to usurp the sovereign authority of Christ by claiming absolute

authority in scriptural interpretation. He noted that Christ possessed interpretational authority based on his unique relationship to the text. "In this diversitie of opinions, yea, of the Scriptures themselves," Perkins maintained, "we must still have recourse to Christ, and that in the Scriptures alone: for though there were a thousand divers expositions of one place: yet by the scope and circumstances thereof conferring it with other like places of Scripture, a man shall be able to finde out the true sense; for Christ in the Scripture expoundeth himself."<sup>7</sup> Christ provides the hermeneutical key that unlocks the mysteries of Scripture.

This insight provided minimal direction in the process of scriptural interpretation, but Perkins also detailed more closely how Christ could act as interpreter and the Holy Spirit serve as an intermediary between Christ and the human exegete. Perkins relied primarily upon Tertullian in support of his view.<sup>8</sup> According to Perkins, the voice of the Holy Spirit speaks in Scripture. The Spirit facilitates a full certainty of the nature of Scripture as one reads, meditates on, or listens to the text.<sup>9</sup> He ultimately insisted that interpretation of Scripture and instruction of the elect remained a task of the office of Christ, but the more existential outworking of Christ's instruction occurs through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Perkins identified two rudimentary forms of mental illumination, "first, generally, whereby a man in reading the word is able to conceive the true sense and meaning of it. Secondly, more specially, when beside the generall sense, God makes a man feele the truth and power of the word in his owne conscience: and in this special illumination stands the true finding."<sup>11</sup> The Holy Spirit, not the church or any other source, provided the authoritative living voice of Scripture through illumination.

This emphasis might be understood as a kind of anti-intellectualism or an extreme aversion to the use of reason in the exegetical process. It is true that Perkins placed little stock in human reason after the fall. He admitted that after the fall, humans retained the image of God as part of their nature. As such, humans possessed some knowledge of good and evil, but even these most basic concepts had been thoroughly corrupted. Perkins summarized his view of the human mind in three words: ignorant, impotent, and vain. All that is left is a "natural inclination onely to conceive and devise the thing which is evill."<sup>12</sup> This inclination has obvious repercussions for one's ability to read and understand the Bible, as the ability to understand spiritual matters is hindered.

The illumination of the Holy Spirit helps to counter the deleterious consequences of the fall. Perkins listed the affects of sanctification of

every part of human psychology from the mind to one's appetite. All of these are reoriented toward spiritual things. In particular, the mind is cleared of darkness and "dimme understanding." This reorientation then allowed one to possess salvific knowledge and comprehension of spiritual matters.<sup>13</sup> It is only after one's mind has been sanctified that one can hope to interpret Scripture properly. Perkins described this ability as one of the first benefits of sanctification. Under the category of special illumination, Perkins enumerated two forms. First, spiritual illumination "is an illumination of the minde, whereby it acknowledgeth the knowne truth of the word of God." Alternatively, spiritual wisdom "is an illumination of the minde, whereby the same truth, is applied to the good ordering of particular both things and actions." Out of this reorientation, one can understand good and evil and meditate on Scripture.<sup>14</sup>

### THE HOLY SPIRIT, RHETORIC, AND THE TASK OF PREACHING

Left here, it may appear that Perkins's pessimism about human reason compelled him to rely on the spontaneous inspiration of the Holy Spirit to deliver sermons to the exclusion of more academic preparation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. He not only prescribed a precisely organized reading list of canonical books and orthodox writers throughout church history, but he also outlined a program for how to read the biblical text. Scripture was to be read "using a grammaticall, rhetoricall, and logicall analysis," along with the assistance of any other academic discipline.<sup>15</sup> In doing this, Perkins merely reiterated the classical balance between word and Spirit worked out earlier by, for instance, John Calvin.<sup>16</sup>

A sharper image of Perkins's intention is provided when his views are contrasted with those of his peer, Richard Hooker. Early on in his massive *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker set out his approach in countering the views of the Presbyterians. He claimed to have carefully examined their arguments and now moved to establish his "final resolute persuasion."<sup>17</sup> He hoped to write "for mens more cleare and plaine understanding."<sup>18</sup> Hooker was forced to acknowledge that the Presbyterian rhetoric was successful in eliciting emotion and tried to set out a remedy. Consequently, he presented his case so as to set knowledge "forward unto the tryall of that whereof there is doubt."<sup>19</sup> Specifically regarding Presbyterianism, Hooker strove "to teach men a reason why just and reasonable lawes are of so great force."<sup>20</sup> Rudolph Almsy correctly observes that, in his writing, "Hooker hopes to teach

rationally, *docere* being one of the functions of rhetoric.”<sup>21</sup> This technique is visible in Hooker’s sermons. John Stafford notes similarly that more recent interpretations of Hooker present his theology as “a work of practical rationality.”<sup>22</sup> For instance, in his *Learned Sermon on the Nature of Pride*, Hooker appeals to “reasonable men” and he probes the causes for undue sorrow in his *Remedie Against Sorrow and Feare*.<sup>23</sup> It should come as little surprise that Hooker made his name during his lifetime as a lecturer in logic, not rhetoric.

Almasy’s point regarding the functions of rhetoric is important for contextualizing Perkins’s work. Almasy’s statement refers to the three tasks of the rhetorician enumerated by Cicero and reiterated in book four of Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*. Augustine listed the essential tasks of an eloquent preacher as “to instruct, delight, and move their listeners.”<sup>24</sup> Of these three, the first relates to the subject of the sermon while the other two refer to the style of delivery. The connection between these three tasks do not allow for a hard and fast division between purely intellectual instruction and emotional influence. Instead, it is far better to situate Perkins within the tradition of what one scholar has termed a “grand style” of “sacred rhetoric” that thrived during the Renaissance. “The Christian grand style,” Deborah Shuger observes, “becomes a bridge between the word and the world, connecting problems of style to the role of emotion and imagination in the mind’s journey toward God, to the relation between thought and feeling.”<sup>25</sup> Here, one only needs to mention the kinds of applications Perkins outlined in Chapter 8 of his homiletical handbook *The Art of Prophecyng*—a point I will return to shortly—to show the connections between doctrine and practice, head and heart.<sup>26</sup>

The foregoing theological reading of Scripture does little to address specific problems of textual interpretation. Perkins outlined a much more concrete and practical exegetical technique in *The Art of Prophecyng*. He composed *Art* in 1592 as an instructional manual. In light of the “weightie and difficult” task of writing sermons, he penned his treatise to help pastors properly write their own homilies. He stated that the sermon was the means by which the elect are collected and comforted. It was also the means by which the laity could be inoculated against heresy. After studying the work of other divines, including Augustine, Perkins published his manual to improve the quality of preaching.<sup>27</sup>

Perkins’s convictions about the purpose of preaching culminate in an approach to language as a conduit for the work of the Holy Spirit that has been described as “the puritan plain style” of preaching. Perry Miller, the eminent twentieth-century scholar of Puritanism,



contrasts the preaching style of the Puritan and their conformist peers as the difference between a methodical lawyer's brief and an oration replete with verbal tapestry.<sup>28</sup> Perkins instructed preachers to refrain from ostentatious shows of human learning. "*Humane wisdom* must be concealed whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words," Perkins stated, "because the preaching of the word is the *Testimony of God*."<sup>29</sup> Clearly, this is not to say that a pastor should be uneducated or that his sermon should appear barbarous, but only that human learning should be hidden. Learning must be concealed so that it does not distract from the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> The preacher is, after all, "the voyce of God" in preaching.<sup>31</sup> Preaching of the word "is the Testimony of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ."<sup>32</sup> This conviction rises to the fore in what Perkins called "the demonstration of the Spirit,"<sup>33</sup> which is the ability for all to see "that it is not so much the preacher who speaketh, as the Spirit of God in him and by him."<sup>34</sup> The "demonstration of the Spirit" materializes in the preacher's lifestyle and in his manner of preaching, particularly his words. Barbara Lewalski writes that "Perkins expects that such plain preaching, concerned to display God's Word unadorned, would achieve the most powerfully moving effect upon the hearers because of the power resident in the Word itself."<sup>35</sup> This achievement, of course, first requires the illumination of the preacher mentioned earlier. As Perkins wrote, "wood, that is capable of fire, doth not burne unlesse fire be put to it; he must first be godly affected himself, who would stirre up godly affections in other men."<sup>36</sup>

Finally, after a lengthy program of both intellectual and spiritual preparation, Perkins moved onto the second part of sermon preparation, which he called the right dividing of the word. He defined this as the method "whereby the word is made fitte to edifie the people of God."<sup>37</sup> He then elaborated a series of bifurcations in analyzing how the process was facilitated by subdividing it into resolution and application. He observed two kinds of resolution—notation, in which doctrine is explicitly stated, and collection, where doctrine is gathered from Scripture by the use of rhetorical analysis.<sup>38</sup> Perkins defined "application" as "that whereby the doctrine rightly collected, is diversely fitted according as place, time, and person doe require."<sup>39</sup> The most important part of this was to rightly discern between law and gospel in Scripture. "For when the word is preached," Perkins observed, "there is one operation of the Law and another of the Gospel." As one could probably guess, the operation of the law served to declare human sinfulness. The gospel "as it reacheth what is to be done,"

Perkins stated, “so it hath also the efficacy of the holy Ghost adjoined with it, by whom being regenerated, we have strength both to beleeve the Gospell, and to perform those things which it commandeth.”<sup>40</sup> Perkins detailed seven different ways in which a verse could be applied to the auditor. Each manner of application derived from the spiritual state of the listener. This ran from an unbeliever to the willfully ignorant through various levels of spiritual maturity up to those who are committed believers and even those who have fallen into assorted kinds of error.<sup>41</sup> This portion of the *The Art of Prophecyng* bears an unmistakable resemblance to Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>42</sup>

This is a point at which the triumvirate of roles assigned to the Christian rhetor seems to give Perkins’s views on preaching some shape. Consider that the unbeliever was to be engaged in rational disputation as well as reprov’d for their sins so that “beeing pricked in hearts and terrified, they may become teachable.”<sup>43</sup> Perkins viewed this as a kind of preparation so that a more robust theology can be presented and absorbed. It should be fairly clear here that Perkins fully deployed the tasks of instructing and moving in the office of the preacher. It is less evident here that he was interested in delighting his auditors, but if we remember that the purpose of the right dividing of the word was intended as a generally edifying experience for the congregation and that the demonstration of the Spirit seems to fulfill a similar function, then this reading of Perkins becomes much more plausible.

Application was of two kinds for Perkins, mental or practical. In turn, each of these was rendered into two elements. Mental application “is that, which respects the mind and is either doctrine or” redarguation, wherein mental error is corrected; practical application pertained to “that which respecteth the life and behavior” and followed a similar pattern with its parts, instruction and correction.<sup>44</sup> Instruction “is that, whereby doctrine is applied to frame a man well to live well in the family, common-wealth, and Church,” while correction tried to reform “the life from ungodlinesse and unrighteous dealing.”<sup>45</sup> The similarities between the special forms of illumination and application are striking. For the most part, Perkins seems to be offering a descriptive account of the work of the Holy Spirit translated into rhetorical idiom and deployed in the act of preaching.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ORDO SALUTIS

So far, Perkins’s views on preaching and the Holy Spirit have been examined on a larger scale. These perspectives can be focused by

examining how they coalesce more tangibly in one of the more routine goals of preaching—conversion. Of course, this task rests upon Perkins's conviction that "preaching and hearing of the word of God is a common and usual means of God to begin and confirme faith and all graces of God that depend on faith, and consequently to worke out our salvation."<sup>46</sup> Or, put more succinctly, preaching "is the Instrument of God to conferre the Spirit."<sup>47</sup> Perkins conveniently connected the various aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in a five-fold list of how the Spirit moves the heart that encompasses all of the functions of preaching, beginning with illumination and conversion before addressing how the Spirit is active in more specific situations.<sup>48</sup> The remaining pages of this chapter will be spent mapping out how the steps of Perkins's *ordo salutis*—preparation for conversion, justification, sanctification, regeneration—are actuated through the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching.

One of the more popular topics in Puritan historiography has been a description of the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion through preaching. According to Norman Pettit's influential study, preparationism developed as the end result of a complex of ideas. On one hand, preparation began by a contrast between law and gospel. While in the Old Testament people achieved righteousness through adherence to the law, in the era of the New Testament the law primarily served to convict the conscience of a person's sins.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit convinced Puritans that this can happen gradually.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, Pettit finds an uncomfortable paradox at the very heart of the matter. He placed great emphasis upon the voluntary assent to the terms of the covenant as well as the aseity of God, which functionally negates any human effort.<sup>51</sup>

Perkins addressed the order of conversion on several different occasions. In his exposition of the Apostles' Creed, he succinctly outlined three simple things that one must possess before repentance: "I. The knowledge of our owne sinnes. II. From the bottome of our hearts wee must confesse and condemne our selves for them, and speake the worst that can be of our selves, in regard of our sins. III. We must earnestly crave pardon for them, and call for mercie at Gods hands in Christ."<sup>52</sup> This preparatory stage has absolutely no salvific worth. These are merely intended to "bring under, tame, and subdue the stubbornness of mans nature." The causes extend to "accusations of conscience, by the ministry of the law, feares and terrors arising thence, compunction of heart, which is the apprehending of Gods anger against sinne."<sup>53</sup> In another treatise, Perkins explicitly connected his notion of a multiphase stage of conversion to the authority

of Augustine, moving through preventing, preparative, operative, and cooperative grace.<sup>54</sup> The important point here is that this initial stage is carried out under the auspices of the law through preaching in a manner that parallels the special illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Justification follows next in the *ordo salutis*. First, justification is an act of God in which God accepts a sinner into eternal life. Second, the act of justification itself involves two complementary processes. A person's sins are remitted through the merit of Christ's death and, following that, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner. Third, justification is solely an act of God's mercy and grace. Finally, a person is justified by faith alone "because faith is that alone instrument created in the heart by the holy Ghost, whereby a sinner layeth hold" of Christ's righteousness.<sup>55</sup> Again, the inner-trinitarian cooperation between the Son and the Holy Spirit is evident.

Perkins also explained how justification occurs in the human being. His answer is: by faith alone. In his opinion, there were two requirements for justifying faith—knowledge revealed in Scripture concerning the means of salvation and "an applying of things knowne unto our selves." It is in regard to the second point that he deemed Roman Catholics deficient.<sup>56</sup> This is essentially the *pro me* of Luther. Perkins began by stating that "Augustine and the rest of the Fathers that dispute against Pelagius doe take Justice for inherent sanctity, or new obedience; Grace for the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and to justifie for to make one from unjust, just."<sup>57</sup>

Both justification and the subsequent step, regeneration, are achieved by grace. Although Perkins offered two different schematizations of grace, his definition of grace is primarily guided by its function or what grace accomplishes. God gives two graces prior to justification—the first is conviction for sin under the weight of the law, and the second carries this preparation through to true conversion.<sup>58</sup> Following upon justification, Perkins defined regeneration as the process "whereby a man of a limme of the divel is made a member of Christ."<sup>59</sup> Renewing grace is characterized as "a gift of Gods spirit, wherby the corruption of sin, is not onely restrained, but also mortified, & the decayed image of God, restored in righteousness and true holines."<sup>60</sup> He identified the three graces that a person acquires in regeneration. The first is "preventing grace," which occurs "when God of his mercy set and imprints in the mind a new light, in the will a new quality of inclination, in the heart new motivations." He called the second "working grace," the will to believe, repent, and obey God's word. The final grace is a co-working grace in which God gives faith and repentance to the will. All three of these are based on a reading of Augustine's *De*

*Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*.<sup>61</sup> On a much larger scale, Perkins claimed the pseudo-Augustinian maxim, “He that made thee without thee doth not regenerate or save thee without thee,” as legitimization for inclusion of the human will in this process.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Perkins made it clear that regeneration was exclusively the work of the Son. Preaching is merely an external instrument of faith and regeneration and cannot be considered a kind of medicinal remedy that heals by its existence. However, in its instrumental use, ministers of the word declare what is to be done and what the will of God is while “the spirit of God inwardly inlightens the minde, and inclines the heart to believe and obey.”<sup>63</sup> One may note here that these are critical dimensions of Perkins’s view of preaching, corroborating the notion that preaching functions as an instrument of grace. The affects of grace parallel the work of the Holy Spirit and Perkins’s account of the various kinds of applications to be included in a sermon.

Regeneration is essentially the restoration of the original *imago Dei*. Perkins identified four ways to speak of human nature—as it was created, corrupted, renewed, and glorified. It is in this second point that he thought Protestants differed from Roman Catholics. Interestingly, he claimed common ground with Roman Catholics on an Augustinian basis who claimed that the will was involved in conversion. In addition to the pseudo-Augustinian text just mentioned, he also referred to the aforementioned passage from *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, wherein the bishop of Hippo stated that the will is required in salvation, but that the power to will derives from God.<sup>64</sup> The difference is that Perkins did not believe that a person could will his or her conversion. The loss of human nature’s original righteousness prohibits such a motivation. To start, the mind is unable to know good things. This, in turn, obstructs the will’s ability to choose. At most, the will can respond only after the mind has been illuminated and it gives assent to whatever decision the will has made.<sup>65</sup> Augustine’s testimony was central to this, constituting half of the non-scriptural authorities cited on this point in *Reformed Catholike*. The first quotation states the matter precisely. “The will of the regenerate,” Perkins quoted Augustine as stating, “is kindled onely by the Holy Ghost: that they may therefore be able because they will thus: and they will thus, because God workes in them to will.”<sup>66</sup> Functionally, this portrayal provides an explanation for the totality of the applications of Scripture in Puritan preaching insofar as the process of regeneration beginning with the mind moving through to action corresponds to mental and practical applications. The Holy Spirit serves as the marrow of Perkins’s theology of preaching, binding together his doctrine of God with his view on pastoral theology.

## CONCLUSION

The popularity of Perkins's short treatise on preaching points toward its importance in understanding Puritan exegetical practices as well as continental beliefs about preaching. *The Art of Prophecy* was originally published in Latin in England, but it was translated into English within a few years. Latin versions were also published in Basel and in Hannover in 1602. It was translated into Dutch in 1606, followed by a reprint edition three years later.<sup>67</sup> The publication history suggests that Perkins's essay addressed a concern of both English and continental divines alike. More work needs to be done on the Perkinsian legacy, but the reception history of *The Art of Prophecy* seems to provide a small window into the cause of Perkins's popularity among later theologians, namely his ability to combine doctrine with pastoral insight.

It is worth pointing out here that Perkins and other moderate Puritans pinned their hopes for personal moral reform, as well as institutional renovation within the Church of England, upon the work of the Holy Spirit administered through preaching. At times, Perkins could make some forthright criticisms of the Church of England. His affirmations of the Church of England as a true church have largely overshadowed some of his more negative statements about the Church. With the exception of a brief essay by Raymond Blacketer, Perkins's condemnations have been neglected. Blacketer insists that "Perkins hoped that the Elizabethan Settlement would be the beginning of reform in the English Church, not the last word."<sup>68</sup> He maintains that Perkins "could not have been satisfied with the state of doctrine, worship, and piety in the national Church."<sup>69</sup> When he discussed Perkins's vision of reform for the Church of England, however, Blacketer only mentions Perkins's concern for better paid and educated ministers, noting that his larger program for reform was contingent upon the moral improvement of the individual through preaching.<sup>70</sup> This optimism was typical of other Renaissance era thinkers. Perkins had to know that such a plan was stillborn since reform had to be spearheaded by the monarch, as Perkins himself stated, and Elizabeth I had little interest in ecclesiastical changes.<sup>71</sup> Along similar lines, Ian Breward asserts that Perkins's *Of the Calling of the Ministerie* was "the first solid attempt, by an English divine, to present an ideal of the ministry related to the needs and problems of the Church of England."<sup>72</sup> Blacketer and Breward both detect Perkins's reforming tendency, but neither believe that he had any plans for larger programmatic change. Whatever hopes for further reform of the Church of England Perkins

may have harbored, he relied upon the renovating work of the Holy Spirit administered through faithful preaching.

Finally, some mention has been made here of the sources for Perkins's views. Not only did Perkins seek to imitate the church fathers in his preaching and exegesis, but he also instructed preachers to seek assistance "from the more ancient church" in combating the revival of ancient heresies.<sup>73</sup> Of course, patristic sources are "onely to be received as they doe agree with the rule of our faith, and the writings of the Prophets and Apostles,"<sup>74</sup> just as the fathers themselves would have wanted. In this way, Perkins used tradition as a source for renewal. This is only possible insofar as the same Holy Spirit that guided and instructed the church fathers does the same for the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church across time.

## NOTES

1. Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* in *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. S. Hill, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA and Binghamton, NY: Belknap Press and Medieval & Renaissance Text and Studies, 1977–1998), Preface, 3.6–10. Hereafter, this edition of Hooker's will be referred to as *FLE*.
2. William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, in *The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge*, 3 vols. (London: John Legat, 1626–1631), I.15. All citations to Perkins's works are cited according to volume and page to this set of his writings.
3. The classic discussion of Puritan pneumatology is Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947).
4. Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole*, I.268.
5. *Ibid.*, I.270–76.
6. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, I.30.
7. Perkins, *Commentarie Upon the Three First Chapters of the Revelation*, III.II.220.
8. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, ed. R. F. Refoulé, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 1 (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1954), 13.4–5, as referenced in Perkins, *Probleme of the Forged Catholicisme*, II.511.
9. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecyng*, II.649.
10. Perkins, *Exposition upon the First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, II.172.
11. Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christs Sermon in the Mount*, III.I.166.
12. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, I.20. See also Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christs Sermon in the Mount*, III.I.172.
13. Perkins, *Exposition Upon the Whole Epistle of Jude*, III.II.486.

14. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, I.83–84.
15. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy*, II.650–51. Note the similarities between Perkins's plan and that of one attributed to his tutor, Laurence Chaderton. See Albert Peel, *The Seconde Part of a Register* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), I.133–34.
16. See Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. Willem Heyner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1981).
17. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Pref. 1.2.
18. *Ibid.*, III.I.1.
19. *Ibid.*, I.16.1.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Rudolph P. Almasy, "Rhetoric and Apologetics," in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Torrance Kirby (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 125.
22. John K. Stafford, "Practical Divinity," in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Kirby, 536.
23. Richard Hooker, *A Learned Sermon of the Nature of Pride*, FLE 5.361; Richard Hooker, *Remedie Against Sorrow and Feare*, FLE 5.367–77.
24. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. K. D. Daur and J. Martin, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 32 (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1962), 4.12.27.
25. Debora K. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: the Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 8. See also Debora K. Shuger, "The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric," in *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 115–32.
26. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy*, II.668.
27. *Ibid.*, II.645. On *Art*, see also Paul R. Schaefer, "The Arte of Prophesying by William Perkins (1558–1602)," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 38–51.
28. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1982), 332–33.
29. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy*, II.670.
30. *Ibid.*, II.670.
31. *Ibid.*, II.646.
32. *Ibid.*, II.670.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 225.
36. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy*, II.671.
37. *Ibid.*, II.662.
38. *Ibid.*, II.662–3.
39. *Ibid.*, II.664.
40. *Ibid.*



41. Ibid., II.665–68. On the reception of sermons, see Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
42. See Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4. This is particularly interesting in light of the humanist development of rhetorical theology and Hooker's rejection of the attempt to manipulate the auditor's emotions in sermons. Charles Trinkaus draws upon Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de Sapientia* for a definition of rhetorical theology as the ability to use the power of words and language to draw the auditor toward God. This was distinct from the use of logic and syllogisms amongst scholastics and was common among humanists. See Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness, Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2nd ed., (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 127–28, 141–42, 305–7, 647–48; Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.18.1; and Brian Vickers, "Public and Private Rhetoric in Hooker's *Laws*," in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 101–11.
43. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecyng*, II.665.
44. Ibid., II.668–69.
45. Ibid.
46. Perkins, *A Warning Against the Idolatry of the Last Times*, I.708.
47. Perkins, *Commentary on Galatians*, II.224.
48. Perkins, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Jude*, III.II.579.
49. Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 15–18.
50. Pettit, *Heart Prepared*, 217–18.
51. Ibid., 219. Pettit retained Miller's views and again set Calvin against experiential Puritanism insofar as conversion was allegedly an instantaneous event for Calvin while for Puritans it could be protracted due to the development of covenantal theology. For a response to this charge, see Mark Shaw, "Drama in the Meeting House: The Concept of Conversion in the Theology of William Perkins," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 41–72 and Lane Tipson, "The Development of a Puritan Understanding of Conversion" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1972), 327–30. Miller's essay on the Puritan theology of conversion is in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956), 48–98.
52. Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole*, I.224.
53. Perkins, *A Graine of Musterd-Seed*, I.638.
54. Augustine, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, 17.34 (PL, 44.985–86). Augustine, *De Correctione et Gratia*, 12.38 (PL 44.939–40); and Jerome, *Epistulae*, ed. I. Hilberg and M. Kamptner, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 54–56 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1910–1996), 133.6, as cited in Perkins, *A Christian and Plaine Treatise of the Manner and Order of Predestination*, II.637.
55. Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike*, I.567.

56. Augustine, *Sermones*, 100.3.4 (PL 38.605); Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Adnuntiatione Dominica*, in *Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclerq, C. H. Talbot, and Henri Rochais, 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1977), vol. 5, 1.3; and Cyprian, *De Mortalitate*, ed. M. Simonetti and C. Moreschini, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latinorum* 3A (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1976), 6, as cited in Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike*, I.570.
57. Perkins, *Probleme of the Forged Catholicisme*, II.533. This section also includes references to John Chrysostom (3), Jerome (2), Bernard of Clairvaux (5), Ambrose of Milan (1), Basil of Caesarea (2), Gregory the Great (7), as well as a handful of other less prominent patristic characters who are only mentioned once, as well as a few early modern Roman Catholics whom Perkins almost certainly cited to point out that even his enemies agreed with him on this point. The Latin tradition stemming primarily from Augustine clearly dominates Perkins’s perspective. On the different vectors of soteriology emerging from the patristic era, see Donald Fairbairn, “Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007): 289–310.
58. Perkins, *Case of Conscience*, II.13. See also Perkins, *A Clowd of Faithfull Witnesses*, III.II.148.
59. Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole*, I.271. See also Perkins, *Exposition upon the First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, II.204 and *Exposition upon the First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, II.301.
60. Perkins, *A Graine of Musterd-Seed*, I.638.
61. Augustine, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, 17.33 (PL 44.901), as cited in Perkins, *A Treatise of Gods Free-Grace and Mans Free-Will*, I.736–37. Perkins’s use of Augustine is a conceptual shift from the standard understanding in scholasticism back toward a more authentically Augustinian position. Regarding the distinction between created and uncreated grace in the *Sentences* commentaries of the thirteenth century, see Karlfried Froehlich, “Justification Language and Grace: The Charge of Pelagianism in the Middle Ages,” in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 27–28.
62. Augustine, *Sermons*, 169.11.13 (PL 38.923), as cited in Perkins, *A Treatise of Gods Free-Grace and Mans Free-Will*, I.737.
63. See Perkins, *Exposition upon the First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, II.196 and *Commentarie Upon the Three First Chapters of the Revelation*, III.II.355.
64. Augustine, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, 17.33 (PL 44.901), as cited in Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike*, I.558.
65. On this theme, see the two-volume study by Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1994); Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

66. Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, 12.38 (*PL* 44.939); Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. I. A. Goldbacher, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 57 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1911), 217.4; Augustine, *Sermones*, 131.6.6 (*PL* 38.732); Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Ad Monimum Libri III*, ed. J. Fraipont, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latinorum* 91 (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1968), 1.7–8; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Liber de Gratia et de Libero Arbitrio*, in *Bernardi Opera*, ed. Leclerq and Rochais, vol. 3, 48; and C. de Clerq, ed., *Concilia Galliae, 511–695, Corpus Christianorum Series Latinorum* 148A (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1963), *Council of Orange*, 6, as cited in Perkins, *A Reformed Catholic*, I.560.
67. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Preaching and Teaching of Scripture: The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 261. On Perkins's place in the formation of Puritan preaching, see also Joseph A. Pipa Jr., "William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).
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69. *Ibid.*, 217.
70. *Ibid.*, 234.
71. *Ibid.*, 235.
72. Ian Breward, "The Life and Theology of William Perkins" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1963), 159. See also Ian Breward, "William Perkins and the Ideal of the Ministry in the English Church," *Reformed Theological Review* 24 (1965): 73–84.
73. Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy*, II.651. On Perkins's use of the church fathers, see my dissertation, "A Reformed Catholic: William Perkins' Use of the Church Fathers" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013) and Ann-Stephane Schäfer, *Auctoritas Patrum? The Reception of the Church Fathers in Puritanism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 31–63.
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## BAPTISM BY FIRE: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PASCAL'S PHILOSOPHY

*Janelle Aijian*

Many elements of the life and philosophy of Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) speak to the profound impact the work and doctrine of the Holy Spirit had on him. However, because Pascal's skepticism and pragmatism have been so emphasized, especially in English language studies, very little has been said about the importance Pascal placed on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for knowledge and sanctification. On the following pages, I suggest that Pascal views the revelation of the Holy Spirit as the source of justification for both secular and sacred foundational beliefs. For Pascal, religious experiences, which cohere with the full witness of the Christian tradition, are externally justified sources of belief. The first part of the chapter articulates the role that the Holy Spirit played in Pascal's life in the context of his Jansenist community. The second part outlines the ways in which Pascal's pneumatology plays an important role in his philosophy. I conclude with an analysis of the role of the Spirit in Pascal's account of the formation of religious beliefs.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PASCAL'S LIFE AND COMMUNITY

Pascal's life was marked by two clear encounters with the Holy Spirit. The first is the so-called Night of Fire, which occurred on the night of November 23, 1654. The only record of this experience is a memorial that Pascal wrote just after the encounter ended, which was found sewn into the lining of his jacket after his death. This memorial describes Pascal's visceral experience (a feeling like fire), and also the doxastic and devotional effect the experience had for Pascal. His

encounter with the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” gave him a profound sense of certainty, especially certainty in his knowledge of God the Father. It convinced him of the greatness of the human soul, of his own sin, and of the truth of the gospel teachings. It also led him to commit himself to total submission to Christ and to his spiritual director at Port Royal.

Pascal’s use of the metaphor of fire conveys both the intensity and the mystical nature of his experience.<sup>1</sup> Roger Hazelton argues, “The metaphor of fire, familiar in other mystical writings, conveys the feelings both of burning pain and of inner radiance.”<sup>2</sup> The experience is also marked by an explicit rejection of the deistic philosophy of Pascal’s contemporaries. He writes, “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars.”<sup>3</sup> From this point on, especially in the *Pensées*, Pascal is adamant to distinguish between the particular and personal nature of encounters with the true God from belief in God that arises solely from rational argument. Such belief, Pascal argues, is “simply human and useless for salvation.”<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Pascal leaves his Night of Fire with the rarest of experiences for a skeptic. He records an experience of “Certainty, certainty, feeling, joy, peace.”<sup>5</sup> Pascal’s encounter left him with an experience of absolute certainty, but what kind of certainty? Does Pascal take his experience to have given him indubitable evidence as to the reality of Christ? As I will argue, Pascal did not take his Night of Fire experience to give him evidence of the veracity of his Christian belief, *apart from faith*. Rather, Pascal’s experience of certainty must be understood as existential rather than epistemic. Pascal *feels* certain about the reality of Jesus Christ as a result of his experience.

The memorial was profoundly important for Pascal’s life. Although there are perhaps as many as three “conversion” moments that Pascal experienced over the course of his life, there is no doubt that the Night of Fire had a profound impact on his lifestyle and sense of vocation. From the time of this “conversion,” he devoted himself to the Christian community at Port Royal and to the defense of Jansenism against Jesuit attacks in the form of the *Provincial Letters*.

Pascal’s second experience of the work of the Holy Spirit came through his niece Marguerite Perier. Marguerite was diagnosed with a weeping fistula in her eye while attending the convent at Port Royal. The convent had recently received a holy relic, a piece from Christ’s Crown of Thorns. On March 24, 1656, one of the sisters picked up the relic and touched Marguerite’s eye, and that night the abscess she had suffered for two years was cured. This miracle was taken to be

evidence of God's confirmation of the Jansenists in the midst of Jesuit persecution. Jean Mesnard argues that this miracle "gave Pascal new confidence to carry on with his struggle" against the Jesuits in the form of his *Provincial Letters*.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of this second miracle can be glimpsed in Pascal's later work. There is only one fragment in the *Pensées* that mentions the Holy Spirit explicitly, and this is a direct reference to Acts 10:45, where the Gentiles are judged to be approved by God without circumcision.<sup>7</sup> In this fragment, Pascal associates the working of the Spirit of God with confirmation of God's blessing in the face of theological opposition.

When St. Peter and the apostles discussed abolishing circumcision, where it was a question of going against the law of God, they did not look to the prophets but simply to the reception of the Holy Spirit in the person of the uncircumcised. They judged it more certain that God approved those whom he fills with his spirit than that the Law must be observed.<sup>8</sup>

Here we see a clear consonance with the miracle at Port Royal. In both cases, Pascal argues that the work of the Holy Spirit acts as a seal of God's blessing. In cases where there is room for theological dispute, one ought to trust the revelation of the Holy Spirit more than the conclusions of theological reasoning. Thus, the miracle at Port Royal renders obsolete Jesuit arguments against Jansenism for precisely the same reason that the apostles disregarded the arguments of the circumcision party; in both cases, God has revealed that which was obscured by reasoning through the work of his Spirit. This is one of the ways in which Pascal distinguishes the God of Jesus Christ from the God of the philosophers. Pascal regards reasoning as inherently uncertain, liable to be warped by desires and prejudices. It is by means of the revelation of the Spirit, not by careful argument, that certainty about a theological question can be gained.

In other cases where Pascal refers to the Holy Spirit explicitly, there are also references to these two experiences of the Spirit. On the occasion of his father's death, Pascal writes to his sister and brother-in-law, the Périers, "It is a truth that the Holy Spirit reposes invisibly in the relics of those who have died in the grace of God, until they shall appear visibly in the resurrection, and this it is that renders the relics of the saints so worthy of veneration."<sup>9</sup> Pascal associates the Holy Spirit explicitly with the power and veneration of relics, like the relic of the Holy Thorn that had healed Marguerite.

In the same letter to the Périers, where Pascal writes “With Jesus Christ . . . the truth is . . . revealed, and the consolation is also as infallibly joined with it as it is infallibly separated from error. Let us, then, consider death in the truth which the Holy Spirit has taught us.”<sup>10</sup> Here Pascal associates the Holy Spirit’s teaching with consolation and infallible truth, the two things above all that he records receiving in his Night of Fire, in contrast to the knowledge produced by human reasoning.<sup>11</sup> Again, these reflect Pascal’s experience in the memorial, where he expresses the sense of certainty given by the revelation of the Spirit.

Given the clear influence that his experiences of the Holy Spirit had on Pascal’s life and work, the small number of times that Pascal mentions the Holy Spirit explicitly seems surprising. However, a final passage from his letters provides an interpretive key for understanding the relationship between Pascal’s personal experiences of the Holy Spirit and his philosophy. In a work of instruction on how to pray in the midst of sickness (a continually recurring experience for Pascal) he writes, “Unite me to thee; fill me with thyself and with thy Spirit. Enter into my heart and soul, to bear in them my sufferings.”<sup>12</sup> This passage accords with a reference to Jeremiah 32:40 that Pascal makes in the *Pensées*, “I will put my spirit and my fear into your heart.”<sup>13</sup> These passages are crucial, for it is here that we see Pascal explicitly associating the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the human faculty of the heart, a faculty about which Pascal has much to say in the *Pensées*.

That Pascal associates the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the faculty of the heart is directly in keeping with the theological instruction he received.<sup>14</sup> Saint-Cyran, the spiritual director at the forefront of the Jansenist movement in Pascal’s time, consistently associates the presence of the Holy Spirit with the heart. In his small tract, *Le Coeur Nouveau*, Saint-Cyran writes,

This [new] heart is nothing other than His Spirit and His Grace, by which our soul is detached from the objects of the senses and raised to God by all sorts of good thoughts and holy affections. This Spirit and this Grace, which establish this new heart, are called “charity” and “love” in Scripture.<sup>15</sup>

He writes further, “Prayer is the channel that unites the heart of a religious to that of God, which is His Spirit.” Jacqueline, writing to the Périers from Port Royal, refers to the “true oil of grace, shed abroad in [the] heart by God’s Holy Spirit” and Antoine le Maistre writes of Port Royal, “They are Christian friends joined together by the Blood

that Jesus Christ shed for all men, and which, by the Holy Spirit, has so filled their hearts that their union is closer, stronger, and purer than the deepest and firmest of earthly friendships.”<sup>16</sup> King James II of England, on returning from a retreat with M. de Rancé, the abbé de la Trappe and an associate of the Jansenists, reports, “I now can look upon myself as become [God’s] son, through the merits of my Saviour, applied to my heart by his Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

Consistently, Pascal and contemporary Jansenists identify the heart as a faculty that receives revelation from the Holy Spirit. The most telling of the above statements is Saint-Cyran’s claim that the Holy Spirit is the heart of God, which communes with the heart of the believer, revealing to the believer the nature of God. The teaching at Port Royal was suffused with this emphasis on the knowledge of God, which is received through the heart by communion with the Holy Spirit. Pascal, having received what he called certain knowledge of God through a spiritual vision, found his own experience in perfect harmony with this teaching and relied heavily on this teaching and on his own spiritual experiences as he formed his religious epistemology in his *Pensées*.<sup>18</sup>

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PASCAL’S PHILOSOPHY

Pascal’s own experience with the Holy Spirit as a corrective and guide in cases where reason is either incomplete or misleading carries over into his philosophical work. Both with regard to knowledge in general and to religious knowledge, Pascal relies on the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to ground beliefs that would otherwise be impossible to ground. As a result, the Holy Spirit is the means by which Pascal is able to simultaneously affirm the possibility of certain knowledge and emphasize the corruption of human reason.

Pascal’s first, and perhaps most unusual employment of the Holy Spirit is as the source for the first principles of knowledge. Like early modern thinkers, Pascal accepts a foundationalist model for knowledge. All beliefs are justified because they are derived from a set of first principle beliefs that do not require further justification. These starting point beliefs include, for Pascal, premises like “space has three dimensions,” “there is an infinite series of numbers,” and “I am not dreaming.”<sup>19</sup> These premises cannot be proven rationally, and they are necessary for proving all other propositions. The foundationalists reasoned that without these starting points for belief, the axioms that do not require further support, no other beliefs could ever be justified.



Most foundationalists argue that this basic set of self-justified beliefs is self-evident. Many argue that we can identify these beliefs by their indubitability.<sup>20</sup> Any belief that seems so clear and distinct that I cannot possibly doubt it must be true and self-evident. Pascal diverges from these thinkers, however, in arguing that these principles are not self-evident truths. Rather, these truths are actually revealed to the heart, which in light of the argument above implies that they are objects of revelation by the Spirit. Pascal writes, “We know the truth not only through our reason but also through the heart. It is through the latter that we know first principles, and reason, which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to refute them.”<sup>21</sup> He emphasizes that no amount of felt certainty about a proposition can guarantee its truthfulness. These first principles essentially amount to instincts; they are indubitable, but their indubitableness does not guarantee their truth.

We cannot be sure that [first] principles are true (faith and revelation apart) except through some natural intuition....[and] There is no certainty, apart from faith, as to whether man was created by a good God, an evil demon, or just by chance, and so it is a matter of doubt, depending on our origin, whether these innate principles are true, false or uncertain.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, these first principles cannot be trusted simply because they cannot be doubted. In order to determine their trustworthiness, one would have to determine their source. However, doing so is impossible. Because reason is dependent on first principles, it is incapable of either testing their trustworthiness or dispensing with them.

Pascal’s conclusion is not, however, that these first principles are unfounded, or ought to be regarded skeptically. The parenthetical stipulation in the first sentence carries the key to understanding Pascal’s view. Without faith and revelation, it is impossible to have certainty about the source of first principles, but with the aid of faith and revelation such certainty is possible. For Pascal, the way we become certain of the source of our cognitive instincts is not by reasoning, because this would be circular, but is rather by faith and revelation. It is the person who has received faith from God and revelation by the Holy Spirit who is able to identify the source of his rational instincts. The natural person, devoid of this divine aid, can identify no reason for trusting these seemingly self-evident first principles. Thankfully, however, this does not throw one into despair or absolute skepticism. God has designed this general revelation such that it cannot be doubted, even when it cannot be justified. “Nature backs up helpless reason and stops it going

wildly astray.”<sup>23</sup> So, even those who have not been given the gift of faith have been given a natural inclination to believe in the trustworthiness of these first principles, and this is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The result of Pascal’s theory of knowledge is that all rational knowledge is founded, fundamentally, on trust in the creator of these first principles, these rational instincts. He concludes, “Truth lies beyond our scope and is an unattainable quarry, it is no earthly denizen, but at home in heaven, lying in the lap of God, to be known only in so far as it pleases him to reveal it.”<sup>24</sup> God reveals elements of that truth to the heart of every person, such that they have conviction about the truth of axioms that cannot be proven rationally.

Apart from the general revelation of the Holy Spirit that every person receives, there is a further revelation that comes when the Spirit works miracles. Pascal argues that miracles are important, even necessary, aspects of God’s revelation of himself to remove impediments for rational belief. While reason alone is not sufficient to produce salvific faith, Pascal argues that faith cannot be contrary to reason. Miracles provide part of the evidence that renders Christian belief plausible, though not certain. “It would have been no sin not to have believed in Jesus Christ without miracles.”<sup>25</sup> Both prophecies fulfilled and supernatural interventions such as healings are manifestations of the Spirit’s presence, accessible to believers and unbelievers alike.

The most weighty proofs of Jesus are the prophecies. It is for them that God made provision, for the events which fulfilled them is a miracle, continuing from the birth of the Church to the end. Thus God raised up prophets for 1,600 years and for 400 years afterwards dispersed all the prophecies with all the Jews, who carried them into every corner of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Again reflecting the view of the Jansenists at Port Royal, Pascal argues here that the work of the Spirit in inspiring prophetic visions is the primary evidence for the veracity of Christian teaching. The work of the Spirit in performing miracles reveals what argument is incapable of showing: God’s real presence among a specific people group. Here, as with first principles, it is the Spirit that provides the certainty that reason seeks in vain to establish, so that all people are dependent on the manifestations of the Spirit to reveal the truth.

While the existence of miracles attests to the presence of God in the world, however, the evidence for God’s existence provided by an argument from miracles, or indeed any argument at all, is insufficient to produce salvific belief. Pascal affirms that for faith, a further gift of

the Holy Spirit is required beyond the evidence of the Spirit's work in the world: "Two foundations; one inward, the other outward; grace, miracles; both supernatural."<sup>27</sup> This further revelation of the Holy Spirit recreates or awakens within the heart a faculty capable of perceiving God. "It is the heart which perceives God and not reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by reason."<sup>28</sup> This perception of God through the heart is a revelation of the Spirit perfectly analogous to the general revelation of first principles, and it provides certainty to the believer in the same way that the axiomatic first principles are certain.

This revelation results, among other things, in a leveling of the field between those believers able to construct and understand proofs for the truth of Christian faith, and those simple believers who are unable to engage in this kind of argument. Pascal is adamant that the capacity to create complex proofs is no benefit to faith:

Those whom we see to be Christians without knowledge of the prophecies and proofs are no less sound judges than those who possess such knowledge. They judge with their hearts as others judge with their minds. It is God himself who inclines them to believe and thus they are most effectively convinced.<sup>29</sup>

Pascal is careful to distinguish the certainty that comes from this divine enlightenment from the probabilities that result from rational argument. He urges,

Do not be astonished to see simple people believing without argument. God makes them love him and hate themselves. He inclines their hearts to believe. We shall never believe, with an effective belief and faith, until God inclines our hearts, and we shall believe as soon as he does so.<sup>30</sup>

Because the first principle of faith, much like the first principles of logic, is a gift of the Spirit, no amount of argument can produce it. In this case, as with the first principles of reason, the human subject is dependent on God's revelation for knowledge it can receive in no other way.

It is important to distinguish Pascal's claim from other epistemic accounts of the gift of faith. The revelation of the Holy Spirit, whether it comes through a dramatic experience like Pascal's Night of Fire or a simple inclination to believe, is non-inferential and non-evidential. That a person experiences this kind of revelation does not give that person any evidence for the belief that God exists. Neither does it provide the subject with insight into new evidence for God's existence

that then draws her irresistibly to this conclusion. The revelation of the Spirit does not give reasons for belief, it gives belief itself. Such belief, like the axiomatic first principles of logic, is incorrigible once given, and independent of evidence and reasoning. As the argument above has shown, no amount of internal, felt certainty provides an epistemic foundation for belief for Pascal. The inner witness of the Spirit creates conviction, incorrigible belief within the subject, but it does not provide any evidence for God's existence. Whereas miracles and prophecies do provide evidence for God's existence but are ultimately incapable of producing salvific belief, the gift of faith by the Holy Spirit produces belief without providing any evidence for God's existence.

The gift of faith is not utterly bereft of epistemic benefits for Pascal, however. Faith, once received without evidence, enlightens the believer to manifold evidences of God's existence that were unavailable to the nonbeliever. It is the believer who is able to perceive, by the Holy Spirit, cosmological proofs for the existence of God. "Those with living faith in their hearts can certainly see at once that everything which exists is entirely the work of the God they worship."<sup>31</sup> In affirming this, Pascal appropriates the Augustinian maxim "*crede, ut intelligas*." It is only the eyes enlightened by faith that are able to fully comprehend the proof for God's existence in the physical world. One of the works of the Holy Spirit, who is received into the heart without the help of reason, is the reformation of reason so that it again becomes a tool capable of helping the believer make progress in knowledge and faith. Reason, in its corrupted state, is incapable of discovering God and wreaks havoc on knowledge and belief, but once the Spirit intercedes in the heart with the gift of faith, reason resumes its role as a helpful handmaiden in the pursuit of God.

A further reformation is necessary in order for reason to be fully redeemed in the life of the believer, the reclamation of the passions. Fundamental to Pascal's argument that reason is not to be trusted on its own merits is that reason is continually warped and swayed by human desire.<sup>32</sup> Without the reformation that comes with faith, a subject is likely to ignore evidence of God's existence in the world, because accepting that evidence would require adopting a lifestyle that denied the passions. In the wager, Pascal succeeds in convincing his interlocutor that belief is reasonable, but the interlocutor responds, "I am so made that I cannot believe."<sup>33</sup> Pascal responds, "That is true, but at least get it into your head that, if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so."<sup>34</sup> Part of the enlightenment that

the Spirit affords is a release from these passions that disrupt reason. Thus, Pascal affirms the commonplace doctrine of Christian sanctification by the Spirit, but goes further in outlining its epistemological benefits. The Spirit releases the mind from passions that consistently obscure its apprehension of the truth, especially the evidence of God in the world.

Further, the Spirit's sanctification releases the believer from the ethical consequences of the fall. Whereas prior to faith a subject cannot fulfill his longing for happiness, faith allows the believer to know God, and thus releases him from his wretched pursuit of other means to fill this God shaped vacuum. Pascal writes,

All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. . . . Yet for very many years no one without faith has ever achieved this goal. . . . We are incapable of attaining the good by our own efforts. . . . God alone is man's true good, and since man abandoned him it is a strange fact that nothing in nature has been found to take his place.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, the believer experiences a God who "unites himself with them in the depths of their soul: who fills it with humility, joy, confidence and love: who makes them incapable of having any other end but him."<sup>36</sup> The result of the indwelling of the Spirit is an end to the tormenting sense that things are not as they should be. The Spirit begins the inner work of sanctification that once again makes the believer capable of the happiness for which he was created.

## THE SPIRIT AND EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

The role that Pascal has assigned to the revelation of the Holy Spirit in his philosophy engages him in a much larger contemporary conversation about the status of beliefs formed on the basis of individual religious or mystical experience. I have argued that the religious experience produces belief, for Pascal, but not justification. The evidence that justifies belief in God is only accessible *after* the believer's perception and reason are redeemed by the Spirit. However, it may be argued that Pascal is giving an externalist account of justification. While the believer does not have access internally to the source of his justification, he is nevertheless justified in believing on the basis of the reliable formation of his belief process by means of the Spirit. This final section assesses the position that Pascal takes with regards to the important question of whether experiences of the Spirit provide warrant for religious belief.

The chief difficulty in accounts of the justification afforded by religious experiences is that they tend toward affording either very little justification, or far too much. This is because the testimonies about religious experiences are a very mixed lot; they contradict each other and some are manifestly absurd. Nearly all believers in religious experiences will want an account according to which some religious experiences provide strong justification for religious belief, others provide no justification whatsoever. Monotheistic believers accord significant epistemic weight to religious experiences that corroborate the tenets of their own faith, but they do not want to afford the same status to the religious experiences that conflict with their views. Perhaps even more than this, members of most sophisticated religious worldviews would distinguish their religious experiences from what may be called outlier religious or mystical experiences (e.g., the person who claims to receive transcendent messages from blueberries). If any religious experiences are to lend justification to belief in God, there must be some way to differentiate between religious experiences that do provide justification for belief from others that fail to ground belief.

W. J. Abraham helpfully outlines some possible views on the epistemic merit of a religious experience. The strongest is to take all religious experiences to be non-inferential and self-evident religious intuitions.<sup>37</sup> That is to say, a religious experience does not provide evidence for God's existence that I use to infer his reality. Rather, it produces the belief directly, without inference, and in such a way that no other evidence is needed to support it. This stance, however, clearly lets too many apples into the barrel. Any experience that produces a phenomenological sense of certainty within the subject (even an experience of transcendental blueberries) gives her as much reason to believe as Wesley's Aldersgate experience or Augustine's "*tolle, lege.*" What's more, from this view, the outside observer has no more reason to doubt this experience than the subject itself. Because religious experiences provide non-inferential and self-evident belief, the subject of such an experience cannot either be expected to provide supporting justification for one's belief, or be dissuaded by evidence that undermines rational acceptance of one's experience. Some corroborating witness, some other senses, are needed in order to sort out which, if any, religious experiences produce warrant.

This sorting mechanism is especially necessary because both genuine religious experiences and delusions are likely to produce belief in the subject. This means that no phenomenological account will succeed in distinguishing them, since delusions will feel from the inside exactly as self-evident and certain as genuine revelations. For a criterion that will

distinguish warrant-producing divine revelations from false claims or delusions, Abraham and Pascal both turn to Christian tradition, and what may be called an internal coherence argument for identifying genuine religious experience.

The first element of identifying a religious experience that can appropriately ground belief is assessing its coherence with the testimonies of others who claim to have experienced the work of the Spirit. Abraham argues that Christians across diverse backgrounds and cultures have associated experiences of God with specific propositions and effects. This set of characteristics includes a “deep sense of certainty about the reality of God and his profoundly personal love for human agents” and “leads to the development of sanctity manifested in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>38</sup> These criteria cohere well with Pascal’s own experience of God in the Night of Fire and the criterion he gives for veridical religious experience.<sup>39</sup>

Along with the testimony of other Christians who have experienced God, there is also the testimony of Scripture. Any purported religious experience that comes into conflict with Scripture can be safely rejected. Finally, Pascal adds to this list the criterion that no revelation from God can be contrary to reason. “Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid that it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.”<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that according to Pascal all divine revelation will be rationally accessible. Rather, divine revelation will always be in accordance with reason until it passes beyond what reason is capable of comprehending.<sup>41</sup> Religious experience may reveal truths that are suprarational, but not irrational. This is because reason, along with Scripture and personal revelation, is on this account a further means of God’s revelation. The orderly and rational universe provides a guide for attuning oneself to divine revelation that is akin to the God’s special revelation.

Simply put, one way of telling a true religious experience from a false one is to determine whether the subject’s experience was *the kind of thing God would say*, on the basis of the things God has revealed to other Christians in the past, through Scripture and through the orderly nature of the universe. Claims to religious experience that contradict this testimony can be safely disregarded because they fail to conform to the broader witness of the Spirit’s revelation.

A second means of distinguishing genuine Christian religious experience is the effect the experience has on the believer’s life. Abraham and Pascal both argue that, apart from providing a sense of certainty about God’s existence, encounters with the Spirit will also lead to the

effects of Christian sanctification. This account, of course, coheres with Pascal's view, which follows the Jansenist tradition in holding that both faith (certainty that God exists) and holiness are gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that intellectual and moral enlightenment are both fruits of the same Spirit.

These two criteria, coherence and personal change, allow for religious experiences to be confirmed, to a certain degree, by externally assessable evidence. They thus distinguish some religious beliefs, held on the basis of such experiences, as warranted. Of course, these criteria assume the truth of scriptural revelation and the historical witness of the church as a starting point. *Crede, ut intelligas*, only from a foundation of faith can one reason, on Pascal's account, to a coherent means of distinguishing warranted from unwarranted beliefs held on the basis of religious experience.

Once a criterion is established to determine which experiences ought, at least from within a particular religious perspective, be taken as genuine experiences of the divine, the further question is whether these experiences provide warrant for belief in God, either for the subject of the experience or for those who hear his testimony. One approach to this question might be to say that religious experiences do provide some evidence for God's existence. If a loving and personal God does exist, then it is reasonable to expect that such a God would reveal his existence and love to those who seek him. An examination of the testimony of Christian believers reveals that a high proportion of these believers report experiences of this kind. So, the world is, to this extent, consistent with the kind of world one would expect if a loving and personal God did exist. Abraham argues that an experience of the Holy Spirit helps to render plausible a "large scale, integrative system of belief."<sup>42</sup> That is to say, an experience of the Holy Spirit does not in itself justify religious belief, but rather makes a part of a "cumulative case" for belief in God. Other parts of this cumulative case may include rational arguments for God's existence, the effectiveness of Christian practice for living the good life, or the fulfillment of biblical prophecies.

Pascal rejects this evidentialist approach, for reasons already discussed. Religious experience is not unique to Christian belief. Because there is no clear criterion for identifying genuine religious experience outside the context of faith, Pascal argues that from the perspective of the skeptic, no religious experience can count as evidence to justify religious belief. Much like cosmological arguments, Pascal believes that religious experiences only provide evidence for God's existence to those who already believe. From the perspective of doubt, no religious



experience provides strong proof for the truth of a particular faith. On the contrary, the large diversity of claimed religious experiences could equally provide a reason for greater skepticism.

Pascal does appear to accord religious experience a form of externalist justification, however. He argues that those who come to believe in God's existence as a result of the Spirit's revelation alone, without access to arguments or proofs, are epistemically no worse off than those who come to belief with an awareness of these proofs.

Those whom we see to be Christians without knowledge of the prophecies and proofs are no less sound judges than those who possess such knowledge. They judge with their hearts as others judge with their minds. It is God himself who inclines them to believe and thus they are most effectively convinced.<sup>43</sup>

Those who believe because God inclines their hearts, come to belief from a reliable belief forming mechanism. Beliefs formed by the intervention of the Spirit into the heart are certain. In fact, because of the extreme reliability of the mechanism by which these beliefs were formed, they hold a privileged place in the believer's epistemology. They are both indubitable and perfectly reliable.

This does not, however, mean that there is no place for rational proof in religious contexts. Pascal consistently argues that although an individual believer may not have access to the proofs that render his belief plausible, others who are capable of providing proofs will, so to speak, back him up with rational arguments.

It may be that this way of judging is not certain, and that it is by following such a method that heretics and unbelievers go astray. . . . To that I answer that God truly inclines those whom he loves to believe in the Christian religion, that the unbelievers have no proof of what they say and that therefore, though our propositions employ the same terms, they differ in that one lacks any proof while the other is very solidly proved.<sup>44</sup>

Because knowledge of God is not irrational for Pascal, although it is often beyond the capacities of reason, there is room for supporting arguments to confirm and build upon what the Spirit reveals by faith. In the same way that first principles provide the foundation for rational knowledge, on which vast edifices of propositions can be erected, the religious truths revealed by the Spirit act as a foundation for religious knowledge on which reason and proof can build.

## CONCLUSION

That revelations of the Spirit provide the believer with externalist justification is, of course, little help to the skeptic in search of proofs for the existence of God or of the truth of Christianity. Neither are they means for the believer to assess the reliability of his beliefs. In this way, Pascal reaffirms the feebleness of human reason to defeat the specter of skepticism. It is not possible for the believer to prove that revelation comes from the Spirit. Indeed, any attempt to distinguish one's religious experience as reliable or plausible relies on an assumption of the truth of Christianity. Pascal is insistent that the believer must begin by trusting the revelation of the Spirit apart from rational justification. Only once we believe in the Spirit will we, on the basis of this belief, be able to reason toward further justified beliefs.

The role that Pascal attributes to the Holy Spirit in his philosophy is as important as the role the revelation of the Holy Spirit played in his personal life. In both cases, the Holy Spirit is the only source of certainty in the life of the believer. It is through the revelation of the Holy Spirit to the heart that a believer gains access to the truth, not only about the external world and one's own faculties, but also about God and the means of salvation. While this certainty is not independent of trusting the reliability of the Spirit's revelation, the believer who chooses to trust God may be as sure of the truth of one's experience of God as of the most basic principles of one's epistemology. The Spirit reveals both these truths to the human heart, and both allow the believer to experience certain knowledge of the truth.

## NOTES

1. I take the Night of Fire to be a mystical experience, a view it is not within the scope of this paper to defend. However, I recognize that this view has been challenged. For discussion, see Henri Gouhier, 'Le Mémorial est-il un texte mystique?' in Blaise Pascal: *Commentaires* (Paris: Vrin, 1984), 49–57 and Hélène Michon, *L'Ordre du Coeur* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).
2. Roger Hazelton, *Blaise Pascal: The Genius of His Thought* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1974), 140.
3. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1995), *The Memorial*. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from the *Pensées* use the Lafuma numbering, and the Krailsheimer translation.
4. *Ibid.*, f. 110.
5. Pascal, *The Memorial*, translation mine.

6. Jean Mesnard, *Pascal: His Life and Works*, trans. G. S. Frasier (London: Harvill Press, 1952), 83.
7. Less explicit mentions of the spirit are in Pascal, *Pensées*, fr. 131 and 301.
8. *Ibid.*, f. 367.
9. Blaise Pascal, *Blaise Pascal: Thoughts, Letters, and Minor Works*, trans. W. F. Trotter, M. L. Booth and O. W. Wight (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 365.
10. *Ibid.*, 337.
11. See also *ibid.*, 333.
12. *Ibid.*, 378. I have slightly modified this translation to conform more closely to the original text.
13. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 328.
14. For the purposes of this article, all I claim is that Pascal's idiom and theology were influenced by the group at Port Royal, who I will refer to for convenience as Jansenists.
15. A. K. H., *Angélique of Port-Royal 1591–1661* (London: Skeffington and Son, 1905), 341.
16. *Ibid.*, 182.
17. Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *A Tour to Alet and the Grand Chartreuse*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (London: J. and A. Arch, 1816), 335.
18. The consistency of this association between the Holy Spirit and the heart amongst Pascal's contemporary Jansenists, along with Pascal's own association of them in the work quoted above, gives us good reason to believe that Pascal thought of the heart as the faculty that receives inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, some scholars begin their interpretation of Pascal on this very assumption. Vinet straightforwardly identifies Pascal's faith of the heart with faith by the Holy Spirit. See Alexander Vinet, *Studies on Pascal*, trans. Thomas Smith (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1859), 163.
19. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 110.
20. A good example is Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 24.
21. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 110.
22. *Ibid.*, f. 131.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, f. 184.
26. *Ibid.*, f. 335.
27. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 861.
28. *Ibid.*, f. 424.
29. *Ibid.*, f. 382.
30. *Ibid.*, f. 380.
31. *Ibid.*, f. 781.
32. *Ibid.*, f. 45.
33. *Ibid.*, f. 418.

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., f. 148.
36. Ibid., f. 449.
37. W. J. Abraham, "The Epistemological Significance of the Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit," *Faith and Philosophy* 7, no. 4 (2009): 434–50 (444).
38. Ibid., 441–42.
39. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 382.
40. Ibid., f. 12.
41. Ibid., f. 174.
42. Abraham, "The Epistemological Significance," 447.
43. Pascal, *Pensées*, f. 382.
44. Ibid., f. 382.



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE  
MIRACULOUS: JOHN WESLEY'S  
EGALITARIAN VIEW OF THE  
SUPERNATURAL AND ITS PROBLEMS

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During the month of August 1739, just 15 months after his heart-warming Aldersgate experience of May 24, 1738, John Wesley (1703–1791) had three separate interviews with Bishop Joseph Butler (1692–1752) in Bristol, England. Frank Baker has noted that the first interview lasted about 15 minutes, the second about 30 minutes, and the final one approximately one hour.<sup>1</sup> In his meeting, the relatively young Wesley, who had gained momentum through his proclamation of justifying grace in the open fields, was perhaps too aggressive with the Bishop of Bristol. Despite Wesley's admiration of Butler's masterful denunciation of Deism, it was perhaps too bold for him to expect that the Bishop would receive the likes of a George Whitefield (1714–1770) or himself and the enthusiastic affectations they were incurring in their open-field preaching.<sup>2</sup> After some discussion about the nature of faith in its justifying sense, Butler turned to what was probably irritating him the most about the Methodist preachers, especially Wesley and Whitefield. It appeared, at least to Butler, that the Methodists assumed that God was doing something special in their faith and ministry that was isolated from other believers who did not embrace their cause. To Wesley, Butler accosted: "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing."<sup>3</sup> Wesley's response to Butler has become equally famous: "I pretend to no extraordinary revelations or gifts

of the Holy Ghost—none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for.”<sup>4</sup> The conversation that ensued between the two Anglicans must have been a civil but heated one because a few moments later Bishop Butler forbade Wesley from preaching in his diocese, and Wesley, for his part, refused to abide by Bulter’s prohibition, citing his own ordination credentials in the Church of England to preach to the church universal.<sup>5</sup>

Within this exchange, there is an important feature of Wesley’s understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit and egalitarian conception of the experience of the supernatural among human agents living in the world. I have most recently argued in a more complete way that John Wesley both believed in demonstrative manifestations of the supernatural and that he also gathered and assembled various experiences of the invisible world among the Methodists and developed a rhetorical defense of the supernatural into a programmatic of self-identification for Methodists living in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In the following analysis, I want to explore John Wesley’s view of the Holy Spirit in relation to the irregular occurrences of miracles in the world in which he lived and ministered. Of course, we know that Wesley was never a systematic theologian in the modern sense of that title. He never wrote a pneumatology or anything close to a systematic treatment of the Holy Spirit. However, scattered throughout his sermons, journals, and correspondence are hundreds of references and ruminations about the creative power of the Holy Spirit, and in several of these citations miracles and supernatural occurrences are linked to his view of the Spirit of God. What I will demonstrate is that John Wesley was not only committed to an egalitarian idea of the Holy Spirit’s movement and manifestations but he also elevated that idea to prominence in his rhetoric of the supernatural.

I begin with an exploration of Wesley’s view of the Holy Spirit and how he understood the Holy Spirit to be an active and creative force in the creation of miraculous and supernatural events. For Wesley, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian was a necessary component to validate authentic Christian experience. The second and more substantial part of this essay deals with the perfectionist controversies of 1760–1762 in London where Wesley encountered his most strenuous test to the commitment of spiritual perfection and its viability for all believers. At the root of the disputes was how the doctrine was going to be accepted and how Wesley would adjudicate the role of irregular experiences of the Spirit. I contend that with the rising opposition of fanatical elements in certain Methodist societies, Wesley’s idea that all believers could equally experience and

articulate a balanced view of spiritual perfection became strained. In the end, I will argue that however Wesley maintained his idea of an egalitarian view of spiritual experiences, this controversy caused him to review how certain experiences of the Spirit should be monitored and assessed.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CREATION OF THE MIRACULOUS

If John Wesley never engaged in systematic theology in the technical sense of the word, where then can his ideas on this important part of theological reflection be obtained? More importantly, what were the sources where other Methodists in the eighteenth century might find a inculcation of a Wesleyan pneumatology? At the outset, it must be clarified that, first and foremost, Wesley considered the Old and New Testaments to be primary for any understanding of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit or any other doctrine for that matter. He was, after all, a self-confessed “man of one book” (*homo unius libri*).<sup>7</sup> For the Wesleys, to daily study the New Testament meant to daily study the Greek text of the New Testament, and John and Charles would often quote the Greek text in conversation with others.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, it should not go unnoticed that for the opponents of Methodists to declare that they were “Bible moths” was not just a metaphorical jab in their sides but a full-fledged characterization that portrayed their need to consume deeply the Scriptures themselves. However, there were secondary sources, we should note from the outset, that a Methodist preacher in the eighteenth century was expected to master as well. First, John Wesley’s collection of published sermons, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, became the standard reference point for determining what an orthodox Christian viewpoint could be for a Methodist. Second, every Methodist preacher was expected to read through Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes* on the Old and New Testaments. First published in 1755, the *Notes* provided the Methodists with an exegetical tool for their study of the Scripture. This brief and to-the-point commentary of the Old and New Testaments provided Methodists with salient and provocative doctrinal insight into what a Methodist hermeneutic looked like. Third, the doctrinal minutes, and after 1784 the “Articles of Religion,” also became sources for adjudicating an orthodox position for Wesleyan and Methodist believers.<sup>9</sup> The student of Methodist history may well wonder what these sources reveal about Wesley’s understanding of the Holy Spirit and its operation in the Christian life. To that question we now turn.



Throughout his life, John Wesley held to an orthodox view of the Holy Spirit as the third person in a trinitarian understanding of the Godhead. So adamant was Wesley's conviction of this doctrine that he noted at the conclusion of his homily on the Trinity:

But I know not how anyone can be a Christian believer till "he hath" (as John speaks) "the witness in himself"; till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God"—that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son—and having this witness he honours the Son and the blessed Spirit "even as he honours the Father. . . . Therefore I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion who denies that these three are one."<sup>10</sup>

A good portion of Wesley's understanding of the Trinity came from his endearment to Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> Albert C. Outler, in his masterful historical treatment of Wesley's sermons, insightfully located Macarius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ephraem the Syrian as patristic sources of which Wesley was not only keenly aware but which he actively incorporated into his writings on God's Spirit. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to compare the details of an Eastern Orthodox understanding of the Trinity in the writings of John Wesley, I would like to explore briefly Wesley's understanding of divine presence with the view of ascertaining how such a view contributed to his understanding of the Spirit and the creation of miracles in the life of human subjects.

As previously asserted, Wesley found a view of the Holy Spirit indispensable to understanding the renewal of the Christian life. Indeed, one does not need to read too deeply to find the founder and sustainer of this renewal movement declaring that where there was no acknowledgment of the Spirit of God, there was also no evidence that an individual could claim to be a Christian. An avid proponent of religious empiricism, Wesley often noted that it was faith that gave a person supernatural sense to understand and appropriate the things of God. Thus, in his sermon entitled *On the Discoveries of Faith*, he asserted that God "hath appointed faith to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends."<sup>12</sup> So dynamic was this principle that Wesley wrote in his sermon *Awake, Thou That Sleepest*: "This experimental knowledge, and this alone, is true Christianity. He is a Christian who hath received the Spirit of Christ. He is not a Christian who hath not received him. Neither is it possible to have received him and not know it."<sup>13</sup> At the point of justifying faith, the

experience of the Spirit of God comes to the believer with power and fills the human heart and life. Indeed, as one then moves onto perfection, this same Spirit manifests itself in a variety of ways and confirms itself in the life of the believer and the community of faith. In Wesley's mind, then, when a believer initially makes a confession of faith in Christ, a threefold progression unfolds. First, and most obviously, the believer receives the Spirit and this entrance into the human soul signifies a divine-human relationship. Second, the Spirit as divine teacher comes into the life of the believer to teach the soul new truths about its nature and the presence of God. Third, the anointing of the Spirit rests in each believer until perfection is realized. In his extended defense against enthusiasm, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, first published in 1744–1745, Wesley wrote about the supernatural activities in the soul: "He inspires, breathes, infuses into our soul, what of ourselves we could not have."<sup>14</sup>

What then, one may ponder, enables the perception of the working of miracles by the Spirit in the world? For Wesley, the power of the Holy Spirit resided in each believer, and it was only as faith was ignited that one could actually perceive the activities of the Spirit in life. Influenced by John Locke (1632–1704) and Peter Browne (1665–1735), and their commitment to religious empiricism, Wesley was always committed to the philosophical principle that "there is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses."<sup>15</sup> For Wesley, to hold his empiricism together would require an understanding of faith as a "spiritual sense," which is precisely his perspective. As Wesley began to preach on faith, he never did so after 1740 without going directly to Hebrews 11 for his text of exposition. But just 18 months before his death in 1788, he also penned a sermon in which the seasoned pastoral theologian wrote concerning this epistemological conundrum: "But the wise and gracious Governor of the worlds, both visible and invisible, has prepared a remedy for this defect. He hath appointed faith to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that one of sense ends."<sup>16</sup> Still, the question remains: How does one perceive the workings of the Spirit in a fallen and human world? This was a question to which Wesley gave thought in the 1740s, and one which he elaborated with an unidentified source 1745–1748.<sup>17</sup> How does one recognize the movement of the Spirit, or what Wesley called "perceptible inspiration"? At the foundation of those perceptions was the means of grace that God had given in His mercy, so that the believer can indeed look and see God's Spirit in the context of a fallen world.

The accusation that began the controversial correspondence centered around the fact that, according to Wesley's interlocutor, Wesley taught his Methodist followers that the moment they received justifying faith, this faith was "easily discernable . . . as light is discernible from darkness."<sup>18</sup> Instead of looking at faith as a rational assent to be fostered on every believer, Wesley conceptualized faith as a supernatural category that is a gift of God and consequently under the direction of God. As such, one could notice what he called "operations" or "workings" of God. Because of his adamant acceptance of supernatural occurrences, John Wesley often found himself combating charges of enthusiasm in the eighteenth century. Regardless of various oppositions, Wesley consistently contended that the movements and gifts of the Holy Spirit that were active in the first century were also active in the eighteenth. In his *Farther Appeal*, he dealt at length with this issue that was provoked by Bishop Edmund Gibson (1669–1748) and others.<sup>19</sup> At the foundation of Wesley's argument for an egalitarian understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was whether the charismata that were operative in the first century had indeed died out with apostolic Christianity or whether they emerged in every generation since then. Though Wesley agreed that the primary assurance was an inward one where love, peace, and joy are realized with an incremental advancement towards spiritual perfection, it was also the case that, just as in the first century so in Wesley's own day, believers could adjudicate the true sense of faith working by love, which often appeared in miraculous ways.

Scattered throughout Wesley's extracts of his journal, which sold by the thousands in the eighteenth century, were a variety of stories that Wesley had collected and edited for edification; stories of healing, dreams and visions, exorcisms, and an assortment of preternatural occurrences. For example, on April 6, 1756, Wesley approvingly wrote the story of a lady who had fallen and sprained her ankle several years prior. On her way home from a preaching service, she stumbled and fell on the ankle again. Her injury was recorded by Wesley in the journal: "I thought, O Lord, I shall not be able to hear thy word again for many weeks. Immediately a voice went through my heart, Name the name of Christ and thou shalt stand. I leaped up and stretched out my foot and said, 'Lord, Jesus Christ, I name thy name; let me stand.' And my pain ceased. And I stood up. And my foot was as strong as ever."<sup>20</sup> Or in the case of an exorcism, Wesley recounts for an entry on October 25, 1739, how he was sent to see a young girl in Bristol. After some reluctance, Wesley entered into conversation with the demons that possessed the young girl. In the midst of the exorcism, Charles

Wesley walked into the room and the demon-possessed girl screamed out: “Preacher! Field preacher! I don’t love field preaching.”<sup>21</sup> After two more hours of intense prayer, Wesley recorded the results: “And now it was that God showed he heareth the prayer. All her pangs ceased in a moment. She was filled with peace, and knew that the son of wickedness was departed from her.”<sup>22</sup> These stories and many more like them, which were included in the journals and in *Arminian Magazine*, became popular and enjoyed a vast level of success and influence across the terrain of evangelical Christianity and Methodism in the eighteenth century. The reader knew very well that such stories were meant to communicate important truths about both the visible and invisible worlds on different levels. I have argued elsewhere that apart from an obvious view of Wesley’s personal commitment to the supernatural, he has also constructed a rhetoric of the supernatural, which became profoundly influential in Methodist circles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>23</sup> It eventually became the seedbed of vastly influential pentecostal and charismatic movements and their global influence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>24</sup>

### EGALITARIAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE SPIRIT: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

What Wesley experienced in regard to the radical nature of justifying faith was nothing in comparison, however, to the problems he discovered in regard to spiritual perfection and sanctification.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, Wesley carried on various conversations about his understanding of spiritual perfection. A fraction of the disputes revolved around the etymological misunderstanding of the word “perfection.” Furthermore, Wesley entertained the idea that complete perfection or “entire sanctification,” as it was sometimes called, was attainable in the present life. In the 1758 conference, the Methodist preachers were warned to treat the topic of perfection circumspectly and then, following the London conference of 1759, Wesley published his “Thoughts on Christian Perfection.”<sup>26</sup> Wesley’s essay was published in a question and answer format, which gave him the opportunity to succinctly summarize his beliefs about perfection. Question 28 asked: “Is this death to sin and renewal in love gradual or instantaneous?” John Wesley’s response: “The change wrought when the soul dies to sin is of a different kind and infinitely greater than any before, and than any one can conceive till he experiences it.”<sup>27</sup> This answer opened the door for both British and American Methodists to consider the possibility and priority of instantaneous sanctification.

Of course, such experiences already had occurred, as Wesley's meeting with Gibson indicated. What Wesley did not count on, however, was that the Methodists who had been under his watchful care would start to move in directions that he had not intended and this eventually caused him to sever relationships with preachers who he had once considered dear to his evangelical program. But in the 1760s, those who claimed extraordinary experiences multiplied and demanded his immediate attention. The question Wesley had to consider was whether instantaneous experiences would become woven into the fabric of his understanding of religious experience and therefore characterize the religious identification of Methodists altogether.

Central to this phase of development in Methodist history were Thomas Maxfield (d. 1784) and George Bell (d. 1807). Thomas Maxfield, a native of Bristol had been converted by John Wesley when he first visited there in 1739. After two years of traveling with Charles Wesley, Bell returned to Bristol in 1741. Maxfield was a powerful and demonstrative preacher during the Evangelical Revival and in the eighteenth century. However, Wesley had been disturbed by the irregularity of the conversions that occurred under Maxfield's preaching, and he rushed to London so that the Methodist societies would be restored to order.<sup>28</sup> Wesley's intentions were prevented by his mother, Susanna, who had been living next door to the foundry and advised her son that Maxfield was as qualified to preach as Wesley himself. She told John: "Take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are."<sup>29</sup> Maxfield's disciple, George Bell, was less astute but utilized the fringe elements of the controversy among society members in London as a means of securing a place for himself in the movement. Despite current research, little is known about Bell's life outside his involvement in the controversies of the 1760s.<sup>30</sup> He had been born in the county of Durham, but when is not known, and he died in Paddington sometime in 1807. Bell had served as a corporal in the King's life guards until he had a religious experience around 1758.<sup>31</sup> Both Maxfield and Bell interpreted the New Testament admonition of being filled with the Holy Spirit in radical terms, and, after their own conversion experiences, they began preaching and teaching in London to various Methodist societies and insisted that the same Spirit, which had operated through Christ, was also present and speaking through them. Moreover, they embraced the idea that sanctification explicitly entailed the idea of "sinless perfection," where a believer who had experienced a "second birth" was incapable of error or sin in his or her life. As a consequence, there

emerged various types of issues over doctrine and order that both frustrated and burdened Wesley during the decade.

John Wesley, at the conclusion of his sermon on Christian perfection, had firmly asserted, "If *any* unrighteousness remain in the soul it is not cleansed from *all* unrighteousness. . . . It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers."<sup>32</sup> A crisis emerged when several Methodist followers took this idea to heart along with Wesley's conviction that "perfect love" and justification were gifts instantaneously granted. The end result was a distorted perfectionism that insisted on illusionist epiphanies and a coterie of followers that elevated their personal experiences above traditional Methodist practices. At the center of the controversy were several groups who were meeting in London during the early 1760s. Some underwent a type of experience that eventually became known as a "second blessing."<sup>33</sup> Despite Wesley's sermon on wandering thoughts, published in 1762, where he noted that human beings continued to struggle with thoughts that distracted their focus, several interpreted these "blessings" as a deposit of sanctifying grace that brought their souls into a deeper awareness of God.<sup>34</sup> Initially, Wesley was not disconcerted by these expressions of religious fervor. In February 14, 1761, for example, Wesley expressed his approval of the London situation: "The work of God goes on mightily here both in conviction and conversion. . . . I believe within five weeks six in one class have received remission of sins and five in one band received a second blessing."<sup>35</sup> He was happy for news of them to be published, and on August 9, 1772, he wrote to Sarah Salkeld (1755–1812), a school mistress in Weardale: "Exhort all the little ones that believe to make haste and not delay the time of receiving the second blessing; and be not backward to declare what God has done for your soul to any that truly fear him."<sup>36</sup> Unlike John, however, Charles Wesley believed that entire sanctification was not attainable before death, and was usually reserved for deathbed conversions.<sup>37</sup> Often more skeptical than his brother, Charles Wesley not only insisted that the idea of instantaneous holiness underestimated the reality of sin in the human life but also saw in charismatic groups a tendency to exhibit *theosis* to a fault. From John Wesley's viewpoint, however, fervent prayer meetings and ecstatic experiences were all elements of the revival that were endorsed by the divine presence. Even though there were incidents that he could not condone, Wesley was convinced that they could not be discounted altogether because of their irregularity or

issues relating to possible psychological deception. On the eve of the 1760s controversy, he recorded in his journal for November 25, 1759: "The shadow is no disparagement of the substance, nor the counterfeit of the real diamond. We may farther suppose that Satan will make these visions an occasion of pride. . . . But still, to slight or censure visions in general would be both irrational and unchristian."<sup>38</sup> Wesley attributed the experience of the "second blessing" and its favorable reception among Methodists in London to the fervent prayers of members in attendance at the meetings, among which George Bell was included.<sup>39</sup> Without resolving the situation in London, however, John Wesley left on Monday, March 9, and did not return until October 31. While Wesley was away, Thomas Maxfield and George Bell emerged and gave leadership to an extreme group of perfectionists. As a consequence, upon Wesley's return, the situation escalated, and the architect of the Methodists found himself in the middle of an intense battle for both his movement of renewal and adherence of a balanced belief in the doctrine of perfection.

With John Wesley absent from London, there developed a leadership vacuum among those who claimed to have received demonstrative manifestations of love and holiness. As the perfectionist revival progressed, there was not only an upsurge of zeal for the experience of sinless perfection but also a mounting dislike by enthusiastic adherents of Wesley's caution against those who were claiming perfection for themselves. At the 1761 Leeds conference, for example, Wesley discussed the idea of perfection at great length and everyone seemed to be satisfied. But later that year, William Grimshaw (1708–1763) told Wesley that some of his preachers were dissatisfied with his restraint on the subject and mocked Wesley as "a child of the devil."<sup>40</sup> As a consequence, the affair became extremely damaging not only to Wesley's explicit leadership but also to his teaching on Christian perfection, which caused the movement toward "entire sanctification" to lose much of its attractiveness.

The damage that the London societies suffered can be seen in an extraordinary letter composed by the Irish Methodist, John Walsh (1745–1799).<sup>41</sup> Walsh was a deist who had been converted under the preaching ministry of John Wesley on one of his preaching tours. At the insistence of Charles Wesley, Walsh wrote an eyewitness account of the activities of Thomas Maxfield and George Bell in the London society during the early 1760s. The document indicates that, like many Methodists of the day, Walsh's own sinful condition was revealed to him in dreams and stood in tandem with a wide circle of Methodists in the eighteenth century, who saw no contradiction between visions

of supernatural splendor and the experience of justification and sanctification. Walsh's letter also demonstrated that Bell had a significant influence on the life of the London societies. Despite Walsh's continual experiences of ecstasy and rapture, Bell doubted his perfection. Their relationship was taxed, and Walsh wrote to Bell: "My own Ears having heard you say that you was perfect: then that you could not fall from your perfect State, unless GOD himself could fall from his Throne."<sup>42</sup> George Bell further claimed to have experienced sanctification in 1761 with a vision that John Wesley later included in the *Arminian Magazine*. In the vision, Bell confessed: "I seemed as if my spirit was just ready to force its way out of my body."<sup>43</sup> However, on January 12, 1762, Walsh brought Bell to converse with John Berridge (1716–1793), an evangelical Anglican.<sup>44</sup> There, Bell revealed his passion and focus:

What he now chiefly said was, that GOD had given him the Gift of healing, which he had already practiced & of raising the Dead, which he should perform in GOD's time. That the Millennium was begun, & he should never die. That he & several other Men had seen Satan bound & cast into the bottomless Pit, & the Angel had set a Seal upon him that he should not come out to deceive the Nations.<sup>45</sup>

When Wesley returned to London and visited the societies again on November 1, 1761, he found them in disarray. A description by a G. C. entitled "Thoughts on the Work of Sanctification" included in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1790, portrayed the London disturbances in sensational terms: "They . . . professing to have gifts of healing, and in London did really attempt to heal the blind, and raise the dead."<sup>46</sup> The disputes in London were burdensome for Wesley. In correspondence with his brother, in 1762, John expressed his concern to Charles: "The meeting in Beech Lane, before I came to town, was like a bear-garden; full of noise, brawling, cursing, swearing, blasphemy, and confusion."<sup>47</sup> As he had done earlier, with his field preaching experiences in Bristol, John Wesley noticed that there were many who exhibited genuine signs of justification and sanctification. He recorded in his journal for November 14, 1762: "I spent an hour with a little company near Grosvenor Square. For many years this has been the darkest, driest spot of all in or near London. But God has now watered the barren wilderness, and it is become a fruitful field."<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the challenge posed by Maxfield and Bell required resolution, and it became evident that their continued membership in the Methodist society was problematic for Wesley.



Wesley had not only established his commitment to the doctrine of perfection through his own preaching, but on December 21, 1761, he also began to write *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, which was published later in 1763.<sup>49</sup> At the conference of 1761, Maxfield had been charged with a minor offence, but Wesley had come to his defense and cooler heads prevailed. By the end of 1761, however, on December 29, Wesley called another meeting with the intention of clearing the air, but Maxfield was conspicuously absent. Wesley recorded his frustration in a journal entry for that day: "In order to remove some understandings, I desired all the parties concerned to meet me. They did so; all but T [homas] M[axfield], who flatly refused to come. Is this only the first step toward a separation? Alas for the man! Alas for the people!"<sup>50</sup> Even though Maxfield would join Wesley to serve over two thousand communicants at Spitalfields on January 1, 1762, nearly a year had passed into the controversy and the confusion of matters in the London societies became increasingly divisive. On the following day, Wesley left London again and did not return until October 30. With Wesley's second absence, matters descended further, as George Bell waxed more hysterical in his prayer meetings that culminated in his predicting that the world would reach a cataclysmic end on February 28, 1763. Upon his return, an alarmed Wesley visited Bell and attempted to convince him of grotesque errors. All was futile, however, and Wesley observed that Bell "was hard as a rock."<sup>51</sup> A month later, on February 4, 1763, Bell turned in his class ticket. The next day, Maxfield followed suit and ceased to attend the meeting. It was an anguished time for Wesley, and in correspondence with Charles, he wrote: "The frightful stories wrote from London had made all our preachers in the North afraid even to mutter about perfection; and, of course, the people on all sides were grown good Calvinists in that point. . . . No man was more profitable to me than George Bell while he was simple of heart. Oh for heat and light united!"<sup>52</sup> A couple of years on the other side of the controversy, he wrote to Charles again and expressed his frustration and despair. In a letter of June 27, 1766, John Wesley referred to himself as an "honest heathen."

## CONCLUSION

At the end of his life, John Wesley had experienced several issues relating to the power of the Spirit in the life of the human soul. Despite the many controversies and pastoral problems that he faced over the

doctrine of perfection, Wesley's work represents not only a unique contribution of Methodism to the history of Christian doctrine but also an endearing aspect of renewal that has instructed the spiritual lives of believers. Many churchmen in eighteenth-century England affirmed and embraced an orthodox view of the Holy Spirit as a part of the Trinity. Certainly, John Wesley was not different in that respect as he never wavered from a orthodox view of the Spirit and the Spirit's relation to both Father and Son. However, the rub for Wesley was how one can discern and affirm the workings of the Holy Spirit. There were many instances in which he and other Methodists did not always understand various and sundry irregular spiritual occurrences. Coming from a high church sentiment, which asserted that the liturgy of the Church of England was appropriate and desirable, Wesley struggled with the open and manifest responses that he encountered as he preached in the fields. While fundamentally embracing a healthy agnosticism in regard to the meaning of irregular occurrences of the Spirit, he continued to see, in various miraculous occurrences, a deposit of the grace of God that was also present in the apostolic community. Therefore, Wesley believed that if supernatural manifestations were truly from God, he dared not stand in the way. Nevertheless, a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit necessarily entailed for Wesley and the Methodists of the eighteenth century a theological understanding of spiritual liberty as an authentic theological category. That is to say, in Wesley's line of reasoning, God is ultimately free to act in the way(s) that are best for the advancement of his kingdom. Of course, Methodists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would increasingly see in miraculous and supernatural occurrences an embarrassment to their pastoral program.<sup>53</sup> Still, the fascination with the supernatural was not eclipsed in the life and ministry of the Methodist movement.

In the end, what I have attempted to demonstrate in evaluating this strand of Methodist history and theology is that when the Spirit of God moves freely through the warp and woof of human history, there are problems and promises to be sorted out. Throughout the rest of his life, John Wesley had to contend with those who had embraced a misunderstanding of the doctrine of spiritual perfection. One such occasion was on March 16, 1773, over a decade after the perfectionist controversies had ended in London. Wesley recorded in his journal having read an account of a Richard Hill who reported "the shocking behavior of some that professed to be perfect." In response, Wesley surmised: "But none who professed to love God with all their heart have done anything contrary to that profession."<sup>54</sup>

## NOTES

1. Frank Baker, "John Wesley and Bishop Joseph Butler: A Fragment of John Wesley's Manuscript Journal 16th to 24th August 1739," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 42 (1980): 93–100. The essence of the interview between Bishop Butler and John Wesley is found in Wesley's journal as well. See Nehemiah Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1938), 2:256–57 and W. R. Ward (ed.), "Appendix B: Wesley's Interview with Bishop Butler, August 16 and 18, 1739," in *The Bicentennial Edition of The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 19:471–74. Hereafter all citations of this edition of Wesley's works are mentioned as *BEW*.
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6. Robert Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous: John Wesley's Idea of the Supernatural and the Identification of Methodists in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013).
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12. John Wesley, "On the Discoveries of Faith," *BEW* 4:30.
13. John Wesley, "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," *BEW* 1:154.
14. John Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men or Reason and Religion," *BEW* 11:171.
15. John Wesley, "On the Discoveries of Faith," *BEW* 4:29.
16. John Wesley, "On the Discoveries of Faith," *BEW* 4:30.
17. For Baker's informative notes on the correspondence and the letters themselves see John Wesley, *Letters II 1740–1755*, ed. Frank Baker, *BEW* 26: 138–46, 153–61, 164–72, 175–83, 184–90, 197–207, 209–15, 229–42, 244–52, 258–61, and 287–94.
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19. Thomas Dockwray, *The Operation of the Holy Spirit Imperceptible, and How Men may Know when they are under the Guidance and Influence of the Spirit* (Newcastle, UK: John White, 1743); Richard Smalbroke, *A Charge deliver'd to the Reverend the Clergy in several Parts of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, in a Triennial Visitation of the same in 1741* (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1744. For Wesley's response see his *A Farther Appeal of Men of Reason and Religion*, *BEW* 11:139–72.
20. John Wesley, April 6, 1756, *BEW* 21:49.
21. John Wesley, October 25–27, 1739, *BEW* 19:110–11.
22. *Ibid.*, 19:111.
23. See Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous*.
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28. See Samuel Jackson (ed.), *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910), s.v. "Irregularity."
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  35. John Wesley, *Letters of John Wesley*, 4:133.
  36. John Wesley, *Letters of John Wesley*, 5:333. See also, John Wesley, “Journal and Diaries V (1765–1775),” *BEW*, 22:334, 414 and John Wesley, “Journals and Diaries VI (1776–1786),” *BEW*, 23:316.
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  38. John Wesley, “Journal and Diaries IV (1755–1765),” *BEW*, 4:235.
  39. Charles Goodwin, “Setting Perfection Too High: John Wesley’s Changing Attitudes Toward the ‘London Blessing,’” *Methodist History* 36 (1998): 89.
  40. John Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. Wesley, M.A. Some Time Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford*, 2 vols. (London: Stephen Couchman, 1793), 2:297. See Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: The Epworth Press, 2002), 337.
  41. See Robert Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous*, 209–25.
  42. John Walsh, Letter to Charles Wesley, 4a, in Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous*, 218.
  43. George Bell, Letter to John Wesley (Letter 142), 674. But note, Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists*, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871), 433: “He [George Bell] was converted in the year 1758, and pretended to be sanctified in the month of March, 1761.”
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  46. John Wesley, *Arminian Magazine*, 13 (1790): 42.
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48. John Wesley, "Journal and Diaries IV (1755–1765)," *BEW*, 4:343. Cf. John Wesley, *ibid.*, 439.
49. John Wesley, *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection* (London: n. p., 1763).
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52. John Wesley, *Letters of John Wesley*, 4:245.
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APOCALYPTIC PNEUMATOLOGY AND  
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE RELIGIONS:  
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTOPH  
BLUMHARDT

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The nineteenth century is still with us. Though we often think of the twentieth century as far more consequential because of the many social, political, technical, religious, and other upheavals that populated that century, it was, nonetheless, the ideas birthed in the nineteenth century that fueled many of those developments. The present essay is conceived with this fact in mind and is offered as a contemporary theology of religions or religious pluralism by virtue of correlating a discussion of the apocalyptic pneumatology of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919). Blumhardt’s apocalyptic pneumatology enabled him to offer a novel assessment of Christianity and other religious traditions and deserves to be considered in light of developments occurring within the contemporary discussion of the theologies of religious pluralism. Though Blumhardt cannot provide a comprehensive theory that resolves the tensions within the theology of religions, nonetheless, his voice adds an important pneumatological texture to the discussion. Because of the unique apocalyptic structure of his pneumatological theology of religious pluralism, Blumhardt was able to offer both positive affirmations of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in other religious traditions, as well as a needed prophetic critique of religion in general and of Christianity and the other religions in particular.

In what follows, I offer an initial description of two trends occurring in the theology of religions, namely, the “pneumatological turn”



in theologies of religious pluralism and the development of the so-called critique of religion begun in the nineteenth century. Then I give a descriptive account of Blumhardt's thoughts on Christianity and other religious traditions as they are expressed in his letters to Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930), Blumhardt's son-in-law and a Protestant missionary in China at the turn of the twentieth century. Next, I provide a short synthetic description of the apocalyptic pneumatology that undergirds Blumhardt's *ad hoc* observations. I conclude with some brief remarks on potential contributions that Blumhardt's apocalyptic pneumatological theology of religions could make to the current discussion in theology of religions.

### INTERSECTING TRENDS IN THE CURRENT THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

Christian “theology of religions” or “theology of religious pluralism” refers to that field of discourse which attempts to, “account theologically for the meaning and value of other religions.”<sup>1</sup> Though reflection on the salvific import of other traditions and practices can be detected in the biblical texts themselves, the discourse of a theology of religions is very much a recent development with clear roots in the enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> A significant post-enlightenment event was the World's Parliament of Religion, held in the glow of the Columbian exhibition of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. As the *Chicago Tribune* noted, the Parliament had “Opened the Eyes of the Christian World,”<sup>3</sup> in no small part because of the direct encounter between religious traditions that occurred in the meeting of delegates from around the world. Since 1893, so the story goes, the world has become more and more religiously plural; or rather, Christians have become more and more aware of other religious traditions in ways that are less and less abstract and more concrete. As Paul Knitter observed in 1985, “It is one thing to confront a religious truth in the abstract—on the printed page or in a classroom lecture; it is quite another to see it enfleshed in the life of a friend. That is what is happening in our shrinking world.”<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the Western orientation of Knitter's observation and of the parliament itself, and despite the thoroughly modern framework within which most of the theorizing of other religions has occurred, it is fair to say that the “shrinking world” of which Knitter speaks has indeed been a central catalyst in the development of the Christian theology of religions.<sup>5</sup>

In this development, Christological and soteriological concerns have been preeminent leading to the well-worn framework of

exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.<sup>6</sup> These different options can be fairly described as determined by the binary of conservative and liberal theology. Exclusivism is linked to a traditional orientation that emphasizes the radical particularity of Jesus Christ, in whom alone salvation is found. The position includes both an ontological and an epistemological dimension, so that the claim made by the exclusivist is that one must come to a conscious knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord in order to be saved. Though sharing in the assumption that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ, inclusivism—the second option—offers a concession in the realm of epistemology. Inclusivism posits that it is entirely possible for an individual, or even a whole community, to find salvation without coming to a conscious knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord. However, salvation is still based on God's reconciling work done in Jesus Christ. Finally, pluralism postulates that all of the major religions represent equally valid pathways to God and therefore to salvation. Each religion, to use a common metaphor, is a distinct pathway up the one mountain of salvation.

Though useful in some ways, this taxonomy has come under increasing pressure as inadequate, along with criticism of the dominant role played by soteriological and Christological concerns in thinking about other religions and their relationship with Christianity. For example, a recent alternative developed by Mark Heim argues that the very category of soteriology is so thoroughly Christian that it necessarily distorts the native teleology of other religious traditions. Other traditions, Buddhism for example, are not at all interested in salvation, at least in the way that Christian theology usually understands this term. Working out of a trinitarian framework, Heim argues that it might be better to think of different religious traditions offering pathways to very different religious ends, which can only be fully understood from within a given tradition, but which nonetheless can be compared and contrasted with other religious traditions.<sup>7</sup>

A valid alternative, which has been developing over the past 25 years, is the so-called pneumatological turn in Christian theologies of religion. Associated with the work of scholars like Jacques Dupuis,<sup>8</sup> Gavin D'Costa,<sup>9</sup> and Amos Yong,<sup>10</sup> the pneumatological theology of religious pluralism seeks to move "beyond the impasse" (to borrow the title of one of Yong's books), which the exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism typology has produced. More specifically, "In one sense, a pneumatological *theologia religionum* attempts to mediate between a narrow focus on what may be called the soteriology of religions on the one side and a purely descriptive account of either a phenomenology or a history of religions on the other."<sup>11</sup> For Yong,

this pneumatological orientation is motivated by the conviction that a richer theological account of the religions is called for than can be provided within a purely soteriological framework."<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of these theologians, developing the theology of religions through a pneumatological lens allows one to affirm the working of God in other religious traditions, and also provides a theological rationale for Christian reflection on the significance and import of God's work in other traditions for Christian conceptions of God. This rationale, in turn, has produced the need to clarify the criteria for discerning just where and how God is in fact at work in the world's religions.<sup>13</sup>

Concurrent with and clarifying the developments sketched above has been the maturation of the so-called critique of religion, the roots of which lay in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche, and which found a deep theological resonance in the twentieth century in figures like Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Marx's statement that "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people,"<sup>14</sup> is the quintessential expression of the critique of religion, for the aim of the critique is to free humanity from the distorting affects and bad conscience that religion itself creates. Echoing Marx and especially Feuerbach, though for very different reasons, the young Karl Barth described religion as the enemy of both God and humanity: "Religion, though it come disguised as the most intimate friend of men, be they Greeks or barbarians, is nevertheless the adversary."<sup>15</sup> For Barth, religion is the highest expression of human arrogance, and therefore represents the greatest temptation that humanity faces. The situation is so dire, that only revelation can rescue humanity from religion.<sup>16</sup>

The development of the critique of religion and its theological expression exemplified especially in Barth's work has not gone unnoticed by scholars working in the field of theologies of religion. Nevertheless, the critique has often been sequestered and blunted in different ways. For example, Barth, and others like him, have generally been misunderstood as arguing for the superiority of Christianity vis-à-vis other religions—rather than understanding that Barth argues for the superiority of revelation over-against all forms of religion, including Christianity—and has therefore been pegged as an exclusivist in the parlance of the traditional exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism taxonomy, deemed unhelpful for constructive theological reflection.

More recently, though, scholars from a variety of fields, who can be loosely grouped together around a common interest in the intellectual

genealogy of modernity and the “secular,” have pointed out that the category of “religion” was one of several conceptual categories developed during the gestation and birth of modernity; and that, furthermore, the category of “religion” was crafted as part of the process of “othering” the indigenous peoples that Europeans were encountering and colonizing.<sup>17</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa, in her remarkable book, *The Invention of World Religions*, notes that when the category of “religion” was finally operationalized in the form of the academic discourses of “Orientalism” and “anthropology” in the nineteenth century, it was accompanied by the widespread assumption that “religion” was actually disappearing in Europe, while the rest of the world was still in its grip.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the use of the category of “religion” as a way of organizing certain phenomena in the world was no mere descriptive gesture but was rather meant to reinforce European supremacy over others.

This postcolonial form of the critique of religion—distinct from earlier forms of criticism in its employment of genealogical analysis—has led some theorists and theologians to reconsider the critique of religion as a viable and perhaps even necessary moment in any future theology of religious pluralism.<sup>19</sup> That is, all religions, and this is especially the case for Christianity because of its intimate involvement in the colonial and imperial enterprises, need to be subjected to careful and clear-eyed criticism to sift the life-giving practices and beliefs from those that are death-dealing. This critical turn, however, intensifies the criteriological question. That is, what should be the criteria by which our critique of various forms and expressions of religion is guided? In other words, how do we distinguish between the life-giving and the death-dealing—what criteria do we use? Should the criteria be primarily sociological, political, ethical, theological, or something else?

It is here, around the criteriological question, that we see an intersection with the development of a pneumatological theology of religious pluralism, for the concern of scholars and practitioners working in this field is to develop specific theological criteria by which to discern the work of the Spirit in the world. How can we discern the working of the Spirit amidst the spirits? How do we positively identify the work of the Spirit of life in the world, and how do we identify that which is not the Spirit of God, but another spirit, the spirit of death—a spirit to be resisted? The apocalyptic pneumatology of Christoph Blumhardt offers a valuable resource to scholars working in this field, one that is also attuned to some of the social and ethical concerns expressed by the postcolonial critique of religion. To his life and thought, we now turn.

## THE BLUMHARDT-WILHELM CORRESPONDENCE<sup>20</sup> (1898–1914)

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt was the son of the well-known Württemberg pastor and spiritual counselor Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–80), whose ministry had begun with a purported case of demonic possession, which occurred in the small village of Möttlingen outside Stuttgart in 1842–1843. In effect, the elder Blumhardt came to national prominence after a regional religious revival broke out in response to the conclusion of the case of demonic possession.<sup>21</sup> Christoph, born into the Blumhardt family during this time, grew up hearing the stories connected to these events and was deeply shaped by his father's ministry and by the Württemberg Pietism that had influenced the region.<sup>22</sup> By the 1890s, Christoph had already assumed the mantle of his father's ministry and was himself a figure of some renown and controversy. The controversy surrounding the younger Blumhardt reached a fever pitch when, in 1899, Blumhardt publicly declared himself a candidate for office in the Social Democratic Party (SPD). He was subsequently defrocked by his church, and eventually served in the regional legislature as an SPD representative from 1900 to 1906.<sup>23</sup>

Richard Wilhelm was also a child of southern Germany. In 1897, after attending the Tübingen *Stift*, a hall of residence and teaching of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, where Blumhardt himself had once been a student, Wilhelm was called to be vicar in the town of Bad Boll where Blumhardt's father had established a spiritual retreat center in the 1850s. It was during this time that Wilhelm came under Blumhardt's influence. Blumhardt functioned as a kind of spiritual mentor and father, a role that was probably welcomed by Wilhelm, who had lost his own father in 1883 when Richard was only nine years old. So great was the influence that Wilhelm would eventually marry Blumhardt's fifth daughter, Salome.

In November 1898, in consultation with Blumhardt,<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm applied to the *Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein* (AEPM), "a non-sectarian mission society devoted to charitable and cultural work,"<sup>25</sup> to serve as a missionary in China. German imperial ambitions form the geopolitical backdrop against which Wilhelm's missionary endeavors should be seen. In 1898, the German government had extracted from the Chinese imperial government a 99-year lease of the Jiaozhou Bay after the murder of two German Roman Catholic priests.<sup>26</sup> Tsingtao was the provincial administrative center and served as the, "base for the German Navy in East Asia, the

base for missionaries in China and a center for German businessmen and financiers.”<sup>27</sup> This geopolitical context was also accompanied by Blumhardt’s decision to identify with the working class and to serve as an elected representative of the Social Democratic Party. Blumhardt’s evolving thoughts on the relationship between the gospel and the socialist movement is very much at play in his thoughts on the relationship between the gospel and the religions.<sup>28</sup>

After a short stint for language training (in English!), Wilhelm arrived in Tsingtao in April 1899 and would remain in China for the next 25 years, with only a lone two-year furlough back in Germany (1920–1922). Though we are interested primarily in Blumhardt’s insights, it is worth noting that Wilhelm would become a well-known Sinologist in his own right, functioning as a kind of cultural ambassador between China and Germany. He held a chair in Sinology at the University of Frankfurt am Main from 1924 till his death in 1930, and was widely praised for his translation of the *I Ching*,<sup>29</sup> as well as the numerous public lectures he gave throughout Germany during the latter half of the 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

Blumhardt’s letters to Wilhelm, written from 1898 to 1914 and ranging across numerous topics—personal, political, and theological—were published in 1958 under the title, *Christ in the World (Christus in der Welt)*. Some of his most important and controversial reflections on the topics of Christian mission, on the relationship between the gospel and culture, on the relationship between the gospel of the kingdom of God, and what he called, “the gospel of the Christians,” are found here. In these letters, Blumhardt argued that the Spirit of life—the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead—was indeed at work in the world’s religions, simultaneously judging/critiquing and making alive/affirming. Because our interest is primarily with understanding how Blumhardt viewed the relationship between religious traditions, I will group together his disparate thoughts under two broad themes: (1) the critique of Christianity, missions, and religion; and (2) the affirmation of the world-presence of the Spirit of the Son of Man.

### **Blumhardt’s Critique of Christianity, Missions, and Religion**

Any reader of this correspondence will come away with the conviction that Blumhardt was a fierce critic of contemporary Christianity and nineteenth-century mission practice, but also of religion more broadly. His critique of Christianity and missions are entwined because, according to Blumhardt, “it is harder to lead people out of the swamp

of the Christian churches than out of the barbarity of paganism.”<sup>31</sup> The thrust of Blumhardt’s criticism of Christianity can be succinctly stated in his assessment that the Christian church had effectively blocked the flow of the Spirit of life, and therefore the inbreaking power of the kingdom of God.<sup>32</sup> More precisely, the Christian church impedes the life-giving power of the Spirit from flowing into history and society through a compromise with death. This compromise has been historically expressed in a variety of ways: the formation of state-churches, the fusion of the gospel with nationalism, the creation of confessional identities and theologies that become as important as the gospel itself, or the cultivation of other-worldly forms of piety, to name but a few examples.<sup>33</sup> The problem with Christianity was as much its adherence to certain “dogmas,” formalized practices of worship, and piety, as its ethical hypocrisy.

For Blumhardt, a compromise with death is the constitutive act that produces the phenomenon of religion in general and the religion of Christianity in particular.<sup>34</sup> In Blumhardt’s view, contrary to the gospel of life, the Christian religion has been enthralled in death and the powers of death.<sup>35</sup> The captivity to death, however, did not render Christianity “non-political” or disembodied; on the contrary, “death itself... was no longer an enemy but a friend. The zeal was no longer to experience the kingdom of God on earth, but rather to establish a Christian religion and gain worldly power by it.”<sup>36</sup> The concern for Blumhardt, then, was the way of being in the world that the Spirit of life sought to create. The way of death had created “spiritualities” concerned only with the “life after death,” while this life was to be carved up and dominated by the “powers and principalities.” One surrendered the soul to God and the body to the state, so to speak. In contrast, to use Jürgen Moltmann’s helpful phrasing, Blumhardt conceived of the Spirit of life as the “vital” element that produced communities concerned with justice, a peaceable society, and the care for the body.<sup>37</sup> Contemporary Christianity only seemed capable of producing other-worldly forms of “spirituality,” which Blumhardt viewed as a pernicious betrayal of the gospel and as ineffective in the face of the real evil that Christians were called to confront. As he said, “it is only on the ground of material life, that Jesus can gain victory on earth. The Devil goes away laughing at religious views and opinions and purely spiritual communities.”<sup>38</sup> For Blumhardt, the power of the Spirit is not in its ability to create other-worldly forms of spirituality, but rather in its ability to transform and liberate the social and physical body.

As might be expected, these concerns and critiques would radically reconfigure Wilhelm’s mission practice. The task of the missionary,

if that descriptor can even be used, is to serve as a witness and midwife to the work of the Spirit in the world. Under no circumstances should Wilhelm seek to convert others,<sup>39</sup> nor should he seek to found a church.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Blumhardt talks at some length about the practice of water baptism, asking Wilhelm, “to look upon all who come to you in trust as your, or rather Christ’s, sheep, and make no difference between them through water baptism, whereby you have to choose whom you baptize.”<sup>41</sup> In Blumhardt’s assessment, rather than uniting, water baptism actually creates divisions and in so doing plays into the power of death, and so he counsels a moratorium on the practice. In distinction from this, “This Spirit works in the world for the world, without creating factions.”<sup>42</sup> What the people need is a baptism of the Spirit, for “the baptism of the Spirit with which God baptizes makes us brothers to all people.”<sup>43</sup>

Blumhardt’s concern that God’s Spirit be free to move into the world, however, means that other religious traditions will also have to be critiqued. Though it is fair to say that Blumhardt saves his most trenchant criticisms for Christianity, he nonetheless offers critical asides regarding the overly formalized rituals of Buddhism, the role of law in Islam, and the hierarchical vision of Confucian social thought.<sup>44</sup> Where these criticisms appear, at least in reference to Buddhism and Islam, they do not betray an intimate knowledge of the tradition discussed. Blumhardt appears to have read a good deal regarding Confucianism, due to the translation efforts of Wilhelm, and he had personal contacts with Muslim communities in Cairo and Jerusalem,<sup>45</sup> but none of this can be described as deep knowledge. Rather, the critique of these traditions is framed by his criticism of Christianity: these traditions, in their own sophisticated way, also make peace with death and its ability to organize human communities and human lives. Though over-determined by concerns about nineteenth-century German Protestantism, Blumhardt’s vision of the critical function of the Spirit of life places all religious traditions on an equal footing, barring any—especially Christianity—from claiming sole proprietorship of God’s life-giving Spirit.

### **An Affirmation of the World-Presence of the Spirit of the Son of Man**

Blumhardt’s trenchant critique is predicated on an even deeper affirmation: the Spirit of life is at work in the world, working in and through all things. This means that in spite of their limitations, even the religions can be conduits through which God works. Thus, in his first



letter to Wilhelm, Blumhardt framed the encounter of religions this way: “No longer religion against religion, but justice against sin, life against death.”<sup>46</sup> The encounter between Christianity and another tradition is no longer to be negotiated on the plane of Christian dogmatic conceptualities, but on the basis of those elements within both traditions that are truly life-giving. Wilhelm’s task, then, was to discern the working of the Spirit of life in and through the whole of Chinese culture, including the religious culture, because, according to Blumhardt, “The Spirit of God must come to meet you from out of the Chinese themselves, and this will happen, for this is today the way of God.”<sup>47</sup> Undoubtedly his most positive comments were for the Confucian tradition. For Blumhardt, this tradition was comparable to God’s work in the history of Israel and the formation of the Torah, and was inspired by God’s Spirit that was “at work in China long before we came.”<sup>48</sup>

Around the same time that he made these observations, and seeking to avoid the old supersessionist argument by which Christianity is seen to be the fulfillment of all of the religious longings of other traditions, Blumhardt made it clear to Wilhelm that the decisive question was to discern the way of life over-against the way of death, not to convert the Chinese.<sup>49</sup> In fact, Blumhardt went so far as to say: “They don’t need to become ‘Christians.’ This designation need not come up at all in foreign lands. Whoever does the will of God is a child of the kingdom of heaven, whether he comes from Confucius or from the Church Fathers.”<sup>50</sup> The task of Wilhelm was to discern and foster, in and through proclamation, deeds of service and in quiet hope for what Blumhardt describes as the principles of the Son of man: “humanness, social responsibility, political equality through peace and the works of peace.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, there was no need for other traditions to enter into Christianity; rather all of the religions, Christianity included, were to lean into the Spirit of life, or the Spirit of the Son of Man, who was stirring throughout creation.

It is here that Blumhardt’s Christological commitments come to the fore. The Spirit of life at work in the world is none other than the Spirit of the life of Jesus, the lowly Son of man, whose way of life, not incidentally, has been raised from the dead, and is therefore stronger than death. The presence of this Jesus is the presence of life.<sup>52</sup> “When he is present, streams of living water flow out bringing life to many.”<sup>53</sup> The criteria, then, for discerning the presence of the Spirit both in Christianity and in the world’s religions is the humanity of the Son of man.<sup>54</sup>

It is also here that the theo-political shape of Blumhardt’s pneumatological theology of religions begins to emerge, for the Spirit of

the Son of man is not discerned in an idealized “spirituality.” Rather, the Spirit of the Son of man calls forth a commitment to embodied practices—that is, the struggle for justice; practical work for peace and holistic community reform; and a commitment to the earth<sup>55</sup>—that place individual and communal bodies in positions of risk and solidarity. This is because a key anchor point in Blumhardt’s conception was the conviction that any act of discerning the Spirit of the Son of man must be done in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed, for the simple fact that it was with these that Jesus had identified. As Blumhardt puts it:

We set our hopes on the highest regions of heaven, while Jesus sets His hopes on the poor, on the outcasts, on those who are rejected by kings and emperors. His hopes are with those who are a mere plaything in the hands of rulers. Here it is that Jesus sees the beginning of renewal. Do we want to follow Jesus on this way? Then we must accept Him in this company. Then the call comes to us to set to work wholeheartedly, for *here* is Jesus.<sup>56</sup>

Or again: “Jesus comes from the lowly, and from there he will illuminate the world and be a blessing to all people.”<sup>57</sup> The locus of the Spirit of life originating from the poor further reconfigures the task of the missionary in such a way that the ultimate task set before Wilhelm was not so much to discern the Spirit of life at work amongst the “religions” of the world, but rather to discern the work of God among those who are poor, despised, and oppressed.<sup>58</sup> For Blumhardt, the poor in China were no different than the poor in Germany: “The government and establishment only want to continually strike them down. Underneath, however, these are people of solid character. It is to these that Jesus Christ comes, and the high and mighty will tremble before the multitude that Jesus will gather from among these despised people.”<sup>59</sup> Blumhardt’s theology of religious pluralism—his affirmation of the working of the Spirit of the Son of man in the world—was also a political theology of liberation.<sup>60</sup>

### THE APOCALYPTIC STRUCTURE OF BLUMHARDT’S PNEUMATOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

How is Blumhardt able to speak both words of prophetic critique as well as appreciation for religion? I suggest it is because of the fundamentally apocalyptic structure of his pneumatology. Blumhardt was an eschatological thinker, and his ruminations about the Spirit were

framed by his apocalyptic eschatology. By “apocalyptic eschatology” I am not referring to the kind of premillennial dispensationalism developed in the late nineteenth century by John Nelson Darby and others, and recently expressed in popular works like the *Left Behind* novels.<sup>61</sup> I use “apocalyptic” to denote both a diachronic and a synchronic operation that marks Blumhardt’s pneumatological theology of religion.<sup>62</sup>

Blumhardt was convinced that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God had already invaded the cosmos in a decisive, apocalyptic fashion; beginning the process of the transition out of the old age and into a new one. In Jesus, God had confronted the powers and principalities, and in so doing, had vanquished them. The Spirit of the resurrection, poured out at Pentecost, was meant to be a kind of outburst by which God would extend the life-giving powers of the resurrection through the whole of the cosmos. As noted above, he had become convinced by his reflections on the history of Christianity, especially in the West, that the church had actually become a major hindrance to the apocalyptic work of the Spirit in history, which, following Paul, Blumhardt had identified ultimately with the overthrow of death.<sup>63</sup> However, although this work was hampered by the church, the religions, and a number of other “powers and principalities” that Blumhardt named over the course of his long career, the Spirit of the resurrection was irrepressible—being the Spirit that overcomes—always just under the surface looking to break forth in willing servants and communities.

The event of irruption or inbreaking by which the Spirit moves into history, however, contained both sides of the apocalypse: it was both an event of judgment and an event of new life. Here, the synchronic intersects with the diachronic. The rule of God, which is manifested in the power of life over death, contains within it the event of the judgment of death, such that whatever the Spirit of life touches in the cosmos will necessarily undergo some form of judgment. This is because the cosmos is enslaved and distorted by the power of death. However, the judgment of the Spirit is not a judgment to destruction.<sup>64</sup> It is rather a judgment to life. It is, in fact, the deepest affirmation of creation: to be released from its bondage to death.

It was the apocalyptic structure of Blumhardt’s pneumatology—in both its diachronic and synchronic modalities—that enabled him to look on Christianity and other religious traditions with both critical and hopeful eyes. His conviction that God’s Spirit is always at the door looking for a way to come in made him attentive to the possibility that the Spirit might be found in the most unexpected of places.

His conviction that when the Spirit emerges from those unexpected places, they themselves will not remain untouched by the fire of God's judgment any more than that they would remain untransformed by the power of the resurrection, made him offer both critical and affirmative assessments of the religious traditions he encountered.

## CONCLUSION

Blumhardt offers a unique articulation of a pneumatological theology of religion that includes a theologically articulated "critique of religion." This is made possible by the apocalyptic and eschatological nature of his pneumatology, which is distinct from other pneumatological theologies of religion that tend to talk about the Spirit's work in the world under the rubric of a theology of creation. Pertinent to the current conversations is the fact that Blumhardt offers a theology of religions that is attuned to the emerging postcolonial critique of religions and Christian missions. Blumhardt's pneumatological theology of religions is, from its very inception, a political theology of liberation. Though Blumhardt does not offer the same kind of genealogical analysis of the concept of "religions" found among postcolonial theorists, the linkage between a theology of religions and political theology encourages us to attend to the complicated relationship between the social processes of colonialism and imperialism on the one hand, and their relationship to Christianity, the religions of the world, and to the very concept of religion itself on the other. Blumhardt's apocalyptic pneumatology with its attention to the Spirit of life fosters this critical attentiveness in a way that is able to do justice to some of the most basic concerns of Christian faith, while also offering a positive assessment of other traditions.

Intimately related to this emphasis is the fact that Blumhardt's conception of the need to discern the Spirit of the Son of man offers a potentially robust "Christological" criterion for critically engaging other religious traditions that—because refracted through the humanity of Jesus—is capable of being translated into a variety of contexts and settings. It is here, at the criteriological level, that Blumhardt does justice to one of the most basic concerns of the Christian gospel: the identity of Jesus. His focus on the humanity of Jesus as the form of the Spirit of the resurrection offers a remarkably flexible approach to criteriological issues that is capable of finding broad connections with multiple traditions as well as of delivering a word of judgment. Ultimately, when judged in light of this criterion, every tradition is found wanting, including (perhaps even especially) Christianity, and

every tradition is found potentially useful for the living God who is pressing into history. By articulation of these criteria, then, Blumhardt offers an interesting model for how to integrate Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology without absorbing the latter into the former. Though more work needs to be done in explicating and assessing these potential contributions, it is safe to say that engaging this marginal nineteenth-century figure could yield important insights for current discussions in the theology of religions from the perspective of the Spirit of life.

## NOTES

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18. See Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 18–20.
19. See John Thatamanil, "Comparative Theology after 'Religion,'" in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 238–57.
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28. See Frank Macchia, "The Secular and the Religious under the Shadow of the Cross: Implications in Christoph Blumhardt's Kingdom Spirituality for a Christian Response to World Religions," in *Religion in a Secular City: Essays in Honor of Harvey Cox*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 59–77.
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31. Christoph F. Blumhardt, *Christus in der Welt* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag Zürich, 1958), 68.
32. Much of this critique is developed in his *Gedanken aus dem Reich Gottes*, recently republished as *Damit Gott kommt: "Gedanken aus dem Reich Gottes,"* ed. Wolfgang J. Bittner (Basel: Brunnen Verlag Giessen, 1992).
33. See Blumhardt, *Damit Gott kommt*, 38, 46–47, 55–62, 81–82, 112–13, 125–35, 145–58, 168–73, and 203–5.
34. *Ibid.*, 204.
35. Blumhardt goes so far as to call this a "deification of death." *Ibid.*, 204.
36. *Ibid.*, 204.
37. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 83–86, 94–98.
38. Blumhardt, *Christus in Der Welt*, 114.
39. *Ibid.*, 164.
40. See *ibid.*, 70–72. See also Sun Lixin, "Über Richard Wilhelms Missionsmethode," in *Interkulturalität im frühen 20. Jahrhundert: Richard Wilhelm—Theologe, Missionar und Sinologe*, ed. Dorothea Wippermann et al. (Frankfurt: IKO—Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2007), 45–49.
41. Blumhardt, *Christus in Der Welt*, 61.
42. *Ibid.*, 29.
43. *Ibid.*, 111.
44. See, *Ibid.*, 132, 143, 164–65, and 242–45.
45. See Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, *Brief über eine Palästina-reise im Jahre 1906 (an Richard Wilhelm)* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1964).
46. Blumhardt, *Christus in Der Welt*, 22.
47. *Ibid.*, 32.
48. *Ibid.*, 91.
49. See *ibid.*, 58.
50. *Ibid.*, 92.
51. *Ibid.*, 140.

52. See *ibid.*, 75–76,
53. *Ibid.*, 213.
54. It is important to point out that in spite of the mostly negative comments regarding Christianity Blumhardt still regards it in positive terms. See *ibid.*, 243.
55. This latter element is particularly pronounced in Blumhardt's short commentary on Genesis 1–3. See Christoph Blumhardt, *Schöpfung und Erlösung* (Stuttgart: Evangelische MissionsVerlag, 1936).
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59. Blumhardt, *Christus in Der Welt*, 34.
60. For a more lengthy discussion of this dynamic see Macchia, “The Secular and the Religious,” 59–77. See also Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 134–49; Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, “Comparative Theology as a Theology of Liberation,” in *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, ed. Francis X. Clooney (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 129–49.
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63. See Blumhardt, *Damit Gott kommt*, 200.
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AN “IMPROBABLE BOND” OF THE  
SPIRIT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN  
PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC AND  
PROCESS-RELATIONAL THEOLOGIES

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Pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies are perhaps the most improbable Christian traditions to find unity in the bond of the Spirit; yet, they have surprisingly common historical roots, and these roots run deep. Unobvious but accessible commonalities provide the foundation for dialogue for these otherwise disparate voices within the Christian theological spectrum. In this chapter, historical sources will be mined to demonstrate that although their contemporary expressions seem worlds apart, both pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies provide rich insights into the fullness of the Christian life. Through a creative synthesis, these traditions can mutually challenge and enrich one another. These traditions find common roots in post-enlightenment reactions and primarily represent divergent trajectories as contemporary heirs of Wesleyan theology. Although pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologians have viewed one another on divergent ends of the theological spectrum, a renewed emphasis on love can draw them back to their common roots.

Both process-relational theology and pentecostal-charismatic theology in the West trace their twentieth-century geographic roots to greater Los Angeles, California. The classical Pentecostal movement was birthed in a revival that occurred on Azusa Street in Los Angeles (1906–1915).<sup>1</sup> Process theology has been largely championed by

the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California (a suburb of Los Angeles), beginning with John B. Cobb Jr., David Ray Griffin, and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki.<sup>2</sup> Although not exclusively Wesleyan, the Claremont School of Theology is an official United Methodist seminary and a number of the significant process theologians are likewise United Methodists. Primitive developments within the pentecostal tradition were also rooted in the Wesleyan Holiness movements.<sup>3</sup> However, while pentecostalism has been widely popularized on an international scale and continues to expand relentlessly, process-relational thought has found less ground-level popularity and remains confined to primarily intellectual communities. Although both the pentecostal-charismatic movements and process-relational influence have expanded far beyond their Wesleyan roots, the subtle commonality of their heritage is contextually notable. Given the synergistic model that informs Wesleyan conceptions of the God-world relationship; many Wesleyans have been attracted historically to both process-relational theology and pentecostal-charismatic theologies. Thus, inasmuch as Randy Maddox has invited the “heirs of Wesleyanism” to engage in renewed dialogue about Wesley’s theology of the Christian life, this chapter seeks to engage two divergent heirs, process-relational theology and pentecostal-charismatic theology, in such dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

The relationship between pentecostal-charismatic theologies and process-relational theologies has been identified as common ground for broader ecumenical dialogue between evangelical and process theologians. Process and evangelical theologians alike have identified the pentecostal-charismatic movements as most potentially receptive to process-relational theology among the present evangelical movements. Nazarene theologian Thomas J. Oord identified the pentecostal-charismatic branch of evangelicalism as a key conversation partner in an evangelical-process dialogue.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, David Ray Griffin voiced hope that dialogue between evangelicals and process theists may lead evangelicals to “look more seriously at process theology as a framework for articulating Christianity’s good news.”<sup>6</sup> Like Griffin, Oord argues that “because pentecostals and charismatics claim to be in direct communication with God, they should find a sophisticated philosophical basis in process philosophy for their claim.”<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, pentecostalism needs process philosophy for metaphysical and philosophical justification.

Following a brief introduction of process-relational theology, this chapter begins with a survey of the Wesleyan Holiness movements, the forerunners of both pentecostalism, on one hand, and process

theology, on the other. Wesleyanism is utilized as the key dialogue partner between both traditions, particularly with regard to radical empiricism and experientialism. In the context of postmodernism, I then survey open theism as the "probable bond," the obvious compatibility, between pentecostal and process theologies. The chapter concludes with a shift beyond the "probable bond" to deeper historical and theological similarities between pentecostal and process-relational theologies, especially in light of both traditions' conceptions of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life.

### OVERVIEW OF PROCESS-RELATIONAL THEOLOGY

Process-relational theology refers to philosophical conceptions of God and cosmology inspired by or in agreement with the metaphysical orientations of the British philosopher-mathematician Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) and the American philosopher-ornithologist Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000). Other expressions of process theology exist that are similar but unrelated to the work of Whitehead, such as that of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Henri Bergson. Process philosophers maintain that the fundamental nature of reality is one of process, dynamism, becoming, and perpetual change. The intrinsic nature of reality as processive is itself fixed, permanent, eternal, and immutable. Whitehead maintained that "God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. [God] is their chief exemplification."<sup>8</sup> Seeing God as the "chief exemplification" situates process theology as fundamentally philosophical and metaphysical in its identity. Process-relational theology offers a unique and controversial theodicy that reconstructs classical-orthodox views of divine power. The process theodicy is stated thus: if God is all-powerful, then God can prevent unjustified suffering; if God is perfectly good, then God has the motive to prevent unjustified suffering; but unjustified suffering apparently exists; therefore, there is reason to believe that God is either not all-powerful or not perfectly good. Process-relational theists prefer to surrender traditional notions of God's omnipotence rather than surrender God's omnibenevolence. Process-relational theologians view the classical conception of omnipotence as logically and morally incoherent. Thus, the doctrine of divine power in process theism can be summed up as follows: "God acts by persuasion rather than by coercion."<sup>9</sup> Process-relational theists maintain that every actual entity<sup>10</sup> retains some power of self-determination, however minimal or slight it may be.<sup>11</sup>

## WESLEYANISM AS EXPERIENTIAL THEOLOGY

Arguably an early forerunner of both pentecostalism and process theology, John Wesley (1703–1791) affirmed a deeply synergetic relationship between human beings and God.<sup>12</sup> Wesley's emphasis on cooperation, synergy, human responsibility, and human empowerment by God set the stage for pentecostalism on the experiential and process theology on the philosophical ends of the theological spectrum. Hartshorne, in the Whiteheadian tradition, maintained that God is intrinsically related to the world and is eternally affected by changes in the world. Hartshorne contended that "true religion is contributing value to God which [God] would otherwise lack."<sup>13</sup> In the Christian life, the practical intent of a synergetic relationship with God is to "move away from being toward relationality."<sup>14</sup> As a scholar, but also a "revivalist," Wesley represented a unique historical pivot point between the enlightenment and the Great Awakening—and ushered in the emerging theologies of the twentieth century.

In the late nineteenth century, a Wesleyan named Charles Fox Parham (1873–1929) embraced not only Wesley's holiness theology but also an emphasis on divine healing and direct experiences of the Spirit. One of Parham's students, William J. Seymour (1870–1922), embraced this "pentecostal" message and took it to Los Angeles where classical Pentecostalism was born. As Steven J. Land notes, "Had there been no eighteenth century Wesleyan and no nineteenth century Holiness movements there would have been no twentieth century Pentecostalism."<sup>15</sup> But, inasmuch as the historical and doctrinal lineage of pentecostalism can be "found in the Wesleyan tradition,"<sup>16</sup> Wesleyans later came to embrace the philosophical ideals of process theology.

As Cobb observes, because "history does not work backwards," John Wesleyan cannot be identified as a "Whiteheadian" *per se*, but there is much affinity between Wesleyan and process theologies.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, although Whitehead and Hartshorne were not Wesleyans, Cobb, Suchocki, and several representatives of open theism do have Wesleyan roots or connections. John Wesley's unique combination of both reason and experience is perhaps the primary reason why Wesleyans have been attracted to the experientialism of pentecostalism on one hand the rationalism of process philosophy on the other.

However, Wesley was neither a rationalist nor a raw experientialist. As Maddox notes, "rational persuasion of the rightness of loving others is not sufficient of itself to move us to do so; we are ultimately inclined and enabled to love others only as we experience being

loved ourselves."<sup>18</sup> Wesley expressed doubt about the "sufficiency of intellectual conviction alone to motivate a life of Christ-like love."<sup>19</sup> Process-relational theology, with all its metaphysical and philosophical constructs of love, cannot motivate the human heart to loving action by reason alone. A healthy, experientially rooted Christian life must be informed not only by process-relational theology but perhaps also by the exuberance and richness of pentecostal-charismatic experience. It may be that if Wesley were alive today, his arms would be extended in both directions.

Wesley's mature conception of the Christian life was thoroughly experiential, what he affectionately called "heart religion."<sup>20</sup> Wesley himself moved from a purely rationalistic interpretation of love, as was fashionable in enlightenment-era Oxford, to a focus on the affections, experience, and the heart.<sup>21</sup> Wesley related experientialism to a "spiritual sense" through which human beings directly and personally experience God's love.<sup>22</sup> This emphasis on experience is characteristic of both pentecostal-charismatic theology and process-relational theists. Process-relational theology affirms radical empiricism, the experiencing of more than sense data, to validate rationalistic claims and constructs. Although empiricism was the order of the day at Oxford, Wesley himself sought deeper empirical validation of God's loving presence in direct experience.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Wesley's theology focused primarily on the "real events" of peoples' lives, the changes that occur, and the means by which God works in those processes.<sup>24</sup>

Prototypical of the pentecostal experience, Wesley believed that the "Spirit witnesses to our spirit."<sup>25</sup> However, unlike some modern pentecostals and charismatics, Wesley was more intentional about his emphasis on experience; he was not interested in promoting "emotional experiences for their own sake."<sup>26</sup> Instead, Wesley's idea of an encounter with God is the direct experience of the reality and sufficiency of God's love. Wesley believed that in the Christian life, such synergy could be so deep and so transformed that human beings could be "truly freed to love God and others consistently."<sup>27</sup> Thus, by mining the roots of Wesley's theology, both pentecostals and process theists can find commonalities and trajectories for the future of their theological maturations: in the direction of love.

## POSTMODERN CONTEXTS AND PERSPECTIVES

The modernist movement that was birthed in and through the enlightenment has given way to new ideals of postmodernism. Beginning with Hume's scrutiny of causation at the earliest stages of

the enlightenment, philosophers sought to understand the mechanisms of nature and ultimately of humanity; and, if possible, of God as well. In the formulation of the modernist worldview, Immanuel Kant set the stage for later dissatisfactions. Kant affirmed mechanistic ideals of linear causation, including the notion that God is the first cause initiating all other secondary causes. Kant insisted that matter was created by God and in so doing, reinforced the enlightenment notion of contradictory dualism between God and world. Kant also suggested that natural events were purely natural and divine events were purely divine.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, Kant reinforced the modernist notions of dualism, the subject-object distinction, and linear causality. enlightenment deism best caricatures the modernist conception of God.

Such modernist notions led to deep divisions between the activity of God and the activity of the world; it was assumed, then, that if God acted, God must disrupt natural causes. In the twentieth century, Karl Barth expressed concern about such rigid dualism, arguing that it reduced God to a “cog in the universal machine rather than its master.” Such an error, according to Barth, “deprived God of the power over the system that is needed to save. Such a God merely fulfills the metaphysically ordained divine function.”<sup>29</sup> Although Barth’s instincts were not unfounded, he instead defended the notion of the transcendence and otherness of God, thereby embracing the modernist ideals of dualism and subject-object distinction between God and the world. Such an embrace simply reinforced the notion of the world’s alienation from God. When confronted with the experientialism of the Great Awakening, the emergence of pentecostalism, and then later advances in twenty-first-century science, these ideals became less convincing. In fact, Richard Rice argues that the unwarranted optimism of the enlightenment worldview has had “deadly and deadening consequences” for the modern world.<sup>30</sup>

By the middle of the twentieth century, philosophers and theologians began to question the ideals of modernism, especially in relation to human volition. Essentially, two possibilities became dominant explanations for the causal mechanisms in the human being: either “upward determinism,” based largely on a reductionist understanding of physical causality, or “downward causation,” which implies that the human mind, the human spirit, or even God could somehow affect the otherwise naturalistic and deterministic system of the physical body. Consequently, the debate concerning God’s activity focused on the question whether or not “downward causation” could coexist with “upward determinism”; that is, whether or not it is possible for that which is metaphysical or immaterial to influence “that which

sustains its very existence," physical matter.<sup>31</sup> These questions moved the theological conversation beyond dissipating modernist notions of God and science and thereby opened the possibility for a new post-modern era that would transform philosophy, science, and theology.

The questions hovering over the waning modern era provided new, substantial information for framing questions about God's immanence and renewed the possibility of God interacting with human beings. New scientific discoveries in the quantum world weakened the modernist ideals of causal predictability. Scientists began to acknowledge the inadequacies of modernism, and Western culture began to shift in a postmodern direction that opened new possibilities for theological engagement with philosophy, science, and human experience.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, the birth of pentecostalism was well under way by this point and process theology was on the cusp of emerging in response to the unexpected discoveries in new physics and quantum theory. Out of this context, a new, postmodern era was born.

It may be argued that this postmodern orientation is not antimodern but "ultramodern"; a maturation of otherwise limited enlightenment ideals, not a total upheaval and displacement of them. Postmodernism opens new possibilities of understanding the ways in which God works in the world for both the pentecostal-charismatic movements and process-relational theology. While both traditions were largely reactions to the ideals of modernism, both traditions also found their own understanding of the ways in which God interacts with the world, and the nature of the universe itself, compatible in many ways with the perspective of postmodernism. According to David Bosch, postmodernism tends to be more holistic in its outlook and values subjectivity and experience.<sup>33</sup> Wesley's experiential vision, now well over one hundred years mature, had a cultural crucible in which and through which to be realized.

A widespread "disaffection with enlightenment rationality" made possible the emergence of other forms of theology, including both pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies.<sup>34</sup> Both movements were reactions to a broad dissatisfaction with modernism; from one end, among the common people, and from the other end, among the intellectual elite. While the pentecostal-charismatic movements and process-relational theology share such an historical antipathy toward modernism and a general affinity toward postmodernism, the manner by which each movement responded was quite different. Process-relational theists did not, and do not, seek to entirely displace philosophical rationalism or the empirical methods of science; instead, they seek to find ways to give such concepts religious expression. The pentecostal-charismatic movements, by contrast, are grounded in a



pervasive distrust of rationalism, scientific progress, and intellectualism. According to Henry Lederle, the pentecostal-charismatic movements brought with them deep changes in religious attitudes, and challenged the “contemporary idolatries of rationalism, naturalism, and individualism.”<sup>35</sup> Process theists would not entirely disagree with such challenges. However, process-relational theology became situated in liberal Protestant churches of the twentieth century, while the pentecostal-charismatic movements aligned with conservative evangelicals.<sup>36</sup> The conservative, and sometimes even fundamentalist, nature of the pentecostal-charismatic movements distinguishes their response to modernity from the response of process-relational theology, which was instead characterized by a creative synthesis of philosophy, science, and theology.<sup>37</sup>

The pentecostal-charismatic movements have historically demonstrated a “deep antipathy to critical rationality applied to theology.”<sup>38</sup> Pentecostal scholar Rick Nañez concedes that within the pentecostal-charismatic movements, a deeply rooted tradition of anti-intellectualism exists, a tradition that had lasting effects on the theology and practice of pentecostal experience and spirituality.<sup>39</sup> Pentecostals and charismatics established their movements on “pragmatism, experientialism, emotionalism, romanticism, individualism, and anti-intellectualism.”<sup>40</sup> Such anti-intellectualism is markedly different from the approach taken by process-relational theists, who sought instead to confront the claims of modernity directly and construct a rationally cohesive metaphysical and naturalistically tenable form of theism.

However, aside from these differences, experientialism, which had been advocated by Wesley, remains the central feature of both traditions. As Clark Pinnock observed, the experience of God by the Holy Spirit was, for early Christians, a “dynamic fact of experience.”<sup>41</sup> Further, while pentecostals and charismatics seek to understand such experiences in biblical terms, process-relational theists seek a scientifically viable explanation for divine action and divine-human interaction. In the context of postmodernism, these traditions can aid one another in realizing such experience. The postmodern era provides a new moment in history for the otherwise disparate traditions of pentecostalism and process theology to reunite.

### THE PROBABLE BOND: OPEN THEISM AS THE MIDDLE GROUND

At face value, it may seem that open theism is the most likely place where pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies may

unite. As a largely postmodern theological voice, open theism emphasizes a relational and experiential God who is intimately involved with the world. The theological values of evangelical open theism seem deeply compatible with pentecostal-charismatic theologies and as such, represent a "probable bond" of the Spirit. Such a bond, however, is only the first step toward a potentially deeper and "improbable" bond of the Spirit with process-relational theology.

Open theism, also known as freewill theism, is a theological movement that developed in the late twentieth century within evangelical and post-evangelical Protestant Christianity. The development of open theism is part of the historical debate concerning free will versus determinism. John Calvin (1509–1564), in framing the Reformed tradition, affirmed a God who determines the minute details of reality and knows the past, present, and future with totality. Built upon a primarily Augustinian tradition, Calvin's theology was an essential component of the soteriology that defined the Reformation. The thought of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), John Wesley, and Ellen G. White (1827–1915), however, contributed to the development of freewill theism as an alternative to Calvinism. Classical Arminians confess that God knows the past, present, and future with equal completeness, but that God does not determine everything that occurs because God gives human beings genuine freedom to make responsible decisions.

Like process-relational and pentecostal-charismatic theologies, open theism shares a common Arminian-Wesleyan heritage.<sup>42</sup> Some contemporary open theists regard aspects of the classical, orthodox-evangelical conceptions of the doctrine of God as an historical synthesis of Greek philosophy and Christian theology; in particular, overemphasizing the Augustinian-Calvinistic perspectives on divine sovereignty and omnipotence. Several ideas within classical theism state that God is immutable, impassible, and eternal (timeless). Classical theists maintain that God fully determines the future; thus, humanity does not have libertarian free will, or, if necessarily free in part, only insofar as that freedom remains compatible with God's determining actions. Because of its emphasis on linear causation, classical theism is highly modernist in its theological conceptions.

Open theism is a postmodern response to classical theism. As a foundational theology within evangelicalism, it attempts to explain the practical relationship between the free will of humanity and the sovereignty of God. Based on traditional Arminian theology, open theists elaborate the idea of the free will of human agency. Open theists primarily deny the classical doctrine of omniscience<sup>43</sup> suggesting

that the future is “open” and can be determined by God and humanity in cooperation; the future is unknowable, even to God. Open theists describe the divine attribute of omniscience as God’s ability to know all that is knowable, which does not include the unknowable, undetermined future.

Open theists argue further that the belief in the meticulous sovereignty of God is not biblical but instead influenced by Hellenistic philosophical ideas of divine perfection. The Greek philosophers viewed God as an immovable, detached, all-controlling force. This view, open theists argue, influenced modern Christian thought. In contrast with a detached view of God as the “unmoved mover,” open theists argue that the God of the prophets of Jesus Christ demonstrate that God is intimately involved in God’s creation. For open theists, their theology’s “greatest asset” is that it fits with Christian experience and real human experiences that ground their theological claims.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Cobb has observed that “evangelicals and process theologians are both concerned with the way things are” in daily experiences.<sup>45</sup> Because process theology is proposing ideas about questions that are real questions for evangelicals and claiming continuity between its answers and biblical ones, many evangelicals take it seriously.<sup>46</sup>

Clark Pinnock argued that “theological integrity and the credibility of the concept of God in our time are at stake. It is difficult to believe the conventional model of God because of its intellectual contradictions and lack of existential appeal.”<sup>47</sup> He proposed for a revised theological understanding of reality as dynamic, not static, and that opened the door for evangelical dialog with process-relational theology. Oord suggests that open theists such as Pinnock look to process-relational categories for philosophical support.<sup>48</sup> However, although open theism shares many perspectives with process-relational theism, there are deeper connections between pentecostal-charismatic theology that move beyond the more obvious connections with open theism. From Pinnock’s view, God’s love includes “responsiveness, generosity, sensitivity, openness, and vulnerability.”<sup>49</sup> However, Oord notes that Pinnock’s theology is inconsistent on the issue of coercive versus persuasive power; and it is precisely on this issue that process-relational theists offer an alternative.<sup>50</sup> A more thoroughly pneumatological perspective may provide a bridge to connect the divergent views.

### THE “IMPROBABLE BOND” OF THE SPIRIT

The “improbable bond” of the Spirit is a deeper compatibility between pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies. While both

traditions share historical roots, reject the ideals of modernism, and embrace an experiential and relational theology of love, the specter of liberalism that clouds process-relational theology has prevented pentecostal and charismatics from engaging the tradition directly. However, if pentecostals and charismatics can critically reflect on their own theological incompatibilities with evangelicalism and focus on a fundamentally Wesleyan theology of love, they may be able to embrace an "improbable bond" with process-relational theology. Such a "reconvergence" can inform a broader experiential and relational theology of the Christian life.

Although the pentecostal-charismatic movements have aligned with evangelicalism, their roots actually lend themselves to alignment with the liberal Protestant emphasis on experience. Thus, the movements are intrinsically distinct from evangelicalism. Such distinction sets the renewal movements apart from reactionary fundamentalism or even the tendency toward absolutism propagated by modern evangelicalism.<sup>51</sup> Because pentecostal-charismatic theology has been identified as a key factor in the open-theist and process-relational dialogue, it may help bridge the gap between the traditionally evangelical movements and more philosophically and scientifically compatible theologies. In the themes of immanence and experience, pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologians may find common ground.

Liberal Protestantism has historically posited "human experience alongside revelation as a correlative pole of faith."<sup>52</sup> Pentecostals and charismatics have endeavored to do the same, having given deep priority to a direct, personal experience of the Holy Spirit. In fact, although the revivalism that gave birth to the Great Awakening, the holiness movements, and pentecostalism, have been historically criticized as "religious enthusiasm," the process-relational perspective affirms such rich experiences. For process-relational theists, "intense experience is preferable to dull experience" because "more intense experiences cross the threshold of consciousness."<sup>53</sup> It is in the emphasis on experience that both pentecostals and process theists blur the boundary between liberal and evangelical; the liberals, beginning perhaps with Schleiermacher, claimed experience as authoritative on one hand and reason as authoritative on the other. Pentecostals and charismatics break that stereotype by embracing an authoritative role for the Bible and an equally important emphasis on direct, personal experience. What pentecostals intuit to be true by direct experience, process theists describe with metaphysical rationalization.

Nancy Howell notes that in liberal theology, the "dichotomy of God and the world is bridged by a focus on the significant immanence

of God, which makes God accessible to anyone.”<sup>54</sup> This notion is not altogether different from the pentecostal doctrine of the infilling of the Holy Spirit; the immanence of God in the life of every Spirit-filled Christian. While “liberal theology affirms the immanence of God in history,” evangelicalism has tended to affirm a “transcendent God who acts in history.”<sup>55</sup> But this has not been the case for pentecostals, who have historically given priority to immanence over transcendence. In fact, because of the metaphysical notion of prehension, process-relational theists hold that “religious experience can involve a genuine perceptual experience of God.”<sup>56</sup> It is, perhaps, for this reason that pentecostals and charismatics share a deeper connection with process-relational theists than do open theists.

In the past one hundred years, process-relational theists have attempted to formulate a rational theology compatible with science and philosophy. On the other hand, pentecostals embraced the “verificational approach to revivalism proposed by Jonathan Edwards.”<sup>57</sup> Pentecostals and charismatics affirm the authoritativeness of mystical experiences, while process-relational theists affirm rationality and metaphysics. However, these polarities are not mutually exclusive. Process-relational theists “locate reality, and therefore also value, in experience.”<sup>58</sup> And, as Peter D. Neumann notes, the pentecostal experience should not be immune to empirical verification.<sup>59</sup> Process-relational theists argue not only that subjective experiences are legitimate, but also that they constitute the very nature of reality. In this way, both traditions enrich, challenge, and support one another in the endeavor to overcome the limitations of the enlightenment and modernist worldviews. Process-relational theists envision a worldview that accounts for God’s immanence and moves beyond the enlightenment paradigm of atomistic individualism.<sup>60</sup> Pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies share a common rejection of “naturalism as the view that nature is what there is—all that there is.”<sup>61</sup> Instead, both traditions affirm a deeper ontology where the Spirit is active, moving, and ever present in the world.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, pentecostals and charismatics and process-relational theists both hold, “against most forms of liberal theology,” that God is immanently active in “both nature and human history.”<sup>63</sup> As a process-relational theist, David Ray Griffin notes that “our most immediate access to God is, of course, to God the Holy Spirit acting in our present experience.”<sup>64</sup> Although pentecostals and charismatics uphold such immanence and direct, personal experience of God, pentecostal-charismatic theologians as well as critics outside of the movements have estimated that the praxis of their adherents is not

entirely consistent with its evangelical dogmatic professions of the nature of God or God's activity in the world. While pentecostal-charismatic theologians have attempted to provide biblical, rational, and systematic theological justification for their experience and praxis, some theologians argue that concessions have been made to conform to twentieth-century evangelical dogmatism.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, neither evangelicalism nor liberalism are fixed theological proposals and neither are finalized in history.<sup>66</sup> Neither tradition has consistently "portrayed God's loving activity and the life of loving Christian devotion well."<sup>67</sup> Pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies seek to reverse this trend, with a deeper and renewed theological focus on relational love.

Dialogue and analysis of the pentecostal-charismatic movements in the light of process-relational theology may aid these developments, especially in terms of interdisciplinary theological scholarship and global ecumenism. Historically and contextually situated, the phenomenological changes in global pentecostalism noted by Phillip Jenkins and Hollenweger can serve as a platform for exploring dialogue between pentecostal-charismatic, open theists, and process-relational theologies.<sup>68</sup> By historically tracing these theologies and the trajectories they have followed, otherwise improbable bonds of the Spirit can be identified and affirmed. Thus, a creative synthesis between process-relational theology and pentecostal-charismatic experiences can provide a response to the "decisionistic rational control model" of the Christian life that, Maddox argues, continues to pervade "our culture and churches."<sup>69</sup> More work needs to be done in this area to identify the potential for collaboration.

It is perhaps on the issue of biblical authority that process-relational and pentecostal-charismatic theologies would part ways. The former has historically sided with textual criticism, while the latter has sided with evangelical biblicism. But, as Cobb and primarily evangelical open theists have argued, process-relational theology reduces rather than intensifies the tension between liberal and biblical theologies. In step with their mutually grounded Wesleyan heritage, both traditions need not privilege one perspective over the other. Wesley himself would not have encouraged fundamentalism. In fact, Wesley engaged in ways of interpreting the Bible by applying reason that anticipated the later forms of critical scholarship. For Wesley, this was balanced by passionate experientialism as well. Although pentecostal-charismatic adherents tend toward a more literal biblical interpretation of Scripture, process-relational theists share a common value of coming to know and understand the God of the Bible. The interpretation

of a doctrine of God from Scripture demands humility in hermeneutics. As Cobb notes, “the Bible is unusual, if not unique, in its sustained interpretation of human events in relation to God’s activity in the world . . . the whole of human history in relation to God’s purposes and actions.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, “when faced with a choice between evangelicalism and liberalism, pentecostals have chosen the former.”<sup>71</sup> Because of this reality, it may be tempting to suggest that pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologians should do their own work in separate spheres. Concerning debates between process and open theists, David Wheeler suggested that it may be best to simply let “each tradition do its work, and let them complement each other.”<sup>72</sup> New frontiers in the postmodern era surrounding a deep theology of love have paved the way for these two theologies to reunite.

Although, as Oord argues, “open theology helps make sense of love from biblical, rational, and experiential perspectives,”<sup>73</sup> it may be that a reconvergence of pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theologies can deepen the theological emphasis on love. Amos Yong has deemed the baptism of the Holy Spirit a “baptism of love” and documented theme of love throughout the pentecostal tradition.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Yong’s vision for a “multidimensional nexus of empathetic loving relationships,” grounded in the life of the Spirit, is highly compatible with the notion of “prehension” in the process-relational tradition.<sup>75</sup> Thus, both traditions tend to agree that the Christian life is a life of empathetic love. The Christian life is grounded in such relationships because God is relational and not only “gives to” but also “receives from others.”<sup>76</sup> Rooted in a Wesleyan heritage, both traditions find themselves in deeper dialog around the simple but fundamental Christian value of love.

## CONCLUSION

We may conclude with Maddox that the “relationship between Christian life and theological convictions is reciprocal.”<sup>77</sup> Process-relational theists can give pentecostals and charismatics sound philosophical and metaphysical explanations for their claims, and at the same time, pentecostals and charismatics can give process-relational theists tangible experiences to realize their philosophical constructs. Pneumatology stands at the center of this reciprocity. After all, metaphysics is itself pneumatological and a quest for “transcendence and renewal.”<sup>78</sup> According to Yong, the *pneuma* is “given at least in part by the object of experience to the imagination.”<sup>79</sup> Pentecostals and

charismatics are uniquely situated to find an improbable, but common, bond with process-relational theology and in the postmodern context to unite "what an earlier age had divided" as "one of the most socially active and Spirit-filled forms of Christianity in the world."<sup>80</sup> For pentecostals, appropriating and adapting the philosophy and metaphysics of process-relational theology may aid in the realization of the "pentecostal imagination," the quest to "conceive the world in its wholeness and to engage it."<sup>81</sup> In spite of obvious differences, pentecostals and charismatics should embrace the common Wesleyan affinities with process-relational theology and continue to directly engage philosophy and metaphysics to address the complex needs of a contemporary world. By affirming such an "improbable bond" of the Spirit, the next one hundred years may look very different for the future of pentecostal-charismatic and process-relational theology alike.

## NOTES

1. See Frank Bartleman and William Seymour, *The Azusa Street Papers: 1906–1908* (Springfield, MO: Reprinted by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, repr. 1997, 2003).
2. The Claremont School of Theology houses the Center for Process Studies. See <http://www.ctr4process.org>.
3. James Creech, "Visions of Glory: The Place of the Azusa Street Revival in Pentecostal History," *Church History* 65, no. 3 (1996): 405–24.
4. Randy L. Maddox, "Celebrating the Whole Wesley: A Legacy for Contemporary Wesleyans," *Methodist History* 43, no. 2 (2005): 75–89; Randy L. Maddox, "Seeking a Response-able God: The Wesleyan Tradition and process Theology," in *Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, ed. Bryan Stone and Tom Oord (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001), 4.
5. Thomas J. Oord, "Evangelical Theologies," in *Handbook of Process Theology*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006). The Church of the Nazarene is an Evangelical Wesleyan denomination in the United States with some measure of international influence.
6. David Ray Griffin, "Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to Classical Free-Will Theism," in *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John W. Cobb and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1–38 (38).
7. Oord, "Evangelical Theologies," 254.
8. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: Corrected Edition* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 521.



9. David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1991), 98–99.
10. The model of the basic unit of reality developed by Alfred North Whitehead: All things can be explained as processes of actual entities, interrelated and varying in degree of complexity. Each actual entity is a dipolar, momentary event that is partially self-created and partially influenced by other actual entities.
11. Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1970), 272.
12. John Wesley, *Sermon 19*, §III.2, available at <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-19-The-Great-Privilege-of-Those-that-Are-Born-of-God>, accessed March 6, 2013.
13. Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1967), 274.
14. Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 195.
15. Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, JPT Supplement 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 49.
16. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 8.
17. John B. Cobb Jr., “Wesley the Process Theologian,” available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1097>, accessed March 10, 2013.
18. Maddox, “Seeking,” 13.
19. *Ibid.*, 10.
20. *Ibid.*, 3.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Wesley, “Great Privilege,” §I.6–10; *idem*, *Sermon 45*, “The New Birth,” §II.4, available at <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-45-The-New-Birth>, accessed March 6, 2013.
23. Maddox, “Seeking,” 12.
24. Cobb, “Wesley the Process Theologian.”
25. John Wesley, *Sermon 10*, “The Witness of the Spirit I,” §I.8, available at <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-10-The-Witness-of-the-Spirit>, accessed March 6, 2013.
26. Maddox, “Seeking,” 16.
27. *Ibid.*, 21.
28. Howard Robinson, “Substance,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/substance/>, accessed March 4, 2013.
29. Donna Bowman, “God for Us: A Process View of the Divine-Human Relationship,” in McDaniel and Bowman, *Handbook of Process Theology*, 13.
30. Richard Rice, “Process Theism and the Open View of God: The Crucial Difference,” in Cobb and Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God*, 163–200 (158, 182).

31. Nancey Murphy, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 25.
32. Jeffery Koperski, "Metatheoretic Shaping Principles: Where Science Meets Theology," in *God in an Open Universe: Science, Metaphysics, and Open Theism*, ed. William Hasker, Thomas Jay Oord, and Dean Zimmerman (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 33–49.
33. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 350–62.
34. Rice, "Process Theism," 158.
35. Henry Lederle, "Life in the Spirit and Worldview: Some Preliminary Thoughts on Understanding Reality, Faith and Providence from a Charismatic Perspective," in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honour of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. Mark W. Wilson, JPT Supplement (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 24.
36. Bruce Lawrence identifies the characteristics of such theological conservatism as a general aversion to modernism and secularism, the distrust of enlightenment values and institutions, and contempt for outsiders. However, Theodore Walker Jr. notes that "ancient African and traditional African resources have determined that black theology would appropriate Christian revelations in ways that do not entail extreme fundamentalist claims to exclusivist particularity"; in "Hathorne's Neoclassical Theism and Black Theology," available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2788>, accessed March 1, 2013.
37. Cf. Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).
38. Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 29.
39. See Rick M. Nañez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds? A Call to Use God's Gift of the Intellect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).
40. *Ibid.*, 97.
41. Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 166.
42. John Sanders, "Is Open Theism a Radical Revision or Miniscule Modification of Arminianism?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (2003): 69–102.
43. Inasmuch as the future is not fixed, but flexible and yet undetermined, open theists maintain that God remains thoroughly omniscient (that is, God knows all there is to be known), but he does not *determine* future events because he cannot possibly know them in full.
44. Thomas J. Oord, *The Nature of Love: A Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2010), 90.
45. John B. Cobb, "Evangelical Theology in Process Perspective: The Enlightenment in Evangelical and Process Perspectives," unpublished paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Claremont, March, 1997.

46. John B. Cobb Jr., "Evangelical Theology in Process Perspective," unpublished manuscript presented at The Enlightenment in Evangelical and Process Perspectives Conference, March 20–22, 1997, available at the Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California.
47. Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 181.
48. Thomas J. Oord, "Evangelical Theologies," in McDaniel and Bowman, *Handbook of Process Theology*, 251–61 (255).
49. Clark H. Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, and John Sanders (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 103.
50. Oord, *Nature of Love*, 97.
51. Martyn Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power* (London: SPCK Publishing, 1996), 13.
52. David L. Wheeler, "Confessional Communities and Public Worldviews: A Case Study," in Cobb and Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God*, 97–148 (104).
53. Cobb, "Process Theology."
54. Nancy R. Howell, "Openness and Process Theism: Respecting the Integrity of the Two Views," in Cobb and Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God*, 53–79 (60).
55. Howell, "Openness," 60.
56. Griffin, "Process Theology," 1–38 (4).
57. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 138–140.
58. Cobb, "Process Theology."
59. Peter D. Neumann, 2012. *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications), 320. See also Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 32.
60. Wheeler, "Confessional Communities," 141.
61. Robert Mesle, *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 127.
62. James K. A. Smith calls this the "pentecostal ontology"; though process-relational theists may not embrace the "pentecostal" nomenclature, they nonetheless embrace the panentheistic dimension of such a reality. See James K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise? Pentecostal Ontology and the Spirit of Naturalism," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 43, no. 4 (2008): 879–96.
63. Griffin, "Process Theology," 12.
64. *Ibid.*, 26.
65. Such inconsistencies are documented by Pinnock and Basinger from the open theist perspective and by Anderson from the pentecostal-charismatic perspective.
66. Clark Pinnock, "Introduction" in *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 13.
67. Oord, "Nature of Love," 87.

68. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Walter Hollenweger, "Pentecostalism's Global Language," *Christian History* 58 (1998), available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1998/issue58/58h042.html>, accessed July 31, 2013.
69. Maddox, "Seeking," 25.
70. Cobb, *Process Perspective*, 68.
71. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007), 151.
72. David L. Wheeler, "In Response to Richard Rice," in Cobb and Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God*, 208–13 (212).
73. Oord, "Nature of Love," 92.
74. Amos Yong, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).
75. Yong, *Spirit of Love*, 149; "Prehension" is Whitehead's term for actual entities "feeling the feelings of others."
76. Thomas J. Oord, "Relational Love," in *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*, ed. Brint Montgomery, Thomas J. Oord, and Karen Strand Winslow (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 24–27 (24).
77. Maddox, "Seeking," 24.
78. Skip Horton-Parker, "Tracking the Theological 'Turn': The Pneumatological Imagination and the Renewal of Metaphysics and Theology in the 21st Century," *PentecoStudies* 6, no. 1 (2007): 47–77 (65).
79. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 132.
80. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 151.
81. Horton-Parker, "Tracking the Theological 'Turn,'" 64.



THE PASSION OF/FOR PENTECOST:  
HERMENEUTICS, HETEROLOGY, AND  
THE “HAUNTOLOGY” OF THE SPIRIT

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In his letter to the Ephesians the apostle Paul explicitly calls for the preservation of “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), a unity that he correlates with a plurality of singularities: *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* hope, *one* faith, and *one* Lord. Ironically, he follows that panegyric to unity with an extended affirmation of the diversity of ecclesiastical gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (Eph. 4:11). The creative tension between similarities and differences that marks this passage finds corollaries in other Pauline texts as well. For example, in Galatians 5:22–23, Paul speaks of the singular “fruit of the Spirit” as a reality composed of nine different affections, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Scriptures such as these raise the question of how one should interpret the traditional association of the divine Spirit with the ideas of unity, similitude, and order. Is the Spirit of holiness a Spirit of homogeneity? Is the unity of the Spirit synonymous with uniformity to the extent that the church is composed not only of the ones “called out” from the world but also the ones “cloned out” of some singular spiritual genetic code? Or, given the above examples of the creative tension between the integrated and the idiosyncratic, could one interpret the Paraclete as the grace of a *pleroma* of particularities? In other words, might one infer from this tension that the work of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily always to promote singularity and conformity, but might, perhaps, also include a disruptive dynamic that demands plurality, heterogeneity, and even disorder?

One can easily find theologians of the Spirit who answer the final question in the affirmative—that, indeed, the work of the Spirit unifies without uniformity, communalizes without conformity, and establishes fellowship without discrediting diversity and alterity. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, in his *The Spirit of Life*, insists that a trinitarian concept of the spiritual community must include the centrality of diversity in unity. He claims that “true community is different”—by constantly opening up “individual potentialities in the greatest given diversity.”<sup>1</sup> For him, a spirit of compliance would be a spirit of “petrification and death” but not the Spirit of life and creativity.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Colin Gunton contends that only in “a theology of the Spirit” may one discover a “theology of being which resists the pressures for homogeneity.”<sup>3</sup> Gunton actually segregates the worldly desire for universalizing assimilation from the spiritual affirmation of particularity and otherness. He, too, identifies the heterogeneity of the Holy Spirit with the trinitarian love of and for the particular and the different. In other words, for him, the Spirit reveals that the unity of the Father and the Son is a unity that only obtains through the distinction of the divine persons, a distinction that also inculcates the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Finally, John Kenneth Gibson echoes much of what Moltmann and Gunton claim about the Holy Spirit as a spirit of multiplicity and multiformity. He asserts that the Spirit inspires the principles of complexity and variance, insisting, therefore, that only when the church acknowledges that its goal should be to affirm the “alterity of the other” does it proceed toward its eschatological goal of functioning as the spiritual body of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

I find it particularly intriguing that when Gunton and Gibson develop their respective treatments of plurality and diversity as products of the influence of the Holy Spirit, both explicitly reference the connection between the first spiritual miracle of the church, Pentecost, and the alleged divine judgment of confusion in the biblical Tower of Babel narrative. Both theologians consider Babel to be a corruption of community realized through the diversification of discourse, while Pentecost represents the spiritual redemption of that fragmentation through the proclamation of the gospel in the various languages represented at the feast. Gunton actually connects Babel with the fall narrative and concludes that postlapsarian language “divides rather than relates,” thereby leading to social alienation and violence along with a “breach of communion with God.”<sup>6</sup> Gibson claims, more poetically, that the “cacophony of Babel becomes the polyphony of Jerusalem at Pentecost,”<sup>7</sup> an event that, for him, acts as a prolepsis of an eschatological religious and social reunification. Consequently, he considers

Pentecost precisely to be a “reversal” of Babel, reversal in the sense, I believe, of redemption or reconciliation, because he interprets the Babelian proliferation of languages and the ensuing discrimination of cultures to be punitive acts of God against a recalcitrant humanity.<sup>8</sup>

I contend that in relating the spiritual implications of difference and otherness to the Babel and Pentecost narratives, Gunton and Gibson raise the issue of translation as a significant topic in the context of the Holy Spirit’s propensity to privilege plurality and difference. The complexities inherent in translation theory appear to offer analogues of or rubrics for prosecuting the idea that the Holy Spirit seeks to avoid symmetry and orthodoxy in favor of multiplicity and a profusion of opinions. In other words, the discursive dynamics of the Spirit as inspiring the asymptotic intent to translate an ersatz singular meaning across multiple language games provides an interesting test case for whether one can interpret the Holy Spirit as a guarantor of an extensive principle of plenitude and divergence.

I wish to engage this test case by examining two French theorists whose Continental philosophies of discourse expressly legitimize alterity and difference and do so by examining the hermeneutical ramifications of the Tower of Babel episode as they relate to the “impossibility” of a pure translation. Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur insist that the inevitability of translation never escapes the impossibility of realizing a loyal rendering of the original. In other words, both agree that one never escapes the necessity of “other (*heteros*) words (*logos*).” Their mutual acceptance of this translational heterology, however, does not lead to a hermeneutical consensus on how to read the Babel story. Although agreeing at several points about the complexity of translation, about how one can never ignore the diversity of discourses and the disconnection among them that preempts an absolute attestation of semantic clarity, there are significant differences between how the two theorists evaluate the untranslatability of translation. One such difference, which will function as the focus of this essay, concerns their various interpretations of the positive and negative context within which linguistic heterogeneity demands constant translation. Ricoeur’s and Derrida’s various interpretations actually converge at the point of their different readings of the provocative Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis, the narrative that attempts to explain the dissemination and confusion of human languages.

Derrida appears to be quite comfortable with a more traditional perspective on the etiological tale, one taken by Walter Benjamin, for example, whose essay on translation figures so significantly in Derrida’s reading. Without too much overt criticism, Derrida adopts the usual



idiom of divine condemnation and concludes that the necessity for translation results from a punitive act of God's judgment. Linguistic multiplicity ensues from the giving of the divine name, which, in turn, disrupts the purity of a single mode of communication. Translation, therefore, transpires because of the "trespass of the sign,"<sup>9</sup> something of a postlapsarian social and linguistic distancing that expresses God's chastisement of humanity. Whereas the plurality of languages may be considered a positive expression of heterology, it remains, nonetheless, a *felix culpa*, at best a happy guilt.

Ricoeur, on the other hand, does not consider the Babel story to be a retaliatory text but another indication of the creative differentiation that should not be understood as a postlapsarian loss of discursive purity but as a principle of plenitude that exempts plurivocity and polysemy from any need for redemption. Alterity does not come as a loss of an original homogeneity; on the contrary, it is itself an originary affirmation of the extravagance of plurality. Indeed, Ricoeur argues that translation signifies the reality of "linguistic hospitality," the possibility of engaging the other *as* other through an appreciation of diversified discourses. Although Derrida indicts Ricoeur as an adherent to the false hope of univocal meaning and truth through his putative acceptance of the possibility of equivalent translations, I argue that just the opposite is true—that Ricoeur may be more "deconstructive" than Derrida in his primary affirmation of the risk of non-closure that consistently haunts translation.

In the next two sections, I will examine the theories of translation proposed by Derrida and Ricoeur respectively, and how those theories relate to the affiliation between Babel and Pentecost. Given the spiritual and linguistic implications of the Pentecostal miracle, I suggest that their theories of translation can inform my primary thesis that one should consider the Holy Spirit to be a guarantor of difference and alterity as expressions of divine grace. Obviously, my focus centers on the relationship of Spirit and Word, that is, the inextricable connection between the convicting and comforting dynamics of the Spirit and their implications for comprehending and communicating the gospel. This connection suggests that one should recognize that the Holy Spirit functions consistently as a Spirit of translation and interpretation and, therefore, as a Spirit of uncertainty and plurality. In the final section, I will indicate how John D. Caputo's recent theology of the event offers a constructive perspective from which to develop a theology of the Spirit of translation and interpretation. I will rely primarily on his concept of "hauntology" as a principle of humility and uncertainty and will relate it to his theology of the

kingdom of God as a “sacred anarchy.” By doing so, I intend to tease out of Caputo’s thought a creative pneumatology that reconsiders the redemptive power of divine disordering and that acknowledges the spiritually subversive consequences of the Holy Spirit as a prophetic and messianic manifestation of God.

### TRANSLATION AS TRANSGRESSION

One can initiate a reading of Jacques Derrida’s philosophy of translation by examining a pair of paradoxes that identify a basic economy of the impossible possibility systemically inscribed in all language. Derrida claims, with his usual deconstructive playfulness, that one only speaks *one* language while simultaneously never speaking *only* one language.<sup>10</sup> This “law” of translation, as he terms it, indicates that every monolingualism displays symptoms of the contamination of linguistic polymorphism, both in the sense that every linguistic vocabulary contains the remnants of various foreign semiotics and also that within the synthetic homogeneity of a specific language, one inevitably discovers heterolingual aspects that demand the infinite play of hermeneutics.<sup>11</sup> In other words, as per the old adage, something is always lost in translation. This paralogy of mono-poly-lingualism leads logically to the second apparently illogical polarity in Derrida’s theory, specifically, that *nothing* is genuinely untranslatable, although from another perspective *everything* is untranslatable.<sup>12</sup> Derrida confesses that he has no trouble maintaining this tension between translatability and untranslatability. He asserts that every text not only allows but also demands the iteration of re-expression, whether by translation or interpretation (which is, itself, always a mode of translation), while it concurrently prohibits any transparent or precisely equivalent countersigning of the text by a reader/translator. Texts, too, never speak only one language; however, languages with proper names, foreign phrases, or poetic idioms make speaking a second language extremely difficult, if not impossible.<sup>13</sup>

Derrida contends that all of the pertinent issues relating to the two legislating paradoxes of translation coalesce in the provocative narrative of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. He refers to this text as an “epigraph for all discussions of translation,”<sup>14</sup> since it inculcates the topics of pure language, a theology of translation, the reality of non-totalization, and the possibility of translation as a linguistic soteriology. The story also establishes the ambiguity that obtains not only interlingually but also intra-lingually, thereby establishing the ubiquity of the “Babelian motif,”<sup>15</sup> the inescapable impurity of semantic imprecision,

and the inexorable necessity for the untranslatable translation of the poetic. The Babelian motif addresses both the interlingual impossible possibility of translation as well as the deconstructive dynamic at work in any pretense to complete or finalize a formal structure, whether linguistic, cultural, theological, or philosophical.<sup>16</sup> In other words, it deconstructs every textual tower putatively raised to heaven.

What is most fascinating for Derrida about this etiology of linguistic multiplicity is how it connects the confusion of language with the divine punishment of the Shemites (the people whose name, *shem*, means “name” or “lip”), identifying it as an overtly punitive act perpetrated against a sinful humanity by a jealous and wrathful deity.<sup>17</sup> Derrida indicates that, ironically, the linguistic “confusion” precipitated by the divine sanctions actually ensues from God’s judgment meted out as a gift; in other words, God expresses God’s holy wrath by *giving* the divine name to the Shemites, the people of the “name.” That is, God pronounces over them the paternal name of God—“Babel” as *ba-bel*, *abba-bel*, “father God”—a proper name that is then translated in the text as “confusion.”<sup>18</sup> Through this gift of the divine patriarchal name, God confuses the Shemites’ singular language into a plurivocity, puts a halt to the construction of the tower that symbolizes their arrogance and colonial violence, and then scatters them abroad into fragmented cultures according to the new plurality of their various “mother tongues.” These acts of divine vengeance center on the ambiguity, the impossible necessity, and the retribution that require them to translate the divine name, which, in its transcendence and holiness, can never be translated.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, God condemns them to the Sisyphean task of translating the untranslatable without ever achieving the transparency or univocity of a singular meaning, the security of a pure language, or the final closure of the absolute knowledge of a transcendental signified.

Throughout his corpus, Derrida has consistently insisted that he does not wish to traffic in the ideals of linguistic purity, rejecting any interpretation of language as postlapsarian, as the results of an original sin that corrupted clear and distinct ideas and disrupted the intimacy of signifier and signified. For him, there is no “trespass of the sign,” no nostalgia for a lost originary unity of meaning, nor any messianic expectation for the final reconciliation of fragmented semiotics.<sup>20</sup> He simply refuses to profess any potential salvation or restoration after Babel, denying that the promise inherent in all language, a promise that might well be a motivating force in all translation, ever genuinely reaches an eschatological unity of hermeneutical reconciliation. However, Derrida does consistently play the “sin” language game,

especially with reference to the Babel narrative, and he connects the ambiguities of translation with divine wrath, divine judgment, and with a postlapsarian context that never quite escapes the notion of pure language as either an Edenic reality now lost or as a messianic kingdom of univocity yet to come. As a result, non-totalization, linguistic plurivocity, the asymptotic nature of absolute knowledge, and the semiotic/semantic play of dissemination and *différance* appear to betray both a certain nostalgia for a lost linguistic purity and also an eschatological longing for plurality to be subordinated to singularity as the redemptive sign that the Shemites' sins have finally been forgiven.<sup>21</sup>

### TRANSLATION AS INTERPRETATION

Paul Ricoeur shares with Derrida the idea that final unitive meaning remains always "to come" as a hermeneutical event of the absolute future, as restrained by the tension of the future perfect tense of the "will have been"—a "will have been," of course, that will never be. Furthermore, he not only agrees with Derrida in rejecting any theory of pure language as either prelapsarian or eschatological but also goes further by refusing to play the language game in which translation and interpretation are debts incurred through acts of linguistic iniquity.<sup>22</sup> Ricoeur also follows Derrida in contextualizing his philosophy of translation within the milieu of paradox, actually of three paradoxes. First, following Franz Rosenzweig, Ricoeur declares that translation requires that one serve two masters simultaneously, the foreign author and the appropriating reader.<sup>23</sup> The translator can never escape the tension of this bifurcated loyalty to the different and to the same, certainly not by pretending that some pure, transparent translation, which would adequately transfer objective meaning from one language system into another, could ever be realized. This restriction, in point of fact, indicates the second of Ricoeur's paradoxes, namely, that "a good translation can aim only at a supposed equivalence that is not founded on a demonstrable identity of meaning. An equivalence without identity."<sup>24</sup> He does not, however, consider this "non-identical" equivalence, which translation hopes to achieve, to be a cypher for any presumed "objective" transliteration of an ideal signified.

Ricoeur's third paradox, a paradox that, he concludes, operates as both the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of translation, as well as being a paradox shared directly with Derrida, is the tension between the translatable and the untranslatable.<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur professes that there simply is translation, *il y a la traduction*.<sup>26</sup> In some manner,

all texts demand translation and retranslation, because all texts open themselves “to an unlimited series of readings.”<sup>27</sup> And for Ricoeur, “translation belongs to the history of reading.”<sup>28</sup> Yet, in the midst of this proclivity to translation, there lurks the specter of the untranslatable. Discourse is haunted by this specter in two forms. First, there is the initial untranslatability of the plurality of languages, the threat that linguistic diversity might signal a heterogeneity so fundamental to discourse that translation is prohibited *a priori*.<sup>29</sup> Second, there is the phantom of the secret, or of the mystery, forever possessing the body of any text, the “most entrenched incommunicable” that cannot be repeated or rephrased.<sup>30</sup>

Although the third paradox figures significantly in Ricoeur’s work, he confesses a dissatisfaction with it and a desire to move beyond it to a different polarity of concepts. Instead of the translatable and untranslatable, a binary that he finds much too speculative, he wishes to speak of faithfulness and betrayal. Does the translator remain faithful to the original text or become a traitor, betraying the original text through the arrogance of reiteration? For Ricoeur, this latter polarity better expresses the absence of a pure “third” text as guarantor of univocal meaning and also better accounts for the first paradox of correlating author and reader. Consequently, this latter polarity enables him to engage the ethos of translation by proposing the somewhat “redemptive” dynamic of “linguistic hospitality.”<sup>31</sup> Still, linguistic hospitality offers no “redemption” of translation that would repudiate, in any way, either the impossibility of an anamnesis recovering a prelapsarian linguistic purity, what Ricoeur calls “the idea of a haunting of the past,”<sup>32</sup> or of an eschatological aspiration for a reconciled reunification of discourse. For Ricoeur, the “translator’s task” requires a “work of mourning,” the “sober” forsaking of “the ideal of the perfect translation.”<sup>33</sup> In doing so, the translator can live contentedly with the “agreed deficiency” of never resolving the first paradox—that is, of ever adequately serving the two masters of author and reader.<sup>34</sup> Once translators accede to the “impassible difference of the peculiar and the foreign,” they progress through an entelechy marked by polysemy, ambiguity, and plurivocity toward a happiness of translation, specifically, a linguistic happiness directly affiliated with linguistic hospitality.<sup>35</sup>

Now, throughout his philosophy of translation, Ricoeur refuses to translate translation into the punitive symbolism of transgression, retribution, and reconciliation, a translation that, as demonstrated above, Derrida himself incorporates into his own deconstructive philosophy. Ricoeur may claim that there is no innocent translation, in the sense

of one exempt from the risks of hermeneutics; however, he does not claim that interpretation or translation is ever guilty of a “lapsarian” alienation from the singularity of meaning.<sup>36</sup> This remarkable distinction between Ricoeur and Derrida may be clearly noted in the two thinkers’ categorically contrary readings of the Tower of Babel myth.

Ricoeur rejects any interpretation of the Babelian narrative as revealing a catastrophe of language resulting from divine wrath and retribution. He insists that a close reading of the text will disclose “no recrimination, no lamentation, no accusation.”<sup>37</sup> Following Umberto Eco, Ricoeur demonstrates how the Babel myth simply continues a *de facto* acceptance of linguistic diversity, which in itself is one example of several that give evidence to heterogeneity as a factual characteristic of God’s good creation. The separation of cosmos from chaos in the first creation story, the Adamic myth of the fall as an etiology of humanity’s moral maturation, and even the fratricide of Abel as an indicator of the necessity to develop the “ethical project” of concern for the other confirm originary plurality, difference, and mutability to be traits of reality as an “innocence of becoming.”<sup>38</sup> The diversification of language at Babel, therefore, introduces no condemnation of humanity; instead, it illustrates that the profusion of discourses is just the way things are—no fault, no foul. Language only exists, consequently, in languages, realizing any “universal [linguistic] potentialities only in systems differentiated on phonological, lexical, syntactic and stylistic levels.”<sup>39</sup> This means, for Ricoeur, that “translation is *de facto* [while] translatability is *de jure*.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, it also means that the Babelian motif can never be eradicated, that confusion, risk, and diversity will always mark every event of discourse, and that language does not need redeeming, since it is not in itself transgressive.

### THE “HAUNTOLOGY” OF A SACRED ANARCHY

Now, if one conflates 1 Peter 1:21 with Hebrews 1:1 and then conflates that conflation with the narrative of Pentecost, one can lend credibility to acknowledging a certain pneumatology of translation and heterology. After all, divine prophecy results from individuals being moved by the Holy Spirit to speak (Peter), and those individuals manifest that speech in many portions and in diverse ways (Hebrews). Perhaps it is not so surprising, therefore, that the “first” miracle of the church is a miracle of discourse, specifically a miracle of translation, a miracle that evidences yet again a divine bias toward difference and alterity. The book of Acts quite clearly establishes that the tangible expression of the Holy Spirit’s descending on the disciples through

tongues of fire is that they were able to speak the gospel in different languages other than their mother tongue. This event of polyglossa, an expression of a Christian Babel, signifies that the Spirit inspires in the early church a capacity for translation, the aptitude to speak the Word of God in “other words,” in several other “other words.” In other words, the Holy Spirit’s Pentecostal manifestation celebrates kerygmatic heterology over dogmatic homology, sustains the excitement of difference over the monotony of similarity, and signals God’s embrace of plurality over simple uniformity. Not surprisingly, at least in the eyes of the “world,” the Pentecostal expression of plurivocity, differentiation, and alterity appears to be an instance of “drunk and *disorderly*” conduct—a rather interesting translation of being “filled with the Spirit!”

Consequently, whether one agrees with Gunton, Gibson, and Derrida that the Babelian motif requires redemption—and in the case of the first two thinkers that that redemption occurs at Pentecost—or with Ricoeur that Babel merely indicates another example of the divinely instituted heterogeneity of creation, Pentecost functions as a spiritual manifestation of the inescapability of translation. Whether it redeems Babel or not, the fact remains that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit as a spirit of translation does not reverse the Babelian discursive confusion but works through the plurality and difference inherent in that confusion in order to enable the proclamation of the gospel. Of course, the miracle of translation that the Holy Spirit generates cannot be quarantined against the ambiguities and impossibilities acknowledged by Derrida and Ricoeur. Spiritual translation always works in tandem with the untranslatable, while the contingency between fidelity and infidelity with reference to speaking God’s Word endures as the possibility of mistranslation. Spiritual translation most certainly requires the work of interpretation, with all of the inherent risks of misinterpretation that characterize such work. Moreover, one should never delude oneself into thinking that spiritual translation is ever exhaustive, since mystery forever obtains as the limit to any definitive translation. Spiritual translations as interpretive acts always hold the potential for, at least, a second attempt at meaning (in other words, hermeneutical plurality), with something always being lost in every such attempt (in other words, heterological difference).

I suggest that a provocative formulation of the implications of the Holy Spirit as a spirit of risk, of uncertainty, and of heterophilia might well be John D. Caputo’s adoption of the Derridean neologism “hauntology.” Caputo claims that “there are no hooks to lift us above the ‘situatedness’” of existence; consequently, every “spiritual

journey is... a little spooked by the radical contingency” of that situatedness, and this “spooky” reality is what he terms “the ‘hauntological’ principle.”<sup>41</sup> With his hauntological hermeneutics, Caputo affirms the finite limitations that inevitably characterize the human condition and acknowledges that mystery, the secret, and systemic unknowability lie at the heart of every attempt to establish a well-ordered absolute interpretation of meaning, especially when that attempt is theological. When it comes to finalizing talk about God, we inevitably confront a *passage aux frontières*, a liminal experience of the “dark mirror” that limits our finite comprehension.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, we actually join the long tradition of the mystics who loquaciously speak and write about the ineffability and unknowability of God. As Meister Eckhart confesses, God is unnameable precisely because God is omni-nameable; that is, one can never confine God within the conceptual constraints of any theology precisely because the name of God is endlessly translatable, always motivating “other words” and “other names” that, in a messianic and prophetic sense, leave open a “coefficient of undecidability”<sup>43</sup> marking the linguistic transcendence of the divine. Caputo, therefore, would say about God what Derrida says about any language, that the name of God can *always* be translated, but the name of God can *never* be translated—which is, of course, precisely one of the possible implications of the Babelian motif.

In his hauntological hermeneutics—which he also terms a “devilish hermeneutics” as in “devil’s advocate”—Caputo does not fail to acknowledge that the untranslatability of the endless translatability of the divine name demands in its undecidability that one decide to assign some meaning to the divine naming.<sup>44</sup> He, himself, decides to assign a biblical meaning to that naming, relying on the various revelations of God one finds in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Caputo insists that, in the Bible, the name of God is often a translation of an event of the contradiction and subversion necessitated by the divine call of the *ruach Elohim*, the “Spirit of God,” that graciously offers to make all things new.<sup>45</sup> The summons, or haunting, of the Spirit of God is the gentle movement of a weak force that seeks to inspire disorder and disturbance so as to deconstruct the arrogant, oppressive, and enervating structures that human beings construct in order to maintain status, prestige, and control. For Caputo, the name of God should never be misused as a baptismal formula sanctifying such ungodly Babelian Towers. Instead, the name of God should always reference the “*ordo non ordinans*, the disordering order of what disturbs from within, like an anarchic interruption.”<sup>46</sup> Consequently, he claims that one should replace the classical teleological argument for God’s



existence with an *atheological* one. In lieu of accepting an ID theory of God as the Intelligent Designer, Caputo prefers the ID theory in which God is the Interruptive Dynamic, the powerless force that consistently engages reality with a messianic prophetism ensuring a futurity to decisive meaning, one that continuously reminds us that the final divine order is always “to come” and is never exhaustively present.<sup>47</sup>

Caputo believes that interpreting the name of God as the name of a deconstructive and subversive event finds provocative confirmation in the apostle Paul’s fascinating doctrine of the weakness of God expressed in 1 Corinthians. In Chapter 1 of that epistle, Paul contravenes the “worldly” criteria of power and wisdom with the weakness and foolishness of God, a weakness and foolishness that he declares actually “shames” the world into humility. Yet, Paul makes an even more startling claim about the disruptive power of divine weakness, a claim that Caputo dearly loves. Paraphrasing Isaiah 29:14, Paul writes that God promises to “destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor. 1:19). Caputo notes that the word “destroy” is the Greek word *appolumi*, a word that Martin Luther translates into German as *Destruktion*. This is precisely the word that Martin Heidegger uses to reference his critique of the Western history of ontology, which is the source of Derrida’s provocative term, “deconstruction!”<sup>48</sup> Consequently, Caputo argues that one could translate Paul as stating that the weakness and foolishness of God “deconstruct” the power and wisdom of the world. God, therefore, is the divine deconstructor, the source of divine disorder, subversion, and disruption. Only by disordering what is can God reorder what is to be. If the Spirit of God makes all things new, then, logically, the Spirit of God must confound the old.

Caputo’s naming of God as an event of contradiction and deconstruction finds further biblical validation in the kingdom kerygma proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels, as well as in the Pauline glossings of that kerygma under the rubric of the “logic of the cross.” For Caputo, Jesus both preaches and personifies the kingdom of God as a kingdom of madness, a kingdom where power is weakness, the first shall be last, enemies are to be loved, and sins are to be forgiven “490” times even without repentance.<sup>49</sup> This is a kingdom “not of this world,” a kingdom contrary to the world, actually disruptive and subversive toward the worldly categories that structure human existence. It is a kingdom that may best be described as a “sacred anarchy,” a kingdom of alterity, plurality, difference, and a messianic “chaosmos” in which the redemptive and creative ordering of God often depends on the redemptive and creative disordering of orthodoxy (the Pharisees) and of the powers-that-be (the Romans).<sup>50</sup>

Caputo summarizes the anarchic dynamic of the kingdom with Jesus's preferred word for "repentance," the concept of *metanoia*—not necessarily the best translation of the word, by the way! "Metanoetics" names the metamorphosis that must necessarily take place before anyone can appreciate the seditious character of Jesus's revelation of a sacred anarchy.<sup>51</sup> The word means "to change one's mind" or "to alter one's heart."<sup>52</sup> In other words, if one insists on maintaining the *status quo ante* and giving obeisance to traditional structures of religion, power, and status, then one will never be capable of appreciating the good news of divine grace that Jesus came to declare and demonstrate. Only if one is willing to undergo a transformation (*meta*) of heart and mind (*noia*), that is, to allow for the subversion and conversion of one's established orthodoxies, can one believe in the "good news" of the kingdom of God. One of Caputo's conceits for prosecuting this notion of metanoetic confusion is to inquire into what Jesus would disrupt and disorder. "WWJD?" becomes not so much "What Jesus would *do*" but "What Jesus would *deconstruct*"; what he would call into question; or against what he would wield the sword that he admits to bringing instead of peace. What does Jesus wish to dismantle and disenfranchise? What religious orders, what doctrinal criteria, what institutions of injustice, and what oppressive interpretations of coercion and prestige does Jesus wish to dismantle? The answers to those questions, Caputo insists, would identify the metanoetic anarchy that Jesus exhorts his disciples to implement. According to Caputo's hauntological hermeneutics of the Gospels, Jesus prophesies of just such a metanoetic anarchy when he calls for turning the other cheek, loving the unlovable, and forgiving the unforgivable. No wonder, then, that the religious and political guardians of order determined that only through the death of Jesus could disorder be avoided.

Yet, Caputo alleges that even the death of Jesus continues the sacred anarchy of the kingdom of God. The cross event itself signifies in a unique manner the disruptive and interruptive Spirit of God who consistently contradicts the propositions and perspectives of the world. Caputo relies once again on the Apostle Paul and uses his notion of the "logic of the cross" as crossing out the logic of the world, a "worldly" logic that privileges homogeneity, that celebrates power as manipulation and control, that demands conformity, and that inspires contempt for whatever is different or other.<sup>53</sup> The cross of Christ discloses God's "no" to that worldly logic and God's "yes" to the salvific impulse of heterophilia, plurality, and heterology. In other words, on the cross, Jesus dies as a representative of everything and everyone exiled, excommunicated, excised, and exterminated by the powers

that protect the homogeneity of every shrine dedicated to the idols of similarity and uniformity. As a result, one could interpret the Spirit of the crucified Christ to be the constant divine translation of the cross event into the anarchic and iconoclastic grace that “confuses” every expression of coercive and conceited human disobedience—whether that expression is extra- or intra-ecclesiastical.

## CONCLUSION

The above survey of Caputo’s theo-hauntology manifests a somewhat latent trinitarian configuration. His ateleological approach to the name of God and his Christocentric prioritizing of the sacred anarchy of the kingdom of God offer a translation of divine deconstruction as both the work of the “Father” and of the “Son.” Although Caputo does not directly reference the Holy Spirit proportionately regarding the hieranarchic disturbances that issue from the messianic call of the impossible event of God, both his few overt pneumatological statements and the efficacy of the classical doctrine of *perichoresis* allow one to extrapolate that the work of the Holy Spirit may also be to disorder, disrupt, and subvert ossified networks of narcissism and iniquity. If so, then the Spirit haunts reality as a specter of divine dissatisfaction, always convicting human beings of their corrupt convictions, hovering over reality as a paraclete of paralogy subverting the logic of the world through the logic of the cross. As a result of this hauntology, one could consider the Holy Spirit to be that prophetic and messianic specter that forever haunts human pretensions toward absolute certainty, coercive orthodoxy, and oppressive structures of an ordered homogeneity. God’s Spirit would then be understood as interrupting these pretentious pretensions of human arrogance through the subversive and disruptive power of the “impossible possibility” of translation. Yet, as argued above, this “impossible possibility” is, indeed, the power of Pentecost, which communicates the redemptive gospel of Christ through multiple forms, in diverse discourses, and as a sacred anarchy that always shocks the worldly constellations of power as the madness of an inexplicable and, hence, uncontrollable divine confusion.<sup>54</sup>

The hauntology of the Spirit of Pentecost as a spirit of hermeneutics, heterology, and disorder indicates, not a reversal or redemption of Babel, but a renewed Babelian motif that reveals God’s desire for plurality and difference. Ironically, the sin of Babel is the sin of monolingualism, homogeneity, and social conformity. God’s confusion of languages, therefore, is more redemption than retribution,

a redemption reprised at Pentecost and reiterated constantly in the church through the anarchic Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit's continued translations of the gospel. Our continued prayer, therefore, should be that God will graciously use that Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit to ensure that all our towers of dogmatism and self-righteous "truth" remain unfinished and in need of constant retranslation.

## NOTES

1. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 219–20.
2. *Ibid.*, 226.
3. Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 181.
4. *Ibid.*, 182, 206.
5. John Kenneth Gibson, "A Pneumatological Theology of Diversity," *Anglican Theological Review* 94 (June 2012): 429–30.
6. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 187, 216.
7. Gibson, "A Pneumatological Theology of Diversity," 429.
8. *Ibid.*, 440.
9. See Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
10. Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7.
11. Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 100.
12. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 56–57.
13. *Ibid.*, 56.
14. Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 1, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 191.
15. *Ibid.*, 191; Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 10.
16. Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," 191.
17. *Ibid.*, 195; Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 101.
18. Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," 192.
19. *Ibid.*, 199. Cf. Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 175.
20. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 341; Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 53.

21. Elisabeth M. Loevlie, "God's Invisible Traces: The Sacred in Fallen Language, Translation and Literariness," *Literature and Theology* 23 (December 2009): 442–58 (449).
22. See James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 17.
23. Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.
24. *Ibid.*, 22.
25. *Ibid.*, 30.
26. *Ibid.*, 11.
27. Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 83, 118.
28. André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 337.
29. Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 30.
30. *Ibid.*, 5. See also George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 46.
31. Paul Ricoeur, *The Hermeneutics of Action*, trans. Richard Kearney (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 5; Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 22, 28. See Lovisa Bergdahl, "Lost in Translation: On the Untranslatable and its Ethical Implication for Religious Pluralism," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (2009): 31–44 (37).
32. Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 147. See also Richard Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation," *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 147–59 (152).
33. Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 16.
34. *Ibid.*, 8.
35. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
36. LaCocque and Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically*, 332. Cf. Steiner, *After Babel*, 28 and 414.
37. Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 20.
38. *Ibid.*, 18–19.
39. *Ibid.*, 33. See also Domenico Jervolino, "Reading Patočka, in Search for a Philosophy of Translation," in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology*, ed. Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams (London: Springer, 2011), 121–33; Domenico Jervolino, "Herménutique et traduction. L'autre, l'étranger, l'hôte," *Archives de Philosophie* 63 (2000): 79–93.
40. Ricoeur, *The Hermeneutics of Action*, 4–5.
41. John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 40.
42. John D. Caputo, "Hauntological Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Christian Faith: On Being Dead Equal Before God," in *Hermeneutics*

- at the Crossroads*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, James K. A. Smith, and Bruce Ellis Benson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 99.
43. *Ibid.*, 100, 102; John D. Caputo, "The Return of Anti-Religion: From Radical Atheism to Radical Theology" *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 11 (Spring 2011): 61.
  44. See John D. Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 193–219.
  45. John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 44.
  46. *Ibid.*, 9.
  47. *Ibid.*, 14. See also John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 173; John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 287; John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God*, ed. Jeffrey W. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 52, 64.
  48. John D. Caputo, "In Search of a Sacred Anarchy: An Experiment in Danish Deconstruction," in *Calvin O. Schrag and the Task of Philosophy after Postmodernity*, ed. Martin Beck Matušík and William L. McBride (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002): 226–52 (241).
  49. Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 219. See also John D. Caputo, "Reason, History and a Little Madness: Towards a Hermeneutics of the Kingdom" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 68 (1994): 27–44.
  50. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct*, 137.
  51. Caputo and Vattimo, *After the Death of God*, 61–62.
  52. Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 123, 149. See also John D. Caputo, "Metanoetics: Elements of a Postmodern Christian Philosophy," in *The Question of Christian Philosophy Today*, ed. Francis J. Ambrosio (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999): 189–223.
  53. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct*, 82–83. See also John D. Caputo, "Toward a Postmodern Theology of the Cross: Augustine, Heidegger, Derrida," in *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Merold Westphal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999): 202–25.
  54. John D. Caputo, "Hospitality and the Trouble with God," in *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 83–97 (83); Caputo, "The Return of Anti-Religion," 39.



# Conclusion

## CHRISTIANITY AND RENEWAL— A PLEA FOR INTERDISCIPLINARITY

*Wolfgang Vondey*

The essays on the preceding pages have perhaps shown, among other things, most clearly the inadequacy of any one particular disciplinary pursuit of Christianity and renewal. Only partial answers have been given to the places and circumstances where we find and encounter the Spirit. Few places can be designated as the deserts of life; most are representatives of the abundance of the Spiritual Presence.<sup>1</sup> And yet, this abundance is unrecognized (and unrecognizable) in some other fields. Theological vocabulary, even if used differently, is readily spoken and understood on these pages, yet such theological conversation cannot be taken for granted. Well-known representatives like Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, Martin Luther, or John Wesley need the companionship of less-known figures. And at least in this conversation, critical voices of other disciplines and perspectives have been kept to a minimum. This initial volume therefore confirms my assessment in the introduction that the conversation about Christianity and renewal is not yet fully interdisciplinary.

The path to full interdisciplinarity leads not only to the study of renewal but also to renewal of the way we study, the transformation of scholarship, disciplines, methodologies, institutions, communities, and individuals. Intended by the complex array of disciplinary pursuits of renewal is more than the parallel or integrating portrayal of theories. The kind of studies involved in this quest require a rather “thick description,” to borrow the iconic phrase from Clifford Geertz, a thickness that does not eschew theory but nonetheless needs “to stay rather closer to the ground than tends to be the case in sciences more able to give themselves over to imaginative abstraction.”<sup>2</sup> Geertz offers a view of religion as a “cultural system” or “system of symbols” that can be applied to both the idea of interdisciplinary studies and,



I believe, to the phenomena identified as the transforming dimension of what Paul Tillich calls the Spiritual Presence.<sup>3</sup> A symbol of the dimension of spirit, the heartbeat of the Spiritual Presence is its implicit and unavoidable reference to renewal in all dimensions of life. From the perspective of the pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal movements, in particular, as Amos Yong suggests, “Geertz’s cultural anthropology . . . can be an extremely useful, and at times even normative, tool for the theological interpretation of religious phenomena.”<sup>4</sup> With this affirmation, Yong emphasizes not only the importance of a thick reading of the Spiritual Presence but also in this pursuit “a sense of incompleteness and openness as one that is ontologically grounded in transcendence.”<sup>5</sup> Geertz’s definition of religion offers a flexible model that has the “ability to incorporate the biological, psychological, and social dimensions of human existence and to integrate them semiotically.”<sup>6</sup> These and other attempts at integration potentially engage the imagination of all fields of knowledge in the pursuit of our ultimate concern (Tillich’s term, once more) and quest for the transcendent. While the essays in this collection illustrate this concern to a limited extent, I want to go a step further in this conclusion and adopt Geertz’s model for an interdisciplinary definition of renewal.

Renewal is (1) a system of symbols of the Spiritual Presence which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting affections and motivations in human beings and the world by (3) integrating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the affections and embodiments appropriately represent the system and thereby (5) direct to a transforming encounter with God.<sup>7</sup>

The idea that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary thinking follows the structure and complexity of a systems concept is not new.<sup>8</sup> However, the similarities and differences between this definition of renewal and Geertz’s definition of religion require some explanation. Furthermore, the thick description envisioned by Geertz is now viewed by some as a concern when it justifies neither the production of new knowledge nor of a model of religion.<sup>9</sup> And, finally, Geertz’s model has not been consistently employed by the pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal movements. While I suggest that modifying the iconic idea of religion as a cultural system for use with the focus on renewal is not only warranted but also necessary, such modification needs further clarification.

## A SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS OF THE SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

When renewal is described as a system, we simply mean by that term that renewal functions as an object of research, that we can define, discuss, analyze, compare, contrast, or critique renewal in a specified study.<sup>10</sup> Renewal as a cultural system is “a piece of the real world”<sup>11</sup> that can be identified and studied within a particular domain. This possibility means that a “thick description” avoids any misreading of system as some kind of universal abstraction from the concrete realities of renewal on the ground. Renewal as a system can be studied only through its diverse representations, or symbols, as “tangible formulations of notions, abstraction from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiment of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs.”<sup>12</sup> Different disciplines can study renewal only through the symbolic world of each discipline. Nonetheless, these symbols do not merely represent the system from their particular point of view, symbols *act* as representations of that system *for* other disciplines. Symbols participate in the larger world of the system that can only be grasped if we “pierce through the network of symbols that are operative”<sup>13</sup> on behalf of reaching the transforming reality of the Spiritual Presence. Renewal as a system of symbols is therefore not synonymous with the cultural system we label “religion.” Renewal is itself a symbol of religion, yet not of religion alone. In the same token, religion is also a symbol of renewal, albeit not the only one. We can therefore interpret religion through the study of renewal and understand renewal through the lens of religion. Yet, this interpretation is “open,” so to speak, to the realms beyond the kinds of knowledge, experiences, and practices that form the immediate context of our symbols. Where religion may escape to the realm of the inaccessible transcendental, renewal always maintains a thickness and thusness that is obscured only by the removal of the realm of logic and reason from the domain of the affections and the concrete embodiment of all life.<sup>14</sup>

## AFFECTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS IN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE WORLD

Symbols in general are invoked by image and affections rather than logic.<sup>15</sup> The concrete symbols that we encounter in the contexts of renewal—the images, feelings, rituals, practices, spiritualities, behavioral aspects, charismatic dimensions, physiological manifestations, communities, churches, social institutions, and other manifestations

of the Spiritual Presence—function as both representations and motivations. Renewal as a symbol always “evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.”<sup>16</sup> This notion should not be misunderstood as if to imply that objective study of renewal is impossible. The desire for objectivity is itself an affection and motivation. Rather, feelings, affections, emotional dispositions, and desires function as catalysts for the symbols of the Spirit. Through them we not only “read” but also participate in the world as a form of affective and social comprehension.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of Christianity, these affections and motivations inspire a particular imagination rather than a general conceptual construct.<sup>18</sup> At the heart of this imagination is the Holy Spirit whose renewing and transforming work infuses our disciplines by directing them toward each other and ultimately to God. The affections and motivations underlying this “pneumatological imagination” expose not only the distance we inhabit to God and the other, they also illuminate the common world we share and to that extent invite us “to engage the other not only as other, but as oneself.”<sup>19</sup> We engage the realities of renewal therefore not purely symbolically but, through our symbols, also experientially. Renewal, in this sense, is always a thick description of religion that invites all disciplines and fields of comprehension into participation without favoring one particular epistemology. The pneumatological imagination leads us potentially to a discovery of the Spiritual Presence as a gift bestowed by God on the multidimensional realities of this world, a divine self-giving that ultimately solicits a response as the ground for our own transformation and coming to ourselves.<sup>20</sup>

### INTEGRATING CONCEPTIONS OF A GENERAL ORDER OF EXISTENCE

Renewal is not merely a potential element of a selective disciplinary concern but a methodology for understanding the general order of existence.<sup>21</sup> This emphasis corresponds to the larger claim that our religious symbols function as cosmic symbols or representations of a transcendent truth. Renewal, in this sense, as a system of symbols, is not identical with religion. It exists, rather, at the boundaries of religion—as much as these are open, dynamic, and arbitrary and thus overlap with other systems.<sup>22</sup> More precisely, renewal *is* that boundary of religion that allows for integrative conceptions with other disciplines about the general order of existence. Renewal as the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence issues an inherent invitation to aggregate systems of symbols for the interdisciplinary production of knowledge and the comprehension of the world.

The study of renewal as an aggregate system recognizes the limited analytical capacity of any one particular field of knowledge, whether theology, religious studies, or the social, natural, and formal sciences. In the sense suggested by Geertz, isolated disciplinary pursuits of renewal lead to a “chronic failure of one’s explanatory apparatus.”<sup>23</sup> The immediate task of renewal studies lies in formulating integrative conceptions that show not only the many tongues and many voices of renewal but that let those voices speak to one another, interpret one another, and, when possible, bring the cacophony into some form of harmony. Since the Spiritual Presence penetrates both the big and the small, the Spirit-oriented imagination of renewal is always both foundational and universal. Although not all things are spirit, the study of renewal identifies the existential potential of all things. Here, renewal shifts its position from the horizon or object of study to the *modus operandi* or methodology of inquiry. Integration becomes transformation as we discover the symbols of renewal in our own disciplines. The study of renewal thus becomes itself an instrument of renewal commensurate with our ability to represent the system beyond the confines of our own respective symbols.

### REPRESENTING THE SYSTEM

The interdisciplinary study of renewal is necessarily confronted with the limitations of our epistemologies and the ability of the human mind to engage directly in an encounter with the Spiritual Presence. In other words, the study of renewal remains always a study of the symbols of renewal, and it is imperative for any interdisciplinary approach to renewal that we clothe our conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the affections and motivations appropriately represent the system.<sup>24</sup> If renewal refers to the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence, manifested in its various symbols, then the sciences and disciplines that are able to participate in this study must ascertain the compatibility between their respective representations of the system and the system itself. The task is not only to define but also to represent the system appropriately.<sup>25</sup> As Geertz reminds us, our task requires that we “put aside at once the tone of the village atheist and that of the village preacher.”<sup>26</sup> The goal is not only to ascertain that renewal (or religion) is true, but also that the objects of our study are indeed symbols of that renewal. Since the object of our study—the Spiritual Presence—is not immediately and completely accessible to each of our respective scholarly methods, the task of accurately representing the system belongs both to each discipline and to all disciplines together. From this perspective of interdisciplinary studies,

“everything that happens belongs to a *system* (or to many systems) and *always at the same time* to the *environment of other systems*.”<sup>27</sup> The current stage of interdisciplinarity can be seen as no more than an attempt to map these environments of renewal and to identify how they can be studied.<sup>28</sup>

The goal of this attempt is the expansion of all symbols of renewal to an integrative system of symbols that allows for the integration of all disciplines.<sup>29</sup> One difficulty of this idea of the open system, especially for the foundational theological character of renewal, is the still dominant perception of theological systems in terms of parts within a whole rather than of a unified system and its environments.<sup>30</sup> Another challenge is that the increasing complexity of the environments of renewal, exposed by our interdisciplinary studies, increases the complexity of the system.<sup>31</sup> The paradox of complex systems is the blindness of the system to its own symbols, their construction, self-description, delimitation, and justification.<sup>32</sup> When renewal is defined as an evolving system of increasing complexity that includes as its primary function the integration of conceptions of a general order of existence, then the actual practices of integration can take place only in the environments where renewal is repeatedly reinforced. The significance of these distinctions for the functioning of religious studies and of Christian theology has hardly been explored. Given the centrality of affections and motivations, renewal exposes the difficulty of relating the individual and its relationships to the operations of the overall system.<sup>33</sup> At the thick of these relationships stands the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence, to which all study of renewal ultimately yields if our symbols adequately represent the system.

## ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

Renewal is not self-referential; it is transcendental.<sup>34</sup> That means “the results envisaged are not confined categorially to some particular field or subject”<sup>35</sup> but are unrestricted and comprehensive attempts to grasp the whole reality of the Spiritual Presence in the world. While something similar could be said about religion, renewal is transcendental by virtue of neglecting any one particular interest for the sake of the transformation of the whole.<sup>36</sup> The thick symbols comprising the system of renewal at any given time are not merely performative representations, practices, and rituals but imaginative, improvisational, and creative phenomena that belong to the realm of spirit. In the contexts of Christianity, the symbols of renewal ultimately point to the transforming work of the Spirit of God, who in turn always

directs us to Jesus Christ and to the Father (Eph. 2:18). This explicitly theological transcendence should not be mistaken for the stipulation that scholars of renewal “have one of two options relative to their object of study: Either one engages in reductive explanations of religion and deconstructs the category itself, or one consents to the theological proposition that religion is true.”<sup>37</sup> The goal of renewal studies is not faith but encounter, and that not of choice but of necessity. The study of renewal from any disciplinary perspective “remains an open-ended and ceaseless task in the Spirit”<sup>38</sup> and of the Spirit who directs all things to God. Renewal allows neither for unqualified reductionism and simplistic deconstruction nor for uncritical fideism. Renewal demands conscious and self-critical participation.

Participation in the symbols of renewal is the unavoidable outcome of all study of the transforming work of the Spiritual Presence, since the symbols are not mere signs that refer to something other than themselves (as if to say that all phenomena we observe directly point to the Spirit). Representation is necessary in order to observe (by common sense), to interpret (via theory), and to assign meaning (via interiority) to our symbols. However, the thickness of renewal shows that our symbols do not simply *point* to something other; they are “conduits” that *introduce* us to a realm to which they themselves belong.<sup>39</sup> Since renewal participates in the Spiritual Presence, all study of renewal is an introduction to that participation, a possibility of encounter with God that despises no form or method of approach, no discipline, no worldview, and no ideology. Faith is no hindrance to the study of renewal, and for some (as for myself) faith represents the actual entrance to renewal in their lives. Nonetheless, although intellectual, moral, and religious conversion can lead to new horizons, faith is neither the requirement nor the outcome of the interdisciplinary study of renewal.<sup>40</sup> Instead, renewal tests our faith, whether it is faith in God or in our religion or our instruments of study, and thus measures the maturity and endurance of our methods and convictions (see James 1:2–4).

The essays in this collection offer various forms of introduction to the possibility of participation in the renewing and transforming presence of the Spirit. The hospitality of these limited interdisciplinary forays invites other voices, complementary and critical, to the broader discussion of Christianity and renewal. The potential of interdisciplinary study is limited only by the presence of the Spirit and our imagination. The powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting affections and motivations in human beings and the world that shape the phenomena of renewal urge interdisciplinary participation from historians,

theologians, philosophers, social scientists, natural scientists, behavioral scientists, and all those whose work contributes to conceptions of a general order of existence. Only together can we clothe these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the affections and embodiments appropriately represent the system and thereby direct us all to a transforming encounter with God.

## NOTES

1. For the use of the phrase “Spiritual Presence,” see my Introduction and the term in Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 108.
2. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 24.
3. See my exposition in the Introduction of Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 108.
4. Amos Yong, “‘Tongues,’ Theology and the Social Sciences: A Pentecostal-Theological Reading of Geertz’s Interpretive Theory of Religion,” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 1 (1997), available at <http://www.cyberj/cyberj1/yong.html>.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Cf. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90.
8. Cf. Stephen Jay Kline, *Conceptual Foundations for Multidisciplinary Thinking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
9. See Francisca Cho and Richard King Squier, “Religion as a Complex and Dynamic System,” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 2 (2013): 357–98.
10. See Kline, *Conceptual Foundations*, 16.
11. *Ibid.*, 18.
12. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 91.
13. Yong, “Tongues.”
14. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 106–22.
15. Bernard F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 66.
16. *Ibid.*, 64.
17. Cf. James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 29–100.
18. Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda*, Pentecostal Manifestos 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 16–46.

19. Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 197.
20. Cf. Ralph Del Colle, "The Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (2001): 322–40.
21. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 98.
22. See Cho and Squier, "Religion as a Complex and Dynamic System," 367–72.
23. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 100.
24. See *ibid.*, 109–23.
25. Kline, *Conceptual Foundations*, 280–81.
26. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 123.
27. Nikolas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, trans. John Bednartz Jr. and Dirk Baecker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 177.
28. For the idea of systems mapping, see Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 152–59.
29. On the development of this notion in interdisciplinary studies see Sytse Strijbos, "Systems Thinking," in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Robert Frodeman et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 453–70.
30. For this distinction see Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 176–209.
31. See *ibid.*, 182.
32. Cf. Michael King and Chris Thornhill, "'Will the Real Niklas Luhmann Stand up, Please.' A Reply to John Mingers," *The Sociological Review* 51 (2003): 276–85.
33. See Jürgen Habermas, "Excursus on Luhmann's Appropriation of the Philosophy of the Subject through Systems Theory," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 369.
34. Wolfgang Vondey and Martin William Mittelstadt, "Introduction," in *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 14 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 16.
35. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 14.
36. Cf. Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, 1–8.
37. Francisca Cho and Richard K. Squier, "'He Blinded Me with Science': Science Chauvinism in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (2008): 420–48 (426).
38. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 244.
39. See Edmond Ortigues, *Le Discours et le symbole* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2007), 66–79.
40. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 235–66.





## AFTERWORD

*Amos Yong*

Much has already been said in the preceding pages, especially in the editor's introduction and conclusion, about the interdisciplinary character of this book series. The chapters in this initial volume are interdisciplinary within the specific field of theological studies, deploying approaches from across this domain: historical theology, spiritual formation, renewal studies, philosophy, homiletics, ecumenics, pentecostal-charismatic studies, hermeneutics, and systematic theology, among others. None of these methods are necessarily exclusive of the others, and each opens up to historical retrieval, contemporary application, or constructive reflection—or all three! In all of these senses, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: Historical, Interdisciplinary, and Renewal Perspectives* is an exemplary initiator of the CHARIS series.

However, I would like to use the preceding essays as a springboard to reflect more specifically on the interdisciplinary potential of the study of renewal movements. These final pages of the book provide windows into the possibilities that lie ahead. In each case, I refer only to select representative studies along the trajectory prompted; many others could be attended to in any of these instances. Rather than being exhaustive, however, my goal is simply to make the connections in the hope that further research can be catalyzed. Further, the objective here is not merely to replicate prior inquiries but also to prompt other imaginative construals. Most importantly, in what follows I am interested less in the actual achievements of the preceding set of essays than I am in thought experiments about how their topics and areas of research can be extended in interdisciplinary directions. Hence we will be asking: How might the study of renewal build on this volume while also charting creative trajectories for further research and reflection?

The major intellectual spaces that renewal movements open up for research and scholarship relate to the new pathways exploring the arena of pneumatology. Insofar as the spiritual dimension of human

religiosity has always been difficult to study, particularly according to the scientific standards heralded by the modern world, human knowledge of this pneumatological domain has been particularly handicapped. Yet, the tremendous growth and expansion of renewal movements worldwide is forcing the question: How can we understand the spiritual dynamics of such vital developments? One way forward is to revisit the theological self-understandings of renewal movements, which within the Christian tradition have regularly focused on what is identified as the Holy Spirit or in interdisciplinary terms as the Spiritual Presence. The remainder of this afterword attempts such a task in dialogue with the various chapters, albeit following not their sequence in the book but my own thematic organization.

Thus Janelle Aijian's essay on the work of the Spirit in Pascal signals the emergence of what might be called a pneumatological hermeneutic or historiographic approach to the Christian tradition. By this I mean a revisiting of Christian histories, movements, or even thinkers via the pressing of specifically pneumatological perspectives, questions, or concerns. Others have attempted to reconsider the history of the Christian tradition from these renewalist margins,<sup>1</sup> but the exciting development reflected in Aijian's contribution is to review the legacy of a major Christian philosopher and theologian in this way. What else might be brought to light not only about the sources and methods behind the leading voices in the Christian tradition, but about their commitments and significance? How might the history of Christian thought, ideas, and theology—even doctrine!—be retold if we foregrounded the pneumatological dynamics, themes, and motifs in the lives and writings of contributors to the main lines of the Christian corpus? The field is wide open for historians and historical theologians to take up this approach. In fact, almost every chapter in this volume can be read from such a historiographic perspective as shedding fresh light on what are otherwise historically well-known and extensively commented upon figures.

Daniel Strand's chapter on affectivity and Augustine is a classic exhibit of the historical theologian's craft. What is new is the emerging attention given to the affections and the emotions in contemporary scholarship, and how these are now being applied to illuminate neglected aspects of the work of prior thinkers, including theologians. Similar to but now going beyond the work of Aijian, Strand asks not only about the work of the Spirit in general but also about its affective dimensions, particularly as manifest in the life and thought of a major Christian theologian, the bishop of Hippo. Thus we are beginning to see resistance to the long bias against the emotional and the

subjective in the history of Christian thought, primarily because of the Platonic and Neoplatonic influence, which has hindered focused analysis and appreciation of these aspects of the theological tradition. Beyond the very important and appropriate retrievals of these themes, however, new neurobiological, neurophysiological, neuropsychological, and neurosociopsychological tools are also being brought to bear on our understanding not only of charismatic movements but also of historic figures.<sup>2</sup> Strand's focus on the work of the Spirit in Augustine and how this interfaces with the affective and emotional dimensions of his life and thinking, invites such interdisciplinary analysis. How else might recent developments in the neurosciences assist in exploring in fuller detail the cognitive aspects of the broad theological tradition?

The resourcing of contemporary revitalization via older monastic movements by Greg Peters invites cross-disciplinary conversation with current sociological initiatives. Margaret Poloma and her colleagues at the University of Akron, for instance, have been studying not only the sociology of pentecostal and charismatic movements but also the sociology of revitalization.<sup>3</sup> Their approach, bucking positivistic trends in the sociology of religion, has been to measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the effects of those who have had charismatic experiences and how these have (or have not) revitalized religious communities. Who said that the social sciences cannot be deployed to study pneumatic experiences? And who said that the work of those researching in the areas of spiritual theology and spiritual formation (like Peters) cannot be brought into further interdisciplinary conversation in ways that will prompt new research questions and initiatives both for the social sciences and for those interested in understanding revitalization in all of its various registers (i.e., spiritual, ecclesial, cultural)?

Lisa Millen's work on Hugh of St. Victor's charismatically informed anthropology and psychology and Robert Webster's research on Wesley's theology of the miraculous both also invite anthropological and social scientific consideration. While these are very different undertakings, yet each such can be specified even further along similar trajectories—I am thinking for instance, along political and socio-economic lines. In making this suggestion I am mindful of recent scholarship that is asking what difference, if any, charismatic experience makes politically or economically for those in such communities of faith or churches or for the political and economic regions and environments within which such practitioners find themselves.<sup>4</sup> These studies probe the public relevance of charismatic spirituality: do manifestations of the spiritual gifts and of miraculous phenomena have public impact beyond the healing of the soul (as Millen documents)

or the controversies they precipitate (in Webster's account)? More importantly, do these forms of life correlate to upward socioeconomic mobility and if so how? Do these spiritual orientations and commitments presuppose or predispose toward certain political postures, behaviors, or tendencies, and if so, what postures, behaviors, or tendencies? Given the growing numbers of charismatic renewalists around the world, these questions are no longer merely quaint but even urgent, especially given the many political and economic issues at stake globally.

The chapter on Puritan preaching moves us from the material to the virtual dimension of the public sphere. David Barbee's focus on seventeenth-century communicative techniques connects well with prominent themes across the neopentecostal and neocharismatic landscape, especially inviting comparative exploration with contemporary telecommunicative initiatives and practices that are at the heart of the global renewal movement.<sup>5</sup> Given the expansion of the field of communications and the expansive media presence of charismatic renewal ministries, the question emerges: How does "spiritual" presence map onto (or not) the "virtual" presence in the present global context? What are the implications and applications for renewal and revitalization of churches and even whole traditions when explored through the lens of (tele)communicative technology?

Joshua Reichard's meditation on process-relational metaphysics brings pentecostal and charismatic theologians interested in the theology-and-science dialogue into important wider discussions. The process cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead has been one of the most conducive over the last 40 years for Christian theologians looking seriously at the natural sciences. Unfortunately, this has meant that the leading theologians engaging the science-and-religion conversation have been less evangelical and more liberal, or at least more "progressive," oftentimes from more mainline Protestant churches and tradition, as well as from the Roman Catholic Church. Reichard's intervention holds promise for pentecostals, charismatics, and others in this stream in charting a robustly renewalist approach that also takes mainstream science seriously. Even if the future will surely be less dominated by process-relational presuppositions and frameworks of thinking, the question remains wide open: How will renewalists for whom the person and work of the Holy Spirit is central engage meta-theoretically, not to mention metaphysically, with the important issues where Christian theology encounters the natural, physical, and biological sciences?<sup>6</sup>

The contributions above by Cheryl Peterson and Christian Collins Winn take up the challenges regarding intra-Christian and interfaith

ecumenism respectively. As the former suggests, there is much that a pneumatological approach can do to foster intra-Christian ecumenical relationships. A bit more surprising might be the latter's thesis that argues that the work of the Spirit could be extrapolated beyond the Christian horizon toward reconceiving the Christian encounter with and relationship to those in other faiths. Renewalists are now beginning to ask ecumenical questions along both fronts, and these invite not only theological but also interdisciplinary comment and consideration.<sup>7</sup> Might theologies of the Spirit (pneumatologies or pneumatological theologies) facilitate ecumenical thinking and praxis within Christian traditions and across the global interreligious spectrum amidst the conflicts that mark twenty-first-century religious life?<sup>8</sup>

Who would have thought to ask pneumatological questions within the contemporary multidisciplinary conversation about hermeneutics? Bookending the volume, Steven Sherman and Keith Putt boldly raise this question, with the former doing so via a dialogue between evangelical and renewal hermeneuticians and the latter in conversation with postmodern theorists. Together, they advance the discussions already opened up (by such renewal thinkers as James K. A. Smith, Kenneth Archer, and others<sup>9</sup>) but in ways that explicitly and intentionally factor in "pentecostal" perspectives—here defined more in terms of the biblical day of Pentecost than by trends in modern pentecostal theology. As renewalists engage the postmodern and academic horizons, they will need to confront the philosophical and epistemological challenges related to interpretation and understanding that perennially arise across the human sciences.

All of this adds up to say that the phenomenon of global renewal in the contemporary climate invites, even urges, interdisciplinary study, research, and reflection. As the first volume in this *CHARIS: Christianity and Renewal—Interdisciplinary Studies* series, the preceding no more than gestures toward what might be possible. The editors have framed the series in precisely this sustained, interdisciplinary, research program of inquiry. Along the way, we may not come to agreement on how exactly to define "renewal," but we will grow to have a much better appreciation for its complexity, appeal, and potency to address things that matter in this third Christian millennium.<sup>10</sup>

## NOTES

1. The work of Stanley M. Burgess comes to mind, especially his *Christian Peoples of the Spirit: A Documentary History of Pentecostal Spirituality from the Early Church to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

2. For the former, see Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012); regarding the latter, see Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
3. For an overview of her work, see Amos Yong, "What's Love Got to Do with It? The Sociology of Love and the Renewal of Modern Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no. 1 (2012): 113–34.
4. For example, Paul O'Neill, *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), and Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong (eds.), *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement*, Christianities of the World 1 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
5. India as a hotbed of charismatic televangelistic activity has attracted two recent studies: Pradip Thomas, *Strong Religion, Zealous Media: Christian Fundamentalism and Communication in India* (London: Sage, 2008); and Jonathan D. James, *McDonaldisation, Masala McGospel and Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India* (London: Sage, 2010).
6. My own preliminary response to this question is in my book, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination*, Pentecostal Manifestos 4 (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011). See also my two edited volumes: *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), and (with James K. A. Smith) *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
7. As manifest in David Westerlund (ed.), *Global Pentecostalism: Encounters with Other Religious Traditions* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).
8. Of course, my answer is yes, as I have published numerous books on this range of related topics, most recently Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor*, Faith Meets Faith series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).
9. For example, James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004); Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright (eds.), *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012); and Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., and Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).
10. Thanks to Wolfgang Vondey for inviting this "afterword" and for his editorial input.

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