

The Freedom of God: A Study in the Pneumatology of Robert Jenson

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THE FREEDOM OF GOD:
A STUDY IN THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF ROBERT JENSON

by

JAMES DARYN HENRY

A dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of
the department of Theology
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

August 2016

ABSTRACT

THE FREEDOM OF GOD: A STUDY IN THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF ROBERT JENSON

by

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Readers: Khaled Anatolios, Ph.D. and Robert P. Imbelli, Ph.D.

This dissertation presents a study in the Christian systematic theology of Robert W. Jenson on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, this work seeks to contribute descriptively to Jenson scholarship in the theological academy, to understanding, clarifying and interpreting his role in the contemporary theological scene, while, as itself operating in the discipline of systematic theology, this work also seeks to constructively augment our understanding of the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church, reckoning with the significance of this theological locus for a number of prominent movements in the current thought and practice of world Christianity.

Part I and Part II of this work engage in an exegesis of the content of Jenson's pneumatology. Here I advance the interpretation that Jenson's pneumatology can be meaningfully and beneficially coalesced under—without being merely reduced to—the theme of “freedom” or “liberation.” This integrating motif becomes evident as Jenson's pneumatology is unfolded across a number of other traditional doctrinal loci and interweaved with a number of other ecumenical concerns, examining both the “work” of the Spirit in the world (first part) and the divine “person” of the Spirit (second part). Part III, then, ventures

a constructive evaluation and reception of Jenson's distinctive pneumatological proposals by way of dialectical encounter with three horizons: those of (1) early Christian pneumatology, (2) twentieth century trinitarian theology and (3) liberation theological discourse and praxis.

Through this dialectical engagement, I interrogate a number of aspects of Jenson's divine ontology and theological infrastructure, insofar as they relate to the uniqueness of his pneumatological proposals. With a re-calibration of some of those theological judgments, I argue that certain insights of Jenson's notion of the Spirit as eternal, personal Freedom in God, as the Unsurpassed One and as the movement of divine self-constitution from the End of Divine Life merit retrieval. This characterization of the person of the Spirit as one of "freedom" or "liberation," for the believer, for creation, and for God, forges a pneumatological reconstruction of divine transcendence, similarly to what classical theology had done for the persons of the Father and the Son. Such an achievement, I suggest, offers one viable interpretation of the unique role of the Spirit that mediates between traditional-classical trinitarian ontology and the lived experience of the Spirit currently being exhibited, perceived and theorized in various aspects of global theology and leading areas of theological research.

To Nichole Marie Flores,
through whom the Spirit moves

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An intensive and extended work like this dissertation is often accompanied by a seemingly tedious and wanton catalogue of acknowledgements. When someone reaches the point of completing such a project for themselves, they finally realize why. The completion of this behemoth, even the opportunity to have ventured it, would straightforwardly not have been feasible without many of the people lauded herein. That is not to say that they would all align themselves with, nor should be held culpable for, the specific intellectual positions taken. Many would not so align and should not be so egregiously held. Only that I am indebted to all of them, holistically, for enriching and challenging my life and thought. I have nothing that I have not received.¹ Such, certainly, is an appropriate awareness before the surpassing Grace of the Triune God, in praise of whom, on mission with whom and with gratitude to whom are due the first and the last thanksgiving.

I stand humbled to have been formed by a number of stellar institutions and virtuoso teachers, over a number of years now and in various capacities. Creaturely speaking, I reckon the first, greatest and most faithful of those teachers to have been my family: my parents, Bill and Nancy Henry, and my brother, Chris Henry, now an accomplished academic in his own right, who also continues to make sure that I don't take myself too seriously. Also Bob, Ann &

¹ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 8: "None of us...should claim our understanding of anything as our very own, except possibly of falsehood...everything which is true comes from the one who said, I am the truth...What do we have, after all, that we have not received?"

Sue Rose, Randy & Denise Flores, all constant and true—for indefatigable encouragements.

From my hometown of Owen Sound, ON: it was the Rev. Dr. Franklin & Gay Pyles (*pater materque in evangelio*), along with James Pyles (*in memoriam*), who first played decisive roles in my awareness of the Spirit’s work as a young person. As an indispensable part of that transformation, their crucial witness was that faith demands serious intellectual engagement and that Christian belief does not entail intellectual evisceration, as was the dominant cultural narrative circumambient at the time: *veritas vos liberabit*. Pastor Pyles even endured—mostly with forbearance—my initial episode of theological tantrum, incited by a first full reading of *Romans*. They, along with many mentors at Owen Sound Alliance Church, forged a ministry in which talents were honored and nourished. George Mitges of OSCVI was my first true intellectual hero, who entertained as he provoked and probed as he inspired. He catalyzed my love for the world’s history in general and for the American experience in particular, while he personified my secondary school’s most elegant emblem: *dum vivimus vivamus*.

Some other remarkable pastors have built into my life and have continued to remind me that theology, as the Church’s enterprise of thought, remains intimately connected to the Church’s life, worship, mission and service: Rev. Rick & Tammie Romano, now of the Mission TwentyFive35, Dominican Republic, Hermana Dianna & Hermano Juan, together with many friends associated with Ensenada Christian Ministries, Mexico, Rev. Mike & Jen Wagenman, Chaplain of the Kuyper Centre for Emerging Scholars, UWO, and the Rev. Jon & Allie Taylor

of Manchester, NH. The Rev. Dr. Scott Caton of Roberts Wesleyan College, NY, has been a model of steadfastness and integrity.

At the University of Western Ontario (not “Western University”): Craig Simpson, Rob MacDougall and Luz-Maria Hernández-Sáenz first captivated me with the allure of the university and intellectual life, even while alerting me to its liabilities and limitations—*nil desperandum*. Even though I eventually left their academic discipline for another, they were abiding sources of intellectual inspiration and encouragement. While the engagement with theology, in the broad sense, had been with me already, Susan Brown and Hunter Brown, King’s College UWO, first introduced me to the specifically academic study of religion and theology, and graciously guided my first forays.

During my time at Yale, I was especially influenced by the teaching of Miroslav Volf, Shannon Craigo-Snell and Paul Lakeland on the contour and landscape of modern and postmodern thought, which set the background for this dissertation on a theologian in the Barthian tradition at the threshold of those eras. Lamin Sanneh’s work on translatability is a constant pole for my thought, though I have adapted its interpretation under the sign of the Spirit. Jaime Lara was not only an intellectual, but also a personal encouragement. Randall Balmer has continued to foster my seemingly ineradicable interest in American Religious History. I remain deeply indebted to those of my fellow students in New Haven who, at one point or another from 2007-2009, gathered together at Archie Moore’s after lectures—in the shadow of the Niebuhrs—for systematic theology drinks and discussion group: *lux et veritas* endures.

My mentors at Boston College have been a phenomenal example of dynamic scholarship combined with meaningful collegiality. My thanks especially to M. Shawn Copeland & Natana DeLong-Bas, under whom I had the immense honor of serving as teaching assistant, as they shaped my thinking and practice, and also to Boyd Coolman & Rick Gaillardetz for special interventions at some crucial points in my intellectual journey. Steve Brown is a *magister magistrorum*; thank you for your consummate example of intellectual craftsmanship and responsibility in an era of academic shortcuts, hastiness and self-aggrandizement. Through the Boston Theological Institute, I was rewarded to have studied closely with Emmanuel Clapsis of Holy Cross & John Jefferson Davis of Gordon-Conwell. I must also thank the staff at the Burns Library of Special Collections, especially Justine Sundaram, for two formative years of adventure in the archives.

To my dearest cadre of colleagues at BC: Brian Traska, Joe Collins, Jen Sanders, Teva Regule and Rob Brodrick: the animated back and forth of our reading and comprehensive exams study groups was probably the real intellectual highlight of my time here and one testament to *teología en conjunto*. A number of others at BC, too many to catalogue exhaustively but especially: Nicole Reibe, Nick DiSalvatore, Jeremy Sabella, Steve Okey, Joel Kemp, Chris Conway, Conor Kelly, Chris Jones, Bobby Rivera, Autumn Ridenour, John Slotemaker, Nathaniel Peters, Clifton Stringer, Sam Keyes, John Edwards, Jaisy Joseph and Beth Haile offered advice, provided resources and set examples to emulate at decisive inflection points; they have demonstrated the many benefits of a large community of talented fellow scholars—*αἰέν ἀριστεύειν*.

To a number of cherished friends, whose rollicking and scintillating conversations about theology, philosophy and the nature of religion in the Americas, ebbing and flowing over many years now, were not only formative, but more authentic for occurring outside the strictures of the academy and for actual investment in local communities of faith—especially treasured among them: Rob & Tessa Snider, Jon & Ann Ungerland, Thomas J. (D.R.M.) & Dominique Hawkins, Steve Adam, Lee O’Neil, John Boyles, Gabe Michael, Tanya Skypeck, Sandra Valdes-Lopez, Sarah Koenig, Steve Lafontaine, Liz Adams, Drew & Becca Benson, Wakaba Futamura, Eric Cleven, Christina McRorie, Nathanael Homewood, Phil Yoo and Beth Fairley. You vindicate Aristotle’s contention that true friendship is friendship in the Good, and even more so the contention of the Gospel that friends will sacrifice of themselves for one another. Matt Milliner first introduced me to the theology of Robert Jenson.

Institutional resources and funding are vital to the viability (and nonstarvation) of advanced graduate work. So I am grateful that elements of this dissertation were able to be completed with generous assistance from the Ernest Fortin Memorial Foundation, the BC Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada and the BC Dean of Summer Session Fellows program. Over the past year, my thanks to Jim Childress and Willis Jenkins who, despite my own severe impracticality, graciously agreed to host me as Visiting Scholar in the Institute for Practical Ethics at the University of Virginia.

To my dissertation committee: I cannot thank you aptly for your manifold contributions to my development, as iron sharpens iron. How can I even begin to

articulate the honor of having, first, learned Balthasar from all three of you and then, subsequently, having all of you oversee this dissertation? Fr. Robert Imbelli has been a wise and inspiring companion in *theologia viatorum*, and I am overwhelmingly grateful to him for the many “*pausae aestheticae*!” Khaled Anatolios has been an exemplar of rigorous thinking, from whom I learned a vast amount as his research assistant. It is delightfully fitting that I am submitting a study on the Holy Spirit as the third in a trinity of BC dissertations to have been completed directly under Roberto Goizueta. Prof. Goizueta’s luminous transcending of many old and hackneyed polarities, without merest hint of the *odium theologicum*, with a grace, beauty, equanimity combined with an authentic, contemplative praxis, is a theological legacy I could only hope to live (and practice) up to someday. His graciousness and generosity has been manifested in nothing more so than his heroically unswerving attempt to corral, as much as possible—and without any disgruntlement—my largely unwieldy, meandering, chaotic, eclectic, loquacious peregrinations.

Lastly, and most deeply, to my theological co-conspirator, Nichole Marie Flores, one of those from the aforementioned Archie Moore’s theology group, who is also colleague, critic, champion, collaborator, friend, teacher, student, mentor, partner, lover. I will simply steal some words of Robert Jenson himself to say: “...*amatissimae, genetrici theologiae meae omniae*.”

James Daryn Henry
Charlottesville, VA
Memorial of the Martyrs Perpetua & Felicitas 2016

2 Corinthians 3:17

...ὅπου δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐλευθερία

“and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is—freedom.”

1 Corinthians 2:10

...τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ.

“for the Spirit searches all things, even the abyss of God.”

Revelation 22:17

Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν, Ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ ἀκούων εἰπάτω, Ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ διψῶν ἐρχέσθω, ὁ θέλων λαβέτω ὕδωρ ζωῆς δωρεάν.

“The Spirit and the Bride say, come!
Let anyone who hears resound, come!
Let anyone who thirsts come.
Let anyone who desires
drink freely from the Water of Life.”

INTRODUCTION:
AN ORIENTATION TO JENSON AND THIS STUDY

§PROLOGUE

This dissertation advances a study in the theology of Robert Jenson on the doctrine of the Spirit. It thereby begins with certain assumptions: first, of the distinctly theological perspective of inquiry, secondly, of the relative enticement of the reader by Robert Jenson as a figure of not inconsiderable significance for a number of dynamics in contemporary Christian thought and, thirdly, of still new possibilities and horizons for a contemporary Christian theology more fully dedicated to the third article of the Creed, even while fully integrated into and reconciled with its christological complement.

As to the former, it might have been wise in the situation of the contemporary pluralistic university to undertake the present study as one of either the relatively more observational—methodologically—religious studies or of apologetics (fundamental theology), broadly construed, with its concern for commonly accessible, public canons of warrant, criteria and plausibility. I hope it will suffice to say that, for now, the demise of the secularization thesis,¹ together with the “worldwide Christian resurgence”² in a plethora of cultures and

¹ Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds. *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W. W Norton, 2011); Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

² Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xix.

contexts³ means that the self-interpretation, self-clarification and self-purification of the Christian worldview⁴ still remain vital and viable augmentations of our understanding of global society for the foreseeable future. This holds for global citizens of any and every worldview.

Certainly, even the task of internal theological discourse must increasingly be done in confession of the Christian Creed before “the presence of the world’s religions.”⁵ For Christian theology in the global public sphere must reckon with the tremendous influence on global culture of, at the very least, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Secularist and Materialist worldviews. Nor will Christian theology be long vital and viable without explicit engagement with the epochal “theology” of the “religious nones”⁶ (more accurately: new constellations of digital, eclectic, often implicitly Materialist worldviews). Lastly, Christian theology must be done in recognition that the prolific expansion of global capitalism catechizes according to its own embedded liturgies, formations and values.⁷ Compared to the regnant “consumerist catechumenate,” therefore, the “church’s often feeble catechumenate needs to be reoriented and refashioned.”⁸

³ *Pew Research Center*, Religion and Public Life, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050” (2 April 2015): [<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>].

⁴ David K. Naugle Jr., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁵ Frans Jozef van Beeck, *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology*, 6 vols. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1989-1999), vol. 2/1: *Fundamental Theology*, 41-71.

⁶ *Pew Research Center*, Religion and Public Life, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” (12 May 2015): [<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>].

⁷ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies I (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), especially 17-36.

⁸ Robert P. Imbelli, *Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 91.

All those factors will be crucial for theology's continuing significance in the broader conversation about human truth and meaning. But given the inalienable role of Christianity in global society, nevertheless, theology too will continue to have its own import. Those in the university who are not so convinced of the intrinsic relevancy of theological and confessional discourse, however, could still take the present study—and such discourse in general—as the intellectual production of religious subjects, and thus even on its own terms under the purview of religious studies.

Even more specifically, this work is a work of “systematic theology,” and not apologetics or fundamental theology. I do not avoid the apologetic burden of theology because I subscribe to that fashionable movement in university-based theology largely dismissive and contemptuous of apologetic concerns. In reality, I do not.⁹ Apologetics does desperately need to be re-envisioned.¹⁰ But neither the simple deployment of revelation as a way to outflank the task of fundamental

⁹ In this case, as not often, Tillich must be decisively taken over Barth when he defended the apologetic dimension of theology, the necessity of an “answering theology” that responds to “the questions implied in the ‘situation’ in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answered...Apologetics presupposes common ground, however vague it may be...Even kerygmatic theology must use the conceptual tools of its period. It cannot simply repeat biblical passages. Even when it does, it cannot escape the conceptual situation of the different biblical writers...On the other hand, apologetic theology must heed the warning implied in the existence and claim of kerygmatic theology. It loses itself if it is not based on the kerygma as the substance and criterion of each of its statements” *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963), 1: 6-8, though the neglect of those final two statements by the adherents of “correlation” have often partially vindicated the cavil of Barth and kerygmaticism. But: *abusus non tollit usum*.

¹⁰ For some possibilities of that re-envisioning: Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012): “Apologetics is not to be seen as a defensive and hostile reaction against the world...but as a welcome opportunity to exhibit, celebrate, and display the treasure chest of the Christian faith” or John Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); or simply an acquaintance with the broad spectrum of historical approaches helps: Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

theology, nor the liberationist shift of the grounds to a counter-critique of the power and hegemony of reason by the epistemological privilege of the poor, will finally prove, *by themselves alone*, to be holistically plausible in our situation of such radical worldview pluralism, ethical indifferentism, technological proliferation, and posthumanist, futurist relativization.¹¹ Christian faith lives now “in a radically pluralistic world where rival metaphysical and revelatory claims compete for attention and commitment,” as one of a number of ontologies clamorously “on display,” says one perceptive commentator. As a result, the “current intellectual and social location” of Christian faith, “confirms that the issue of the rationality of belief in God remains as pressing as ever,” in the context of such a situation.¹²

The task of apologetics, thus, even in a renewed worldview framework, has not been truly vitiated by any of the theological movements of the 20th and 21st century. Apologetics is one good and necessary dimension of the Church’s theology on intellectual mission to the world and in quest of truth for itself. It is one aspect of the ascetic, repentant and humble self-correction of theology’s own discourse. All that to say: this is just not primarily what I have ventured here. Without foreclosing the possibility of massaging such a study in the direction of fundamental or apologetic theology, I simply circumscribe my task here as one of systematics proper, as one of articulating a vision of faith in the Holy Spirit fully

¹¹ Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in and Age of Technological Enhancement* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

¹² William J. Abraham, “The Existence of God,” from John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* [OHST] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22.

dependent on the Church's own internal warrants and presuppositions. I have crafted this work as one of systematic or doctrinal theology, and it is for that reason brazenly churchly and confessional. It is intended, therefore, as a work primarily in the Church and for the Church's understanding of her faith,¹³ though I think anyone interested in broader religious and pneumatological trends might also be interested in listening in and is heartily welcome to participate.

To be engaged in "systematic theology" is to be engaged in an enterprise that has undergone tumultuous contestation in the late 20th century, even among fellow theologians and those sympathetic to religious concerns. Systematic theology has been lambasted, Sarah Coakley poignantly notes, for (1) its putative idolatry, for "ontotheology," for presuming to yield a conceptual structure adequate to God—for conceptual idols—also for (2) hegemony, for presenting itself as a totalizing account or all encompassing gaze of the intellectual landscape, and on that basis exerting a power that has suppressed voices not represented in dominant elite-intellectual discourses and (3) for patriarchy, for operating in an intellectual mode of mastery and control, spurning insights from generative creativity, aesthetic reception and emotive intuition. Each of these critiques of systematic theology presume "that the systematician idolatrously desires mastery: a complete understanding of God, a regnant position in society, or a

¹³ Thereby my typical usage of "theology" or "systematic theology" throughout will mean specifically "Christian theology." I do recognize that, broadly speaking, theology can potentially be done under the criteria of any posited "*theos*," without necessarily imposing that particular term upon any community's own view of their internal discourse, such that I could more elaborately differentiate between, for example, Plato's theology, or Islamic theology, or First Nations theology or postmodern theology (a/theology/ies!). The degree of analogy between the various theologies will depend on the sphere of overlap between their various conceptions of divinity and the procedures by which each community claims to know their gods. That is a complicated question I cannot further explore here. So the term should be understood in its narrower usage.

domination of the gendered other...[and will] thereby abuse his knowledge, his power, or his male mode of thinking, for purposes of intellectual, social, or sexual dominance...[involving] insidious entanglement of knowledge, power, and gender.”¹⁴ There are resources from within the tradition and traditional elements of systematic theology itself, I would argue, to resist such accusations, to view systematic theology as fundamentally an enterprise of humility, of ascesis, of discipleship, of service, of pilgrimage, of worship and of self-emptying, while maintaining that in Revelation we do receive and encounter Truth that is not merely for self-aggrandizement, the deployment of power or a weapon to be wielded. But these charges are also not without partial legitimacy, at least in the situation when Christianity formerly held dominant cultural and political power.

Systematic theology as such is itself a modern category, and thereby also appears suspect to a whole constellation of postmodern cultural movements, a term that serves “rather loosely to indicate a variety of styles, perspectives, prejudices, and premises for which no single word is truly adequate,” but which revolve around a “salutary dubiety” of all “the magisterial projects of modernity—political, philosophical, scientific, economic, social—[as]...they attempt to ground their discourse in some stable, transhistorical process, method, set of principles, or canon of rationality.” Even without the retort that postmodernity itself has readily become, in many instances, “a metanarrative” of its own, “the story of no more stories, so told as to determine definitively how much may or may not be said intelligibly by others who have stories to tell; it completes not only the

¹⁴ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay ‘On the Trinity’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 42-43, 51; vol. 1 of a projected 4 vol. “systematics.”

critical but the metanarrative projects of modernity,”¹⁵ still it may be said that the postmodern grievance does not quite pertain to the systematicity that authentic systematic theology has in view. Systematicity, properly understood, describes the search for interrelation, internally, between various aspects of Christian teaching and, externally, between Scripture’s worldview and its interaction with our other knowledge about & experience of the world; it seeks harmony, balance, organic synthesis, not exhaustive totality, as if one could finalize everything that could ever be said about God, God’s world and their relationship.¹⁶ Authentic systematic theology has always understood that its knowledge and claims are, at best, asymptotic to the abundance of both Divine and human reality. Its claims are eschatologically oriented. And, all the while, they are co-determined by the intellectual corruptions of sin, such that even theology’s loftiest achievements are always modest.

Furthermore, systematic theology also “has a certain family resemblance relation...to other, historic, ways of attempting to present a complete [in the sense of the scope of the story from Creation to Eschaton], and inviting, vision of Christian doctrine in its various parts,” and so is not, genealogically, strictly modern after all. So “[s]ystematics, in other words, does not convey the hubristic idea of a totalizing discourse that excludes debate, opposition, or riposte,” but nor does “it falter at the necessary challenge of presenting the gospel afresh in all its ramifications – systematically unfolding the connections of the parts of the vision

¹⁵ David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 5-7.

¹⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:vii, describes the systematic impulse profoundly as: “the smallest problem, if taken seriously and rationally, drove me to all other problems and to the *anticipation* of a whole in which they could find their solution,” emphasis added.

that is set before us.” Systematic theology, grounded “in spiritual practices of attention that mysteriously challenge and expand the *range* of rationality,” performed together with acts of devotion, of worship, of service, of mission, of discipline, can “simultaneously darken and break one’s hold on previous certainties.” With this sense of systematicity, Coakley passionately argues for “systematic theology’s” enduring “indispensability,” though also for its “malleability,” as it has the animating task, “to reinvoke reflection on the perennial mysteries of the gospel,” to forge an “integrated presentation of Christian truth” and to labor unceasingly “to provide a coherent, and alluring, vision of the Christian faith.”¹⁷ While the rational dimension of this enterprise is indispensable, the enlargement of our view of the scope of rationality, together with a holistic presentation of Christian truth, recognizes that our enticement to the truth of the Christian faith will be animated by luminously incarnate truth: by “the beauty of those lives in which that faith is incarnated and made visible and palpable...If we are drawn to Christ, therefore, it will likely...[be] because we have been inspired by the witness of his martyrs and saints.”¹⁸

At the same time, however, various postmodern discourses are themselves on the wane—they never could interpret very well the astounding degree of achievement of contemporary science and technology, particularly the spread of medical science for basic human flourishing, nor the relative development of postcolonial societies, nor something like universal human rights, nor the transparadigmatic continuity of knowledge—even though their influence lingers

¹⁷ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and Self*, 33, 41, 36.

¹⁸ Roberto Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Towards a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 3.

through the cacophonous, and typically unreflective, default eclecticism in the cultural spheres of meaning, value and religion. In Christian theology,¹⁹ moreover, the ascendancy in certain spheres of postmodern deconstruction had to insulate itself—hegemonically, proscriptively!—against the robustly realist lived faith of many of the very peoples on whose behalf it ostensibly claimed to launch its deconstructive efforts: “While helpful and, indeed, necessary for unmasking oppressive ideologies and social structures...such suspicion can become an epistemological absolute...Any Christian theology...that assumes a rejection of appearances as an aprioristic epistemological standpoint cannot ultimately appreciate a lived religion that presupposes the intrinsic relationship between appearance and reality, symbol and referent, form and content [that are] central to a sacramental” and incarnational worldview.²⁰ In response, the shift (or return) to an outlook of a chastened and epistemically more restrained “critical realism,”²¹ which more fittingly and holistically accounts for both the *integrity* of reality as it is disclosed to us—in various disciplines—and the lived faith of the believer—in theology in particular—itself entails that the place and approach of “systematic theology” must be seriously entertained once again.

Such a task is still beset by many perils. It is not one to enter cavalierly, lest the judgment be rendered similarly to the friends of Job: “because you have

¹⁹ A judicious sifting through contemporary continental philosophy for renewals of the basis of Christian systematic theology: Thomas G. Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

²⁰ Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 87.

²¹ John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), especially Chapter 1; Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001-2003), especially vol. 2: *Reality*; Nancy Murphy, “Natural Science” in *OHST*: 543-560.

not spoken truth about me, as my servant Job has.”²² Barth says it in his dramatic way, “[i]f there is any mortally dangerous undertaking on earth, any undertaking in which we have reason not only at the beginning but also in the middle and at the end to take the last resort of invoking the name of the Most High, then it is that of...dogmatics....” Barth adds that given the complexities of the modern world situation—even more so for us now in the digital world—this task is ever more dangerous, and “such a prayer will have to be made out materially much deeper distress and perplexity than in the time of Thomas.” The task is even a burden: “But for us, presenting and studying dogmatics is a burden, a burden that we cannot and may not and will not avoid, but still a burden” nonetheless.²³

Despite the difficulty, it remains a necessary and indispensable task, not only because the Church’s theology reciprocally implicates the Church’s ethics, the Church’s worship, the Church’s mission, not only because theology is intellectual discipleship, the “capturing of every thought in obedience to Christ,”²⁴ but also because the task of systematic theology is to pose Christian teaching at the interface with the deepest questions of human meaning as such: “Theology touches on life, death and our very being, and so through love and

²² Job 42:7; unless otherwise noted, translations from the Scriptures are my own limited rendition, from the texts of the critical editions: **MT**=*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), R. Kittel, K. Elliger, W. Rudolph and Hans Peter Rüger, gen eds. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997), **LXX**=*Septuaginta*, editio altera, Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, gen eds. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), **Vg**=*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, editio quinta, Robert Weber and Roger Gryson, gen eds. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), **Gk**=*Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed., Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Kurt Aland (NA28), et al., eds., Institute for New Testament Research: Münster & Westphalia (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

²³ Karl Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, vol 1. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., Hannelotte Reiffen, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), §1:3-4.

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:5.

freedom. What makes man different from any other creature? Can humans be truly free? Do they want to be free? Can humans be free to love?”²⁵

This is the view of the enterprise in which this study is engaged. As engaged in the study of systematic theology, I am “especially interested in the scope, unity and coherence of Christian teaching.”²⁶ I am especially interested in the intrinsic *relationality* that is necessarily embedded in *any* Christian discourse, because theology posits relations between any and all of creation and its Creator, and therefore, posits relations among all creatures, in a certain fundamental respect.²⁷ Theology, being about “God and all things under their relation to God”—though not all things in every respect, so as to usurp the proper place of other disciplines that consider things in other aspects—must therefore be “systematic” in some broad sense.²⁸

While I do not overlook the reality that systematic theology is also “characterized by a measure of internal contestation,” because its practitioners have to make confessionally and structurally contentious decisions themselves about “where to look for instantiations of or raw material for Christian teaching,” and such decisions about sources are integrally related to the “acceptance of norms,” and “criteria by which decisions may be reached about which sources

²⁵ John Zizioulas, *Lectures on Christian Dogmatics*, Douglas Knight, ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 1.

²⁶ John Webster, “Introduction to Systematic Theology,” in *OHST*, 1.

²⁷ A. N. Williams, “What is Systematic Theology?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 11:1 (January 2009): 40-55.

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.1.7 [by part.question.article]: “*Omnia autem pertractantur in sacra doctrina sub ratione Dei, vel quia sunt ipse Deus; vel quia habent ordinem ad Deum, ut ad principium et finem.*”

furnish the most authentic, reliable, and persuasive Christian teaching.”²⁹ It is a task, nevertheless, that can generally and meaningfully coalesce around the central message of the Gospel and the power for transformation that the Gospel unleashes in the world: “It will make a weak man mighty / it will make a mighty man fall / it will fill your heart and hands / or leave you with nothing at all / it’s the eyes for the blind / and legs for the lame / it is love for hate / and pride for shame. That’s the power, O the mighty power / That’s the power of the Gospel.”³⁰

§0.1: THE THEOLOGY OF ROBERT JENSON

Why Robert Jenson? This dissertation hopes to make a contribution to Jenson scholarship, to the understanding of his role in the contemporary theological scene. Given that “of making many books, there is no end,” says the Teacher, “and much study wearies the body,”³¹ why would this endeavor be worth the additional volume and the study? Such judgments, it must be admitted, are difficult to execute from a strictly scholarly perspective, because of the sheer proliferation, differentiation and diversification of theological discourses at the turn of the 21st century, and the various trends and constituencies represented therein. We live in a deeply complex and vibrant world, and so there is a surplus of worthy objects of study, contingent on one’s concerns, commitments and emphases in the contemporary global scene.

Making such judgments in a fundamental discipline like theology, furthermore—because of its very axiomatocity—is not like making the isomorphic judgment in the disciplines of natural science. Such judgments themselves are

²⁹ John Webster, “Introduction to Systematic Theology,” in *OHST*, 1-3.

³⁰ Ben Harper, “Power of the Gospel” *Fight For Your Mind* [1995].

³¹ Ecclesiastes 12:12.

often bound up in material decisions about—and perhaps unexamined preferences for or against—theological content, and inseparable from them. They are analogous to making prolegomenal decisions in theology. As Jenson himself says, even the initial, anticipatory description of the theological enterprise, “cannot be a pre-theological beginning, for every attempt even to say what sort of thing theology is implies material theological propositions, and so is false if the latter are false.”³² Nothing in theology is wholly and strictly “predogmatic” (*vordogmatisch*).³³ Because of the elemental nature of theology, probing questions of any and every cultural & intellectual assumption and predilection, even of the very nature of reality, meaning, reason, warrant, the human situation in the world, no statement about “importance” in theology simply functions as a neutral statement without any implication for actual theological positions.

That is not to say that we should merely abandon the task of assessing theological importance, of discerning trends, of diagnosing influence in Christian communities and leaders, of appreciating virtuosic creativity and synthesis, of foregrounding areas of concern, of recognizing particular achievements in relation to “scrutinizing the signs of the times *and* interpreting them in the light

³² Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997-1999), vol. 1: *The Triune God*, vol. 2: *The Works of God*, 1:3; An initial note on the citation of Jenson’s work: Jenson regularly employs italics, quotation marks and other punctuation as a stylistically compressed but substantively significant apparatus for his writing, as part of the *structure* of his theological communication. I have attempted to meticulously reproduce these in references for faithful representation. When it has been necessary to alter this apparatus for the purposes of my own clarity, however, I do so with “emphasis emended” (deletion) or “emphasis added” (addition).

³³ Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 2 vols., Darrell L. Guder, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981-1983), 1:4-5.

of the Gospel...in a language intelligible to each generation,”³⁴ of perhaps even quantifying spread or reach. Certainly some cases are more evident than others, and with the “clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds,”³⁵ it is often easier to discriminate between enduring influences and faddish frenzies. But it is to say that such judgments can only be made circumspectly, with self-reflection on how they are entangled with material theological judgments and positions.

§0.1.1: The Significance of Jenson’s Theology—In the case of Jenson, two other widely regarded—if also criticized—theologians noted in the early 2000s the relative dearth of scholarly interest in Jenson’s theology in poignant ways.³⁶ Since

³⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, §4, emphasis intentional—as well as, while I’m at it, the interpretation of “scrutinizing” instead of the more insipid standard English rendition of “reading” for *signa temporum perscrutandi*, which is not to say that scrutinizing doesn’t involve reading, dialogue, reception and patient attention, only that it is also an active and discerning process that goes beyond “mere” perpetual dialogue, as it has sometimes been taken to mean.

³⁵ C. S. Lewis, “Introduction: On Reading Old Books” foreword to Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, John Behr, ed. and trans., Popular Patristics Series [PPS], 44 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012).

³⁶ Pannenberg noted his surprise that, “a theologian of the stature of Robert W. Jenson has not been accorded a place at the center of the American academic establishment.” Pannenberg continues on to say: “Since the 1960s, his books on eschatological theology, on the Trinity, and on ecumenism have established him as one of the most original and knowledgeable theologians of our time. Jenson is a distinctively American voice in the worldwide endeavor to retrieve and reformulate a trinitarian theology”: Wolfhart Pannenberg, “A Trinitarian Synthesis: Review of *Systematic Theology* Volumes I & II by Robert W. Jenson” *First Things* (May 2000): 49-53, 49. That was in 2000, shortly after the publication of Jenson’s two volume *Systematic Theology*. Similar observations were echoed in 2005 by David Bentley Hart, in his own grandiloquent way, when he lamented the “curious neglect America’s perhaps most creative systematic theologian has suffered not only among reasonably theologically literate American Christians, but in the academic world”: David Bentley Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson” *First Things* (October 2005): 28-34, 28. Hart, certainly no Jenson sycophant, as his own *Beauty of the Infinite* contains, at one point, a 10 page excoriation of certain aspects of Jenson’s theology, still marvels at the lack of substantive encounter with Jenson’s theology even where it is *appreciated*...Still, as of yet...[even where] his work is known and esteemed...his theology is too little taught and too little studied; too few dissertations engage his ideas; not nearly enough attention is paid to his

then, however, in the past decade or so, there has been an increasing formal response to Jenson's theology,³⁷ while other studies have begun to reckon with the full range of loci developed in Jenson's theology.³⁸ Particularly since the time

contributions to modern dogmatics; and too little pride is taken in the dignity his work lends to American theology...."

³⁷ Emmitt C. Cornelius, Jr. "The Concept of Christ's Preexistence in the Trinitarian Theology of Robert W. Jenson: An Exposition and Critique." PhD Dissertation: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2005; S. Isaac, "The Unity of the Triune God in the Theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Robert Jenson: A Dialectical Approach." PhD Dissertation: University of Toronto (St. Michael's College), 2009; Peter D. Neumann, "Encountering the Spirit: Pentecostal Mediated Experience of God in Theological Context." PhD Dissertation: University of Toronto (St. Michael's College), 2010; Andrew Nicol, "The God of Israel in the Theology of Robert Jenson." PhD Dissertation: University of Otago, 2011; Cheryl M. Peterson, "The Question of the Church in North American Lutheranism: Toward an Ecclesiology of the Third Article." PhD Dissertation: Marquette University, 2004; Mary J. Streufert, "Re-Conceiving Lutheran Christology." PhD Dissertation: Claremont Graduate University, 2004.

³⁸ For a selection: John R. Albright, "The Story of the Triune God: Time and Eternity in Robert Jenson's Theology" *Christian Scholar's Review* 26:1 (1996): 36-54; Andrew R. Burgess, "A Community of Love? Jesus as the Body of God and Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Thought" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6:3 (2004): 289-300; Eric H. Crump, "Jenson's Systematic Theology" *Seminary Ridge Review* 2:2 (2000): 44-52; Paul Cumin, "Robert Jenson and the Spirit of it All; Or Sometimes You Wonder Where Everything Else Went" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60:2 (2007): 161-179; Jason M. Curtis, "Trinity, Time and Sacrament: Christ's Eucharistic Presence in the Theology of Robert Jenson" *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 10 (2005): 21-38; Tee Gatewood, "A Nicene Christology? Robert Jenson and the Two Natures of Jesus Christ" *Pro Ecclesia* 18:1 (2009): 28-49; Simon J. Gathercole, "Pre-existence, and the Freedom of the Son in Creation and Redemption: An Exposition in Dialogue with Robert Jenson" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7:1 (2005): 38-51; Stanley J. Grenz, "The Divine Fugue: Robert Jenson's Renewed Trinitarianism" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30:2 (2003): 211-216; Colin E. Gunton, "Immanence and Otherness: Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom in the Theology of Robert Jenson" *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 30:1 (1991): 17-26; Wai-Luen Kwok, "The Relation of Narrative, History and the Triune Reality: A Preliminary Investigation of Robert Jenson's Doctrine of the Trinity" *Jian Dao* 29 (2008): 175-197; Piotr J. Malysz, "From Divine Sovereignty to Divine Conversation: Karl Barth and Robert Jenson on God's Being and Analogy" *Concordia Theology Quarterly* 71:1 (2007): 29-55; David C. Ratke, "Lutheran systematic theology: where is it going?" *Dialog*, 40:3 (2001): 216-222; Christoph Schwobel, "A Quest for an Adequate Theology of Grace and the Future of Lutheran Theology: A Response to Robert W. Jenson" *Dialog*, 42:1 (2003): 24-31; Brian K. Sholl, "On Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Thought" *Modern Theology* 18:1 (2002): 27-36; F. Leron Shults, "The Futurity of God in Lutheran Theology" *Dialog* 42:1 (2003): 39-49; Mary M. Solberg, "Concerning God's Proper Name: Some Comments on Robert Jenson's Discussion of the Masculinity of Father" *Dialog* 30:4 (1991): 325-326; Francis Watson, "'America's Theologian': An Appreciation of Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology, with

of the publication of his *Systematic Theology* (1997-1999), Jenson's theology has been increasingly recognized for its broader import, at least for what might be called "theologies of retrieval," theologies that interface the theological tradition with contemporary concerns in interesting ways. Jenson has been especially acknowledged for the accomplishment of his theology in the spheres of: the eschatological shift, revisionary ontology, the recovery of the centrality of trinitarian doctrine, global ecumenical theology, Jewish-Christian dialogue and theological interpretation of Scripture. Jenson's legacy largely still clusters around the three themes emphasized by the major volume on Jenson's theology that was edited by his former student, Colin Gunton: *trinity, time and church*.³⁹

The two most important, recent, extended works on Jenson's theology, Scott Swain's, *The God of the Gospel*,⁴⁰ and Stephen John Wright's, *Dogmatic Aesthetics*,⁴¹ have inaugurated important critical assessments and launched reciprocally enriching conversations about the role of Jenson in current Christian thought. For a figure of whose stature his own critic, David Bentley Hart, surmises "not only as an exciting thinker—more theoretically audacious than almost all of his contemporaries—but one whose achievement is indisputably

Some Remarks About the Bible" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55:2 (2002): 201-223, Christopher Wells, "Aquinas and Jenson on Thinking About the Trinity" *Anglican Theological Review* 84:2 (2002): 345-382; David S. Yeago, "Catholicity Nihilism, and the God of the Gospel: Reflections on the Theology of Robert W. Jenson" *Dialog* 31:1 (1992): 18-22.

³⁹ Colin E. Gunton, ed., *Trinity, Time and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁴⁰ Scott Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

⁴¹ Stephen John Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics: A Theology of Beauty in Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

enormous,”⁴² however, many other aspects of his wide-ranging systematic program still deserve further scholarly attention. Stephen Holmes, another critic, still encapsulates how many prominent trajectories of late 20th century theological thought converge in Jenson: “Barth’s denial of a *Logos asarkos*, Rahner’s insistence on the identity of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity, and Pannenberg’s and Moltmann’s desire to see God’s life as open to the gospel history, all reach their most extreme, and most coherent, expression in Jenson’s theology,”⁴³ those themes having a subsequent interpretive influence on a wide array of systematic loci. For another example, Katherine Sonderegger pithily and acutely describes Jenson as quintessentially the one in whom Barth’s trinitarian and christological dogmatic “legacy has been received in full.”⁴⁴

§0.1.2: *The Barthian Phase (1950s-1960s)*—Rather than tortuously prolong this already pedantic cavalcade, however, I think it would be best just to provide the reader, by way of introduction, with a historical outline of Jenson’s career. I have catalogued below the major intellectual movements in which Jenson has been involved, the major conversations in which he engaged and the major thematic emphases of his theology in its historical unfolding. I then leave it to readers to judge for themselves their own potential interest and whether or not their further exertion would be rewarded.

⁴² Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson,” 28.

⁴³ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2012), 24.

⁴⁴ Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1: *The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015) (vol. 1 of projected 3 vol systematics), xxi-xxii, note 1: against such program she mounts an absolutely fascinating campaign on behalf of the centrality of the “One God,” God’s robustly “metaphysical” predicates, ontological aseity, and the ways of knowing the Bible’s One God not strictly reducible to christology.

The remainder of this dissertation will be conducted by a “systematic” method, that is, by examining Jenson’s position on a variety of topical loci in Christian thought, with their relation to the doctrine of the Spirit as the abiding focus. Here, as one other way into his thought, however, I offer an outline of a historical approach, summarizing severely of course. Here I will provide a brief orientation to the diachronic development of Jenson’s theology by way of a provisional and exploratory heuristic. I have delineated four particular historical phases of Jenson’s thought that will hopefully illuminate the systematic content of my study:

1950s-1960s: Raised in the, for that time, relatively insular embrace of the Norwegian Lutheran community in Minnesota, Jenson embarked on his higher education at Luther College, IA and Luther Seminary, MN. There he confronted a perennial question of many cradle believers and college students: “it first occurred to me that my inherited religion claimed to be true—and therefore might be false.”⁴⁵ Much of Jenson’s theology to this day reckons with the force of that question for the contemporary believer. In response, he explored various aspects of the German and otherwise philosophical tradition, Nietzsche, Marx, Kierkegaard, Kant. At seminary, he began to become entangled in some of the more theologically scrupulous debates then circulating among confessional Lutherans—the role of historical criticism in theology, the Lutheran iteration of the predestinarian (*supra v. infralapsarian*, *intuitu fidei*) controversy, and the radical christological, ecclesiological and ontological implementations of the *communicatio idiomatum* and *finitum capax infiniti* as interpreted by the post-

⁴⁵ Jenson, “Theological Autobiography to Date,” *Dialog*, 46:1 (Spring 2007), 46.

Reformation orthodox Lutheran scholastics, to whom he gravitated. At the same time, he also there became enamored of the German existentialist tradition, then as filtered through the psychoanalytic legacy of Freud and Jung and through the theological adaptation of Rudolf Bultmann, while also studying philosophy and logic intermittently at the University of Minnesota.⁴⁶

When it came time for Jenson's mature theological education, he had planned to write on Bultmann. He went to Heidelberg intending to write on him, embracing Bultmann's articulation of faith as "openness to the future" while concurrently critiquing his thought that such openness seemed to have no discernable content or specifiable anticipation, which would be quite strange for faith in a concrete, narratable Gospel. However, Peter Brunner, Jenson's director, would have nothing of Bultmann for a legitimate dissertation in systematics, and redirected him to Karl Barth's doctrine of election. The chastisement of his director would supply the program for most of Jenson's early theological career. At Heidelberg, Jenson encountered a remarkable constellation of German scholars who deeply shaped him: he was directed by Brunner, Gerhard von Rad, Hans von Campenhausen, Günther Bornkamm, participated in some *ad hoc* seminars of Heidegger and Gadamer, and there sat under the beginning lectures of a young Wolfhart Pannenberg.

The modification of his dissertation, completed in 1959 after some time in Basel with Barth himself, was published in 1963 as *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth*. In this work, Jenson took Barth's doctrine of

⁴⁶ Carl E. Braaten, "Robert William Jenson—A Personal Memoir" from Gunton, ed., *Trinity, Time & Church*, 1-9; Jenson, "Theological Autobiography to Date," 46-48; Jenson, "Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed" *Christian Century* (20 April 2010).

election, and the concomitant construal of God's Being through act and decision, as a decisive answer to the "problem of history" that plagued 19th century German thought and was taken by many modern 20th century theologians to have undermined classical theology's reliance on essentialist ontology. Whereas previous eras in which the Gospel was interpreted had depended for their meaning on ideal forms, the modern era found humanity metaphysically floundering, "forlorn in history," claimed Jenson.⁴⁷ What Barth's doctrine of election provided contemporary people was the ability to see all the discourse about God's will and God's action, even in its "eternity undiminished," as "an event in history, as the chronologically and geographically fixable event of the life of Jesus of Nazareth," and his life and existence "in our history" "in created time and space," thereby it is in "*our* history God makes His *eternal* decision."⁴⁸

During this period, Jenson took this basic outlook, derived from Barth but extrapolating into areas beyond Barth, as programmatic for a number of concerns. First, it animated his jeremiad against the superficiality and banality of mid-20th century American religion—to be salvaged by the intrinsic principle of cruciform self-criticism in Christianity—in his *A Religion Against Itself* (1967)—the year before that most ominous one in the American experience. He further oriented his commitment to historicism toward the eschatological shift in *God After God* (1969). And, finally, in a work on theological method and language, where he attempted to straddle the divide between continental hermeneutics and Anglo-American analytic positivists, he developed this Barthian program towards a

⁴⁷ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 16.

⁴⁸ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 163.

notion of the eschatological verification and vindication of specifically theological knowledge in *The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse* (1969).

All the while, Jenson operated primarily during these years as a philosopher of culture, as faculty member at Luther College, and so wrote widely, and experimentally, on broad topics encompassed by that term and that intertwined with American public life. One dimension of his work as commentator on culture was his own political activism: participation in the March on Washington with MLK Jr. and “strenuous” protest of the Vietnam War, though, as Jenson retrospectively narrates it, his optimism that when *Roe v. Wade* was promulgated, the “protest against killing in an unjust war would naturally be followed by protest against killing children unable themselves to appeal for justice,” resulted in an abandonment and disenchantment that “at once disordered and exacerbated our [he and his partner Blanche’s] politics.”⁴⁹

§0.1.3: The Trinitarian Phase (1970s-1980s)—Jenson took up his first teaching post specifically in theology when he was called to be the resident Lutheran specialist at Oxford in the mid-1960s, during which time he was to oversee the influential dissertation of Colin Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*.⁵⁰ Returning from England in 1968, Jenson entered into seminary teaching at Gettysburg Seminary—as he describes, 20 years punishment for his earlier intellectual

⁴⁹ Jenson “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

⁵⁰ In which Gunton compared the dynamic views of ontology in process theology to Barth’s trinitarian, election historicism and argued strenuously and forcefully for the cogency and viability of the latter in contrast to the former.

disdain for his own seminary formation—and became more oriented to specifically theological concerns. His introductory book on Christian faith—a “little dogmatics”—*Story and Promise: A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus* (1973), charted a clear course for the crystallization of “story” and “narrative” as central operating categories in his thought—though his interest in the category of “story” hearkens back to essays as early as 1962—and also garnered for him a categorization among the “theologians of hope” due to the eschatological orientation of that book.

Besides becoming involved in matters of Lutheran confessionalism and polity, with a decisive interest in the liturgical renewal movement in Lutheranism, matured into *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (1978) and his role in developing some of the formal liturgy for the Lutheran Book of Worship in the, then, Lutheran Church in America, the heart of Jenson’s theology became his reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity. Jenson had already taken Barth’s positioning of the doctrine of the Trinity as a “mandating example.” Barth, he said, pioneered the analysis that, “The Trinity’s first function is identification of the Christian God, which leads to its larger role as the frame within which ancient and new theological puzzles can be resolved.”⁵¹ The selection of Jenson to take up the doctrine of the Trinity in a multi-authored dogmatics textbook for Lutheran seminarians launched his intensive and enduring—some would say also idiosyncratic—immersion in the early pro-Nicene theologians, especially the Cappadocians, and a resolve for the significance and necessity of the trinitarian renewal in contemporary theology. Jenson wedded

⁵¹ Jenson, “Theological Autobiography to Date,” 50.

his work on the Trinity to his concerns about God's Being as open to history and to the characteristic of the Biblical God, over and against the gods of standard religion, in the embrace of history and its vicissitudes, in *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (1982) and in his contribution to the 2-volume *Christian Dogmatics* (1984). The latter also includes some of his most direct, and dramatic, statements on pneumatology. Jenson saw his own program for Trinitarian thought as in alignment with Karl Rahner's trinitarian axiom about the identification of the immanent and economic trinity and with Eberhard Jüngel's emphasis on God's ontological openness and vulnerability to the world in the Gospel.⁵²

§0.1.4: The Ecumenical Phase (1980s-2000s)—Spurred on by his wife, Blanche,⁵³ a former university minister and major contributing factor in many of his theological emphases, and shaped by his tenure at Oxford collaborating with the Church of England, Jenson became a devoted advocate of a “passionate

⁵² Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 139 and notes 172-173.

⁵³ Jenson, “Theological Autobiography to Date,” 48-49: The major theological event of my seminary years occurred during internship...[when] I met the counselor at the Lutheran Student House— “counselor” was a euphemism for the role of women who were pastors in all but celebrating Eucharist. We were married the following summer. *And when I tell people that my books should rightly list Blanche Rockne as co-author, that is the truth.* Some will know me as a passionate ecumenist...But before Blanche I disapproved of the whole movement. She, shaped by the inevitably ecumenical ministry at state universities, converted me. Or again, those who read me will have seen an ever-increasing use of the notion of story/narrative. It was not the labeled ‘narrative theologians’ who pushed me that way; Blanche’s critical query in 52 years of theological discussion/argument has ever been, ‘But how does this fit the biblical narrative/story?’...Or yet again, when in the 70s I developed a deep and abiding interest in specifically American theologians, wrote an enthusiastic book about the greatest of them, Jonathan Edwards, and indeed stole his aesthetic metaphysics, it was Blanche who had pushed me to read and teach the New Englanders. She knew something of American intellectual history, and thought it odd that I knew quite a lot about what happened in Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries and almost nothing about what was concurrently happening in my own country. And so forth...” Though, still, she is not so listed....

ecumenism.” Having been converted from an initial skepticism of the whole movement as amorphous reductionism—“contemptuous of theologically pusillanimous Protestantism, which I presumed dominated the ecumenical movement”⁵⁴—Jenson came to see the modern movement, in its salubrious streams at least, not as an appeal to the lowest common denominator but as a joint enterprise of ambitious theological imagination, in which the attempt might be made “to think together new thoughts that might transcend otherwise intractable” confessional divisions.⁵⁵ Jenson pursued the rigorous work of facilitating both sides in an ecumenical discussion to affirm their own decisive insights on a theological topic, but to be able to see a greater whole in which seemingly antagonistic positions could be understood as complementary. In this work, Jenson was appointed to the formal dialogues of the Lutheran and Episcopal Churches and the Lutheran and Catholic Churches, though he was later unceremoniously jettisoned from the Catholic dialogue for being overly sympathetic to their positions.

Jenson’s ecumenical work culminated in the publication of his *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (1992), following a year spent at the *Centre d’étude Oecumenique* at Strasbourg. In that work, Jenson paraded a number of proposed ecumenical solutions to traditionally thorny issues of justification, eucharistic theology and ecclesiology, all revolving around his contention of a shared common assumption on both the Protestant and Catholic side of a still “Hellenistic” and not yet fully “trinitarian” view of God and his own

⁵⁴ Jenson, “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

⁵⁵ Jenson, “Theological Autobiography to Date,” 52.

account of a more holistic view of the Spirit in the Triune God. All the while, Jenson also anticipated the challenges of a forthcoming ecumenical winter. He chastised a complacent retreat to confessional retrenchment, on one side, and an ascendancy in some quarters of the rise of a pejorative reductionist and indifferentist ecumenism, on the other. Notwithstanding his more controversial and idiosyncratic views of the Trinity, Divine Time and the Divine Attributes, Jenson's *Systematic Theology* (1997-1999) can also be read, in most of its other loci, as a halcyon consolidation of modern ecumenical theology, especially the most impressive results of the global ecumenical dialogues. In its material positions, its contour of theological reasoning and its use of sources, the *Systematics* embodies the practice of a rigorous, unflinching and nonreductive, yet generous, capacious and nimble ecumenical theology. Ecclesiology is particularly noteworthy in this respect. Jenson attempts to craft a doctrine of Church episcopacy sensitive to Protestant theological concerns and hesitations, and to embrace a chastened role for the Papacy in a reunified church on the basis of a communion theology of the universal pastorate. In the midst of all this, Jenson wrote a book lauding another quintessentially Reformed theologian, Jonathan Edwards, at the interface of traditional Lutheran and Catholic emphases, in *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (1988) while he, along with his longtime co-conspirator Carl Braaten, spearheaded the theological journal *Pro Ecclesia*, which for many years has been at the forefront of global, ecumenical theology in the mode of theology of retrieval.

§0.1.5: *The Theological Interpretation Phase (2000s-present)*—In the last couple of decades, Jenson has been involved in a number of theological

endeavors and has published on wide-ranging topics—his most rigorous being the publication of theological interrogation by his 8-year old granddaughter⁵⁶—especially through his work with the *Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology*, its conferences and edited volumes with Carl Braaten, and from his position as Senior Research Scholar at the *Center for Theological Inquiry* at Princeton. One of the prominent themes of this most recent, productive and influential periods of his career, however, has been the theological interpretation of Scripture. Early on in his theological education, Jenson first entered into Scripture as historically and existentially meaningful through modern historical-critical methods: “the vehicle of my initial access to scripture.” While not rejecting those methods, and while building many of their results into his theology, Jenson now sees himself on the barricades in the “revolt against the hegemony of historical-critical procedures in the exegesis of scripture,” as now predominant in mainstream Protestant schools and as having significantly influenced Catholic and Evangelical theology in different ways.⁵⁷

Jenson was already for a long time an adherent to the vital and enduring role of the Old Testament in Christian thought, in contrast to an exclusive focus on the New Testament, but has now turned to a more holistic retrieval of theological interpretation.⁵⁸ He has published two theological commentaries, on *Song of Songs* (2005) and *Ezekiel* (2009)—one of the most important Scriptural

⁵⁶ Jenson and Solveig Lucia Gold, *Conversations with Poppi about God: An Eight-Year-Old and Her Theologian Grandfather Trade Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Jenson, “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

⁵⁸ Darren Sarisky, “What is Theological Interpretation? The Example of Robert W. Jenson” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12:2 (April 2010): 201-216.

texts in his theology—which advance a decidedly theological interpretation of these texts, in service of “the church’s intrinsic exegetical task: reading the Bible as a single book telling a single story—indeed, as a christological metanarrative.”⁵⁹ Along with his directly exegetical work, Jenson has turned more explicitly to the question of how and why Scripture functions and should function in theological discourse in his *On the Inspiration of Scripture* (2012), while he engaged his ambivalence about the Reformation slogan *sola scriptura* as a theological program in his *Lutheran Slogans: Use and Abuse* (2011). The work on theological interpretation of Scripture Jenson interfaced with the questions of canon formation and the authority of Scripture in relation to the Church, its normative confessions of faith as expressed in acts of ecclesial witness and embodied in ecclesial communion, in his *Canon and Creed*, which was published as part of the commentary series Interpretation in 2010.

Lastly, the renewed focus on Scripture and the Old Testament has driven Jenson to reconsider in novel fashion the Church’s theological relation to the category of Israel and to Jewish-Christian dialogue, especially through theological dialogue with thinkers like Peter Ochs. Because of the shared inheritance, common reliance on Israel’s Scriptures, the intrinsic relation of Israel to the Church, and through a historical hermeneutic of “parallelism”—the Church and Rabbinic Judaism being interpreted as parallel emergences from the crisis of Ancient Israel in the destruction of the Temple—Jenson has come to see more and more that “Jewish-Christian discourse need not be a mere exchange of views but can be a joint reflection on shared theological problems,” as well as

⁵⁹ Jenson, “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

“how urgently the church needs a Christian theology of Judaism...In the next decades, powerful historical forces will drive Judaism and the church ever more closely together, and if they are to stand together, they will have to know why that is a good thing to do.”⁶⁰ In this trajectory, Jenson has set to work attempting to interpret Rabbinic Judaism as a parallel ecclesial “detour” by the Spirit in the fulfillment of God’s promises, which keeps continuous Christ’s body in its concrete, cultural and fleshly lineage from Abraham and Sarah.⁶¹

§0.1.6: *Pneumatology in the Context of Jenson’s Theology*—The preceding survey hopefully illuminates something of the systematic scope of Jenson’s theology, expansive across a number of loci and thematic concerns. Within this wide-ranging scope, the doctrine of the Spirit plays a particularly significant role in the creative and innovative dimensions of Jenson’s theology, in a way not fully appreciated in previous studies. Whether in terms of a proposed resolution to traditionally intractable ecumenical problems, a more fully trinitarian and biblical construal of God, or the basis of Jenson’s eclectic revisions to Christian metaphysical thinking, it is often the distinctive activity and irreducible particularly of the third divine hypostasis that funds the required developments and coalesces the necessary themes for such proposals in Jenson’s theology.

⁶⁰ Jenson, “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

⁶¹ Jenson, “Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism,” from Braaten and Jenson, eds., *Jews and Christians: People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); James Daryn Henry, “Together the People of God: The Development of a Theology of Israel in the Thought of Robert Jenson.” Unpublished MS Presented to the *Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning* (2013).

Given the significance of the Spirit in Jenson's theology, then, particularly in its most creative impulses, it is somewhat remarkable that Jenson has not been more noted for his pneumatology. Certainly Jenson's trinitarian theology as a whole has received its share of attention. But Jenson as pneumatologist—for good or for ill—has, at the very least, been underappreciated and underexamined. The vibrantly articulated role of the Spirit in areas of his theology such as ecclesiology, Israelology, soteriology, sacramentology, Scripture and method, eschatology, not to mention the unique proposals of his “immanent” pneumatology, in the doctrine of God and the role of the Spirit in the Triune Life, certainly justifies a more holistic and robust exploration and evaluation of Jenson as pneumatologist in the context of the role of that particular doctrine in contemporary theology.

§0.1.7: *The Category of Freedom*—One last prefatory comment on Jenson's theology. The category of “freedom” is abundant in this study, and I anticipate that it will be an occasion for some misunderstanding. To clarify how Jenson uses that term, and so its role in this study, I would like to provide an initial sketch up front, before any readers entrench too hastily and intransigently into misunderstandings of what they expect “freedom” to mean and from where this term has acquired its significance for Jenson. This is not to foreclose argument about its propriety, but only to prevent needless controversy about its basis and careless beclouding of its meaning in the remainder of this study.

Jenson draws his understanding of freedom from his notion of “spirit” in general. The notion of “spirit,” in turn, relies on both phenomenological and scriptural observations. The analogical basis for the model of the Holy Spirit in

the Divine Life is the creaturely experience of spirit. Jenson describes the phenomenology of spirit as follows: “A spirit is simply a person, insofar as the person is present in other lives to open new possibilities there; thus a synonym for ‘spirit’ is ‘freedom,’ and we too are to be spirits.”⁶² Spirit is related to freedom in that spiritedness is the *possibility* that other persons present to us. Personality entails agency—the possibility to enact something different in the world, other than the mere unfolding of processes of matter and energy interaction. Jenson describes the possibility and opportunity that the other represents for me in this way, “You appear in my life as genuinely other, as free from me and just so liberating for me. It is this appearance that is personal presence, as spirit. Spirit is the liberating presence of other subjects of my life.”⁶³ Insofar as I don’t treat the other as mere object for me, insofar, that is, as I don’t treat other human persons as tools, as other material objects in the world, they will represent for me the possibility of difference, the possibility of change, the possibility of conversion. I might just alter course, however obstinately I might have set out upon a given one: that is the freedom of other persons in their spiritedness.

Freedom is thus the human and historical availability *for* new potentialities, to become something better, and *from* hindrances to what we may become. Jenson interprets this phenomenology of spirit as having been derived, whether explicitly or tacitly from scriptural usage: “And from the New Testament and especially Pauline usage we have learned to call this historical freedom

⁶² Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 26.

⁶³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 20.

‘spirit.’”⁶⁴ Further, he exegetes, “In Scripture, ‘spirit’ is personal life, subjectivity as is does not merely apprehend objects but in apprehending intrudes upon and determines what it perceives. We all know this reality of life in ourselves, we know what it is to be ‘lively’; but we also know that life fails in us.”⁶⁵ This seems to be the case where the influence of a particular phenomenological account of human personhood and the exegesis of the biblical dynamics of spirit are mutually informing and reinforcing. Since the fulcrum of this analysis is biblical, nevertheless, Jenson applies this same thinking in a more explicit way to the Divine Spirit: Thus, “God the Spirit is God’s freeing Presence, for and in himself and around and among us” and “the Spirit is the very life of God, as that life is personal and communicative.”⁶⁶

Balthasar, to invoke another witness in a slightly different idiom, describes the biblical connection of the Spirit and freedom in the following passage: “This usage [of the Spirit as freedom or liberator] has its roots in Scripture: ‘the Spirit blows where he will’, that is, he cannot be tied down, and ‘where the Spirit is, there is freedom.’” Balthasar continues to note, in trinitarian fashion, that this quality is obviously “not exclusive to the Spirit: after all, the creation is the Father’s free act, and redemption is the Son’s free act...” Still, by contrast, while the Son displays the eminent characteristic of “obedience” vis-à-vis the Father,

⁶⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 20.

⁶⁵ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 151.

⁶⁶ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 26. Could this be a description also of the Logos? In that case, what unique content would it have? In one general sense, I suspect: yes. Given that the Divine Works are all performed together, and not independently, this could also be a description of the Logos. I think here, however, Jenson is trading on the notional difference between “Logos” as ordering and structuring principle and “Spirit” as potentiality to “improvise” upon structures thus given.

even to death, “there is no mention of the Spirit ‘emptying himself’ of his freedom,” in the same way as the Son. “True, he ‘will not speak on his own authority, but ...he will take what is mine and declare it to you’ (Jn 16:13-14)—showing that his indwelling origin is from the Son and hence from the Father.” Even with the Spirit’s abiding in the authority of the Son, however, “his way of declaring and interpreting the hidden ‘treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ in Christ (Col 2:3) is sovereignly manifest throughout world history: it cannot be encapsulated in any law and cannot be predicted.”⁶⁷ Freedom, as a Divine work, is also shared by the Father and the Son in the unity of their work in the world, but in its biblical patterns is specially appropriated to and characteristic of the person of the Spirit in his activity in the world.

For creatures, the event of spiritedness, whether human spirit or gifts of God’s Spirit, entails an overcoming. In history co-determined by sin, brokenness and finitude such freedom always entails the overcoming of hindrances, the transgressing of limitations of such flourishing, and so freedom can also be seen in its aspect of liberation. This is what it means when Jenson calls the work of the Spirit a work of freedom or liberation: the Spirit liberates us from the strict parameters of historical unfolding for new possibilities of life, love and communion, with God and with one another. The gifts of the Spirit liberate creaturely reality from the straightforward unfolding of its own intrinsic possibilities, frees it for possibilities beyond itself, and, in this way, becomes a freedom for Divine Reality. Paradigmatically, Jenson describes this constellation

⁶⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, 3 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001-2005), 3: *The Spirit of Truth*, Graham Harrison, trans., 236-237, citing at various points, Adrienne von Speyer, *The World of Prayer*.

in a passage which draws together all these themes associated with the Spirit: love, future, freedom, communion and gift as all ways into the work and identity of the Spirit—"It is love that the Spirit brings as the End as himself. The infinite future that encompasses all things, eternity that rhymes every past and every penultimate future in present meaning, is the utter freedom of a community constituted by Jesus' crucified and therefore inexhaustible love."⁶⁸

It should be clear, then, how the Divine work in the world can be understood in one of its dimensions as liberation; this is one way to understand the movement from sinful history → graced Kingdom, insofar as this is anticipated in the Church and throughout the process of sanctification of the believer. Thereby, we can also see "freedom's" eschatological orientation to the Divine Sabbath rest, that we can taste now but only in a partial and incomplete way. This is what I will be exploring in Chapters 1-3. The question of how precisely this work of freedom is also analogically characteristic of the eternal Person of the Spirit is a more contentious matter that I will have to discuss in the concluding chapters. On the one hand, says Balthasar, the appropriate characterization of the Spirit by "freedom," "*means that we must look for the origin of the Spirit's freedom within the Trinity*"; the freedom of the Spirit must be just as divine as that of the Father and the Son, yet distinct from it." So the reality that the Spirit blows where He will, "even though he can and will blow only within God's infinite expanses," this reality of the Spirit's work as freedom is "already rooted in [the Spirit's] position between Father and Son; *it is something within the Godhead*, not something that arises in the wake of creation. The Spirit

⁶⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:220.

‘can freely do *whatever he can devise* to promote the love of Father and Son.’”⁶⁹

The Spirit’s work of freedom in the world has its basis and presupposition in the Divine Life in eternity.

On the other hand, we must reckon with the degree of tropification, the analogical interval, of this term (and its appropriateness). For in the Divine Life, of course, no such hindrances or limitations have to be overcome. Just as the Divine Origination, the begetting of the Word and the spiration of the Spirit, entails no succession, defect or overcoming, so also the Divine Anticipation of the final Harmony, the final Communion of the Divine Life, the eschatological actualization of the Divine Perfection does not entail the “introduction” of anything truly novel into Divinity. Freedom as something of and within God is not the same as freedom we experience in our liberations in the world. Like all terms properly predicated of God, freedom is paradigmatically said of God and only imperfectly and subsequently of creatures. Paradigmatic freedom in God, moreover, is first and foremost a positive trait and not a negative overcoming; freedom is first and foremost an aspect of who God is in the perfect richness of His own Life.

§0.2: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL QUESTION

Why a focus on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? My dissertation primarily concerns a particular liberative reading and exegesis of Jenson’s pneumatology,

⁶⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 3:236-237, emphasis added: Balthasar immediately qualifies, though, “In saying this we are not, of course, importing any temporal dimension into the divine processions, but the taxis of the processions, which is essential to divine freedom, is irreducible; thus we may say that the Father’s experience is fulfilled in the Son, and the expectations of both is over-fulfilled...in the Spirit.” This would make his understanding of how Freedom is “based” in God different than that of Jenson’s—more of which subsequently.

and an assessment of the viability of some of his proposals vis-à-vis the theological inheritance and contemporary Christian thought. However, I would also like to outline some background, in a brief and tentative way, of the significance of the pneumatological locus itself, for the relevance of Christian thought in current global society. These trends themselves will not represent the focus of my dissertation, but they do establish reasons why I specifically chose to focus on pneumatology in Jenson, as well as implicate the significance of this dissertation and possible extensions and applications of it in the future.

§0.2.1: *Pneumatological Movements in Global Theology*—The enigmatic nature of the Spirit’s particular hypostatic inflection has long been recognized by the tradition as a particular challenge of pneumatology.⁷⁰ And the question endures. I take this concern not, as has much 20th century theology, as one of some pernicious neglect or striking deficiency of pneumatology as such in the Western tradition. This is a superficial and hackneyed narrative. Against the hyperbole of much 20th century theology on this matter, we must recognize the legitimate reasons behind the more elliptical, implicit and tentative explicit articulations of pneumatology in the tradition. Foremost among them is that the Spirit—especially—is a locus of theology that does not primarily elicit theological discourse, but experience and worship. The Holy Spirit, especially, “is encountered, experienced and confessed before [the Spirit] is reflected upon in

⁷⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31.2, On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations*, Lionel Wickham, ed. and trans., PPS, 23 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002): “Of course, there is something especially difficult about the doctrine of the Spirit...”

more systematic concepts.”⁷¹ Furthermore, there is the biblical contour of the Spirit’s self-presentation, whereby the Spirit does not primary witness to Himself, but to the Son, before the Father.⁷² The Spirit appears there—in His self-revelation—not interested primarily in disclosing Himself, but in directing our attention otherwards, towards the Son and to the Father. For this reason, Balthasar queries whether a theology of the Spirit is even “possible,” whether the biblical data ever present the Spirit as “objectivized,” as a possible direction for our theological knowledge, instead of always as mediatorial in His role of fostering knowledge of the Father through the Son.⁷³

That being said, with much 20th century theology, I do think there are still some lingering questions nevertheless. I would argue that in order to fully confess the Spirit as Divine Person, as *homoousios* with the Father and the Son, does require the Spirit to be potential object of theological knowledge in the distinctiveness and integrity of His personhood. The Church needs to invoke the Spirit specifically, and it needs a thematic theology of the Spirit in order to know how to do so. There are also other areas of theology that have suffered from relative pneumatological underdevelopment in their doctrinal interrelation. These other loci can potentially be augmented if their pneumatological dimension is made more explicit. Articulated more circumspectly: I do take it as an area of further investigation that the vibrancy and power of the Christian *experience* of the Spirit have often been *relatively underdetermined* by the Church’s thematic

⁷¹ Robert P. Imbelli, “The Holy Spirit” from Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993): 474-489, 474.

⁷² John 15:26, John 16:13.

⁷³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 3: *The Spirit of Truth*, 25-31.

theological reflection on the Spirit's role in the Divine Life. In the terms of modern theology, this is a question of the relation between the accounts of the "economic" and the "immanent" dimensions of our understanding the Triune God.⁷⁴ So here I ask, what correspondence does the Spirit's robustly encountered activity in salvation history have in relation to its seemingly passive and receptive role in the divine life? Similarly to how the question has been understood anew in many kenotic christologies, I raise the question in pneumatology of *how the mission of the Spirit in the world is grounded in the relations and movements of the Spirit in the Divine Life*.

Two prominent religious phenomena of our era, in particular, have once again endowed this pneumatological question with renewed urgency: **(1)** Experientially: the monumental rise of Pentecostal Christianity, along with other Charismatic/Renewal Movements and newly indigenous and spontaneous iterations of Christianity, has been the most significant factor in the shift of Christianity to the Global South and its worldwide demographic expansion.⁷⁵ With this movement emerge new areas of consideration for ecumenical theology on the work of the Spirit (especially tongues, miracles & Spirit Baptism⁷⁶) and unexplored questions about the person of the Spirit. **(2)** Theologically, there has been a shift from a christological to a pneumatological paradigm within which to

⁷⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, Joseph Donceel, trans., Catherine Mowry LaCugna, ed. Milestones of Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997).

⁷⁵ This claim is now really beyond dispute, and the most significant demographic phenomenon of Christian experience in our time, but for some introduction begin with the maps and statistics from: Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and Allan Anderson, *To The Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁶ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

interpret some of the more controversial and pressing areas of contemporary theology. As Robert Imbelli well summarizes, “[s]o many of the developments in theology and pastoral practice since the Council [Vatican II] have explicitly or implicitly been placed under the same sign of the Spirit.”⁷⁷ This shift has had ramifications in areas as diverse as theology of culture, theology of religions, comparative theology, postcolonial theology, ecumenical theology, environmental theology, pastoral theology, theology & science and digital theology.⁷⁸

§0.2.2: Possibilities for Contemporary Pneumatology—These two phenomena provide the current background against which pneumatology emerges as a particularly influential dimension of Christian systematic thought in our era. Discerned and encapsulated perceptively in his *Dominum et Vivificantem*, John Paul II articulated the concern thusly: “The Church is also responding to certain deep desires which she believes she can discern in people’s hearts today: a fresh discovery of God in his transcendent reality as the Infinite Spirit...the need to adore him ‘in spirit and truth’; the hope of finding in [the

⁷⁷ Imbelli, “The Holy Spirit,” 488.

⁷⁸ For a nice example: Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) is a parade of pneumatological paradigm shifts in other traditional systematic loci; see further the wide range encompassed by Eerdmans Publishing’s fantastic “Pentecostal Manifestos” series: first, Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (2010), then also: Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (2011), Nimi Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle: Ethical Methodology in the New Spirit* (2011), James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (2010), Mark J. Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology* (2015); widely influential, in certain spheres of Christianity, in making programmatic, or at least gesturing toward the possibilities, for the doctrine of the Spirit across other systematic loci was: Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); an early work influential in other circles, more wary of excesses, but still with understanding, was: Frederick Dale Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

Spirit] the secret of love and the power of a ‘new creation’: as precisely the giver of life.”⁷⁹

In response to this increasing pneumatological focus, and often driven by narratives⁸⁰ about the perceived neglect of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s role in Christian Life in the West following the Patristic Consensus, pneumatological studies have dramatically proliferated in the late 20th century.⁸¹ Such has been the deluge that one theologian wryly suggested that it was time to consider a “moratorium” on theologies of the Spirit as perhaps now the greater “desideratum.”⁸² Yet further problems accompany this pneumatological revival. On occasion, the emphasis on “Spirit” has resulted in an occultation of trinitarian differentiation or a reversion to non-hypostatic accounts of the Spirit.⁸³ From the perspective of traditional theology, even in the more coherent and enticing accounts of the economic activity of the Spirit, the relation of this activity to the hypostatic identity of the Spirit has often been deemphasized. Much recent theology of the Spirit remains content to elaborate upon the experience of the Spirit in the world, and how theology can be reconstructed along these lines,

⁷⁹ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 2 [Vatican Archives Online: http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm].

⁸⁰ Without cataloguing all the variety and scope of movements and theological emphases in which the Spirit has played prominent role in the tradition, I refer simply to the detailed work in the tradition of Pentecostal scholar, Stanley M. Burgess: *The Holy Spirit: Ancient Christian Traditions* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984); *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989); *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), which should serve, at least in a basic way, to dispel the notion of a neglect of the theology of the Spirit prior to the 20th century.

⁸¹ A survey, orchestrated in terms of the locational categories “cosmopolis”, “border towns” and “abroad” is: Telford Work, “Pneumatology” from Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack, eds., *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

⁸² Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 11.

⁸³ G. W. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

without asking the question of how that work is grounded in the Divine Life itself.⁸⁴ In a number of cases, the question of the Divine Processions has been simply—and untenably—dismissed altogether as one of meaningless abstraction.

§0.2.3: An Animating Question of this Dissertation—It is at the nexus of these problems that I suggest a contribution can be made. I ask: given the current importance of theologies of the Spirit in the Church’s global and ecumenical experience: *is there a way to integrate the contemporary impression of the dynamic activity of the Spirit* (“economic trinity”) *with the traditional, classical accounts of the dynamics of Divine Life* (“immanent trinity”? More classically, we might say that our era has potentially witnessed a more vibrant and differentiated experience of the Spirit’s mission in the world. The question correlatively posed to systematic theology is how this mission is grounded in the Divine Processions, and whether our understanding of the Divine Life can be correspondingly augmented? This question can also be posed from the other direction: does the traditional understanding of the Divine Processions help us to understand the current mission of the Spirit in our time, in the global and ecumenical context of Spirit movements in World Christianity?

To begin to respond to these questions, this dissertation—with the exception of the ultimate part—does unfold under the numbingly formulaic pattern: *x* thinker on *y* topic. As I hope to have shown, nevertheless, in this case both *x* and *y* are of themselves intriguing and influential aspects of current

⁸⁴ As excellent and ecumenically sophisticated a work as Yong’s, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, is a case in point: Nowhere in its very accomplished discussions of the *work* of the Spirit in relation to various traditional loci does he ever entertain a renewed account of the antecedent *Person* of the Spirit—who it is that does this work—or suggest why this is unnecessary.

Christian theology that justify further exploration, and I hope that the risk of dreariness has at least been compensated by the responsibility of patient inquiry.

§0.3: A BEGRUDGING NOTE ON METHOD

§0.3.1: *The Method in the Madness*—Despite the potential additional tedium induced, I must also delay briefly on the matters of method operative in this dissertation. Recently in intellectual culture, a fixation on method has increasingly fallen out of fashion as “such a ponderous undertaking,”⁸⁵ one which has delightfully been derided as mere “throat-clearing,” that never then gets along with anything to say.⁸⁶ While the current movement decentering method is, on the whole, salutary—in contrast to the typical mid-20th century preemption of theological content by method—the question of method and prolegomena cannot be entirely circumvented either. Theology that entirely spurns the question of method will be, at best, ambiguous. A study that entirely neglects questions of method simply operates, performatively, under an assumed, unexamined, and potentially incoherent method. And we come to the crucial theological issue at stake here: most disagreements over substantive doctrines can be traced back, at least tacitly, to divergences or relative degrees of emphasis over method and sources. Some of the chaos and fragmentation in current academic theology can be accounted for by a failure of various parties to seriously entertain self-criticism vis-à-vis their own prolegomenal and methodological assumptions, especially the particular contour that is endowed to their theological enterprise by what they assume as “first theology” (whether, doctrine, ethics, worship, experience,

⁸⁵ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 33.

⁸⁶ Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 163.

mission or reason). Where a theologian looks for authentic instantiations of Christian teaching or insight, how they coordinate various sources, as well as what they take to be the fundamental purpose and audience of Christian theology, will all dramatically influence the material theological content they end up affirming or denying.⁸⁷ Without reflection on these decisions, therefore, certain criteria, to the exclusion of others, are consequently—and typically, uncritically—elevated to sacrosanct places as decisive criteria in relation to other sources of Christian teaching. Without reflection on these decisions, the possibility for self-correction deleteriously decreases and the possibility for theology to degenerate into self-delusion precipitously increases.

The questions of method and of theological prolegomena, therefore, retain their own relevance and urgency. Only when we, even in a preliminary and tentative fashion, identify the God about whom we are talking, sketch the contour of the venture in which we are engaged, delimit the sources and criteria to which we will be held accountable and describe the conversations of significance in which we participating, will our study assume a responsible shape, susceptible to

⁸⁷ Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, George Hunsinger and William C. Placher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): distinguishes two broad sensibilities (1) theology is seen as one instance of a general class or type, of common human intelligibility, under which it is subsumed, (2) theology is seen as distinctively Christian self-description and irreducibly distinct discourse, from which he delineates 5 types along a spectrum in an analytical array by their response to this polarity; Dorothy Sölle, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 1997): proposes (1) Classical Orthodox, (2) Revisionist Liberal and (3) Radical Liberation as three distinct paradigms to interpret Christian faith, and applies them (with some partial attempts at translation) to various questions of theology to see how they yield different responses; Frans Jozef van Beeck, “Systematic Theology Lecture Notes (1981-1982)” Box 1.4, *Frans Jozef van Beeck Papers*, BC.2007.014, John J. Burns Library, Boston College: diagrams an interrelation between the three essential but distinct aspects of Christian experience: Word, Sacrament & Ethics (or, with catchy alliteration, “Creed, Cult & Conduct”) emphasizes on one, or combination, influences the character of a theology.

evaluation and potential modification. This is not naïve foundationalism. Such determinations cannot be absolute, nor preclude the possibility of revision and conversion. They are, at best, frameworks for engagement. They are subject to subsequent reflection, to “retroductive warrants”⁸⁸ of their own assumptions and to cumulative holistic assessments of the viability of their outlook. But they must be done, lest our study in theology categorically misrepresent the God whom we study, how and why knowledge about that God is obtained, and the community in and for whom the theological enterprise is conducted.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have grounded my general approach on the remarkable program of Bernard Lonergan in his *Method in Theology*, though I do so—for certain substantive reasons—under the caution of his own advice to take the proposal primarily as a broad “framework for collaborative creativity,” and not in an overdetermined sense as something to be “copied or imitated” slavishly, in a ossified or superficial way.⁸⁹ Lonergan describes *method* in any discipline as “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.” And he attempts to elucidate and delineate such a method for the discipline of theology, partially based on the paradigm of the success of the “natural sciences” and with an empirical notion of culture in relation to the role of religious discourse in that culture.⁹⁰ On that basis, Lonergan enumerates eight “functional specialties,” or

⁸⁸ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Systematic Theology: Tasks and Methods” from Schüssler Fiorenza and John Galvin, eds., *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 64-73.

⁸⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, reprt. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), xi-xii.

⁹⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 4-5.

spheres of labor division in the theological task, a differentiation that “distinguishes and separates successive stages in the process from data to results.”⁹¹ The progression of functional specialties corresponds to Lonergan’s own detailed theory of human cognitional dynamics as experience, understanding, judgment and decision. Among those outlined, I have largely frolicked in the realms of “interpretation” and “dialectic.”

§0.3.2: Interpretation—The bulk of this dissertation operates in the mode of interpretation. “Interpretation,” says Lonergan, is primarily the task of discerning the intended meaning of an author in their own context for a different context. This broadly overlaps with what others call “hermeneutics,” though Lonergan is more specific. Such a task needs to be done because the meaning encoded and coalesced by an author in a text will likely be variable over time and in various situations. “Horizons, values, interests, intellectual development, experience may differ,” and indeed do differ, and “[e]xpression may have intersubjective, artistic, symbolic components that appear strange” to another context.⁹² The enterprise of interpretation, then, is a task of understanding. It should, as much as feasible, enter into the author’s world, strive to reckon with whatever internal plausibility it may have, to entertain its merits. In this phase, the questions are interiorly focused: What does the author say? What is author’s main argument? What are some of the key terms or events? How does the author qualify or nuance their argument? Why do the concerns raised *matter* to the author? What evidence does the author marshal to support their main

⁹¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 126.

⁹² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 154.

argument? What presuppositions are at work animating the author's particular stance? As Lonergan articulates it, interpretation attempts "to understand what was *meant*. It grasps that meaning in its proper historical context, in accord with its proper mode and level of thought and expression, in the light of the circumstances and intention of the writer."⁹³

Lonergan particularly applies this functional specialty to classical and ancient texts, especially Scripture, in which there is a high degree of cultural and temporal distance between text and reader. But there is a similar challenge with any interpretive text, or communicative event for that matter, with communications that deal with human meaning being the most fragile and ambiguous. An analogous, even if attenuated, distance of communication is found even over the period from the concerns of the late 20th century (Jenson) to the current generation now (myself), over geographical, confessional, cultural, generational, methodological and many other significant differences, even—to heighten the point—from one family member to another within the same family. To judge the caliber of an interpretation, whether one has understood another, is a difficult matter itself, for it also depends on "the hermeneutical circle." It depends on "the relativity of the totality of relevant data, of the possible relevance of more remote inquiries, of the limitations to be placed on the scope of one's interpretation."⁹⁴

Such a task of interpretation is needed for Jenson for a number of reasons. His texts make significant demands on his reader in terms of compacted

⁹³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 127, emphasis added.

⁹⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 155.

expectations that go into their formulations, as another theologian has delightfully commented, “a positively oracular terseness” for which there is the sense that if “one of his sentences are handled too casually they might detonate.”⁹⁵ This characteristic is combined with his arguably idiosyncratic reading of other figures, his eclectic array of sources and concerns that transgress many established confessional, political and theological schools in his unswerving and indefatigable quest to do theology “in anticipation of the one church,” the “unique and unitary church of the creeds.” Theology for the one Church, “in the situation of the divided church—if this can happen at all—must at least mean that...we live in radical self-contradiction,” in response to which theology itself is a form of creative waiting on the Spirit’s endowment of the Kingdom.⁹⁶ Entering into the task of theology, as Jenson envisions it, requires one to “dismember” the inheritance of previous theological systems and to “bandy” about the fragments “in strange ways,” as one participates in the long conversation of theology, across culture, time and space. Jenson explicitly offers his own system for such “treatment.”⁹⁷ The act of interpretation makes sure that playing with the fragments does not degenerate into a chaotic demolition but has intentionality as a renovation and rehabilitation.

Interpretation occurs in Parts I & II. I have divided the primary work of interpretation into these two parts based on traditional content. Part I surveys the work of the Spirit in Jenson’s theology, a pneumatology from below

⁹⁵ Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson,” 29.

⁹⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:vii-viii.

⁹⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:v-vi.

upwards,⁹⁸ so to speak, or what in modern trinitarian theology would be seen as the “economic Spirit,” the Spirit as presented to us in His work through the economy of salvation. *Chapter 1* deals especially with the great work of the Spirit, according to Jenson, which is the People of God, in both Israel and Church and in the sacramental and liturgical life of the People. In this chapter, I advance the reading of Jenson’s pneumatology as a “liberative” reading, under the characteristic of “freedom.” The Spirit’s work in history is to liberate, to free a people from their historical and hamartiological inertia, from their entanglement and entrenchment in sin, brokenness, limitation and oppression to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic People of God. *Chapter 2* looks at four gifts of the Spirit, given in the Spirit’s work in the world, which are especially notable for their liberative character. Respectively, I examine the pneumatological context of the gifts of justification, Scripture, tongues and the world as such, highlighting, in each case, how the Spirit labors to free human persons from their constitutional possibilities and from their sinful ambiguities in order to receive Divine Gifts.

Part II turns to the person of the Spirit, a pneumatology from above, or the “immanent Spirit,” the eternal Spirit who exists in relation to the Father and the Son. *Chapter 3* deals with the way Jenson identifies the hypostasis of the Spirit through what I will call his “trinitarian narrational hermeneutics” (biblical historicism), in the context of how Scripture names, describes and presents the

⁹⁸ This language is adopted from 20th century christology to play an analogous role in pneumatology (*mutatis mutandis*). The methodological beginning “from below,” is a perfectly good, augmentative and legitimate theological direction of modern theology. However, the danger in 20th century theology has been that this direction will be cut off from its complementarity with the other theological direction (and so becomes an *immanentism* undermining our understanding of the reality of God), or in the immortal words of Fred Lawrence: “a christology from below *downwards*...”!: Lawrence, “Lectures in Foundational Theology” Fall 2010, Boston College.

Triune God. *Chapter 4* labors with the most textured and challenging descriptions of Jenson's pneumatology: how the economic work of the Spirit as freedom or liberation entails, for Jenson, a revisionary and augmentative trinitarian model of Divine self-constitution *from* the location of the Spirit at the End of God's ways. This chapter details how Jenson believes this model of the Spirit provides a more holistic and robust understanding of the Spirit's irreducibly distinct identity in relation to the relatively more impersonal and inert accounts of the theological tradition. In doing "interpretation" in Chapters 1 through 4, I primarily operate in the mode of "secondary discourse," though I am sure, if I am audited, I will be observed to have occasionally slipped into "primary discourse."

§0.3.3: *Dialectic*—Part III of this dissertation inaugurates a process, as of yet unfinished, concerning the assessment of Jenson's pneumatological theologoumena offered to the Church. It proceeds—again roughly and heuristically—by what Lonergan calls "dialectic." Dialectic is the encounter of different horizons, discourses, and what Lonergan calls "viewpoints," at once potentially mutually enriching and mutually purifying, or potentially leading to intellectual, moral or religious conversion. Dialectic recognizes and acknowledges the plurality of "viewpoints" represented concretely by various movements. Since "all movements are at once concrete and dynamic" certain contestation belongs to their very encounter as differently instantiated and interactive. Such is certainly and obviously the case with Christianity, whether polemically within communions, ecumenically between communions or in dialogue with other worldviews and cultures: all movements, to a greater or lesser

degree, “have been marked with external and internal conflict, whether one considers Christianity as a whole or even this or that larger church or communion.”⁹⁹ The intensity of difference varies. But, at times, such encounters can be fundamental, such that, “[w]hat in one is found intelligible, in another is unintelligible. What for one is true, for another is false. What for one is good, for another is evil. Each may have some awareness of the other and so each in a manner may include the other. But such inclusion” can also be by way of “negation and rejection,” or self-definition by other-condemnation.¹⁰⁰ By the recognition, comparison and, yes (still necessary), criticism, of differences, not in a superficially dismissive way, but in a way that gets at the fundamental concerns at stake in various divergences, dialectic, then, operates as “a generalized apologetic conducted in an ecumenical spirit, aiming ultimately at a comprehensive viewpoint, and proceeding towards the goal by acknowledging differences, seeking their grounds real and apparent, and eliminating superfluous oppositions.”¹⁰¹

In the attempt to evaluate a position from the perspective of another position, dialectic seeks to complement, complicate or challenge based on other considerations that may have been overlooked. It asks questions such as: What does a movement miss? What other perspectives might have been overlooked? What concerns are not represented and why? What other data might have been considered? How do the position’s presuppositions limit their interaction with the evidence they produce? What further connections might the position make?

⁹⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 129-130.

¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 236.

¹⁰¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130.

What might be some unforeseen implications of a position? Through these type of questions and through such operations, differences that are merely superficial—a result of limited data, partial horizon, incomplete understanding, faulty interpretation, or simply a byproduct of misnomer or propaganda—will dissolve, areas of overlap between positions will emerge, while genuine, fundamental conflicts and divergences will either be incorporated into a more comprehensive outlook or will be invited & enticed to conversion. When the conversion is authentic in any encounter of horizons, that is, when it is of God, oriented toward the ultimate convergence of transcendence, dialectic, even its critical mode, will be accompanied by “the gift of God’s love, [which] spontaneously reveals itself in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”¹⁰² The conversion catalyzed by dialectic will itself be an event of the Spirit and will yield fruits of the Spirit’s harvest.

Chapters 5-7, then, conclude this dissertation with an exercise in dialectic. I have interfaced Jenson’s pneumatology with three horizons: *Chapter 5* engages classical (ancestral), pro-Nicene pneumatology, in order to highlight both continuities and differences with Jenson’s account of the Spirit. Some of the ontological foundations and theo-philosophical scaffolding of pro-Nicene pneumatology Jenson rejects, which make his own proposals ambiguous. But I also ask, within the sphere of the pro-Nicene *homoousios* and in relation to the historical fixation of the trinitarian taxis as Father → Son → Spirit, whether or not the active biblical relations of the Spirit to the Son were downplayed in the resulting theological models. *Chapter 6* situates Jenson’s pneumatology within

¹⁰² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 266.

larger patterns of modern trinitarian theology more generally. I do so in order to reckon with the critiques of ways in which contemporary systematic theology has constructed its trinitarian doctrine, while also suggesting that elements of Jenson's doctrine of the Spirit still provide resources to account for the irreducible hypostatic distinctiveness of the Spirit. Lastly, *Chapter 7* raises the explicit concerns of liberation theology in order to suggest that the hypostatic distinctiveness of the Spirit and the accompanying model of the Divine Life that is sketched based on Jenson's understanding all directly concern "lived theology," directly concern the experience of liberation among marginalized peoples and directly concern the experience of the Spirit in various theological movements desperately salubrious for the Church.

§0.3.4: Systematics—A brief note here on Lonergan's own notion of "systematics." While I do not directly employ this category through most of the content of this dissertation, my earlier remarks on the understanding of the whole as taking place within the realm of "systematics" solicits some comment. Compactly and elegantly, Lonergan says, systematics is "concerned with promoting an understanding of the realities affirmed in...doctrines." This corresponds to Anselm's view of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). Doctrines are the content of what is believed in faith by the Church, on the basis of "foundations" that describe their structure and plausibility. Systematics seeks to understand doctrines, thereby taking doctrines as axiomatic for its task: "doctrines are to be regarded as established by the addition of foundations to dialectic. The aim of systematics is not to increase certitude but to promote understanding. It does not seek to establish the facts. It

strives for some inkling of how it could possibly be that the facts are what they are. Its task is to take over the facts, established in doctrines, and to attempt to work them into an assimilable whole.”¹⁰³ This dissertation, then, seeks to be a work in systematics in that it labors, partially and incompletely, to interweave the doctrines on the Spirit—especially on the basis of the homoousion doctrine of Nicaea—into a holistic tapestry with our experiences of the Spirit.

It should be said, lastly, that I am probably more trifling and transgressive of these categories than Lonergan’s ideal program would find decorous, because they are, in the final analysis, overly schematic and delimited. While the differentiation of task and role is necessary in the context of the modern academic specialization and the abundance of our knowledge in the era of big data, this differentiation does pose a problem for the fundamental discipline of theology, in which judgments about each sphere are interrelated with the tasks of all the “functional specialties,” not incidentally but intrinsically. Lonergan anticipated this problem when he expounded on the “dynamic unity” of the functional specialties, and when he qualified that the “functional specialties are intrinsically related to one another. They are successive parts of one and the same process. The earlier parts are incomplete with the later. The later presuppose the earlier and complement them.”¹⁰⁴

And yet, it is the strictly ordered view of this progression from “data” to “results” that remains artificially restrictive for theology (his location of and methodological constraint of Scripture within his program being another flaw).

¹⁰³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 335-336.

¹⁰⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 138-145, 126.

This is evident when Lonergan hedges, “I am writing not theology but method in theology. I am concerned not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform.”¹⁰⁵ Therein Lonergan betrays his underappreciation for the radicality and fundamentality of theology, in which—in reality—there are no judgments about method and no judgments about theological operations except insofar as those themselves are entangled with theological objects, that is, with material theological positions. That is the all or nothing of theology. Our view of God and how we know God—the reality of God!—determines the very shape of authentic theological operations and viable theological method, and decisions about the latter cannot be made without already having implicating decisions about the former. That is what makes theology and philosophy unique as disciplines, and where Lonergan’s comparison to the method of natural sciences is overdrawn.

Certainly all these distinctions of task and role are important intellectual parameters and demarcations. But they are heuristic, and should not, nor cannot, be taken as absolute. They are overlapping spheres. According to its own inherent plausibility and parameters, systematic theology has its own integral sphere. Yet, nevertheless, no remotely plausible systematic theology can do without some foundation in biblical theology. The questions and difficulties of systematic theology emerge in the historical experience of the life of the Church, and so cannot do without some connection to historical theology. Systematic theology cannot exculpate itself entirely from accounting for its contemporary relevance in the life of the Church and so cannot help but be a pastoral theology.

¹⁰⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xii.

Christian thought is ultimately inextricable from Christian life and worship, and so systematic theology cannot be divorced from moral theology or liturgical theology. In all these ways, the Church's theology is one, just as there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." So all the penultimate and tentative distinctions of fields or spheres of inquiry in theology should not fail to recognize their ultimate interdependence with one another. Systematic theology is one particular—good and necessary—task in the Church. But it is also symbiotic with all the other theological disciplines, and what is more, derived from the integrity of lived Christian faith. And the relationship between them never quite fits neatly into a strict progression from data to results.

§0.3.5: *Theologies of Retrieval*—One final way to describe the ethos and character of this dissertation as a whole, especially in its constructive work and over and above the specified method designated for each chapter, is to say that this dissertation seeks to participate in the broad endeavor of what John Webster has called "theologies of retrieval." Now this designation represents a "cluster of theologies," much too differentiated to represent any tightly coherent "school." Retrieval theologies are diverse chronologically, confessionally, philosophically, politically, stylistically and thematically. Yet as a broad movement they share, nevertheless, a discernable methodological orientation and theological ethos, animating them to greater or lesser degrees, which orbit around certain commitments: such as, an "awed rediscovery of the inseparability of theology, exegesis and spirituality," and that what is required for the vibrancy of contemporary Christian thought is not primarily intellectual and cultural novelty, which obsolesces more rapidly than can be reckoned with, but primarily "what is

required are...skills of theological judgement schooled by the Christian past, alert to present opportunity, and enacted with deference and hope.”¹⁰⁶

1. Theologies of Retrieval, according to Webster, typically propound a common genealogy of “modernity.” They advance a thoroughgoing critique of the hegemony of modernity’s assumptions in previous theological method (whether the critique emerges from sympathies postmodern, traditionalist, liberationist-postcolonial, postliberal, paleo-orthodox, et al.) That is, they have turned the tables on the modern and scientific narrative about its own decisive and liberating break from all of the antecedently bankrupt and dispensable classical thought that preceded it. In this story, theology is largely narrated as an antiquated discourse that can only survive escaping through the purifying fire of the critical intellectual, cultural and philosophical program of “modernity.” The counter-narrative demonstrates both the continuity of discernibly modern critical thought back into the medieval and ancient world and also the lingering influence of classical modes of thought well into the modern. It also excavates aspects of the particularity and situatedness of “modern” thought that make it susceptible to criticism itself.¹⁰⁷ All the while, the counter-narrative reads theological temerity not as a passive “defencelessness...against the onslaught of critical reason,” but rather as “the failure to marshal specifically theological resources to meet its

¹⁰⁶ John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*: 583-598.

¹⁰⁷ Searingly indicting in this respect is J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), who taking Kant as representative of distinctly modern theology unearths how Kant’s theological notions of “reason” with its ostensible objectivity and universality was crucially situated in the formation of the modern racialized world and the intellectual superstructure of imperialist colonialism, punctuated by intriguing project of theological retrieval of certain early Christian figures and a ressourcement of distinctively Black theological sources.

detractors” while uncritically accepting many of modernity’s *unexamined* critical assumptions.¹⁰⁸ In many ways, these theologies—if not hyper-reactionary or stultifyingly traditionalist¹⁰⁹—typically make (relatively) more common cause with postmodern sensibilities than with modern ones. Though, I would also add to Webster that, from my earlier discussion, it should also be evident that a critical “genealogy of postmodernity,” with a subversion of its own tendencies towards hegemonic narration—the metanarrative of chaos—is also currently required, probably much more so now in this moment.

2. Historical *Ressourcement*: This theological ethos looks to the Christian heritage, over its many centuries and in a plurality of contexts, as *primarily* a positive inheritance to be inhabited and not a stumbling block to be overcome. It is a broad predilection in favor of the “Great Tradition,” interpreted as intellectual catholicity structured by a concrete order of truths but also fundamentally open to a plurality and variety of insights, intellectual categories and theological languages.¹¹⁰ Such a return to the sources represents an opportunity to “decenter” (Rowan Williams) contemporary assumptions, certainties and orthodoxies, and to allow the broad sweep of Christian tradition to function as “an instrument for the enlargement of vision.”¹¹¹ Theologies of retrieval argue that theology *must* be cumulative, and that theology does not and cannot start *de novo* with each new generation but operates as an inheritance

¹⁰⁸ John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*: 590-595.

¹⁰⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition: The 1983 Jefferson Lectures in the Humanities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 65: “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose, I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name.”

¹¹⁰ Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 1: *Understanding the Christian Faith*, 6-8, 70-81.

¹¹¹ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*, 590.

that is received, reengaged and communicated. It does so as an exegetical conviction that, concretely, the Spirit has led the Church into truth, against which the gates of Hades cannot prevail, that the diachronic life of the Church itself in history is an arena for the trustworthy activity of the Spirit, and as a material theological conviction that Christians of all ages have had the Spirit to guide them in the understanding of the faith, a faith that also has a dimension of objectivity and permanence to it, as endowed “once for all to the saints” by the culminating disclosure of Christ.¹¹² The theological conversation of the communion of saints across time, therefore, assumes a *relative priority* and criterion for the necessary, often enriching, but also deeply ambiguous, dialogue with contemporary culture. From the perspective of the theology of retrieval, due to an intrinsic aspect of Christianity’s constituting message and belief, theology must live through its own history and not without it.¹¹³

Theologies of retrieval can find and have found a home in various ecclesial locations (though they cannot truly thrive in communities of drastic revisionism, cultural captivity or astringent biblicism) and with various doctrinal emphases. All that to say: theology of retrieval is never a question of mere formulaic replication, “...it is never a question of simply repristinating a previous achievement of the church,”¹¹⁴ nor of categorically “endorsing everything the tradition has ever said.”¹¹⁵ The perennial temptation for sympathizers with theologies of retrieval, “[e]specially when deployed in reaction to an apparently

¹¹² John 16:13, Matthew 16:18, 1 Timothy 3:15, Jude 1:3.

¹¹³ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*, 589-592.

¹¹⁴ Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, “Preface,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 1: xix.

¹¹⁵ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*, 592.

unyielding ideology of criticism,” will be to view *the* tradition or their *one* tradition, as a “fully realized whole rather than as an unfinished assemblage of products, however providentially ordered.” When nimbly vibrant and sufficiently organic, however, these theologies “have eschewed *excessive* stability and determinacy; but a reminder of the danger is important, because in any positive theology much hangs on what *kind* of givenness is being recommended. A revelatory or ecclesial given which is entirely unaffected by the conditions of its reception, wholly free from the poetics of church and culture, is scarcely imaginable.”¹¹⁶ Practitioners of theology of retrieval must constantly reflect on the differentiation between the failures and the achievements of the tradition, between the abuses and the inspirations of the tradition, between the liabilities, limitations and the resources and resplendence of the tradition, between the ossification and the revivification of the tradition. They must seek always to avoid artificially manicured, self-aggrandizingly decadent, stiflingly selective, hazardously sanitized and “sometimes glib and false accounts of...continuity in the transmission (*traditio*) of scriptural” and doctrinal truth.¹¹⁷

§0.4: A DISTILLATION OF THE ARGUMENT

Here is what I hope to accomplish in this presentation of Jenson’s doctrine of the Spirit. I advance, first, an understanding of its character as “liberative” or as “freedom.” Through the exploration of various aspects of the work of the Spirit, I argue that the manifold dimensions of this work can be meaningfully coalesced around—without being reduced to—the animating theme of freedom. As sub-

¹¹⁶ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *OHST*, 596, emphasis emended.

¹¹⁷ Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 284.

themes to this main argument, I would also like to foreground the distinctively systematic and ecumenical character of Jenson's pneumatology, in order to advocate for a consideration of Jenson among other significant pneumatologists—not something for which he has been particularly studied yet.

The liberative work that Jenson discerns in the “economy” becomes the basis for a consideration of such a role for the irreducibly distinct person of the Spirit “immanently” and eternally. The activity of the Spirit in mission has a corresponding ground in the Divine Life. The Spirit is thus primarily *freedom in God's own Life*, the one who together with the Son frees the Divine Persons for perfect communion with one another. Together with Jenson's dramatic and temporal construal of God's Being, the zenith of Jenson's pneumatology suggests that the Spirit is God's freedom as the hypostatically distinct end or *telos* of God's own dynamic Life—which is then paradigmatic of creaturely time and narrative. This construal complements the traditional trinitarian accounts, limited to relations of origin, with *relations of goal or outcome*. Building thus on the classical achievement in trinitarian theology, Jenson's model adds a second part to the conceptualization. The Spirit's active role of freedom and witness in the Divine Life grounds the Spirit's role as freedom in mission in the world.

Finally, I dialectically interface Jenson's account with the horizons of pro-Nicene theology, modern trinitarian theology and liberation theology. In that encounter, I argue that certain aspects of Jenson's revision of trinitarian ontology and his historicizing of the Spirit's eternal person should not be embraced as such. Nevertheless, I hope to retrieve from Jenson the notion of freedom or liberation as characteristically appropriated to the Spirit. Once this insight has been

disentangled from some of the more problematic aspects of his theology and more fully integrated with pro-Nicene Divine ontology, Jenson's augmentation of traditional trinitarian models with a distinctive location of the Spirit can be appreciated. The consideration of the Spirit as the Unsurpassed of Divine Being, as the End and Culmination of all God's Ways, provides a more holistic hermeneutic for the biblical activity of the Spirit, the active relations of the Spirit to the Son and the full personality of the Spirit in the Divine Life. The active relations from the Spirit to the Son and the Father provide the immanent and eternal trinitarian ground for the Spirit-leading experience of liberation in the Church and the incorporation of the believer into the Divine Life.

In articulating this insight as augmentative theologoumena for the Church, I argue that Jenson has provided one potentially viable interpretation of the distinctive role of the Spirit as contemporarily experienced in various movements, an interpretation that complements traditional trinitarian theology with the current experience of the Spirit, without simply displacing those models. Jenson's pneumatology, consequently, offers a potential mediation between the traditional theological accounts of the Spirit's procession and the contemporary emphasis on the Spirit's mission. While I do not fully unfurl the implications of this mediation for even broader theological interpretation in this work, I would intimate here that his program does have many potentially profound ones: especially for the two pneumatological movements previously mentioned—the rise of Charismatic Christianity and the pneumatological paradigm shifts—but also for others in our global and digital age.

CHAPTER 1:
THE SPIRIT & THE PEOPLE OF GOD

§INTRODUCTION

The Spirit works in the world to liberate a People from sinful history to be God's own. This is the communal freedom of the Spirit given to (1) Israel and (2) the Church.

To understand the Spirit as a whole in Jenson's theology, we have to first understand in Part I how Jenson interprets the *work* of the Spirit in the world—whether in the whole scope of that work from Creation to New Creation as the Spirit operates together with the Father and the Son, or more specifically in the special appropriation of sanctification, perfection and consummation to the Spirit. For Jenson, the work of the Spirit that we encounter in the Divine action in the world intimately relates to the eternal person (identity) of the Spirit. The overarching arc of the biblical narrative identifies the Spirit as one of the personal agencies driving the Divine activity in the world. The Spirit accomplishes this role in the world drama as the authentic self-presentation—but even more so self-constitution—of His own role in the Divine Life. For Jenson, therefore, we look to see what the characteristics of that role are, what mission the Spirit enacts in the world, in order to see *who* the Spirit is, in order to get a glimpse of the “hypostatic ethos”¹ of the Spirit, His² personal irreducibility among the Divine Persons in the unity of their Being.

¹ In the wonderful phrase of Khaled Anatolios, “Divine *Disponibilité*: The Hypostatic Ethos of the Holy Spirit,” *Pro Ecclesia* 12:3 (Summer 2003): 287-308.

² I will largely abide by the Church's traditional practice of employing masculine pronouns for God. This is not because I am unaware of the seriousness of the critiques of masculine language: as, for one example, perhaps most judicious and sophisticated on this question, Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist*

Theological Discourse, anniversary ed. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 54: “The mystery of God is properly understood as neither male nor female but transcends both in an unimaginable way. But insofar as God creates both male and female in the divine image and is the source of the perfections of both, either can equally well be used as metaphor to point to the divine mystery”; 45: “Given the powerful ways the ruling male metaphor has expanded to become an entire metaphysical world view, and the way it perdures in imagination even when gender neutral God-language is used, correction of androcentric speech is not sufficient...other images must be introduced which shatter the exclusivity of the male metaphor, subvert its dominance, and set free a greater sense of the mystery of God”; 173: with “the even more appropriate symbol of God as mother.” Nor because I am unsympathetic to concerns that entrenched patterns of masculine naming potentially reinforce abusively patriarchal practices in society. Though, that analysis is often advanced hyperbolically, with neglect of the complexity of *cross-currents* of belief, culture and practice (was there no patriarchal abuse in religions with lavishly exalted practices of the divine feminine?!) and potential remedies already within the Christian tradition itself are often downplayed. And a periodic pivot to feminine language, together with an augmentative emphasis on the feminine aspects of the portrayal of God in Scripture (Num 11:11-12, Deut 32:18, Isaiah 42:13-15, 45:9-10, 49:14-15, 66:13, Matt 22:37, Luke 15:8) is entirely appropriate and beneficial. However, to dispense with the practice of masculine language *categorically*—or its emphasis—would be to undermine the force of the biblical patterns of naming and structures of Revelation, and so the ground of *any* authentic Christian speech about God altogether; while, in any case, it would also reinforce a faulty understanding of the *analogical* and *trophic* nature of theological language. In the arguments above, Johnson’s beneficial insight into the latter aspect (with Thomas, *Deus non est in genere*: 239) (then employing feminine “metaphors” analogically) is leveraged against the former (flattening, “shattering,” biblical masculine language to all the same level of “metaphor”) exhibits this theological flaw. By operating under the assumption (on the ostensible basis of the *imago dei*) that divine naming is some panmetaphorical game, here invoking this metaphor, there celebrating that metaphor, Johnson undermines the basic warrant of all Christian theological knowledge: what we can *least inadequately* say of God (analogically) is *funded* and *normed* by Revelation. Biblical patterns of naming supply the proper linguistic loci for authentic theological language that is not simply the haphazard metaphor of anything and everything that happens to suit. I will broadly follow Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, 7, note 8, who encapsulates the matter from the feminist concern thusly: “In my view, neither the straightforward obliteration of ‘Father’ language, nor the ‘feminization’ of the Spirit...constitute in themselves satisfactory strategies in the face of the profound feminist critique of classical Christian thought forms and patterns of behaviour. These problems can only be met satisfactorily by an *ascetic* response which attacks idolatry at its root” and Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, 1: xxii, note 2: “this doctrine of God retains the traditional language and titles for God: He, the Lord, the Almighty. This is *not* a repudiation of feminist theology or its sophisticated analysis of creaturely language for God...Rather, feminist analyses and aims can best be prosecuted, I say, by retaining personal language for God...and by confidently asserting...that the broad tradition of the church, its creeds, confessions, and scriptural idiom, is ours, male and female, by baptism, by call, and by gracious gift of the One, Holy Lord of the whole earth.” Jenson himself is more polemical: he writes, the practice of masculine personal pronouns, “will be rigorously and expansively maintained throughout the work. Monotheistic discourse cannot be conducted without personal pronouns, and within Judaism and Christianity these

Such an intimate and inextricable association between the Spirit's mission in the economy of salvation and the Spirit's personal identity as one of the triune hypostases overflows from Jenson's radical implementation of the identity between the economic and immanent dimensions of understanding the Triune Life of God more generally, the relationship between God's eternal Triune Reality and God's gracious Triune self-determination to be God for us and God with us in the historical events of the Gospel. To this architectonic of Jenson's pneumatology, I must return explicitly in subsequent chapters, the matter being one of great complexity and controversy (Chapters 4-6). It is necessary, nevertheless, to understand this basic contour and commitment of Jenson's thought in order to understand anything that he has to say about the doctrine of the Spirit, particularly what he distinctively has to say.

Governed and oriented by this commitment, Jenson argues that, "we should no more want to specify an identity of the Spirit without reference to Israel and the church, without the created community whose Spirit he in fact is, than we should want to specify an identity of the Son without Jesus,"³ a pneumatological analogue to the christological and trinitarian commitments that Jenson had already embraced in other loci of his theology. For him, the person relates to the mission; the identity corresponds to the work. In my analysis of his pneumatology, I have orchestrated the exposition around the traditional distinction between the work and the person of the Spirit, focusing first in the

cannot be feminine or neuter" Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:5, note 4; further to the argument: Jenson, "The Father, He...", from Alvin F. Kimel Jr., ed., *Speaking the Christian God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992): 95-109.

³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:148.

next two chapters on how Jenson describes the work. Vigilance is required, however, to recall that, in general, this distinction remains an organizationally heuristic systematic category, and furthermore that such a distinction is an artificial one for the interpretation of Jenson, given the necessary interrelation in his understanding between the identity and the mission of the Spirit. An understanding of Jenson's account of the identity of the Spirit, therefore, requires an integral appreciation for his analysis of the work of the Spirit. In particular, this chapter reckons with Jenson's understanding of the great work of the Spirit: the created community whose animating ethos the Holy Spirit is: the People of God in both Israel and Church.

The hallmark of the mission of the Spirit in the world, for the theology of Jenson, culminates in the gathering together of a people for God's own, to be God's covenant partner by election, to be His Bride, and as so intimate a partner, for the community to be invited to join in the antiphony of God's own discourse, God's own Life. Communion in the Spirit, as the life of the Gospel in history, anticipates the final Communion of the Saints with the Triune God. Insofar as this communion is enacted in history by the Spirit, therefore, it is an anticipation of the final Communion. It is an event of eschatological inbreaking. As it is an event in the coordination of world history with its unique End and Goal, its occurrence results from a Divine gift and a Divine work. The primary association of the Spirit with the Community is witnessed by the early Creeds, which crystallize and dogmatize the elemental "motifs of biblical pneumatology."⁴

⁴ Jenson, "Holy Spirit" from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:109.

This chapter examines the ways in which Jenson articulates the People of God as the decisive sphere of the Spirit's activity in the world,⁵ and, in doing so, illuminates the Spirit's hypostatic ethos. The recurrent traditional theme of communion would be an intuitive way to characterize this work. Jenson does describe "communion" as a crucial aspect of the work and—in line with Augustine—the Triune character of the Spirit. But I will elucidate how "freedom" and "liberation" are also prominent, and for Jenson decisive, characterizations of this work of sanctification, in such a way as to divulge the Spirit's eternal triune role as freedom and liberator in the Divine Reality, as unique goal of the Divine Life shared with the Father and the Son. I attempt to show, therefore, how freedom-liberation functions as a unifying category of Jenson's description of the Spirit's work. The synthesizing of the Spirit's work under the category of freedom then facilitates Jenson's characterization of the person of the Spirit, and His irreducible hypostatic location in the Triune Life, also as one of Freedom—a more drastic and pioneering implication. I will argue, lastly, that the distinctive work of the Spirit that Jenson sees in the formation of the People of God, in their communal and sacramental life, represents the uniqueness of the final outcome of the world. It does so because the Spirit brings freedom—as only Divine action could—for that End and that Future, even in the midst of the deep ambiguity of history.

⁵ Much traditional Reformational theology foregrounds the work of the Spirit in terms of individual soteriology, the application and unfolding of the work of redemption accomplished objectively by Christ subjectively to the believer: calling, conversion, justification, sanctification, glorification, among the other stages of the *ordo salutis*. These are also certainly components of Jenson's pneumatology. But it is an achievement of Jenson's to locate the primary work of the Spirit in his community forming work in history, in which all the events of individual life in the Spirit, of keeping in step with the Spirit, occur—more in keeping with the shape of the Creed.

Jenson, moreover, describes the work of the Spirit in a way that especially foregrounds the particular hypostatic initiative of the Spirit in the triune enactment of the works of salvation, whereas one can potentially get the sense from traditional theology that the Spirit's role *merely* recapitulates the work of the Son. This concern remains one at the heart of Jenson's pneumatology. "The problem is religiously important," he queries, "Is invocation of the Spirit anything distinctive over against invocation of God? Is Pentecost a peer of Easter or does it merely display the meaning that Easter would in any case have?"⁶ Jenson's account of the work of the Spirit, as I will describe it, presses the distinctive and initiatory character of the Spirit's work on the Church's theology—Pentecost as a peer of Easter.

§1.1: ISRAEL

Communal Freedom 1: The Spirit's great work of activity in the world makes the People of God. For the paradigmatic experience of the formation of a community by the Spirit, the Church herself typically thinks first of her own foundation. She thinks first of her own Pentecost Event, where the proclamation in tongues of fire sends her out on mission into "the ends of the earth."⁷ In expounding the self-understanding of the Church, however, Jenson reminds us that the liberation of a human community in this way actually first belongs to the experience of Israel: "The Spirit did not first begin to liberate a human community when he intervened at Pentecost...It is the Spirit who made prophets who makes the prophetic community; the Spirit who raised up 'judges' to free the

⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:146.

⁷ Acts 1:8.

tribes from historical impasse who frees the church from history's intrinsic impasse; the Spirit promised a new life for Israel's dry bones... ."8 In all these aspects, the Spirit frees a historical community for prophecy, to speak God's Word, for the possibility of communal coherence, to live righteously with one another, and for resurrection itself, to make life out of death. But all of this belongs firstly and encompassingly to Israel. From early on in the diachronic development of his theology, Jenson champions the theologoumena that *Israel* remains the unique historical-communal locus, the specificity and particularly, of this gathered community, into which the nations are incorporated as Church. What this means is that Israel herself belongs foundationally among the distinctive works of the Spirit in the unfurling of the salvation historical reality. And the mission of the Spirit to forge a People remains embedded first and foremost in Israel. The Spirit also works to do particular things in and through Israel, and in and through certain roles in Israel's experience, but even more so the existence of Israel as a whole results from an act of the Spirit's vivifying work among human communities.

§1.1.1: *The Identity of the Spirit in Israel*—That the Spirit spoken of in Israel anticipates the disclosure of the Person of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost can be discerned decisively only from the perspective of the Church. Regardless of whether someone reads the Scriptures of Israel retrospectively under the Creedal hermeneutic (the Church's "critical theory" for Jenson)⁹ and so therein discerns the hypostatically distinct Holy Spirit, still certain aspects of that work can be

⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:183.

⁹ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 79-87.

elucidated nonetheless. Jenson notes how the Spirit of the Lord appears there as an animating agent of the events that take place in Israel's experience. The Spirit belongs to one of those manifestations of divine presence whereby YHWH (*adonai*), who is incomparable in his distinctive otherness, also seems to dwell among and intimately enliven his people: "within Israel while not ceasing to stand over against Israel."¹⁰ Jenson argues that this particular mode of presence, in contrast to others, coalesced by the Rabbinic tradition under the symbol of Shekinah—the dwelling, the settling, the inhabiting—and subsequently unified in Christian theology as diverse presentations of the identity of the Son, the "biblical self-presentation" of the Spirit "appears as a single reality from the start,"¹¹ that is, in relatively coherent characterization. Certain interpreters might be wary of this claim as homogenization: is the Spirit more like a naturalistic force, wind, or more like a personal agency of liveliness? Does the arrival of Spirit entail mostly construction or demolition? Does the Spirit labor primarily for communicative inspiration or for dynamic leadership? Upon further reflection, however, we can also recognize that these various trends are not necessarily mutual exclusive or disjunctive.

Such observations notwithstanding, Jenson argues that these various emphases are susceptible to synthetic description. The Spirit appears as: "the power of the future to break the present open, to overcome the present's immobility under the dead hand of the past, and just so to fulfill all the past's

¹⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:76.

¹¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:86.

promises,”¹² as the “Lord’s *breath*, the whirlwind of his *liveliness* that agitates whatever he turns toward,”¹³ as the Lord’s “moving transcendent force, to create or throw down whether in nature or society.”¹⁴ The activity of the Spirit, then, comprehends the semantic field of both the original Hebrew and Greek meanings “breath” and “wind”, and also extended to encompass the related meanings of life, energy, power, movement, surprise, freedom, future.

The liveliness of the Spirit supremely manifests itself in the endowment of mission and role to creatures in relation to God’s work. So Jenson: “the Spirit who from Genesis 1:2 onward appears in Scripture as God’s own liveliness, liberating creatures to be other actors in God’s history.”¹⁵ The Spirit enables creatures to participate, not just in creaturely action amidst one another, but in the very divine story that God is orchestrating in the world. The paradigmatic actor, however, is not any particular individual, but the corporate, communal actor of Israel herself as a whole. The formative event of this communal actor is the Exodus from the “house of slaves” in Egypt and the establishment of the people in the covenant gift to them by YHWH. Thus Israel, who “In her own self-understanding...had been created by the deliverance of bond workers from Egypt and by events of their consequent migration through Sinai into Canaan,”¹⁶ is the collective one so empowered by the Spirit to be not just some constellation of peoples awash in the rivalries of ancient Mesopotamian empires, but in her very humble origins to become herself the distinctive historical bearer of God’s salvific

¹² Jenson, *Visible Words*, 54.

¹³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:86.

¹⁴ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:110.

¹⁵ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 45.

¹⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:43.

mission, the leading human responsorial role in the historical Divine program. Emerging as the people whom “YHWH clung to on account of your ancestors, to love them, he elected you, their descendants after them, from among all the peoples,”¹⁷ the people whom “YHWH...made his own,”¹⁸ Israel was endowed with existence by the Lord’s Spirit. In the exegesis of a favorite passage of Jenson: “Israel can say that the breath of Yahweh freed them from Egypt, in that Yahweh’s *ruach* blasted the Egyptians and drove back the waters.”¹⁹ The very historical existence of Israel, therefore, as a People, even more so as the People of God, as YHWH’s covenant partner, is itself a fundamental gift of freedom endowed by the Spirit.

§1.1.2: *The Lord’s Relationship to Israel*—The formation of a community to be God’s own, God’s partner, occurs as an act of both asymmetrical, unilateral establishment by God and, in this very choice, a radical identification of God *with and by his people*. Jenson attempts to develop both aspects of this relation exegetically in his remarkable commentary on the Song. In his gloss on Song of Songs 1:9-17, where Jenson revives the “canonical plain sense”²⁰ of the passage, “The Bible’s God is sheer contingency; he is the one who chooses because he chooses it; he is the one who is what he is because he is it; and for whom this coincidence of fact and reason is not necessity but freedom. In consequence, his relation to Israel and the church can only be truly described with such alarming

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 10:15.

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 12:22.

¹⁹ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:110; citing Exodus 15:8-10.

²⁰ Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 8; To the methodological matters of this exegesis: 1-15. Chastened in certain ways by historical-critical observations, Jenson nevertheless is fundamentally committed to the “canonical” reading, where “the whole of Scripture as a dramatically coherent narrative plotted by the Spirit from creation to consummation...”

concepts as election and predestination—or love.”²¹ The elective love must be complemented by the reciprocal, erotic love, which if the Song is *theological* at all is everywhere attested in it. So Jenson accounts for the garden scene of Song 4:9-5:1 as an occasion for his particular construal of the identificatory implication of this erotic love between YHWH and Israel, such that God chooses to be who He is only with Israel and not without her: “When the Lord comes to Israel and she receives him, she is his *bride*: which within Scripture is to say, the two are ‘one flesh,’ that is, one thing. *Whatever might have been, there is no Lord without Israel and no Israel without her Lord.*”²²

Already here we verge upon one of the more controversial aspects of Jenson’s theology and so one of the recurrent disputed questions of this study. *Once*²³ God elects to make Israel his historical-communal partner, says Jenson, thus it is so in a radical identification. There remains no fundamental separation between the two. The Lord partners with Israel, by Grace, and Israel is only with her Lord: God *with us*. Here is one iteration of Jenson’s radical commitment to an interpretation of Rahner’s trinitarian axiom by which God in his work in history just is God who is in his own Life. This relates to Jenson’s doctrine of the Spirit, more specifically, in that, similarly the Spirit in God’s Life identifies Himself by the unfolding of the salvation historical drama.

§1.1.3: Charismatic Leadership in Israel—What in particular does the Spirit do in Israel? Two dimensions of that work particularly stand out: dynamic

²¹ Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 28. Is this nominalism?

²² Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 51, emphasis added.

²³ *However* we understand this divine “once” in relation to creaturely time; for some clarification see later: §4.1.1-4.1.2.

leadership and communicative prophecy. In the narrative tradition of the primal history of Israel's Scriptures,²⁴ the Spirit recurrently comes to empower dynamic

²⁴ The nomenclature is itself difficult here. What we call the body of literature that functions as normative scripture fully for Judaism and partially for Christians usually encodes a certain theology over against others, and there is probably no way to circumvent the problematic nature of terminology in every context. The traditional usage "Old Testament" has come under censure for its alleged "supersessionism." It is presumed that "Old" must be pejorative, even though for the vast majority of Western history, antiquity was in fact viewed as an esteemed characteristic. "Old Testament" does pose a legitimate problem in Jewish-Christian mutual learning, since, for the Synagogue, there is no such thing as a "New Testament" to make the other scriptures "Old" (though possibly Mishnah could be viewed this way). To adopt the traditional Rabbinic usage of "Tanakh"—in reference to the collection of Torah, Prophets and other Writings—even though descriptive, would be, at this point, somewhat artificial for the Church and also seem to foreclose the christological reading of those texts. Biblical scholars have largely defaulted to the term "Hebrew Bible" as a more "neutral" descriptor. For the Synagogue, of course, this term is just redundant. Nor, in the strict sense, is it "neutrally" correct, given the Aramaic portions of that literature; but this is taken to be a negligible point. Another problem with this term is that it is largely a scholarly construct, abstracted for the concerns of that enterprise, with little or no resonance in the originating, concrete, lived faith of either the Synagogue or the Church. Even so it could possibly be adopted, but the term is in fact also theologically pernicious: it preferences the scholarly reconstructed "historical context" over what Christianity has seen as the intrinsic *translatability* of its Scriptures. Even though the scholarly study of the original Hebrew *must* remain a fixed pole of the Church's engagement of its Scriptures, for the Church these Scriptures do not strictly subsist in Hebrew as such. Those scriptures only became "Hebrew" for the vast majority of Christians during the Protestant Reformation and afterwards, for those who had the privilege and ability to read the language and engage in translation. The actual bible of most of the Early Church was the Greek Septuagint, and the Scriptures in the West were, for the majority of Christianity for the majority of its history, the Latin of the Vulgate—then the translation of the Scriptures in Christian Mission into the multifarious vernacular languages of the world. This is in contrast to the *strict* Arabic criterion of Qur'an, such that the Scriptures as such for the Ummah subsist only in the original recitations—the language of heaven—and not properly in translation: see further Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*. Then there is also the plural or singular tension: "scripture" or "scriptures". Indeed, if *the* "book" is Scripture at all it functions, in some way, as a *singular, coherent whole*. But scholarship has tended towards the compositeness and fragmentation of the text into ever more discrete and disparate units. That emphasis is appropriate in certain contexts, but in other respects also cannibalistic on that text being "bible" at all. In attempted partial resolution, I have adopted here the term "Scriptures of Israel" for that body of literature—this leaves the matter of the "intertestamental" texts open to various purposes, which can be applied differently depending on a community's doctrinal decision about their canonical status—and the term "Apostolic Witness" or "Apostolic Scriptures" for the Church's distinctive body of literature that interprets the Scriptures of Israel by the Event of Jesus. The term "Scriptures of Israel" does not *exclude* those writings either from being a distinctive set for the Synagogue *or* from being a partial, but constituting, set for the Church. Even though the predominant sensibilities suggest that we should once again remind

leadership in the advance of Israel's historical mission. Especially spectacular with the Judges, but also Moses himself and the Kings of Israel are Spirit bearers in their leadership, a leadership that might also overlap somewhat with "prophetic action." Even this, however, Jenson sees as primarily an inflection of the work of the Spirit who creates community, freeing her from the limits of the past, and who continues to sustain Israel in her unfolding life. "In Israel's narrative tradition," Jenson surmises, "the Spirit is above all God's power on and through the charismatic leadership of Israel: Moses, the judges, the early kings, and the prophets who appear around these. Their activity belongs to God's creating, here of Israel: to God's throwing down what is and bringing forth what is to be."²⁵ The work of dynamic leadership is encompassed by God's creation of Israel as such to be his covenant People in history. That the Spirit's activity belongs not only to the sphere of encouraging liveliness but also awesome power, not just the calm, gentle breeze, but also potentially the destructive torrent, that can throw down to build up—however we might then construe this theologically—Jenson faces with uncommon candor.²⁶

ourselves of the coherent wholeness of "Scripture," I have opted for "Scriptures" in order to acknowledge its multivocality, and as patterned after the biblical usage itself of referring to the "Scriptures" or "Writings" (γραφαί), paradigmatically Luke 24:32. "Apostolic" for the second body in that its authority, in terms of historical experience, derives from the apostolicity of its message, which is the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20), Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. The novelty of this proposal may not find resonance in the actual life of the Church, though it is hoped that its scriptural moorings might perhaps recommend it. But, in the final analysis, I also find no sufficient prohibition to simply abiding with the tradition of the Church: "Old Testament." As long as proper distinctions are kept in mind.

²⁵ Jenson, "Holy Spirit," from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:110.

²⁶ Most dramatically, Samson, who, when the "Spirit of the Lord surges" in him, is led to actions like the tearing apart of a lion with his bear hands, or the bludgeoning of a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. Or in the most chilling text of terror, when the Spirit of the Lord surges in Jephthah, he makes his fateful vow, Judges 14-15, 11.

§1.1.4: Charismatic Prophecy in Israel—As Jenson describes it, the second major component of the Spirit’s work in Israel is, of course, prophecy, which corresponds to the synthetic statement of the Creeds that the Holy Spirit is the “One who spoke by the Prophets.” Even in the sporadic complex of phenomenon of ancient prophecy that antedates the classical prophets, the role of the Spirit is decisive. In any variety of manifestations, “the identity of the Spirit with freedom to speak on God’s behalf, indeed, specifically to speak *promises* on God’s behalf.”²⁷ Israelite prophecy, of course, endured its own vicissitudes. With the rise of the great classical pre-exilic prophets, “The attribution of prophetic speech to the Spirit is uncommon...though it perhaps never died out (Hos. 9:7, Mic. 3:8); reasons can only be conjectured.” During that phase, there is a clear concern for the content, the Word (דבר), that comes to the prophet, as opposed to the animation of prophetic experience as such. Jenson thus regards it as all “the more remarkable that the conception returns in full force in the exilic and postexilic prophets,” in Jenson’s assessment of the arc of Israelite history, “as Israel’s hope becomes increasingly eschatological.” Here we have the coordination of an increasingly eschatologically oriented faith with an importance on the role of the Spirit, a correlation that Jenson’s understands as biblically paradigmatic. The trajectory will be that, by the end of the classical period of prophecy in Israel, there will emerge, “a full-fledged doctrine of prophetic inspiration, as the agent of all revelation in Israel,” citing Zechariah 7:12—all the “Teaching (הַתּוֹרָה) and Words (הַדְּבָרִים) that YHWH of Hosts had

²⁷ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:111.

sent by his Spirit (קְרוֹחַ) through the former prophets.” Even more broadly, the entire “work of God can now be identified with the presence of God’s Spirit.”²⁸

The increasingly eschatological expectation that Jenson reads in the post-Exilic development of Israel’s experience, together with a renewed emphasis on the work of the Spirit, gravitates towards the universalization of prophetic experience. Prophecy will become also the reality of all those persons within the community. The emerging hope, towards the end of the Hebrew Scriptures Jenson argues, will be that the prophetic way of life will be “liberated...from its exceptionality,” such that “*all* God’s people shall be speakers and not only hearers of that word,” that the general life of faith will be that of prophecy in the Spirit, that the whole community will become the prophetic community together, and that regardless of prior social location. It is these constellations of expectations that is claimed to be actualized at Pentecost, when the hypostatic disclosure of the Spirit in the Church prompts Peter’s citation of the prophet Joel: “...my Spirit will be poured out on all flesh...in those days.”²⁹ At Pentecost, Jenson describes, “the prophetic Spirit was ‘poured out’ to make not individual prophets but a prophetic community,” as a whole.³⁰ The Church then becomes the place where prophecy is liberated from its exceptionality and made a general gift.

Jenson most explicitly elaborates this point in his commentary on Ezekiel, a book that looms large in Jenson’s theological imagination. In his reading, this prophet brings the Scriptures of Israel to their crescendo with the decisive

²⁸ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:112; Vg—“*ne audirent legem et verba quae misit Dominus exercituum in spiritu suo per manum prophetarum priorum.*”

²⁹ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:110; Joel 3:1-2 (MT).

³⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:181.

question at the end of Ancient Israel's experience: of whether life can come once again to the dead bones and with the anticipation of Israel's final eschatological version of faith with the hope that such will be possible when the gift of the Spirit radiates in the whole community, not just special individuals within her. So, in his exegesis of Ezekiel, he notes that in that prophet's vision for Israel, "The final cause of Israel's transformation will be the indwelling of the Lord's own Spirit, of his own *ruach*." The vivification of Israel, the restoration of life to those "dry bones," will occur as the establishment of a whole community of prophets by the Spirit's upbuilding of such a collection. Jenson continues, "it is all the Israelites whom the Spirit will enter." The notion that God will distribute his own Spirit universally to the community, Jenson thinks, is uncommonly highlighted by Ezekiel. "The closest parallel outside Ezekiel," however, "is the phenomenon of the Spirit's role in prophecy itself. In his role as an archetypical prophet, David said, 'The Spirit... (2 Sam 23:2); in the case of Ezekiel, the Spirit 'entered into' him to prepare him for the word (Ezek 2:2)...(Isa 61:1)." This unique expectation finally culminates in the other crucial passage outside of Ezekiel to this effect: "Joel finally joins the promise of the Spirit's universal indwelling of God's people with this conception of prophecy, in a passage that became central in Christian theology...(Joel 2:28-29). From her beginning the church has seen her own existence as a fulfillment of this promise (Acts 2:14-21)." ³¹

In this very way, the work of the Spirit in Israel to propel prophets interweaves itself with the larger structural and corporate work of forming the People themselves. It belongs to Israel as the sphere of the Spirit's activity. The

³¹ Jenson, *Ezekiel*, 279.

Spirit comes to make the People of God. In the Spirit, “the work of the prophets—and other word- and spirit-bearers—is God’s continuing creative work, to throw down what is old and call forth the true Israel that is to be.”³² In a passage of pregnant compaction, Jenson describes the coalescing dynamics of the Spirit’s work in Israel: “...the dialectics of Israel’s knowledge of the Spirit will be completed only by...hope for a people that is a community of prophets, and therefore is possessed of unquenchable life, because it is gathered by the final Prophet, hope for a people all of whom have the Spirit because among them is a Spirit-bearer whose prophetic mission is precisely to be the Spirit-giver.” Jenson thinks this final movement does not occur within Israel’s Scriptures themselves, “unless in entirely transcendent-predictive fashion by Second Isaiah’s ‘servant songs.’”³³ We will have to wait until Pentecost for that final step.

Israel witnesses the work of God’s Spirit in her experience as the Lord’s covenant partner. As Israel herself is a work of the Spirit, Israel’s self-identity also gets re-oriented eschatologically. The expectation transcends the contemporaneous limitations of that self-identity, such that its hope for completion looks beyond itself as it currently is. It looks toward a time when the whole community will be prophetic, when the whole community will hear and proclaim the word of the Lord in the power of the Spirit. What is required is one whose prophetic mission and prophetic self coincides, such that the very life itself resounds with the word of the Lord. That one will be able to endow the Spirit to those who encounter him, because that one has the Spirit to give. The

³² Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:113.

³³ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:114.

community coalesced around that prophet will be the Spirit community as such. Disciples of Jesus, who claim for him that role, know that community from Pentecost as the Church, an affirmation that brings me to the second dimension of the People of God as the Spirit's work.

§1.1.5: *Excursus 8, the Significance of Jenson's Israelology*—Before I discuss the Church, a brief summative comment is warranted on the thematic articulation of Israel as a work of the Spirit. The decisive role of Israel features prominently in the theology of Jenson, and becomes an increasing concern in his diachronic development.³⁴ His construal of Israel herself as a proper systematic locus and so, subsequently, an interwoven theological motif, should be considered one of the great testaments to the audacious biblical fidelity and scope of his theology. This is an emphasis that has its origins in his study of Barth, against much of the prior revisionist Protestant theology. To expound the full scope of Israel in Jenson's theology,³⁵ not to mention his uniquely proposed theological solution to the question of the relation of Rabbinic Judaism to the

³⁴ Jenson, "Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed": "Events have in recent years confronted me with the fact of Judaism in newly demanding fashion. The awakening has had two sides. The one: I have realized how urgently the church needs a Christian theology of Judaism. It is all very well to renounce supersessionism, but how then *should* the church understand Judaism's continuing existence? In the next decades, powerful historical forces will drive Judaism and the church ever more closely together, and if they are to stand together, they will have to know why that is a good thing to do. It is not for Christian theologians to say how Judaism should regard its new partner, but the church on its side must find understanding that reaches far beyond good will. I have been working at it. One key question Christian thinkers might ask themselves: since the church has become almost entirely gentile, can it by itself provide the risen Jewish Christ with a people of his own? Perhaps the risen Christ needs sisters and brothers who maintain Jewish identity in order to be himself, even when—or even because—they do not acknowledge him. The other...I found that Jewish-Christian discourse need not be a mere exchange of views but can be a joint reflection on shared theological problems. I am working on that too, in various ways..."

³⁵ See Andrew Nicol, "The God of Israel in the Theology of Robert Jenson." PhD Dissertation: University of Otago, 2012.

Christian Church as one, not of replacement, displacement or supersession, but as divinely ordained, parallel, “eschatological detours,”³⁶ would take me recklessly beyond the parameters of this study. His correlation of the experience of Israel with the work of the Spirit, nevertheless, does warrant a concluding comment on the significance of that construal in the unfolding of modern theology.

A characteristic of much, typically revisionist, academic theology in the Enlightenment and Modern period was the erasure of Israel from any significant, abiding role in the Christian theological story. Here we might take Schleiermacher, whose genius in certain systematic matters could not assuage his utterly abysmal failure in regard to the place of Israel in Christian theology, as lamentably emblematic³⁷—though the abundance of other examples in the

³⁶ Especially: Robert Jenson, “Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism” from Braaten and Jenson, eds. *Jews and Christians: People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1-13; James Daryn Henry, “Together the People of God: The Development of a Theology of Israel in the Thought of Robert Jenson,” unpublished MS presented to the Boston College Center for Christian Jewish Learning (2013).

³⁷ When Schleiermacher discusses the necessarily communal manifestation of the primal individual experience of radical dependence in its different stages of historical development—an assessment he thinks can be grounded for theology in philosophy of religion or comparative religion—he attempts to differentiate Christianity from Judaism as both iterations of the highest stage of human religious development: monotheism. He champions Christianity as the superior, historical religion, however, over against its seeming connection to Jewish experience. Judaism, even though having positive qualities as monotheistic, he characterizes as betraying “a lingering affinity with Fetichism”, and in a menacing adumbration of the 20th Century, “...being almost in process of extinction,” which even at the time was just a clear falsity. Though not necessarily absent of any “authentic piety,” says Schleiermacher, as a whole he regarded its “predominating form of God-consciousness it that of commanding Will,” of Law, which he interprets pejoratively as a tainted and alloyed experience, “not a pure God consciousness...which was everywhere tinctured with materialistic conceptions.” He saw it as a positive development, therefore, that Christianity as a historical phenomenon untethered itself from Jewish roots, such that the historical undeniability of “Christ’s descent from Judaism,” becomes mitigated and “largely counterbalanced by the facts that so many more heathen than Jews went over to Christianity, and that Christianity would not have been received by the Jews even as much as it was, had they not been

theological tradition gives Schleiermacher copious company. Recent scholarship has suggested that the erasure of Israel for Christian theology was connected to a particular ideological freighting of what counted as “historical science” in the nineteenth century,³⁸ and even more perniciously intertwined with the burgeoning of the racialized world and the implementation of the colonialist enterprise as the attempt of Christianity to dislodge its elemental connection to Israel, and especially to extricate its Christ from his particularity as the Nazarene.³⁹ The culmination of these trends facilitated the type of cultural situation in which the depth of the horrors of Shoah could take place in the 20th

permeated by those foreign elements.”³⁷ The result of this, very appropriate in Schl.’s estimation, untethering of Christianity from its Jewish origins, relativized Judaism to the same position as sheer unbelief: “The truth rather is that the relation of Christianity to Judaism and Heathenism are the same, inasmuch as the transition from either of these to Christianity is a transition to another religion.” Thus Christianity, as a faith community, should neither recognize its intimate connection to Israel nor in any way live by the continuities, “...and so, Christianity cannot in any wise be regarded as a remodeling or a renewal and continuation of Judaism.” Schl.’s final determination for Christian doctrine, therefore, was that, except for certain emphases of prophecy, “the rule may be set up that almost everything else in the Old Testament is, for our Christian usage, but the husk or wrapping of its prophecy, and that whatever is most definitely Jewish has least value.” Thus expunging the experience of Israel from that of Christianity, the final conclusion was that the Old Testament of itself had no purpose for Christian doctrine: “if a doctrine had neither direct nor indirect attestation in the New Testament, but only in the Old, no one could have much confidence in regarding it as a genuinely Christian doctrine...Hence the Old Testament appears simply a superfluous authority for Dogmatics.”³⁷ While other streams of Christian theology—Catholic, traditionalist Protestant—were more attentive to the specific contour and narrational singularities of salvation history refused to abide the severing of the Old from the New Testaments in such a way, and while others like Covenant theology and Dispensational theology wrestled with how to articulate an entrenched locus for Israel in Christian theology, it was views like Schl.’s that would become culturally & intellectually ascendant. Ironical it was that Schl. himself did not include Marcionism among his list of the four seductively perennial and archetypal heresies for Christian theology: Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart, ed. and trans. (Reprint, New York: T & T Clark, 1999), §8:37, 38, §9:43, §94:387, §12:60-61, §27:115, §22.

³⁸ Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁹ Especially, Carter, Race and Beverley Mitchell, *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology and Human Dignity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

century, even where animosity between Jews and Christians antedates these theological trends. The question about the People of God and the relation of the entity Church to Israel and then to the enduring Synagogue, and God's design for his people, have thus been reawakened once again in our era with poignant force as a result of the Shoah Event, and the complicity of certain Christian discourse in this incomprehensible and massive destruction of the Jewish People during the Second World War, a burning question about the messy entanglements between orienting doctrine and lived faith, neither simply reducing to the other. Jenson's account of the Spirit in Israel belongs to the general trajectory of this theological enterprise.⁴⁰

§1.2: CHURCH

Communal Freedom 2: While Israel anticipates the full community of the Spirit, the Church actualizes it. What was promised in Israel's experience, that the Spirit would forge a People in whom, as a whole and individually, participants

⁴⁰ In some circles, however, such considerations have led largely to an abandonment of the constitutional realities of the Church. Jenson thinks this must be viewed soberly. He chastises much recent theology that has endeavored "to overcome 'supersessionism'", for this theology has "supposed that their effort is incompatible with belief that the advent of Jesus Christ definitely fulfills the promises to Israel." In order to atone for the sins of the past, and to develop relations with the contemporary Jewish Community, much theology has assumed that overcoming replacement theology means attenuating the Christian claim that Jesus accomplishes Israel's Promises. But, of course, Jenson sees such reticence as basically an evisceration of the Church's claim and its diachronic identity, its faithfulness to the Gospel. This supposition entails further, Jenson claims, "that supersessionism can only be avoided by repristinating a Christology in which Jesus is not quite identical with the Son, that is, by repristinating Arianism or Nestorianism. But after the decisions of the councils, such a withdrawal amounts to retreat from the faith": Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:335-336. The particular achievement of Jenson's work on the Spirit in Israel precisely counters both centrifugal trends. His account of the role of the Spirit in Israel as a freeing and liberating work to forge the community of God opens up a space where the Church affirms the central position of Jesus as fulfilling Israel's promises, while at the same time, as I will describe in more detail in the next section, the broader work of the Spirit in forging "the common dynamism of Israel and the church, impelling Israel to become the church and liberating the church for the fulfilling of Israel": Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:183.

lived by the Spirit, becomes real for the Church at Pentecost. The Church, as the locus of God's work in redemption, reconciliation and glorification, in inviting the creature into God's own conversation, to share in God's life, is the decisive work of the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit who unites us and makes us one "with the Son and thus to be the gateway of creation's translation into God."⁴¹ Following Luther, and having a very strong and realist sense of the *totus Christus*, Jenson sees the Church as indeed *the proper* work crafted by the Spirit in the economy of salvation, and thus a crucial disclosure of who the Spirit is by what the Spirit does.⁴²

§1.2.1: *The Pneumatological Relationship of the Church to Israel*—This people forming work of the Spirit, Jenson wants to emphasize, however, remains inalienably connected to Israel. While the proper work of the Spirit in the Church becomes thematic in history in its revelational occurrence at Pentecost, the continuity of the Spirit's work to a gather and free a people for God in Israel with that of the Church also maintains its abiding significance. "The Spirit did not first begin to liberate a human community when he intervened at Pentecost," we must be reminded.⁴³ For Jenson, the unfolding of the biblical experience does not represent successive stages, or "dispensations", but rather a "dramatic coherence." From this perspective, that of the internal coherence of the dynamism of historical experience, the Church remains then "an event within Israel,"⁴⁴ even if it is a uniquely definitive and culminating event. From the historical and

⁴¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:179.

⁴² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:197; Luther citation... "*Proprium opus spiritus sancti est, quod ecclesiam faciat.*"

⁴³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:182.

⁴⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:183.

narrative perspective, in contrast to the dominant theme of much of the tradition, which takes Church as the overarching category and locates Israel within it, for Jenson, Israel remains the governing category of God's work of communal formation, and the Church occurs *within* this work. At the same time, Israel remains incomplete in the biblical purview. Not only because of Israel's recurrent unfaithfulness to her covenant partnership, as Jenson explains in a gloss on Ezekiel, "The Lord's sending of Ezekiel sets us deep within the mystery of history. A people, Israel, appears here as a single diachronic entity, with so tightly coherent a story that it can be summed in one word, which—sadly—is rebellion."⁴⁵ The dimension of Israel's unfaithfulness combines with the eschatological shift of the prophets in the themes of the "remnant" among the people who will be preserved until the "day of the Lord." But even more so, Israel as such reaches out beyond herself toward the inclusion of the nations in her covenantal life.

This ecstatic movement of Israel inclines toward fulfillment in the Church and the Church satisfies Israel, as it is completed by the Spirit. The Spirit's work between the Church and Israel is reciprocal and mutually augmentative: "the Spirit makes the common dynamism of Israel and the church, impelling Israel to become the church and liberating the church for the fulfilling of Israel."⁴⁶ That Israel inclines anticipatorily towards the Church I have engaged in the previous section. In this section, I discuss how Jenson envisions the Church's fulfillment of Israel as the most crucial work of the Spirit. While there certainly cannot be a

⁴⁵ Jenson, *Ezekiel*, 48, emphasis emended.

⁴⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:183.

full exposition of Jenson's ecclesiology here,⁴⁷ an understanding of the unique work of the Spirit in the Church, in continuity with the Spirit's work in Israel, nevertheless, does necessitate a discussion of a few particular matters about the constitution of the Church herself, particularly the construal of the historical founding of the Church as a trinitarian action.⁴⁸

§1.2.2: Pentecost & the Time of the Church—The very pinnacle of the story of the biblical God with His people, for Jenson—in his view radically, both for God's own Identity and for that of His people—is the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. (In this sense, a resurrectional theology thoroughly saturates Jenson's theological vision). Such that, the Gospel, the very constituting message of the Church, in its most compacted crystallization, emblazons the predicate “is risen” of its subject Jesus: the claim “Jesus is risen.”⁴⁹ That this claim encodes the very heart of the Gospel, for Jenson, corresponds to his location of the emergence of the Church here, as well as the distinctive nature of the Church in relation to Israel. Resurrection enacts the End as unsurpassed and unquenchable Life. And so, in a certain ontologically intuitive sense, should have been the historical End. That it was not the final End as such, that the Kingdom inaugurated still remains the Kingdom anticipated in the midst of history, represents the space for the

⁴⁷ Susan K. Wood, “Robert Jenson's Ecclesiology from a Roman Catholic Perspective” and David S. Yeago, “The Church as Polity? The Lutheran Context of Robert W. Jenson's Ecclesiology” from Gunton, ed., *Trinity, Time & Church*.

⁴⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 158: “Christianity has known that the Holy Spirit is the true power of community, that our community, at least, lives only by and in eschatological hope. To embody prayer for and sharing of the Spirit, the church therefore naturally and from the very first used the universal human gesture of communal empowerment, therein also following Judaism.”

⁴⁹ Jenson, *Story and Promise*.

emergence of the Church: “Bluntly stated,” as Jenson describes it, “God institutes the church by *not* letting Jesus’ Resurrection be itself the End....”⁵⁰

Pentecost, then, which discloses the irreducible person of the Spirit, occurs as the decisive event opened up by the time of the Resurrection. As often phrased in his conditional way to highlight the interior dramatic cogency of the actual events, Jenson paints the time of the Church thusly: “Had the Father determined that the saints of canonical Israel should rise together with Jesus, so that Jesus’ resurrection was the End, his and their resurrection would still have been in the power of the Holy Spirit, but there would have been no church of Jews and gentiles and so no final revelation of the Spirit’s ‘face.’”⁵¹ The Spirit’s distinctive mission in history, what Jenson calls the disclosure of His “face,” remains enmeshed with the incorporation of the nations into Israel. The Spirit universalizes the particular promises to Israel to include the incorporation of the other nations. The possibility and actuality of such an inclusion actually remains ambiguous at the end of Israel’s Scriptures. It is not clear, by that point, how or when the nations will or could be incorporated into Israel—the Nations are still “outside” Israel, with the lingering but unfulfilled promise for them to be brought “in.” Insofar as Jesus’s historical mission itself was primarily within Israel,⁵² the Crucifixion, even as the culminating work of the Son, would have been similarly ambiguous *by itself*. Pentecost, precipitated by the anticipatory resurrection of the one Israelite first and facilitated by the delay in consummation, allows for the Spirit to complete His particular work of bringing the nations into Israel, of

⁵⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:170.

⁵¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:178.

⁵² Matthew 15:22-24; Matthew 10:5-6.

transforming Israel through the Church. This particular work does not represent simply a corollary of the Son's atoning work of reconciliation on the Cross, but actually complements it in a distinctive way, in its re-creation of Israel and the Church as the People of God, of Jews and Gentiles. As Jenson describes it, "the Spirit's intervention at Pentecost has its dramatic necessity within God's history."⁵³ The dramatic necessity here corresponds to the hypostatic distinctiveness and necessity of the Spirit as the third, not simply as a redundant recapitulation of the work of the Son.

The time of the Church, opened by the Resurrection of Jesus, "resolves an antimony at the heart of Israel's hope," Jenson continues, a transformation not quite anticipated by the basic unfolding of Israel's experience even in its Messianic and pneumatic expectation. So Jenson argues:

One aspect of this concerns Israel's historical mission. Israel's calling was to be a blessing to all nations; and the prophets interpreted the fulfillment of that calling as the gathering of the nations to fellowship with her in worship of the true God. But when it is seen that Israel's destiny can be fulfilled only in a new creation beyond this age, no space seems to remain for such a gathering in this age. Yet this aspect of Israel's mission must surely be understood as at least in part a preparation for the End: when God's people is wholly taken into God and Israel's hopes are thereby fulfilled, that people must already be the Israel to which the gentiles have come.

Even with the coming of the Son, in Jesus's historical mission, the question lingers about the space for such a gathering of the nations into Israel in history. As Jenson phrases it, again in his counterfactual way, designed to emphasize the dramatic coherence at work: "Had Jesus' Resurrection been immediately the End,

⁵³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:178.

Israel's mission would have been aborted [!]"⁵⁴ For there would have been no historical space for the reconciliation of the Gentiles with Israel. The delay following Jesus's Resurrection represents the time of the Spirit,⁵⁵ as the Spirit of the Church, to fulfill such a mission in history, to make the community of Jews and Gentiles.

The Church, therefore, emerges as the unique way by which God completes the fulfillment of his promises to Israel, given the anticipatory inauguration of the New Jerusalem by the Resurrection of Jesus. Jenson describes the unique being of the Church in terms of his dramatic categories, as an "unpredictable sidestep" and an "eschatological detour" along the way of Israel's consummation: "as the author of II Peter wrote, to those worried about the Lord's delay, 'The Lord is not slow about his promise...but is patient' precisely for the sake of Israel's mission." In describing the emergence of the Church as a detour, Jenson appeals to the entire course of biblical experience. For the interaction of the biblical God with his people clearly follows many a labyrinthine diversion throughout the vicissitudes of history: "Nor indeed are detours uncharacteristic of the whole plot of JHWH's story with his people..."⁵⁶ The character of the Church, thus, "is neither a realization of the new age nor an item of the old age. She is precisely an event *within the event* of the new age's advent."⁵⁷ The language of "detour" may be misleading here, or may disgruntle

⁵⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:171.

⁵⁵ Despite potentially apparent rhetorical similarities, this is not at all in the Joachimite sense, as will become clear subsequently: Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:126-137.

⁵⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:171, citing 2 Peter 3:9.

⁵⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:171.

some. The particular terminology could certainly be debated. What Jenson is attempting to convey, nevertheless, is the underlying meaning to the integrity of salvation history, which often seems, in its details, to be chaotic, fitful, tumultuous or arbitrary.

That such a “detour” or dramatic turn occurs in the founding of the Church is, furthermore, not just connected to the intra-historical continuity with the mission of Israel as interpreted and mandated by Jesus of Nazareth. Like every work in the history of redemption, the Church is a triune work. And so, over and above merely historical coherence and sociological realities, “the doctrine of the Trinity itself [represents] the primary theory of the Church’s founding.”⁵⁸ Having its source in the Father, who decides for the Church in his orchestration of the Kingdom, handing its execution over to the Son,⁵⁹ the Spirit too takes initiative in the freeing of historical realities to be the bearer of such a decision. So Pentecost belongs to “the Spirit’s particular personal initiative to delay the Parousia.” This is such that, “when the Spirit descends eschatologically, yet without raising all the dead and ending this age, the time for the church is opened.”⁶⁰ The Church, while being ordained by the Father, mandated by the historical mission of Jesus in the gathering of disciples, also depends on the Spirit’s own intervention. The Spirit acts to facilitate time for the forging of the one People out of many.

§1.2.3: *The Initiative of the Spirit in the Church*—The Spirit’s distinct initiative in fashioning the Church Jenson takes to be an ecumenically decisive point. Jenson marshals a number of seminal Orthodox theologians of the past

⁵⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:173.

⁵⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:173-178.

⁶⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:178-179.

century—Vladimir Lossky, Nikos Nissiotis, Olivier Clement, John Zizioulas—to press the claim of an alleged pneumatological deficit in much western ecclesiology, especially prior to Vatican II, but even subsequently in much of the lingering understanding of the Church’s hierarchy. Jenson largely adopts this critique, which argues that a limitation to the axis of Father→Son→Church authority in standard construals has resulted in an “unstable ecclesial oscillation between institutionalism and spiritualism.”⁶¹ Based in the Son’s historic ministry, and thus on a straightforward transference of authority, the view of the Church simply as diachronic continuity leads to an over-reliance on institutional perpetuation. Of course, the Gospel is historical. Its faithful transmission, therefore, must be communal and social and structural. But the elemental historical perpetuation as such always remains ambiguous. And precisely the uniqueness of the Church in relation to other sociological entities, which emerge and then falter, is that its reality is endowed of the ultimate, eternal future as a gift of the Spirit.

Certainly this critique readily becomes wielded crassly, such that the Church is tempted to live only by the whims of the present; after all, diachronic continuity remains *one* ineradicable pole of the Church’s existence, which is based on particular, concrete, narratively and aesthetically singular historical events and their faithful remembrance. Nevertheless, the critique of relatively over-institutionalized ecclesiology, Jenson relates to the dereliction in the appreciation of the Spirit’s *unique* role in the inauguration of the Church. An appreciation of this role catalyzes an ecumenical equilibrium between structure

⁶¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:180.

and charism: “If Christ and the Spirit are not experienced in the mutuality of their ecclesially founding roles, neither will the church’s institutions and her charismatic reality be seen in their proper congruence.”⁶² Further to the ecumenical point: “If Christ and the Spirit are not experienced in the mutuality of their ecclesially founding activity, neither will the church’s institutions and the church’s charisms be seen in their proper mutual identity,” says Jenson. The work of the Spirit in liberation of merely historical continuities complements the historical unfolding of Christ’s mission, a crucial recognition for a holistic ecclesiology, in Jenson’s determination: “If the church is thought of as founded in the acts of Christ prior to the church’s own post-Pentecost life, and not equally in the correlated continuing initiative of the historically free Spirit within that life, an inner-worldly institutionalism must result.”⁶³

The continuity of the Church with Christ, her Head, itself occurs as an event of the Spirit’s “community-creating work,” a “work that consists in molding the institutions of common life.” Jenson adopts an Orthodox designation of this work of the Spirit as “Holy Tradition.”⁶⁴ Tradition thus also belongs to the works of the Spirit, who through the employment of common structures guarantees the diachronic integrity of the Gospel and the abiding faithfulness of the Church to the Apostolic Community, even throughout historical development. Again, in his conception of Tradition, and in his articulation of the pneumatological grounds of the Church’s faithfulness, we see the nexus of the Spirit, freedom and future in the thought of Jenson. Sole reliance only on the Church’s relation to the

⁶² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:181.

⁶³ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 135.

⁶⁴ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 136.

historical event of incarnation, Jenson argues, “the continuity of the church will be understood and practiced as an inner-historical continuity with its own *past*.” By contrast, the role of the Spirit leads to a recognition that the Church is “equally founded in what is not yet historical event, in a last *future*, then it will also be seen that the church’s continuity with itself through history is mediated by its relation to the eschaton. The church is *eschatologically* self-identical through time, identical with itself in each present in that in each present in anticipates the one end.”⁶⁵ The arrival of the Spirit, as the power of the End, makes the Church at any particular point in history the selfsame Church she will be at her consummation, the community who is all that she will ever be.

§1.2.4: *The Freedom of the Church*—The Spirit performs this work as a work of freedom, the freedom for the community at any one time to embody its own highest and ordained existence: “The Spirit *frees* an actual human community from merely historical determinisms...”⁶⁶ Freedom, as the work of the Spirit in history, corresponds to the role of the Spirit in the Triune Life, “The Spirit’s role as the one who frees the Father and the Son is concretely his role as the one who frees the Christian community.”⁶⁷ The Spirit as the one who frees the Christian community is the Spirit who frees the Father and the Son for their own communion together. For what reason is the Christian community in history liberated? The Christian community is freed by the Spirit to be the Body of Christ, which, of course, is a work that only God could do. Jenson describes the Spirit’s work in this way as follows: “The miracle by which the community of Jesus’

⁶⁵ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 137.

⁶⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:179.

⁶⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:173.

disciples and their converts *can* be the body or bride of the risen one is that the spirit of this particular community is identically the Spirit of God. The Spirit founds the church by giving himself to be her spirit and so freeing a community within this age to be appropriate for union with a person risen into the eschatological future.”⁶⁸ That the Church, by the power of the Resurrection and Ascension, becomes Jesus’s own object-presence, his own availability, in the world, and by living into its identity becomes the *totus Christus* who is incorporated into God’s own life at the End—the radical fulfillment of the Covenant promise all along that God would dwell with his people—belongs to the work of the Spirit in the world as the one sent by Jesus to so do.

This freedom to enact its future reality does not belong to the Church as a matter of historical perpetuation, even from her historical Lord. So Jenson says, “...no structure of historical continuity simply as such—and we must here include torah, circumcision, and the other national guarantees of Israel—can maintain the continuity of a people who have a mission other than their own perpetuation. Israel would not have remained Israel, nor would the church or synagogue remain themselves, unless God the Spirit used these structures to draw his people to their final goal.”⁶⁹ It is not the continuities of Torah and cultural demarcation *as such*, as by human effort or sociological continuance, that make the Church herself, even if the Church does not occur *without* such continuities—otherwise, we would be saying that God’s call is revocable and that God is not really the God of dramatic coherence with His previous acts. But such continuities themselves,

⁶⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:182.

⁶⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:194.

insofar as they are creaturely structures, must be *liberated* for their Divine purpose. In the end, it is the work of the Spirit Himself who finally makes the animating coherence of God's historical work.

For Jenson, therefore, the Spirit works in history and in the world to create the Body of the Son there as a real presence: "We should remember that the work of the Spirit in time is to unite the church with the risen Christ, to establish the church as the risen Christ's own body, as his own concretely historical availability to the world," a work that itself is connected to the taxis of the triune life of God, "From the other triune direction, we should remember that it is the Father on whose mission the Son with his body, is in the world, and it is the Father who breathes forth the Spirit to rest on the Son."⁷⁰ This work of uniting the Church with the risen Christ is both an act of creation, of the Creator Spirit, but also a transformation of what had gone before, and so of the Liberator Spirit.

§1.2.5: *The Divine Spirit & the Community's Common Spirit*—All this foregoing description of the Spirit is from the perspective of the Divine work. We can also understand the Church as the Spirit's community from the perspective of the community itself. From the socio-historical perspective, in the other direction, the assembly of Jesus's disciples coalesces around a particular spirit, just like any other assembly of human persons. The phenomenon of "spirit" in this generic sense is experienced widely among human communities. Any coherent community over time possesses a common spirit, an animating ethos of transcendence by which the community takes on its own communal life, over and

⁷⁰ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 139.

above the simple aggregation of its individual members. The community as a whole takes on a liveliness of its own. As Jenson puts it, “Every community, quite commonsensically and unmysteriously, has a common spirit.”⁷¹ In fact, “There is spirit wherever there is community. If a community has identity, if it is gathered around and as a specific body, then it has a spirit, an identifiable particular freedom that moves the community and moves those who encounter that community.”⁷² Thus we speak meaningfully, in some sense, of the “team spirit” or the “spirit of America” or the “spirit of the revolution” or the “spirit of the Age” or the “spirit of Boston College,” or the (beleaguered but resilient) “spirit of Red Sox Nation” when there is a gathering at the green cathedral. The more intensely a common purpose animates the various constellations among a particular community, the more dynamic, coherent and compelling its experience of spirit usually is.

While every community enjoys spirit, to a relative degree, the distinctive self-identity of the Christian community emerges from a unique claim for her animating spirit, says Jenson. The spirit of this distinctive community coincides with the spirit of Jesus: “All Christianity’s talk of the Spirit unpacks one simple but drastic experience and claim: the spirit of the Christian community and the personal spirit of Jesus of Nazareth are the same.” But this in itself would not be decisive. For such could potentially be the case for any community orchestrated around a historic personality. To say this could merely be an intra-historical phenomenon. As the devotees of Elvis, for example, gather together in historical

⁷¹ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 153.

⁷² Jenson, *Visible Words*, 53.

remembrance of their king, so their common spirit is the spirit of Elvis in a certain way. Not that Elvis himself continues to have freedom among them. His spirit is mediated by the frozen shape of the historical recollection by his followers, though it is thus mediated nonetheless. If they look for his liveliness contemporaneous to them, they do so hopelessly (Elvis *has left* the building).

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, however, the Church makes the uniquely audacious claim that her spirit, the spirit of Jesus, occurs among her still as a free and lively spirit over against the will of the community. In the Church's experience, Jesus remains present to the community, and by Ascension also future to it. In this way, the spirit of the community, which is Jesus's spirit is furthermore the Spirit of God, the Divine Spirit. Just as the Church shares with other historical entities, "Every living community has its spirit, the bond through which members draw life from each other and are free for each other" so, by contrast distinctively, "it is the mystery of the church that God's Spirit is the church's spirit."⁷³ This belongs to the experience of the Church's very foundation: "It is the church's founding miracle that her communal spirit is identically the Spirit that the personal God is and has."⁷⁴ If it is so that the Church's Lord remains the Living Lord, Jenson describes how this reality undergirds the occurrence of the Church's spirit as God's Spirit: "To be free by Jesus' presence is to be free for one another; to be free by one another's presence is to be free for the Lord. But if this is true, then this spirit spans time's discontinuities; in this spirit, Jesus then in Palestine and we here now are together before the future. That is,

⁷³ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from Braaten and Jenson, eds. *The Catholicity of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 6-7.

⁷⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:181.

this spirit is *eternal*, is God, is the Holy Spirit. The spirit that is our freedom for one another, and the spirit that is the risen Jesus' freedom for us and our freedom for him, and the Spirit that is the Father's and the Son's freedom for one another, are all one."⁷⁵

§1.2.6: *The Spirit in the Church's Koinonia*—The Spirit makes the Body of Christ in history by freeing a historical people to be such. The Spirit has a particular role in founding the Church. The Spirit is the spirit of the community of Jesus's disciples. All these are ways in which the Spirit animates the Church as the Spirit's work in the world and in the drama of redemption. A further dimension of this work is the traditional theme of communion. Jenson's ecclesiology as a whole proceeds from his assessments that much of the recent convergence in *communio* ecclesiology has decisive significance and enticing possibility for the theology of the ecumenical Church.⁷⁶ Jenson, however, sees much of this development as grounded in christology, understandably so since properly christological and trinitarian doctrines harmonized with one another and "are but one and the same interpretation of God." He himself, nevertheless, offers a trinitarian complement to what he sees as having been elaborated thus far in christological communion: "But now I want to try to show how churchly *koinonia* is grounded also in the doctrines of the Spirit and of the Father" in addition to Christology."⁷⁷

So the distinct work of the Spirit is also crucial, for Jenson, in forging the Church's communion over its life, and not just in its originating event. The

⁷⁵ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 53-54.

⁷⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, especially 2:211-249.

⁷⁷ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from *Catholicity of Reformation*, 6.

pneumatological dimension of communion is found especially in the Church's *mission* as it anticipates the goal of Christian fellowship, the eschatological Kingdom. Here again we have the particularly decisive association of the Spirit with the End or telos. In the creeds, first of all, we confess the "*church* just as [we] come to confess the *Spirit*, for it is as God's people confess God as Spirit that we come to our own communal place in such confession."⁷⁸ Each of the Church's gifts and blessings, however, and so the pneumatological articles that are mentioned at that location in the Creeds, anticipate life in the Kingdom of God. The Church's reality also reaches out beyond itself to the great vision of consummation, which Jesus calls the Kingdom. "The goal of that *koinonia* which is the church is the *koinonia* of the Kingdom; the Spirit is the reality of the first because he is the reality of the second," as Jenson describes it. The Church's mission in the world embodies this reality, as it seeks to incorporate the rest of the world into its fellowship. As it does so, its mission extends beyond itself, fundamentally because, "The kingdom is not the fulfillment of the church only, but of all creation...." For this reason, the Church "not only is community, but creates community beyond itself...where the church's mission is in any way effective, there *koinonia* will appear. This, too, is a work of the Spirit."⁷⁹

Jenson describes elsewhere this work of the Spirit or life in the Spirit as the constellation between current fellowship and anticipation of the final, ultimate reality: "Our community is therefore that odd community, 'the church,' the community called forth from the communities of this age by a message about

⁷⁸ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from *Catholicity of Reformation*, 6.

⁷⁹ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from *Catholicity of Reformation*, 7.

the age to come. Our fellows in such a community are both living and dead, both those visible in the church and those who have gone on before; they include ‘the saints.’ Our life is life from baptism; it is having died and not yet being risen. And the content of our life is the Kingdom. All of which simply explicates ‘life in the Spirit’”⁸⁰ Just so, this fellowship, this communion—unity—because it reaches out beyond itself into its perfection in the Kingdom also includes, at the same time, *catholicity*, its encompassing scope of the whole: “where the church encounters a geographical or epochal or cultural or national boundary, she sees only glorious variety to be incorporated in one Spirit.”⁸¹ The Church, therefore, is the decisive work of the Spirit by which, in continuity with His work in Israel, God makes a People for God’s own, to be invited into God’s Life and into the Divine Conversation. The Spirit seizes the initiative to do so at Pentecost by opening up the time for the Church, by founding the Church as the communal presence of the Risen Christ in history and in the world. The Spirit also continues to do so by giving the gifts of unity, catholicity and holiness to those belonging to that community. These gifts bear the characteristics of freedom and future, while also sending the Church out on mission to incorporate the entire world, in anticipation of the reality of universal, common fellowship in the eschatological Kingdom: of all tribes and tongues and nations. All of this explicates current life in Spirit for believers. As this community forging work is a work of freedom and liberation by the Spirit in the world, Jenson will also view this work as a crucial disclosure of the personal “face” of the Spirit.

⁸⁰ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 17.

⁸¹ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 27.

§1.3: THE SACRAMENTS

The Spirit works amid the People of God to liberate their communal acts of worship and their ritual employment of creaturely matter to be the liturgical freedom of communion with God and the visible, embodied form of God's message to the world.

As the Spirit works in the world to gather a community, to free that community from captivity to historical inevitabilities, one crucial aspect of this work, for Jenson, employs the sacraments to build up the Church in its particular life as the Body of Christ. Jenson emphasizes the trinitarian, and so also the more specifically pneumatological, foundations of the sacraments as a crucial locus of the Spirit's liberating and eschatological work among creaturely reality. Now the parameters of my discussion here obviously preclude an exhaustive consideration of the full scope of Jenson's sacramental theology, which is particularly notable, recruiting the Lutheran Scholastics, for its radical realism, its construal of the Risen Son's embodiment simply as the cup and the loaf in the community.⁸² But, nevertheless, I should venture a relatively brief synopsis. His

⁸² Especially Johannes Brenz and John Gerhard; Jenson, "Means of Grace: The Sacraments" *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:289-389, note 118, 366; *Visible Words*, 3-50; this raises the labyrinthine and contentious matter of Luther's doctrine of Christ's sacramental *ubiquity* following the Ascension, which is far beyond my scope but should be mentioned in this regard: Jenson, "The Sacraments" *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:359—"For Luther, Christ's risen body has no location...of its own, distinct from its location...on the altars. He therefore has no need to overcome a spatial separation between Christ's body in heaven and the bread and cup on the altar, whether by the power of the church [standard Catholic Scholastic view] or by the power of faith [Calvin's view]...a person may be somewhere in that he or she is available there, intendable and addressable there. In this way, says Luther, Christ's body is where the bread and cup are, and this place can be any place, in that all places are one to Christ." On the Scholastics: Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970-1972), 2:138-142; also Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

general sacramentology provides the background in which the distinctive role of the Spirit in the Church's rites can be understood. Particularly, his general phenomenology of personal presence, through the modes of body and spirit, directly corresponds to the trinitarian shape of any liturgical action that is sacramental.

§1.3.1: *The Evangelical Foundation of the Sacraments as Visible Gospel—*

Jenson regards the sacraments as internal to the speaking and living of the Gospel, and so as a crucial consideration for any evangelical theology. Indeed, it was his and Blanche Jenson's ecclesial conviction concerning the Gospel objectivity of the sacraments that was one of the earliest occasions for Jenson's divergence from Barth, whom he generally followed in so many other respects early on.⁸³ The enactment of embodied rites belongs to the general character of

1976), 70-90; further to Luther: Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), Chapters 13, 18 and 32; Herman Sasse, *This is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1959); Robert C. Croken, *Luther's First Front: The Eucharist as Sacrifice* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990); and as apologia for Luther's contemporary significance, particularly in this regard, at the intersection of his christology, the *communicatio idiomatum* and sacramental presence, we are back to Jenson, "Luther's Contemporary Theological Significance" from Donald K. McKim, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 274-278. Most recently, there is the deliciously telling remark in "Preface," viii to *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics: Essays on God and Creation*, Stephen John Wright, ed. (Eugene: Cascade, 2014).

⁸³ Jenson, "Theological Autobiography, to Date," "I was never a proper Barthian—which is—I think, why Barth liked having me around...Blanche and I were already too catholic in our need for the church's ancient order of worship and too Lutheran in our attitude to sacraments to become full-fledged disciples of a Swiss Protestant, however winsome", 49-50; Susan K. Wood, "Robert Jenson's Ecclesiology from a Roman Catholic Perspective" from Gunton, ed. *Trinity, Time and Church*, in a nuanced, critically appreciative essay, avers that "Jenson's familiarity with Roman Catholic sources and...strong Catholic sensibilities are particularly evident in his sacramental theology and ecclesiology," but these aspects of his theology also seem to her as "being neither singularly Protestant nor exclusively Roman Catholic." A critical dimension of her assessment interrogates how Jenson's radical identification between Christ and the

religion, Jenson acknowledges, insofar as a particular faith necessarily has some relation to the visible, material world in which its adherents live. Thus the proliferation of actions or rites in the historical life of the Church as it carries out its mission should entail no particular bamboozlement, and the ebb and flow of various practices may or may not be spiritually edifying, depending on their proximity to Gospel experience and on given circumstances and cultural locations. In the Church, any such actions could be identified as “sacramental” in the most general sense. Some particular actions, however, also belong to the constitutive mission of the Church. They are actions internal to Gospel speaking or Gospel living itself. These practices “are intended to accompany the mission mandate through the church’s future, so that there will be a repeated and recognizable more-than-verbal rite of the gospel.”⁸⁴ It is these actions, rites that determine the Church’s continued extension of its life *as Church*, as the particular community of the gospel message, that systematic theology will call “sacraments” in the narrow and special sense.

The question that systematic theology will pose in its critical function, for Jenson, is whether *x* action is “a rite *proper* for the gospel? Is it legitimately mandated?” In a polemical mode, Jenson throws out, for example, “there are voices in the tradition that command promote indulgences or meditate transcendently,” which will fail the test as rites that bear some intrinsic relation to the Gospel, to the Church *as Church*—regardless of their potentially and legitimately creaturely benefits—and so “must not be obeyed” in an explicitly and

Church even “exceeds contemporary Roman Catholic thinking on the relationship between Christ and the church,” 178.

⁸⁴ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:292, also 291-293.

formal sacramental way.⁸⁵ Even more specifically, there will be those actions that have the gravest authority because they belong internally to the very gospel mission, “for there is no way to omit them without disobeying the [same] word that summons the church into being.” These are then the rites “we *must* perform,” the traditional enumeration of *the* “sacraments” that the Church promulgates—whether seven or two or three or four.⁸⁶ Under Jenson’s criterion, these will be actions that somewhere in the Apostolic Witness have a *command* that they be performed and therefore will be interpretable as promises of the Gospel by and about those particular rites, such that “the mandated and promise-bearing rite itself speaks, and speaks in a way essential to the gospel, as the gospel’s necessary externality.”⁸⁷

The sacramental dimension of the Gospel manifests the particular way in which its distinctive task assumes permanent visibility: “A sacramental mandate is a command to draw some ‘element,’ some item of the object-world, into our gospel address to each other: to use the object...[to] speak promises in Jesus’ name...When we do what is mandated in this way, our action is the referent of a promise: that our act will be God’s own ‘visible’ self-communication, the visible

⁸⁵ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:293, emphasis in quotation emended.

⁸⁶ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:293. Here we already encounter the sacraments as a matter of ecumenical dissensus, an issue to which I will return subsequently. Jenson consistently maintains that the question of *number* itself is meaningless, and that the traditional divide between Rome and Reformation over this issue is marginal, not a legitimation of enduring churchly division. It is only *how* the question is asked that yields various results: whether how many belong to the *Church’s saving mission in the scope of human life* [7] or how many are ordained *directly by Christ* in the Scriptures [2 - 4] (an issue between Protestants themselves; now some free church Christians (Quakers, Salvation Army, *inter alia*) even deny *any* are *necessarily* so); see further below on sacramental enumeration.

⁸⁷ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:291.

gospel.”⁸⁸ By God’s promise, mediated through our discipleship of the apostolic historical mandate—“do this” —our embodied conversation about and of the Gospel and our response to the Triune God, which uses as media word, image, sound, song, gesture, action, expression, light and scent, partakes of the Gospel speaking with our total selves: with word and concretized word. This visible dimension of communication pertains not only to the sacraments specifically but even to the whole life of the Christian before God in prayer,⁸⁹ as the antiphony between God and human persons: “We respond to God’s address not only in language but with a wide repertoire of gestures and objects...our ritual word to God. The life of humanity before God is an antiphony of God’s word to us and our word to God; and the whole antiphony is both audible and ‘visible.’”⁹⁰

Jenson’s sacramentalism thus remains a thoroughly evangelical one throughout. It is evangelical in the sense that he views the sacraments as actually internal components in the speaking of the full Gospel. *Speaking*, in the broader sense of communication, involves both intelligible words and *visible gestures* or *elements*. The Gospel belongs to the class of embodied, human communication in which the visible elements of its transmission are ineradicable and nonreducible. As Jenson describes it, “when the Bible’s God speaks to us, when his word comes to us, it comes to and then with some ‘element,’ some piece of the external world. His self-communication...attaches to itself that ‘visible’ reality

⁸⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 5-9.

⁸⁹ On the sacraments as an aspect of prayer in Jenson: James Daryn Henry, “Invitation to the Triune Conversation: Explorations of Prayer through the Theology of Robert Jenson” *Dialog*, 52:4 (December 2013).

⁹⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:59.

that stands in one way or another over against our subjectivity...”⁹¹ Jenson builds this interpretation of the sacraments as a thoroughgoing implementation of Augustine’s description of the sacraments: “The Word comes to the element; and so there is a sacrament, that is, a sort of visible word.”⁹² The sacraments are thus the “visible word” of the Gospel, by which we speak it to one another and also through which human communication becomes an event of divine communication.

The sacraments, furthermore, belong to the *full* Gospel in that one could no more speak the Gospel without embodiment than one could—in the best case—claim to love someone without ever attempting to embrace them with their body, to communicate that love in some tangible way. Gospel speaking without sacraments is a fragmentary gospel, a partial, inchoate communication. So the constructive point also has its negative converse. Jenson issues a sharp rebuke to such practice: “And in all parts of the church in which the Supper is no longer the dominating service, Christ has in fact come to be thought of as a disembodied spirit and, insofar as this conception then controls preaching and teaching, the gospel is not heard.”⁹³ The embodied element manifests the Gospel as a holistic creaturely communication event. While the fundamental basis of the sacraments remains, “because we are so commanded with the Lord’s authority....these actions have been somehow divinely ‘instituted,’” in Jenson’s account, he wants to add that this does not make them arbitrary historical contingencies, but also their meaning encapsulates the full scope of human communication. “The gospel

⁹¹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 3.

⁹² Citing, in multiple key places: Augustine, *In Johannem*, 80:3.

⁹³ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:349.

is an actual communication between human speakers and hearers...And no vital human communication can occur as a mere transfer of information from one mind to another; rather every such speaking is a drama that takes up the visible and audible and tangible reality of speakers and hearers...that involves gestures and sounds and found objects and artifacts, ‘elements’...of bodily reality.” The more crucial the message, the more “vital” a message “is to speaker and hearer, the more fully does it have this character of dramatic embodiment.”⁹⁴

The interpretation of the sacraments under this gospelized rubric conforms to some of the major contours of Jenson’s theology as a whole, as a Gospel theology and as a theology of the Word. Thus his interpretation of the practice of the sacraments manifests the ecclesiological location of them—the Church as fundamentally constituted by the Gospel message—and resonates with his overall program for theology as thinking internal to the task of speaking and living the Gospel.⁹⁵ Locating the sacraments as embodied communication events in the performance and transmission of the Gospel message should give at least some warrant to what has been wryly—and humorously!—derided as Jenson’s “personal and evangelical idiolect.”⁹⁶ Should interpretation of events in the life of the Church by thematic connection to the gospel really be so idiosyncratic? While the fixation on Augustine’s notion of “visible words” circumvents what became the actually dominant sacramental account in the theological tradition, the theory of signs and the soteriological emphasis as events of grace to remedy lapses into

⁹⁴ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 37-38.

⁹⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:3-5.

⁹⁶ John Barry Ryan, “Review of *Visible Words*” *Worship*, 53:5 (Spring 1979): 458-459.

sin, the visible words formula of Augustine certainly acquired more currency in the Reformation⁹⁷ and encodes, even if in a fresh idiom, common Reformational emphases. In the more recent *Systematics*, Jenson has also returned to the more catholic and orthodox themes with a discussion of the sacraments under the category of the “mysteries of communion” and with an exploration of the theory of “signs.”⁹⁸ But I think the two accounts are meant to be complementary.⁹⁹

Jenson’s sacramental theology has even been taken as illustrative of the possibilities for a “comprehensive and irenic sacramental theology” which has been “contextualized within international ecumenical consensus...” that draws insights from Reformation, Catholic and Orthodox sacramental theology.¹⁰⁰

Whereas many could potentially view recurrent rites such as the sacraments as the paragon of ossified religion, lastly, even early on in his polemic against religious Christianity, Jenson was able to argue audaciously that liturgy and sacraments “demythologized,” precisely as dramatic embodied enactment, were actually the vindication of unmythic, living faith and not formalistic

⁹⁷ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 4:187-203.

⁹⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:250-269.

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright, “*Verba Visibilia*: Robert Jenson on the Sacraments” from Gunton, ed. *Trinity, Time and Church*, 281-297, provides a thorough analysis of Jenson’s sacramentology, though one based exclusively on the *Systematics*, largely without consideration of the earlier work in *Visible Words*, see note 2. Wainwright argues that, even notwithstanding his wariness of the more speculatively audacious and metaphysically revisionist aspects of Jenson’s theology, a consideration of Jenson’s treatment of the sacraments proper—though not wholly extricable from those considerations—reveals a robustly ecumenical account that resonates with many of the most recent official ecumenical statements and represents a significant achievement of ecumenical convergence; I have oriented my account here more so around the hermeneutical key of *Visible Words*, because of his more explicit pneumatology there and because of Jenson’s own retrospect that “*Visible Words* is thus a sort of freestanding unit of my work. If the book is valuable at all, it is irreplaceable within the whole body of what I have written” “Preface to the 2010 publication” *Visible Words*, xiv; for more emphasis on sacramentology in the *Systematics*, see Wainwright.

¹⁰⁰ Michael A. Fahey, “The Sacraments” from *OHST*, 267-268.

“religion.” For they involve us in an embodied way in the historically particular and specific story of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰¹ Of course, what makes the sacraments worship, and not just mythic drama, is that they invoke the final future that the Risen Jesus anticipates and guarantees. At this point in the development of his theology, Jenson overlooked the connection of the promise of the final future with the coming of the Spirit. But he will get there in subsequent works. It is precisely here that the evangelical foundation of the sacraments explicitly relates to the work of the Spirit. The evangelical events that culminate in Easter unfold to a distinctive intervention of the Spirit at Pentecost, to free them for consummation.¹⁰² So the sacraments exhibit a unique pentecostal dimension, in addition to their evangelical dimension, because of the very connection of the events of Easter to the events of Pentecost.

§1.3.2: *Personal Presence as Body and Spirit*—The warrant that structures Jenson’s sacramental theology is thus fully evangelical. At the same time, he further attempts to develop the content of sacramental understanding through a phenomenological account of “personal presence.” Personal presence entails the two crucial dimensions of body and spirit. These two concepts in particular fund his account of sacramental presence, as they also resonate with the role of Word and Spirit in the trinitarian divine missions. This phenomenological account of personal presence analyzes not merely an abstract construct, but rather interprets a concrete, particular occurrence: the embodied and ecclesial encounter with the person *of* the Risen Jesus. The standard theory

¹⁰¹ Jenson, *A Religion Against Itself*, 47-60.

¹⁰² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:146.

of sacraments, in Jenson's assessment, moves from some generally and abstractly sacramental character of created being to the Church's particular sacraments. In proceeding in the Barthian fashion from Scripture's claims to the selective ontological elucidation corresponding to them, Jenson reverses this dynamic in his own understanding of the sacraments. The effort of sacramental theology, he says rather, "must be to interpret the being of a particular person, the risen Jesus, insofar as we truly say of him such things as that he is really present as the eucharistic elements...If the interpretation succeeds, it will state a key ontological fact; but here as always when metaphysical questions arise, the direction of thought...is decisive."¹⁰³ This way of approach decisively undergirds his sacramental theology in relation to our question of the work of the Spirit. For, in the mystery of the sacramental event, the spirited dimension of the personal presence of the Risen Jesus and the animating spirit of the community itself in its gathering coincide as *the coming of the Holy Spirit Himself*.

1. *The Body's Availability*—Let me first briefly describe Jenson's notion of *body* as personal presence. The body, as Jenson construes it, "is the self, as the describable and so intendable object of an other self. The body is the available self."¹⁰⁴ A body, such as the loaf becomes in the sacramental event, such as the Church herself is of Christ—in a radically Pauline, especially Corinthian, realism¹⁰⁵—presents an availability of one self to another, a vulnerability, which facilitates a locus for another's intentionality. It is "the *object*-presence of a

¹⁰³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:250-251, emphasis emended.

¹⁰⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:13-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27.

person” to others.¹⁰⁶ The elements of the sacraments function in this way, for Jenson. The sacraments are the objective availability of God’s Being in Christ for the believer. Already in the prolegomenal statements to his *Systematic Theology*, he queries: “Can the gospel’s God really thus be an *object* for us, that is, something we see and hear and can intend?” as he had already described God thusly. Jenson argues, “he can be if the voice of the gospel...is God’s own voice, and if the objects to which this voice call us to attend—the loaf and cup, the bath, and the rest of the gospel’s factual churchly embodiment—are his own objectivity.”¹⁰⁷ The Lord makes Himself present in the sacraments, and his personal presence becomes available as body. With the determination of the savior himself as its ontological warrant—“this is my body”—the items of the sacramental celebration become his own body in the world. The locus of intention that presents God’s body, God’s availability to historical, creational experience is the loaf and the cup and the bath. The God who becomes incarnate is the God who can be object presence for us, certainly not in the way of other finite objects, but authentically nonetheless. And this possibility is a fundamental warrant of all Jenson’s sacramental theology.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:13.

¹⁰⁸ John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), counters that Jenson’s interpretation of Christ’s ascended body, “begins from observations about embodiment rather than from the identity of the agent of whom the metaphor is predicated.” That is, the critique can be made that Jenson’s eucharistic theology is driven by a generic creaturely phenomenology of embodiment and not by biblical warrants about God’s action in His Church. In this case, Jenson would seem inconsistent in relation to his own repeatedly stated principle that all metaphysical warrants in Christian theology must finally be Scriptural. One could respond that Jenson’s phenomenology of embodiment is intentionally grounded trinitarianly as the action of Word and Spirit, and that its architectonic, as I have attempted to show, is *evangelical*, about gospel embodiment and not just general

The association of body with *objectivity* probably already provokes the ire of much of the personalist impulse of modern thought. Of course, there are important concerns here about the treatment of human persons as *merely* objects, in the former slave system most evidently, in the current slave labor enterprises still among us surreptitiously, more discretely but just as perniciously in the objectivizing insertion of human persons as interchangeable components in the modern world economic system. But all of that abuse of our availability cannot be to deny the objectivity of it as such, precisely as embodied. Certainly a theology that confesses a God who unites Himself with creaturely materiality cannot dispense with the dimension of objectivity. And objectivity is inescapable for those related to materiality anyway. In addition, discussion of objectivity affords the salutary obstacle to the rampant hegemony of subjectivity—such that every item exists as no other than to be manipulated or employed by a self’s freedom, that grants to nothing anymore their constitutive intrinsicness. “Contrary to much of what has been said on the matter,” Jenson remarks on this, what is to be spurned is not objectivity as such. “[A]uthentic personal mutuality depends precisely on mutual self-objectification. If address you, I make you my object. If I do not seek to enslave you, I so address you as also to grant myself as your object.” The problem consists, reminiscent of Hegel’s master and slave

embodiment. Still, it does seem that this aspect of Jenson’s theology can be highly speculative, which would have its own merit. But it would undermine, however, his own cavils at seemingly quite comparable metaphysical speculation that he has claimed tainted such doctrines as the traditional *logos asarkos*, for example, or the traditional Divine attributes or Divine ontology, in favor of his putatively more “biblical” historicized trinitarianism, et al.

passage, when “I seek so to make you my object as to withhold my own self-objectification.”¹⁰⁹

2. *The Spirit’s Spontaneity*—But that persons are not merely limited to their objectivity insinuates another dimension of personal presence—spirit. *Spirit* “is the liberating presence of other subjects of my life.” The presence of other subjectivities to my own objectivity poses new possibilities over and above what already is. This occurs as the possibility of transcendence: “personal beings are—for good and ill—free in time, liberated from what is by the beckoning and impact of what is not yet.”¹¹⁰ Jenson develops this insight in a number of ways in terms of historical existence, and under the typically Lutheran categories of law and gospel, but also critically applies it to the sacraments, which are the personal presence of the Lord, and so also ultimately involve body and spirit. The coming of the Spirit to the sacrament will be the ultimate freedom and the radical possibility of transcendence. The personal presence of Jesus in the sacraments will be both his body, his availability and objectivity by means of elements, and his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as the freedom of those elements for the future, for what is not yet true of them merely as elements as such.

The sacraments, then, for Jenson, are the objective, personal availability of the Gospel’s God to us, as we ourselves gather to speak and enact the Gospel. At the same time, in the sacramental event, the Gospel’s God liberates us in historical freedom for anticipation of the future Kingdom. As these are the God *of the Gospel’s* objectivity, furthermore, they are the Triune God’s objectivity.

¹⁰⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 22.

¹¹⁰ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 20.

Every sacrament is thus a trinitarian work. In all the matters of Jenson's sacramental theology, therefore, the distinctive presence of the Spirit will be a crucial dimension. And here I come to the decisive point about the work of the Spirit in the sacraments. The evangelical warrant of Jenson's sacramental theology correlates to the pentecostal experience of the Gospel in the life and mission of the Church, and so derivatively to a *pentecostal sacramentology*. Forthrightly, "Every sacrament is a coming of the Spirit," he says.¹¹¹ For a sacrament consists precisely in the work of the Spirit to free an item of the object world, a concrete piece of creaturely materiality, to be also an occasion of the Risen Jesus's presence for believers as they direct their intention to the Father. Here we see the sacrament as a fully trinitarian work. The sacraments are orchestrated by the Father, mandated by the Son as dramatically meaningful and particular actions of Gospel speaking, and actualized by the Spirit in their Kingdom promise.

§1.3.3: *The Trinitarian Pattern of the Supper*—Every sacrament is thus a work of the Spirit and a gift of the Spirit, as it is the presence of the Risen Christ. So also, then, will the Supper be, if sacrament it is. Though I will not recapitulate the argument here, Jenson does examine in detail the historical mandate for the Supper such that its status as sacrament necessarily obtains in his assessment. Principally, that mandate bids, "with words and with bread and cup, we are to join in praising God for what he has done by Jesus and in pressing for the fulfillment of what God has thereby promised. When we do this, an event occurs

¹¹¹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 59.

to which eschatological promises come, to create a sacrament.”¹¹² The promise betokened by the Supper, deriving from its historical mandate, is the promise that the communion shared in the bread and cup anticipates the final and ultimate communion of the Kingdom. As we share in Christ’s availability in the loaf and the cup that availability speaks our participation together with Christ through resurrection and life: “the promises make our meal fellowship anticipation of the fellowship that is to come with Jesus at the last future...To be brought into the fellowship of this Supper is to anticipate belonging to the fellowship of the kingdom; it is bodily promise of that belonging.”¹¹³ The Spirit completes and perfects this communion from the last future, and so what is involved in the Supper specifically is the coming of the Spirit as the one who generates communion and frees from the limitations of history, which militate against our full communion.

The confession of this reality, that the Supper promises the ultimate communion of the Spirit, becomes thematic in the *invocation*, as a structural part of the celebration of the Supper. As the Supper is a part of the liturgical mission of the Church in its Gospel embodiment, a response to the command to take some item of the object world in our dramatic embodied address to God, the visible Gospel, the prayer of the Supper takes the overall form of a Great Thanksgiving. The Spirit dimension of that prayer will be an invocation—epiclesis—corresponding to the arrival of the Spirit from the future: “Insofar as sacramental action includes also our prayers and praises to God, the Spirit form

¹¹² Jenson, *Visible Words*, 74 and 62-77; Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:337-344.

¹¹³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 78-79.

of prayer is *invocation*: ‘Come Holy Spirit!’ In the ecumenical tradition, such cries, *Epiclesis*, are at the heart of both the Supper and Baptism...”¹¹⁴

In the anti-religious ethos of his earlier theology, Jenson reassures us that “There is nothing esoteric about the sacramental invocation and giving of the Spirit,” for “We should not think of the Spirit as a weird force of invisible fluid to be gathered and channeled.” Rather, as the very personal presence of God in the sacramental event, the invocation of the Spirit only implies the recognition of the presence of Jesus. The presence of this person includes both body and spirit, includes both availability and objectivity to the other, but also freedom over against the other. When two persons are present to each other, they do so as both body and spirit. Analogously, “When Christ is embodied among us, present as the gospel speaking, there too is spirit, *the Holy Spirit*. If in a community’s freedom that freedom itself becomes the matter of our communication, it creates words of invitation and gift. Just so, when the reality of the Spirit becomes itself thematic in the community of the gospel, invocation and bestowal are the forms answering to the Spirit’s mode of being.”¹¹⁵ Therefore, “[t]o invoke God’s Spirit on the bread and cup,” simply recognizes that we have to do with the actual, personal presence of Jesus in our eucharistic assembly; it is not more than consciously and explicitly “to call body and spirit of our relation to the Lord together.”¹¹⁶ The liturgical invocation of the Spirit in the sacrament explicates in the action that since the Lord is personally present, that presence is both Body and Spirit.

¹¹⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 59.

¹¹⁵ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 59, emphasis added.

¹¹⁶ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 103.

The whole dynamic of the Supper, even more so, emblazons its trinitarian pattern, for it is specifically the Triune God whose presence belongs to the sacrament in the Church. Jenson discerns this elemental trinitarian shape, from the earliest liturgical remnants of the Church, as the space between anaphora, anamnesis and epiclesis. *Anaphora*: is the character of the event of the Supper as such, as an embodied prayer offered in address to the Father in its own reality as present act: "...so the central act of the church at eucharist is the 'Great Thanksgiving' or Anaphora, in which the church recites and glorifies the saving actions that the Father has performed in the Son by the Spirit, and in which the church gives its praises the explicit form of the triune relations, as praise, *anamnesis*, and *epiclesis*."¹¹⁷

Retrospective remembrance, recollection and catalogue attest to the great acts of God in history in their objectivity and doneness. The recollection endows the thanksgiving with concrete content. Of course, the anamnesis of the Supper, similar to its archetype in the Passover Seder, does not simply recall past events in their historical distance, but also acknowledges their realization in the current moment, their interweaving with and influence on the understanding and approach to the current lived reality. Because of the particular character of the events recollected in this case, moreover, the current enactment of past events in grateful address is further anticipation of the future, the future that the Risen Jesus promises to us in the Kingdom. They are anticipation of the future because what they narrate is resurrection, and thus—if what they narrate is true—final

¹¹⁷ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from *Catholicity of the Reformation*, 8.

future and unbounded life. What they narrate is God's Promise for *ultimate* salvation, for definitive and unending life.

§1.3.4: *The Significance of Epiclesis*—Thus, the nature of the Supper also includes *epiclesis*, which, for Jenson, corresponds to the distinctive role of the Spirit. The Supper, conforming to the typical structure of Christian Faith, addresses itself primarily *to* the Father, though not thereby without the Spirit of Creation. The Supper recollects the events *in history* of the Son, the presence of the Father dwelling among us and with us. But the particular coordinance of the epiclesis with the Spirit evidences the Spirit's role in particular. So, as Jenson discusses the offertory, and its special character as invocation, he says: “our prayer must be eschatological invocation. And that is, its most Christianly appropriate form is invocation of the Spirit, of God as the One who brings future. We should beseech the Father: ‘Let your Spirit hallow our gifts...’”¹¹⁸

The epiclesis, as eschatological invocation, manifests the particular character of the Spirit; it corresponds to the Spirit as eschaton, as future, as telos. Jenson explicates this more fully as follows: “The remaining element of proper thanksgiving is eschatological invocation...But the chief form of eschatological invocation is invocation of God the Spirit...As we have seen, in the Christian identification of God, God the Spirit is God as the transforming power of the eschaton, now to be goal and judgment of what now is.” In this coordination between the future-looking invocation to the promise of the Kingdom and the person of the Spirit represents “a main structure of Christian theology asserts itself.” Since epiclesis still belongs to the overarching structure of “thanksgiving,”

¹¹⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 93.

it is still always “praise of God.” So in the epiclesis, “Christian invocation of the eschaton is therefore intrinsically invocation of the Spirit. Since the explicit acknowledgement of the divinity of the Spirit [in the Church’s doctrinal tradition], only the most absent-minded or heretical celebrations have omitted the petition, ‘Send, O God, your Spirit...’”¹¹⁹ Explicit liturgical epiclesis performs the Church’s doctrine of the Spirit.

Jenson fixates on the crucial role of the epiclesis in the dynamic of the Supper: “The final main part of the traditional Great Thanksgiving is the *Epiclesis*, an invocation of the Spirit upon the bread and cup and sometimes also upon the congregation.”¹²⁰ He will even make the point polemically by saying that the Supper without the epiclesis betokens a lifeless event, an event with no orientation toward the final future: “Nor is Christ’s embodiment in the church a corpse; if the Spirit did not enliven the assembled church and rest upon the eucharistic elements the risen Christ indeed would not be present.”¹²¹ So he includes even his own proposal for an epiclesis among his liturgical suggestions.¹²² A pivotal role for the epiclesis, as a recognition that the personal presence of the Lord occurs in body and spirit, Jenson thinks resolves a traditional theological discussion over the particular role of the Spirit. The question: “It has been debated whether the Spirit’s [primary] role in the church’s

¹¹⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 95.

¹²⁰ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 102.

¹²¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:257.

¹²² Jenson, *Visible Words*, 121—“Minister: Send now, we pray, your Spirit / The Spirit of our Lord and of his resurrection. / Let him be the Spirit of our feast, / That we and all who share it / May not perish at the last, / But may stand before you, / As now, so in the fulfillment, / To serve the eternal mystery of your love. / Let grace come and let this world pass away! / People: *Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.*”

sacramental life is [actively] to create the Lord's embodied presence or [passively] to be brought and given by the present Lord." Whether, that is, the Spirit actualizes Jesus's embodied presence or whether Jesus's presence bestows the gift of the Spirit in the Supper. Jenson thinks finally, in his account, the two coincide: "If that is the question, the answer must be both. But there is something wrong with this answer and so with the question. For the Lord is present as *person*; and personal presence just is body and spirit, neither of which is instrumental to the other."¹²³ Neither is the presence of body instrumental to the bestowal of Spirit, nor the freedom of Spirit instrumental to the objectivity of the body. But the Spirit frees the body, just as the body facilitates the transcendence of the Spirit—anamnesis and epiclesis belong together.

§1.3.5: *The Work of the Spirit anchored in Baptism with Water*—Jenson discerns a primordial connection between sacramental baptism and the work of the Spirit in the New Testament experience, even a more thematically aware one than that of the Supper, which must be inferred from the latent trinitarian context of God's sacramental work. The character of that connection consists in the possibility of new being, the anticipation of the future reality of God that corresponds to the hypostatic identity of the Spirit. Developing an exegesis of the key passage from John, Jenson argues that the Johannine promise of new birth, of eternal life, of reforged being, grounds itself in baptism of water and spirit. The two basic possibilities of theological existence derive from their two respective origins: flesh and spirit. The transference from one to the other depends here on baptismal work in both dimensions. Jenson concedes the

¹²³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 55.

critical point that the addition “of water” is perhaps a redactional emendation to the text.¹²⁴ But he also takes the canonical shape of the passage as ecclesially determinative nonetheless, and, in either case, theologically correct.¹²⁵

In contrast to a sacramental ritualism, on the one hand, the possibility of new birth belongs to the freedom from merely creaturely possibility that only the very work of God’s Spirit can perform, precisely as She “blows where she pleases”¹²⁶ over against any predictive human calculus. But neither does Jenson entertain a separation of baptism of the Spirit from baptism with water, in distinction from an abstract spiritualism. That water baptism remains the locus of the Spirit’s renewing work belongs to both the Spirit’s coherent identifiability with past acts and also with the integrity of the Spirit’s work amidst creaturely reality: “No doubt the Spirit blows unpredictably,” Jenson argues, “but if we cannot also say where the Spirit *has* been, Spirit-talk is empty and Spirit-being is pure arbitrary self-assertion....” The coordination of spirit-baptism with water-baptism “serves to anchor the discourse about Spirit-beginnings to the present reality which, however much it may be passing away, has not quite gone yet, and *from* which the reality ‘from the Spirit’ must therefore begin.” If we cannot circumscribe the future action of the Spirit, we must surely still be able to identify which Spirit, associated with which acts, is the Divine Spirit and not one of the many creaturely spirits or simply our own spirit. The connection with the rite of water, with elements of the creaturely reality, makes the coming of the Spirit a

¹²⁴ Citing Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*.

¹²⁵ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 140-141.

¹²⁶ John 3:8.

“humanly specifiable event.”¹²⁷ In this way, the work of the Spirit, for Jenson, operates within the sphere of the sacramental event of baptism.

The laying on of hands becomes the gesture of coincidence between water and Spirit. Similar to the role of the institution narrative in the Supper, this action brings the general initiatory and washing rite of water under the divine mandate as a visible word of the Gospel. Jenson adopts the historical perspective that, “from the earliest time for which fuller liturgical information is available, the gift of the Spirit was enacted by the laying on of hands.”¹²⁸ The rite of hand imposition was not always necessarily or exclusively attached to baptism: “The connection between baptism and the Spirit goes back to the very beginning; and imposition of hands, as a communication of the Spirit, does also. But it does not follow that the two rites were always and everywhere joined.”¹²⁹ But once they were joined, the gesture signified the coherence of both actions in their appeal to the Spirit’s work. Since the impartation of the Spirit was associated with the gesture of hands, the role of this action in the baptismal liturgy, the baptismal epiclesis, thus unites the two dimensions of water and spirit: “Second, it [the laying on of hands] established the unity of baptism: of the bath and the bestowal of the Spirit. The same Spirit who will be given by prayer and the imposition of hands is the Spirit who before then uses the water of the bath. A main purpose of

¹²⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 141: “If the phrase [of water] is indeed added by the qualm of an editor, his qualm was right...”

¹²⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 130.

¹²⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 130.

the baptismal Epiclesis was to prevent any separation of ‘water baptism’ and ‘baptism of the Spirit’.”¹³⁰

§1.3.6: Baptism as the Very Endowment of the Spirit to the Believer—
More than just being a work of the Spirit, similar to all other sacraments, baptism maintains a unique place in the pneumatological economy, for Jenson, as *itself the very endowment* of the Spirit to the believer. Among the many gifts and fruits that the Spirit engenders upon entrance into the fellowship of believers, the occasion of baptism becomes, most dramatically, the communicating of the Spirit’s very self to the believer. While other aspects of the drama of redemption can be understood as the Spirit working *on us*, baptism, for Jenson, uniquely represents the imparting of the Spirit himself *to us*, and work *in us*. This union with the Spirit marks “the decisive difference between Christian baptism and all earlier ordinances,” in that “baptism bestows the Spirit.” The pluriformity of gifts and works that the Spirit orchestrates thus culminates and coheres in the baptismal gift that bestows the very Spirit Himself. “Finally on this line, the New Testament summarizes all baptism’s gifts together,” Jenson crystallizes his understanding of baptism, “in the teaching that baptism bestows the Holy Spirit...Such things as justification, priesthood, or triumph over persecution are ‘gifts’ of the Spirit. But ultimately the Spirit, like every true person, has only himself to give.” Baptism occurs as the event of the Spirit’s giving Himself to the believer. If the Spirit thus given is the Holy Spirit, and if he gives himself fully, the astonishingly audacious inference to be drawn is that: “Baptism is initiation

¹³⁰ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 155.

into God's Spirit, into God's own life."¹³¹ Baptism "initiates into the life which God's three persons, Father, Son and Spirit, live among themselves."¹³²

Since this same Spirit, the one who brings us into God's Life, also animates the Church, as the Spirit of believer's communion with one another, the gift of the Spirit in baptism simultaneously facilitates our multiform unity with one another: "And in all our variety there is but one Spirit into which we are baptized. It is precisely in this unity, consisting in the Spirit and granted in baptism, that the rich mutuality of the church's fellowship is founded."¹³³ "As we live in the church, our life with each other is part of the love of the Father for the Son, part of the obedience of the Son to the Father, part of the Spirit's own transforming energy. At the deepest level, it is for this reason that the washing is 'into the name, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'"¹³⁴ Thus baptism, as the joining of the believer to the Spirit, and in the Spirit to other believers, precipitates the baptized entrance into the reality of communion itself, the celebration of the Supper: "For the Holy Spirit here invoked is the new life that baptism grants, and the bond of the community into which baptism inducts. In the ancient orders, moreover, the Spirit, once invoked, drew the neophyte immediately into the actuality of that life and community, the Supper."¹³⁵ So the concrete work of the Spirit sealing himself in the believer overflows into the concrete work of building up the body of Christ.

¹³¹ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 41, citing Acts 19:1-7, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30.

¹³² Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 44.

¹³³ Jenson, "Church as *Communio*" from *Catholicity of the Reformation*, 7, citing Mark 1:8 and par, Acts 10:1-7, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

¹³⁴ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 41.

¹³⁵ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 157-158.

That baptism inaugurates our entrance into God's Life remains, of course, an eschatological progression, a journey into consummation. Baptism thus anticipates the Kingdom, in Jenson's understanding: "But all this language for the efficacy of baptism is eschatological; each of the church's blessings is a specific anticipation of life in the kingdom of God." Because it is anticipation, heralding an eschatological reality, baptism particularly corresponds to the hypostatic ethos of the Spirit: "And it is precisely therein that they [the gifts of the Church] can all together be evoked as the gift of the Spirit, for the Spirit is the present Energy of the end, the Liveliness of a community whose whole life is hope for the fulfillment of God's promises The goal of that *koinonia* which is the church is the *koinonia* of the kingdom; the Spirit is the reality of the first because he is the reality of the second..."¹³⁶ Jenson describes why "it is now also explicable that the New Testament connects baptism so regularly with the Spirit—as it does not specifically connect the Supper." Baptism as sheer anticipation of new life, of holy life, of sanctified life, of divine live in perfected communion discloses to us the personal characteristic of the Spirit as goal, as future, as perfecter, as destiny, as giver of life. "In the Supper," Jenson continues, "there is a classic balance of representation and anticipation." But "[w]ith baptism, all is anticipation...On the other hand, it is one great anticipation. Just so, the New Testament thinks the presence of the Lord to baptize mostly as the coming of the Spirit."¹³⁷ What the Spirit gives in baptism is who He is as Person.

¹³⁶ Jenson, "Church as Communio" from *Catholicity of Reformation*, 7; citing 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14, 2 Cor. 3:17-18.

¹³⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 149.

§1.3.7: *Return to Baptism*—Jenson advocates quite an intriguing understanding of penance as a “correlate to baptism,”¹³⁸ an account which I can only briefly recount here, but one which indeed warrants further detailed study for the prospects of an ecumenical sacramental theology, given how skeptical Reformational theology has been of penance as a whole after its connection to indulgences in Reformation controversy. For Jenson, the traditional rite of penance remains “part of the practice and theology of baptism.”¹³⁹ In that poignant phrase of Luther’s, to which he recurs, penance can be described as “return to baptism.” Although the biblical mandate of penance, Jenson acknowledges, remains ambiguously structured, nevertheless the logic—or strictly paradoxical reality—of the situation of post-baptismal sin compels its recognition. While adhering to the traditional Reformational concern that “[n]o specific rite of penance is mandated by Scripture, nor any specific procedure,” Jenson nevertheless argues that, as a whole, the “New Testament does unambiguously enforce that the church must have *some* procedure and rite to deal with the sins of its members” and that “the necessity and problematic of penance are set by central features of the New Testament understanding of sin.”¹⁴⁰ Jenson’s most recent treatment of the mysteries of communion in his *Systematics* is even more explicit and emphatic: the “necessity” of penance “is clearly biblical,” he claims. “[A]lready the evangelist Matthew’s church had to deal with severe breaches of her communion, and the in the community that has the Lord for its center, discipline of such breaches must be *iure divino*,” as

¹³⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 179.

¹³⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 176.

¹⁴⁰ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:368.

opposed to only creaturely convention, if in fact what occurs is a legitimate return to the people of God, to the community of the Spirit. Thus the mystery of penance: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...”¹⁴¹ Such a mandate constitutes a historical ground for the emergence of penitential practice in general, while the connection of the form of this rite specifically with confession and imposition of hands is clearly biblically coherent with its meaning, in Jenson’s assessment.¹⁴²

The living out of “baptized life is return to baptism,” since it continues to be done under the conditions of lingering sin encountered by the baptized, through the vicissitudes of life in the time opened up after unleashed resurrection but short of Kingdom consummation.¹⁴³ Given the gospel objectivity and radicality of baptism, however, the unfolding of the return to baptism must also be a *true return* to a state once decisively achieved and *not* merely “a development of baptism or a progression from it.” Baptism remains archetypal, because baptism bespeaks, in a radical way, death to old life and resurrection to new life, the doing of which cannot strictly be undone. Therefore, “baptized life must be as sacramental an event as baptism itself,” if it is to be a true return. Otherwise, the initial speaking of gospel promise in baptism would be dissonant: “we need rites whose visible and audible communication is specifically ‘Back to

¹⁴¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:262, citing Matthew 18:6-22.

¹⁴² Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:368-369.

¹⁴³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 176: On the necessity and thus possibility of penance, even as the impossibility for the baptized: “Nor can such anomalies be ignored or defined away. Attempt along that line were made very early: devotees of the free Spirit in Corinth and elsewhere said that since they had already been detached from the old life, whatever they did had to be good since they were the ones doing it.”

baptism’.”¹⁴⁴ If the sacramental character of penance is upheld, regardless of any qualms over historical malpractice, then penance also will be understood as a coming of the Spirit along with any other sacrament.

Penance will have a decisively pneumatological character, moreover, in its recapture of baptism, itself the paradigmatic sacrament of the Spirit. Leaning towards the Tridentine direction of sacramental enumeration, Jenson construes those other sacraments—confirmation, healing and marriage—as rites that “bestow the Spirit for some juncture or task of baptized life.” Of those, however, only penance restores us directly to and in the life of the Spirit Himself, as a recovery of the original baptismal existence.¹⁴⁵ Again this corresponds to the hypostatic ethos of the Spirit, as true life, as freedom for sanctification and as Creator Spirit, the re-creator. When the Church speaks absolution to the penitent, “Absolution is an act of positive creation; it recapitulates baptism’s admission to the community of justice and holiness and priesthood and bridal union with Christ. It recapitulates baptism’s gift of God’s own Liveliness, the Spirit.”¹⁴⁶ Penance, then, is that sacramental rite of the Church whereby the community broken asunder by post-baptismal sin reconstitutes itself in the unity of the Spirit and whereby the believer is given back baptismal life and freedom by the Spirit. Such an account warrants further ecumenical consideration as potential

¹⁴⁴ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:368, 367.

¹⁴⁵ Jenson, “The Sacraments” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:367.

¹⁴⁶ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 45.

convergence between Reformational parties, even if it would still be viewed skeptically from more recent free Church ecclesiological developments.¹⁴⁷

§1.3.8: Spirit & Office—While Jenson largely spurns the Reformation squabble over the specific number of sacraments, whose enumeration, he thinks, depends solely on the scope of terminological usage,¹⁴⁸ he certainly envisions the

¹⁴⁷ It is interesting, lastly, that Jenson does not include an explicit epiclesis for this rite, as he does for the Supper, the Bath and the Office, one that would thematize its pentecostal foundations: something like—Lord, send the Spirit of your reconciliation and sanctification to grant x forgiveness, to return them to the gift and promise of their baptism, to make them holy as you are holy...

¹⁴⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 10-11: “The word sacrament as used by the theological tradition, picks out only some of the church’s repertoire of legitimately instituted gospel-forms. At the simplest level all forms of the gospel might be called ‘sacraments:’ all involve ways of communication that are more than verbal, even if this is only the physical presence of the preacher and the sheer sound of his voice, or the appearance of marks on paper. And all are ‘visible’ presences of the ‘invisible’ God. But theology has used *sacraments* more narrowly...Thus the final medieval list of seven was made by stipulating that only those performances should be called ‘sacraments’ which are essential to someone’s salvation. The Reformation lists of two or three or four were made by stipulating that only those of the seven should be called ‘sacraments’ whose institution has canonical authority. Such stipulations are made for polemical purposes... Polemics of this sort are sometimes necessary, but in this book my polemics will be of a different sort and I will make no such stipulations. I will simply take the four ‘sacraments’ as mentioned in the Reformation confessions as a minimal list on which there is likely to be ecumenical agreement. As for the question: ‘How many sacraments are there *really?*’—it is totally meaningless. There are as many sacraments as we polemically define the word to cover”;

Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:260-261: “The profusion of the church’s mysteries is historically rather than systematically determined and so can be captured by no merely conceptual structure...Lists of ‘the’ sacraments vary historically and confessionally; and any but the shortest again encompasses rites in themselves quite different from one another. The historically dominant enumeration of sacraments is that of the later medieval Western church and the Council of Trent. The list is in fact appropriate to our purpose...[but] There is no necessary dogmatic dissensus here...If Protestants allow the council to speak of ‘sacraments’ with the council’s own conditions for the term’s application, all will affirm the seven; if Catholics allow Reformation traditions to speak of ‘sacraments’ with their own conditions for the term’s application, all will affirm but the two or three. One must, of course, wish that Trent had not been quite so enthusiastic in its use of the anathema.” However, this is an ecumenical slight of hand on Jenson’s part, for, in fact, Trent is surgical: “If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law (*sacramenta novae Legis*) were not **all** instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord (*non fuisse omnia a Iesu Christo Domino nostro instituta*), or that there are more or fewer than seven (*aut esse plura vel pauciora quam septem*)...or that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament (*vere et proprie sacramentum*): *anathema sit*.” Council

Supper and the Bath as the two elemental sacraments of the Church, and so the material occasions by which the Spirit makes the Church and facilitates the faithfulness of her embodied Gospel speaking. We have already seen, nevertheless, how Jenson, in chastisement of much Protestant practice, also regards penance as a historically authentic and necessary sacramental correlate to baptism. As Jenson progresses from his *Visible Words* (1978) through his work in *Christian Dogmatics* (1984) to his culminating work in the *Systematics* (1999), he also finds a more explicit place in his sacramental account for marriage, for healing (unction) and for confirmation, as a necessary correlate to baptism if the baptism of infants¹⁴⁹ is affirmed—which he does, in the end, against Barth,¹⁵⁰ even after cataloguing some of the tortuous historical ramifications. By the *Systematics*, Jenson takes the Tridentine list of seven as ecumenically normative, even if the corresponding anathema of that Council he regards as over-

of Trent, Session 7, Canon 1 (DH 1601=Heinrich Denzinger, with Peter Hünermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 43rd ed., new Latin-English ed., Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash, eds. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), (also DH 1606, 1608), from Lyons II (1275) (DH 860), confirmed in the Tridentine profession of faith, Pius IV, *Iniunctum Nobis* (DH 1864), Benedict XIV, Profession of faith for the union of East and West based on Council of Florence (1743) (DH 2536); *Catechism of Catholic Church*, §1113-1118 reiterates on the basis of the Spirit leading the Church into all truth in its discernment of 7 liturgical actions called “in the strict sense” sacrament; moreover, the tradition also goes at length to insist on the institution of each disputed sacrament *by Christ* at some point in his historical ministry: DH 1628, 1669-1670, 1695, 1764-1766, 1773, 1797-1801; Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 3.72.1 (especially *ad. 1*), 3.84.1&7, 3 (*supplementum*).29.1&3, 3 (*suppl.*).34.3&1; see further, Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 4:290-303; for a compelling exploration of the ambiguity of the term “sacrament” from a Protestant Ecumenical view, even with a relatively high “sacramental” sensibility: Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987-1998), 3:336-369.

¹⁴⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 163: “If infants cannot or should not receive the Spirit, they should not be baptized. If we have a rite for the Spirit and separate it from baptism, we merely thereby make either baptism or this later rite meaningless, probably both.”

¹⁵⁰ Barth, *CD*, IV.4.§75.2 and preface; for commentary, most recently: W. Travis McMaken, *The Sign of the Gospel: Toward an Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism After Karl Barth*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

determined. Regardless, ordination is another such correlate to baptism that from early on Jenson regards as actually constitutive of the Church. This rite, for Jenson, is thus also a particular sphere of the Spirit's recurrent activity in the Church.

Without digressing into Jenson's full discussion of authority and office in the Church, a basic outline of his advocacy for ordination remains crucial. It is crucial since the matter of ordination is one of, perhaps, the greatest ecumenical travails, but also because it is increasingly dismissed as a whole as alien to our democratic and egalitarian sensibilities. The relation of the Spirit to Office, of Charism to Institution, is now so contested that any understanding of Jenson's account of the Spirit's work in the ministry as such will have to be prefaced by a initial consideration of the evangelical basis of ordination, in order to have even a remote chance of ecumenical understanding.

"As baptism is initiation into the believing community," Jenson comments, "ordination is initiation into a community within the believing community." The notion of such a distinction, however, can initially strike us today as elitist and authoritarian. It is actually a true freedom. Jenson's claim, nevertheless, is that "the ministry itself, as a group into which persons must indeed somehow be initiated, belongs to the church's essential nature and is explicitly so regarded in Scripture." This is not—Jenson acknowledges the generally Protestant and especially free Church concern—because a specific rite of ordination is clearly mandated with definitive scriptural authority. But this is because—to the episcopal understanding—differentiation of ecclesial roles already saturates the whole of the communal life in which Scripture itself as text emerges. The

Scriptures do in indirect ways testify to this. This only begins to become thematically aware in the Pastorals,¹⁵¹ which gesture to a rite of ordination and to specific offices of presbyter or bishop—shortly thereafter regarded as decisive by Ignatius and Irenaeus. The concern emerges in the Pastorals, Jenson argues, because this very phase in the historical development of the New Testament itself witnesses to the first crisis of the *passing* of an already established ministerial generation—that of the Apostles, of those who had some direct historical and experiential connection to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and whose testimony shapes the New Testament. Jenson describes thusly: “The delay of the Lord’s coming and the death of the apostles imposed (if these were not to be taken as refutations of the faith) one need above all: ascertainable historical continuity with the apostolic preaching of the gospel.”¹⁵² This need constitutes the historical mandate for and inner logic of ordination.¹⁵³

Ordination belongs to the Church precisely because of its constitution as an evangelical community, its stewardship of a message that it did not craft and its enactment of a mission that it did not fabricate. Jenson argues the point as

¹⁵¹ Jenson, “The Sacraments” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:378: “The pastoral Epistles were directed to the self-understanding and discipline of the third generation of Christian leaders (i.e., to those who were no longer either apostles or assistants of apostles) in the form of pseudonymous letters...appearing as links between the apostolic generation of leaders and later generations and as archetypes of Christian official leadership.”

¹⁵² Jenson, “The Sacraments” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:379.

¹⁵³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 190: “Thus the notion of a state of nature when everyone had the same service and authority does not at all apply to the church, not even as myth or as a purely theoretical model. The church’s internal differentiation of service and authority was never created by a general decision to organize and delegate. The ministerial differentiation of the church and the church’s own existence are precisely coeval and mutually dependent. Insofar as some Protestants have supposed that the church is originally an undifferentiated mass, whose communal structure is created by social contract of the members, this is an error with no biblical justification whatever.”

follows: “The church is not and cannot be an essentially undifferentiated collection of equivalent individuals, who then may or may not choose to organize themselves as to create offices with various authorities. In particular, without the internal community of the ministry, possessed of its defining authority, there is no church.”¹⁵⁴ The reality at the basis of ordination is thus: if the message and the ministry of Jesus is grounded in divine mandate, the community which perpetuates and transmits this message and ministry does not exist by its own organization but is orchestrated according to what it has received as gift. Of course, if we deny the foregoing premise, then there would be no such theological reality “Church” about which to dispute its organization in any case. We can see the very general principle broadly at work already in the New Testament in the clear differentiation in the description of Jesus’s ministry of the 3 → the 12 → the 70 → the multitudes,¹⁵⁵ in the concern of the election of Matthias to replace Judas in Acts 1 and over Paul’s repeatedly self-conscious concern about the status of his own Apostleship.¹⁵⁶

An internal community of ministry is provided for the purposes of personal presence within the community of interpretation through time and throughout the world of its originating message and also the advocacy of that message, when needed, over against the whims of the community. If the occurrence in history and throughout the world of the Gospel transpires by divine mandate, and so coincides with the Word of God, those from whom the

¹⁵⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 188.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 2:20.

¹⁵⁶ Romans 1:1, 1:5; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 9:2, 9:5; 1 Corinthians 15:7-9, 2 Corinthians 11:4-5, 2 Corinthians 11:16-33; Galatians 1-2:14; Acts 15:1-35; Philemon 1:8.

proclamation historically originates must be endowed with their mission by God's Spirit—they are *prophets*. Their prophecy is foundational, and so structurally determinative. But it will also relate to various functions in the Church as *office* that will vary in organization and constitution over time. In terms of the Gospel, however, a primary task will be the “authoritative interpretation of its word,” as the discourse moves across new frontiers of time and culture. That is, there must be some “teaching office,” in the Church as the interpretation of the faithfulness of its historically mediated gospel communication. “Since the church is eschatologically lively,” Jenson argues, “its teaching office cannot be filled by a mere deposit of doctrine, but must be filled by living persons.”¹⁵⁷

With this judgment Jenson still affirms the distinctive role of each and every baptized member of the community in the discernment of the Word of the Lord through their own gift of the Spirit: “The prophet’s oracle, or any other offered service, may of course be wrong, and it is the responsibility of the whole Spirit-filled congregation to judge.” But this is judgment on the prophet’s claim to authenticity, not a usurpation of the prophet’s role as such if it is authentic: “either the prophet is a false prophet or his speech for the Lord is unarguable” and therefore axiomatic.¹⁵⁸ Such with the constitution of the Church through the Apostolic mediation of the Gospel.

That the resistance to structural differentiation in the Church has no biblical justification whatever overstates the case. Certainly the counter concern corresponds to egalitarianizing—broadly speaking—tendencies recorded in

¹⁵⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 189.

¹⁵⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 191.

Jesus's message, impulses which transgress normal societal differentiations and hierarchies. That also the Apostles themselves misunderstood the nature of ecclesial authority must be accounted for,¹⁵⁹ as well as the radical reversal of the shape of leadership in the Christian community to one of cruciform service.¹⁶⁰ Certainly also the eschatological trajectory of the Gospel community gravitates toward one where "there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."¹⁶¹ Though neither do these considerations entirely mitigate Jenson's point, where even in the eschatological City, the New Jerusalem, the entryway foundations still indelibly bear the "twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb."¹⁶² Just as Paul vigorously denies that the hand can say to the foot, I don't need you, so also he does not deny that there are hands and feet, as "God has arranged the members of the body."¹⁶³ Ordination is thus the work of the Spirit in the Church, through time and space, to personally advocate for the integrity of its evangelical message and constitution.

Ordination, for Jenson therefore, while its biblical basis remains more elliptical than the Supper or the Bath, also constitutes a necessary rite of the Church insofar as the Church must remain in historical, diachronic continuity with the Apostles, and in synchronic fellowship with one another. For the Church to abide in its diachronic and synchronic integrity, however, is itself a work and

¹⁵⁹ Mark 10:35; the query of the Apostles in Acts 1:6 might be interpreted along these lines as well.

¹⁶⁰ Matthew 20:25-28: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave."

¹⁶¹ Galatians 3:28

¹⁶² Revelation 21:14

¹⁶³ 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

gift of the Spirit. From the historical perspective, that of the integrity of the Gospel communication through time and throughout the world, an *office* is required. From the perspective of the divine work in the world, what is needed is a *charism*, a gift of the Spirit. Ordination occurs as the coincidence of office and charism. Jenson thus describes ordination: “When the church’s ministers induct a new minister, they do so with prayer that the Spirit will take her or him into a specific part of the Spirit’s freedom in the church.”¹⁶⁴ The office liberates the minister to perform their unique work of advocacy by the freedom of the Spirit.

The Church herself as the Spirit’s community possesses the possibility of bestowing charism. The question is whether ordination as such is one that should be so bestowed to certain members of the community: “The charism itself we can bestow. The question is not whether we *can* bestow the charisms of the Spirit, but whether, since they are charisms of the *Spirit*, we *may*.” The warrant of such bestowal of the Spirit for this task depends on the evangelical mandate, which I preciously discussed in Jenson: “What there is, is the sheer necessity to ordain, if the church is to continue beyond the apostolic generation, and canonization of documents that show the immediately post-apostolic church acknowledging the necessity by measures that include the beginnings of ordination.”¹⁶⁵ Jenson thus thinks that the bestowal of the Spirit for ordination belongs to the legitimately mandated function of the Church and is an appropriate charism of the Church.

¹⁶⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 200.

¹⁶⁵ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 199.

What is the outcome of this charism? Commitment of a minister to this charism, Jenson describes in the following way as a work of the Spirit, characterized by freedom and by eschatological orientation, as has been continually associated with the Spirit's work:

If I have been ordained, I have been committed to the Spirit in a particular way. My opportunity and burden is to hold the community to the gospel, which means to the community's own and the world's last future; and the power of the future to grip the present is what the Spirit is. The Spirit 'blows where he wills,' he makes faith and creates the church 'when and where God chooses.' The outcome of my work is therefore unpredictable, more unpredictable even than ecstasy or prophetic vision. Ordination is visible permission to affirm this unpredictability, to find in it the very freedom to go on.¹⁶⁶

This charism, then, especially relates to the coming of the Spirit as a freedom and a liberation. It is precisely the freedom to speak over against the rest of the Church, the freedom to exegete the Scriptures and interpret their meaning in a way that is continuous with the Apostolic Witness. Generally, "Ordination is installation into an institutionalized office...by bestowal of the Spirit of prophecy and inspired exegesis"¹⁶⁷ a charism of the Spirit is a particular freedom in and for the believing community, a particular justification of unconditional action for God within and over against the church. The community of faith, whose freedom is the Spirit, can bestow any charism it chooses—just as it can initiate the Spirit by baptism."¹⁶⁸ This freedom, of course, represents not an arbitrary authority nor the reckless and amorphous freedom of an uninhibited will that belongs to our culture. For the Spirit goes together with the Word. And the integrity of the

¹⁶⁶ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 203.

¹⁶⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 198.

¹⁶⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 199.

ministerial freedom is a freedom for a particular task, a freedom bound to the historical integrity of the Gospel: “The speaking of the gospel remains authentic—to be the coming of God’s Spirit and not another’s—only by faithfully remaining the news that *Jesus of Nazareth* in particular is risen.” The following balance of freedom and faithfulness applies: “The church is the community of a word that is simultaneously the narrative of a past event and eschatological promise to its hearers at any time. The servants of this word have thus both to speak with the utter freedom of the last future, the freedom that is the Spirit, and faithfully to cultivate the tradition of what happened in the past with Jesus.”¹⁶⁹

That particular ministers might fail in this task, even fail egregiously and obscenely, is readily apparent. Still, the very performance of their ordination is an event of the institutional, diachronic continuity of the Church. But the achievement, the success of this ultimate continuity again belongs to the work of the Spirit Himself and not to any human person in themselves, just as the rite of ordination also belongs to this work. The work of the Spirit to guarantee this continuity, therefore, always has the possibility of extending beyond the visible ministry as such. Irruptions of the Spirit to call the ministry back to its own legitimate witness is something that Jenson thinks, in general, has happened throughout the history of the Church. That fundamental structure, while inalienably institution, Jenson thus also says is non-monolithic: “Precisely this anti-monolithic structure of the instituted ministry left it open for interruption by self-authenticating messengers of the Spirit.” Thus we also return to the basic reality that the Church is the Spirit’s work: “Yet interrupting too secure

¹⁶⁹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 191.

continuities of the instituted ministry is finally something only the Spirit himself can guarantee, and through history the Spirit has done his work.”¹⁷⁰ Part of that work might just be the interruption of the endowed ministry by the Spirit to recall the Church’s faithfulness to her eschatological reality, the freedom of the Spirit to forge the People of God.

§CODA

In Jenson’s pneumatology, the work of the Spirit among the People of God is central, and that work can be synthetically and analytically characterized as freedom. The Spirit acts in the world to forge this Community, as also the Community’s own spirit. In an anticipatory way in Israel, through her leadership and prophecy, and in a eschatological guarantee in the Church, the Spirit gathers these people to be who they will be at the outcome of the world. The Spirit does so as an event of liberation by which He brings the final outcome of God’s salvific plan of human community to actualization and objectivity in the world—over and above the mere unfolding of the world’s own intrinsic possibilities, and even where the people themselves are still caught in the ambiguity and slavery of sin. Life in the Spirit, for the community, also includes the practice of Sacraments, as the Spirit makes the Risen Jesus himself present not just as the community itself, to the community, but also concrete in the community, in certain of her embodied ritual actions.

The sacraments—the visible and concrete liturgical life of the Church as visible Gospel—are thus also decisively pneumatological. They are works of the Spirit, together with the design of the Father and the mandate of the Son. The

¹⁷⁰ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 196.

intimate association of the work of the Spirit with the sacramental life of the People of God, in its historical unfolding prior to the Kingdom, considerably challenges the neo-Gnostic and contemporary dichotomy of “spirituality” and “embodiment,” a connection grounded in the elemental goodness of creation and eschatologically vindicated in the resurrection of the transfigured body—a connection tasted, felt and sensed anticipatorily in the sacraments. In the sacraments, the Spirit labors to liberate created matter in order to be the occasion and locus for Divine Presence. Through the sacraments, the Spirit enables communion with God and ordinary object-items of the world to become bearers of the Divine message. The sacramental gifts of the Spirit for the community in the Church’s liturgical life are complemented and accompanied by a number other gifts of the Spirit that concern different aspects of individual human experience, some of which I will explore in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 2: **SOME GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**

§INTRODUCTION

The Spirit works among the People of God to give certain gifts of Grace. Of those particularly notable (though certainly not exclusively) for their character as freedom are: (1) Justification, (2) Scripture, (3) Tongues and (4) the Creation itself.

The Spirit forges a People of God in history, in Israel and the Church. The Spirit liberates matter within that community to be the liturgical freedom for communion with God and for the embodied and visible word of proclamation. Jenson thus envisions the primary work of the Spirit in the triune economy, in God's self-determination to be God for us, as a community forging work, as the liberation of a human community to be the People of God. This chapter explores some of the gifts that Jenson describes as those the Spirit gives in history to accomplish and to accompany that primary work. I discuss four foci: (1) justification, (2) scripture, (3) tongues, and (4) creation. In contrast to the previous chapter, which was relatively comprehensive in its account of Jenson's understanding of the work of the Spirit among the People of God, this chapter should not be understood to exhaust Jenson's understanding of the gifts of the Spirit. Nor does it delve into Jenson's exegetical account of 1 Corinthians 12 or Ephesians 4. This chapter is more circumscribed. What I have done here, rather, is to foreground four areas where Jenson's thinking on the work of the Spirit is particularly robust. These four areas will show how the character of the Spirit's work as freedom, guaranteed from the future, is especially prominent and

thematic. I am arguing, therefore, that these are four loci in Jenson's theology that are particularly transparent to the distinctively liberative character of the Spirit's work, a character which, as we will see, discloses the very hypostatic identity of the Spirit.

§2.1: JUSTIFICATION

As part of His community forming work to anticipate the final outcome of the Kingdom of God, the Spirit frees the individual believer from alienation with God for righteousness before God. This is the soteriological freedom of the Spirit. A more thorough and explicit recognition of the Spirit's particular initiative of freedom in the event of justification provides a possible context for the resolution of traditional ecumenical difficulties about this doctrine.

The first of those areas where his theology of Spirit proves particularly novel, while also illuminating of some of his own key theological patterns, is Jenson's discussion of justification. Early on in the diachronic development of his theology, justification was actually not a major thematic emphasis for Jenson, when he primarily labored as a Barthian scholar on the doctrine of election and the doctrine of God in the Barthian trajectory, how that related to the problematic of religion in contemporary culture, then through the major periods of his work on the trinity and the sacraments. As Jenson's theology has become more explicitly ecumenical, however, as he has attempted "together to think new thoughts that might transcend otherwise intractable divisions,"¹ as he has more and more consciously performed theology for the one church,² and as he has also

¹ Jenson, "Theological Autobiography to Date," 51-53.

² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:vii.

articulated his theology more thematically in negotiation with his Lutheran heritage, justification has become much more crucial a theme.

Justification, historically being one of the most contentious and enduring problems of ecumenical dissensus, even after what seemed to have been a breakthrough in the *Joint Declaration on Justification* in 1999,³ has come to occupy an important systematic location for Jenson in its ecumenical implications and significance. Jenson generally sees the perceived divergence as a bewitching by words. His assessment has been that the antagonism over justification encodes a failure to recognize the biblically semantic range of meaning that this term encompasses and the various ways in which this term been deployed in the tradition. To this misunderstanding, Jenson proposes a more fully pneumatological, and so trinitarian, understanding of justification, which he thinks synthesizes the fundamental underlying unity between various ecclesial usages. Thus the role of the Spirit in justification becomes not only a key component of Jenson's pneumatology, but also a decisive factor in his proposals

³ Pontifical Council on Christian Unity, "Joint Declaration on Justification (1999)," Vatican Archives Online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html; further clarifications: Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, "Response to the Joint Declaration," Vatican Archives Online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_01081998_off-answer-catholic_en.html; Jenson ran his own commentary on the process: Jenson, "What if the Document on Justification were Adopted?" *Pro Ecclesia*, 6:1 (Winter 1997): 99-105; "On the 'Joint Declaration' of the LWF and the RC Church on the Doctrine of Justification" *Pro Ecclesia*, 5:2 (Spring 1996): 137-141; "On the Vatican's 'Official Response' to the Joint Declaration on Justification" *Pro Ecclesia*, 7:4 (Fall 1998): 401-404; there was a major backlash from entrenched confessional Protestants, but see: "Justification" & "The Gift of Salvation (1997)" from Timothy George and Thomas G. Guarino, eds., *Evangelicals and Catholics Together at Twenty: Vital Statements on Contested Topics* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), 24-37.

for ecumenical convergence. A recognition of the Spirit's particular work of freedom here could potentially pose something of a resolution.

§2.1.1: *The Ecumenical Problematic*—In his book on the ecumenical situation at the turn of the millennium, *Unbaptized God*, Jenson describes the perceived originating problem in relation to justification thusly: it has emerged as a conflict between, on the one side, “the error to which the churches of the Reformation have feared the Catholic teaching must lead—a recursive reliance of the believing person upon something in him or herself, on virtues or merits. Such a recursion...must be the negation of faith, since faith is precisely the person’s reliant attention to an other than him or herself” and, on the other side, the counter-position, “the error to which Catholics have feared Reformation polemics must lead: an ultimately prideful refusal to acknowledge that God’s grace does indeed work real changes in the believer’s life, and that the believer may rightly note these changes and praise God for them....”⁴

Such a dispute occurs in the interstices of the differentiation and relation between justification, as a distinct moment in the *ordo salutis*, and sanctification, in the larger sweep of salvation and glorification as final communion with God—eternal life—and so the precise relationship of uncreated to created grace, in scholastic terminology, or forensic to effective justification in Reformation language, imputed or infused righteousness. From the Reformation concern, nothing that belongs to the believer as such can function as the focus of my attention for trust in the work of salvation. Faith, as gift and trust, attends to the work of Christ alone, as a complete work, as the basis of salvation. From the

⁴ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 18, emphasis emended.

Catholic concern, believers *themselves* must be seen as the ones saved by Christ, not some artificial construction of themselves, and so discussion of salvation must include the work of God in actually conforming the believer to the image of Christ and through the Spirit preparing the believer for final fellowship with the Holy God and His Holy People.

A second level of dispute, furthermore, which makes the issue so vital for deeply Reformational churches, concerns what Jenson calls the “theological-systematic weight of the doctrine of justification,” the architectonic role of that doctrine in the overall architecture of Christian faith (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*). Whereas the Reformation party—as a generalization—insists on justification’s formal and indispensable centrality to the faith, the north star of faith, the Catholic side has seen it as one star in a larger constellation of Christian doctrines that mutually determine and inform each other, and which itself can legitimately be construed by various biblical soteriological themes: reconciliation, redemption, freedom, liberation, new life, new creation—not exclusively in legal terms as justification, even if that is surely one dimension.⁵ In this case, the particular theological-systematic weight on which the Reformation insists is seen as a soteriological narrowing of doctrine, a dislocation of its place in the network of doctrine, and even perhaps an over-determined imposition on the ecumenical Creed’s more terse, “for us and for our salvation.” Such an elevation of justification as doctrine to this status remains a debatable centralization of a doctrine on which the ancient church did not in fact issue formal dogmatic pronouncement, as in the case of trinity and christology for example. The

⁵ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 22-25.

doctrine of justification, then, properly interpreted, could still be entertained as proposed theologoumenon, but should not have the reductive theological-systematic position on which the Reformers insisted. The counter-consideration of the Reformation remains that this particular formulation of justification goes to the center of the integrity and gratuity of God's work of grace *pro nobis*, which is why it is itself integral to the Gospel as *good* news.

Amidst this intractability, Jenson comments, "Supposed dissensus about justification has been disastrously divisive in the West, and alleviation of the controversy has been in the center of ecumenical dialogue." The diagnosis that Jenson has proposed to the Church is that here we have encountered different questions, and so different responses, different ways of *using* the doctrine of justification. The enduring dispute assumes, he argues, that the different constellation of ecclesial accounts of justification "are different answers or different ways of answering the same question." Supposing that Trent and Luther are offering different, and to a certain degree mutually exclusive, propositions assumes that they are answering exactly the same question. To this, Jenson responds, "This assumption, however, is surely false; and its hidden persistence accounts, in my judgment, for most, if not all, remaining difficulty with justification in its original context."⁶ Jenson avers that the use of justification in the tradition is multifaceted, and that we must carefully distinguish the particular questions at play in each particular usage. The failure of consensus, in this case, is the failure to recognize sufficient differentiation in the churchly usage of justification. The neglect of the range of questions which

⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:290.

occur under the rubric of justification in the tradition has been, in Jenson's strong diagnosis, "the great source" of what he calls "illusory dissensus," all the way from the Reformation until today.⁷

§2.1.2: *Three Models of Justification*—To assess such doctrinal divergence, we must properly distinguish the respective questions. The pluriform usage of justification and righteousness in the scriptural imagination inspires various resonances, says Jenson: "The religious immediacy of the word means that it is richly used in Scripture and the church's language, and in a variety of contexts. This very richness has made it available for theological cross-purpose."⁸ One abiding concern of Jenson's ecumenical theology has been to sort out and clarify these cross-purposes. In doing so, he advocates a trinitarian and pneumatological reconstruction of this complex of teaching as the solution. Encompassing the various usages, Jenson sketches the meaning of this important term as the harmonious orchestration of communal life, whether life with one another or life with God. So, he says, in its basic sense, "righteousness or justice is the mutual responsibility by which a community is faithful to itself" and so, "God justifies when he sets things communally right, whether by judgment and reordering of the community as such or by setting an individual right within it."⁹

Within this broader scope, however, Jenson distinguishes three primary questions which have emerged as theologically pregnant ones in the tradition: **(1)** the Apostle Paul's question: how does God establish his righteousness among us in the situation of gentile incorporation into the covenant people of Israel

⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:291.

⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:290.

⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:290.

because of Christ? **(2)** Western Augustinianism’s question, later transposed into the scholastic idiom about grace, as to *how* specifically to understand, to demarcate and to narrate the process of the believer’s salvation as it occurs *in actuality*, as the movement from the state of sin to the state of fellowship with Holy God. This concern Jenson will even summarize as characteristic of Western Christianity as such, across its many iterations, “in which the central concern is precisely the practical effect of God’s living reality *in our lives*.”¹⁰ **(3)** Thirdly, there is the question about the “metatheological” or proclamatory Reformation doctrine of justification, which, to Jenson’s mind, is more properly seen as a hermeneutical theologoumenon about the character of all the Church’s discourse.

Allow me to briefly consider these three, and then how Jenson thinks a thorough consideration of the work of the Spirit unites them. First, to Paul’s question. Paul’s juxtaposition between faith and works of law occurs in the context of gentile believers incorporation as heirs into the promise to Israel because of what happened with Christ. Do gentile believers who have come to faith in Christ still have to observe the important cultural and ritual observations of Torah in order to be rightly established in the community, in Israel and with God? For Paul—in Jenson’s reading—the event of the proclamation of the Gospel itself, received then by faith, was the basis of gentile incorporation into right relationship with Israel’s community, which is what animated Paul so vigorously about its centrality. The Gospel itself is the power by which God was bringing gentiles to salvation. The preaching event itself is the disclosure of “God’s own righteousness, which is apprehended by and creates faith.” This righteousness

¹⁰ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:125, emphasis added.

clearly has something eschatological about it, in that in the world between the advents of Jesus, the establishment of God's righteousness is manifestly not yet final or definitive. But, in the meantime, God still "establishes his righteousness apocalyptically unveiling it in the gospel; this event thus justifies those who *undergo* it."¹¹ For Jenson, this construal of Paul's doctrine reveals its intimate connection with that theologically dreaded of all terms: predestination. Justification states in the passive and creaturely construal what predestination states in the active and divine. "If we change 'We are justified by God alone' from passive to active we get, 'God alone justifies us.' That God's promise is unconditional or that God's will for us is final and externally unmotivated obviously come to the same thing. The need thus to consider the doctrine of justification in the active voice is given with the circumstance that we are dealing with the reality of God and the Spirit and must remind ourselves that God is indeed *God* the Spirit, lest even yet all turn into a fascination with our own spirituality."¹²

Next, let me jump to what Jenson makes of the Reformation's hermeneutical doctrine of justification, number three on his list of historical problematics. It should be mentioned upfront that, for Jenson, neither (2) nor (3) are *directly* (1); neither Augustine's nor Luther's questions are directly Paul's, *not* because of any necessary historical distance, but simply because the context of Paul's question, in terms of the righteousness of the Christian community,

¹¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:292, emphasis emended.

¹² Jenson, "Holy Spirit" from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:134.

directly concerns the parameters of gentile believers' incorporation into Israel.¹³ And this particular question is the live one neither for Augustine nor for Luther—though it is not that they are completely unrelated either. Furthermore, Luther's proposal in (3) does not *necessarily* conflict with (2) the western and even scholastic description of the process of salvation, in Jenson's reading, because (3) does not intend to describe anything in particular at all. The proclamatory doctrine of justification is rather a doctrinal proposal about *how* the Church goes about speaking the Gospel, the manner in which *any* doctrine is proclaimed in the world.

Jenson clarifies his way of understanding the Reformation proposal: "It is instead an instruction to those who would audibly or visibly speak the gospel, a rule for preachers, teachers, liturgists and confessors. This instruction may be formulated: So speak of Christ and of hearers' actual and promised righteousness, whether in audible or visible words, whether by discourse or practice, that what you say solicits no lesser response than faith—or offense."¹⁴ To characterize the Reformation, Jenson crystallizes it as "a protest against a whole way of thinking about and proclaiming the faith" which engendered a response short of trusting in God's promise in Christ to have offered our righteousness. That work was

¹³ By these distinctions, Jenson does not fully take the side of the so-called "new perspective" Pauline scholars that Luther has significantly misread Paul, despite some obvious resonance. For, he argues, even if "the Reformation doctrine and Paul's doctrine cannot be entirely congruent, neither were the Reformers entirely discontinuous in invoking Paul in their own context, citing the assessments of Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). This assessment, however, does overflow from Jenson's significant alignment with the Finnish school's understanding of Luther: Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), Braaten and Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 15.

¹⁴ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 22-23.

God's own work in us: as is often said "Luther radicalized the Western desire for the grace of God into desire for the graceful God. He was concerned no longer for God's effect on us but for God's own presence among us. Rather, he was concerned for God as *God's* effect on us—that is, precisely for God the Spirit."¹⁵

The metatheological Reformational doctrine concerns, in Jenson's interpretation, the entire way in which the Church approaches people with its discourse, the way in which it seeks to tell its message: "If the gospel is properly spoken to me, there can only be acceptance of its claim or flight...The less drastic response of 'works,' that is, of deeds or virtues brought forward because they are thought appropriate to the gospel—as in themselves they may well be—does not as such break through my incurvature on myself [Luther's general definition of our state of sin]. For unless this has otherwise been broken, my works, precisely as *my* actions and habits of action, are still 'willingly' done within my antecedent rapture into myself." The character of the Church's discourse as less than Gospel, as soliciting less than faith, cannot exculpate anyone from the attempt to save themselves. "Only the promise of fulfillment in God, and such promise as hides no implicit conditions of its validity, can break the direction of my actions to myself, by opening my place within God's story while offering no handle for antecedent egocentric willingness." The Church must preach the Gospel message, "The one dedicated to your place in God's community with creation, and dedicated to death, lives as Lord," and it must do so in a way notwithstanding any "further moralistic or religious qualification," not smuggling into its discourse any contingency or any condition for the effectiveness of its reality other than the sheer event of the

¹⁵ Jenson, "Holy Spirit" from *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:129.

fact, the news, itself. When the Church speaks its message in this way, the believer finally then finds themselves in the situation where: “I am bereft of my works and offered my righteousness.”¹⁶ This programmatic for the character of the Church’s discourse, aware and attentive of its character as promise, as gift, is what Jenson takes to be the decisive criterion of the metatheological Reformation meaning of justification.

§2.1.3: Pneumatologically Deficient Models of Justification—Having outlined his reading of the Reformation’s hermeneutical doctrine of justification, Jenson also concerns himself with describing some common misconstruals of it. The most common, historically for Pietism, and especially for restorationist & revivalist Evangelicalism, but “for any of the zealous,” is to make faith as belief, as the subjective existential state of the believer, itself into some sort of criterion for the authenticity of the promise, consequently, into some sort of *work*. “If I do not believe, that is of course that,” says Jenson, “but to bring this fact into the proclamation as a condition of its application to me undoes the message as promise. Indeed, believing as a condition I have to fulfill is of all works the most frustrating and finally irrelevant.”¹⁷ To conjure up or manufacture some psychological, existential or emotional state, which is then taken to correspond to faith, disastrously on the precipice of faith as some sort of emotional-religious work, this effort is itself merely a particular religious contingency imposed upon the power of the Gospel, and thus not the Reformation doctrine of justification at all, despite its potential clothing in scriptural or religious language.

¹⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:292-293.

¹⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:293, emphasis emended.

A second misunderstanding, which has plagued the Catholic and Reformation dispute over justification, concerns what Jenson, along with the most recent ecumenical dialogues, calls its systematic-theological weight. Often, the Reformation has confused the doctrine of justification with the Gospel itself, and therein made a fatal mistake. The assumption has been that “adherence to the Reformation doctrine of justification is itself a sufficient condition of faithfulness.” But this confuses “a set of instructions about the gospel with the gospel itself,” and elides their crucial difference. The Gospel is, most basically, an *account*—news—of what happened with Jesus in Israel. The Gospel then resounds in the Church and in the world as promise, surely, but the character of its discourse is not itself a direct and thematic part of its own story. “For this reason,” in Jenson’s diagnosis, “it is possible to dispute the hermeneutic doctrine of justification while in fact proclaiming the gospel according to its intention or to loudly maintain that we are justified by faith alone while never speaking the gospel at all.”¹⁸ In an autobiographical instance, Jenson describes his own realization of the revolutionary ecumenical import of this distinction:

For a central case: We are justified by faith is *not* the gospel. It is a doctrine *about* the gospel—the gospel itself is a *narrative* that makes a promise, the story of Jesus in Israel. Nor is justification by faith the one doctrine by which the church stands or falls; it is one of a number for which that might be claimed. And when preachers...try to derive the whole life of the church from this doctrine—or as it likely will be said, from ‘the gospel’—the necessary result is biblically untethered preaching, trivialized liturgy and, perhaps most disastrous, culturally accommodated ethics and church practice.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:293.

¹⁹ Jenson, “Reversals: How My Mind Has Changed.”

Jenson elaborates on the distinction between the *Gospel* as such and the *doctrine of justification*: “to suppose that adherence to the Reformation doctrine of justification is itself a sufficient condition of faithfulness...is to confuse a set of instructions about the gospel with the gospel itself...The gospel is a story about Jesus and us, not a linguistic or existential stipulation.”²⁰ The implication of this distinction opens up a whole sphere of ecumenical possibility. Traditional Reformational theology had simply assumed that the Roman Church had forsaken the Gospel when at Trent they officially denied the doctrine of justification as the Reformers had formulated it. With the appropriate distinction in place, it is possible to see how the Gospel may be—and is—mutually affirmed, while the particular metatheological doctrine *about* the Gospel that takes the name of justification remains an intra-ecclesial discussion about legitimate theologoumena.²¹

²⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 293.

²¹ The biblical distinction between the Gospel itself as news—as such—and the doctrine of justification as an interpretation *about* the Gospel in its particular character as *good* news, with its implications *for us*, is seen with most crystal clarity in 2 Timothy 2:8: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the lineage of David—that is my Gospel” [Gk: Μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐγγεγενημένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ, κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου:] and in the *locus classicus* of 1 Corinthians 15: “Now I would remind you, friends, of the Gospel that I gospelized among you, which you received, in which you stand and through which you are being saved...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was resurrected on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he was seen by Peter [Cephas] and the twelve...” it is the *narrative content itself* that is clearly the direct referent of “Gospel” that Paul admonished his flock to recall; it is a derivative consequence of the event of the proclamation of this Gospel content that is then “also” “through which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I evangelized among you...” [Gk: Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐστήκατε, δι’ οὗ καὶ σώζεσθε, τίνι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν εἰ κατέχετε, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ εἰκὴ ἐπιστεύσατε. παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη, καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ, εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα...]

The confusion between a particular doctrinal theologoumenon about the character of the Church's discourse and the Gospel itself has further obfuscated what is meant by "works" or "actions."²² In a recent book, where Jenson explores both the beneficial and the reductionist uses of quintessential Reformation slogans, Jenson describes the problem of uncertainty in what the Reformation meant to exclude by its formula: justification by faith alone apart from works. What does works intend to exclude exactly? In Jenson's narration, the invocation of this slogan by the Reformation catalyzed the very legitimate Catholic response: do you mean even apart from Baptism and the Eucharist, in the performance of which we do many "works"?

Jenson describes the counter-concern in stark terms: "The elements do not after all get on the table by themselves nor does God speak the consecration from heaven. Nor yet is the neophyte baptized without the exertions of a baptizer." For that matter, the Gospel word itself is not spoken without the proclamation of the preacher. Human action conducts the message. Nor does the preacher preach unless they are sent. The mission of the Church does not occur without bearers of the mission. All of this also belongs to the sphere of human activity even if it is *also* God's work, or perhaps precisely because it is

²² Jenson does not exculpate himself from what he now argues are Reformational misunderstandings: "In my first years as a seminary teacher of systematic theology, I dragged seminarians through some seriously convoluted reasonings trying to explain—I suspect mostly to myself—why 'We are justified by faith apart from works' was not itself a law, a demand for a new work label led 'faith.' Only when I became deeply involved in ecumenical dialogue did it occur to me that indeed it is law, and that this is good, if only we correctly identify for *whom* it lays down a rule"; "We do indeed need the slogan of 'justification by faith apart from works.' But whenever we are moved to invoke it, we need to stop and ask ourselves what exactly we on this occasion propose to do with it. I have often enough gone astray in my own use of the slogan, in the classroom, the pulpit, and in print..." Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 11-12, 21.

God's work *for creatures*. According to Jenson, the responsible parties of the Reformation responded by "indignantly rejecting the accusation," but then the history of Protestantism can be read, in one way, as the "confirming of Catholics' fears, steadily diminishing the role of the congregations' and celebrants' service in the life of the churches, often explicitly for fear of works."²³ The distinctions here are crucial. A doctrinal slogan like justification by faith alone, untethered from other proper considerations, easily degenerates into a shibboleth that potentially even undermines what it was originally intended to uphold. For Jenson, the authentic deployment of the slogan about justification is that, "when God judges us righteous, he has final regard not to acts we can identify as ours, but to his own work for us, which is ours by faith." This decisive affirmation does not, however, exclude actions, or even law, as Luther would later argue, against Agricola and in his Catechisms, from their proper sphere in the life of the Church.²⁴

§2.1.4: A More Fully Pneumatological Model of Justification—When the three historical spheres of interpretation under which justification has been employed have been properly distinguished and understood, Jenson does not think that justification any longer betrays significant enough reason for churchly division, despite lingering confusion that these three questions are the same one and so are still leveraged against churchly convergence by "confessional fundamentalists within both communions."²⁵ To leave it at that, however, would be insufficient. It would preclude the possibility of systematic intelligibility and

²³ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 9-10.

²⁴ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 12-13.

²⁵ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 16.

interrelation between the various questions, each of which arose in their context due to pressing existential and cultural concerns. So Jenson articulates the status of the question thusly: “Theology’s problem has always been how to affirm *at once* the *gratuity* and the *reality* of the righteousness or holiness that God gives in the church.”²⁶ Western Christian theology has oscillated between these two poles over most of its history, with various parties having been caught up in the movement.

The recognition of gratuity has been, in Jenson’s assessment, ecumenically resolved in its decisive characteristics at least: “One the one hand, I in no way deserve or earn this gift...I am and will be righteous because God justifies and will justify me, and that is an end of the matter.”²⁷ This can be taken as consensus, enshrined in the words of one Catholic-Lutheran dialogue: “The central point in which both parties agree involves both an affirmation and a negation. The affirmation is that ultimate trust for salvation is to be placed in the God of Jesus Christ alone...The negation is that trust in God alone...excludes ultimate reliance on our faith, virtue or merits.”²⁸

To the other pole, the question lingers: “But if, on the other hand, my own faith, virtues, or merits—that is to say, I myself in my religious and moral life—have no grip on this gifted righteousness, how is it *mine*?” Scripture does use juridical imagery (among others!) to describe the process of righteousness, and so “[o]ne must grant Protestantism’s typical insistence that the language of justification in Scripture is juridical language, so that the righteousness of which

²⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:294, emphasis added.

²⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:294.

²⁸ Citing George Lindbeck, “Justification by Faith,” *Partners* 6 (1985): 8-9.

it speaks is righteousness established by God's judicial action." By contract, juridical imagery is only one dimension of the biblical imagery of righteousness. And even so, a judicial declaration still involves and affects the sentence, who subsequently has to "live out" and conform to the sentence. Thus, "Protestant doctrines of [merely] 'forensic' justification...seem always on the verge of making this righteousness fictional. Does God judicially declare believers righteous even though he knows they are not? Is justification something like a presidential pardon granted for political reasons?"²⁹

The unity between these three questions, along with the resolution of the two poles of justification, Jenson takes to be located in a more fully developed trinitarian theology of justification, with more attention especially to the liberating role of the Spirit. Following the tradition, Jenson advocates an ecumenical resolution that more thematically recognizes the role of each triune person in their joint work of justification. The event of justification is a triune act by which God remains faithful to Himself and to His own Holiness in the reconciliation and communion with sinful creatures. As the Father issues the declaration of justification as an originating and categorically gratuitous decision, so the Spirit, as the eschatological reality of accomplished justification, completes this work as a real and authentic work in creatures, the concrete fulfillment of which is given in Christ. The act is one in the *perichoresis* of the Divine Life.

The role of the Father represents the gratuity: "Justification as an Act of the Father is an absolute beginning, and uninitiated initiative. God the Father mandates and defines righteousness; the fact is underivable and always

²⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:294.

unprecedented”³⁰ (*fons et origo*). Jenson further elaborates the point in his gloss on *Song of Songs*, where he discusses the sheer declaration of beauty of the beloved by the lover: “In Paul’s language of justification, we are justified by God’s sheer declaration, You are justified. Translating, we can say we are beautiful by God’s sheer declaration, You are beautiful. Yet since God does not lie, doctrines of merely ‘forensic’ justification, which do appear to teach that God *says* we are what he knows we are *not*, have only been sustained by themselves unsustainable conceptual contortions.” Even there, however, Jenson remarks how we can not remain with imputation, as the act of the Father: “The dilemma cannot be resolved so long as we, however subliminally, think of God in too little Trinitarian a fashion.”³¹ This particular recognition conforms to the sheer gratuity emphasized in Reformation discourse, as well as brings outs the relationship between justification and predestination, to which Jenson often returns, while, further, the interrelation and unity between *all* the dimensions of salvation delineated in the *ordo salutis*. Here, that is, we run up once more against the limiting notion in Jenson’s theology: the relation of the primordial decision of God, God’s own Being and God’s own Being for and with us as His People: “God’s decision to affirm us, his decision of love, is God’s very decision to be God, the decision in which God is this God...The decision of justification is thus absolute.”³² This thematic will become the central one in subsequent chapters in relation to Jenson’s construal of the Person and Work of the Spirit. With regard

³⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:300.

³¹ Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 45, emphasis emended.

³² Jenson, *Story and Promise*, 121.

to justification, nevertheless, the meaning of justification as originaive decision—patrologically—correlates to Paul’s particular historical problematic.

Then there is the achievement of the Son in the divine act of justification. “Justification as an act of the Son is the *event* of righteousness. We are righteous as the risen Christ’s word is spoken and believed, as the word that he is occurs among us.”³³ That this is event, and a bespeaking of Christ’s word, means it is true in its very speaking. This is what the Reformation has emphasized about justification as a complete work of the Son that comes to us and is done for us. Thus, the christological aspect of the triune work of justification correlates to the Reformation’s problematic about the doctrine’s hermeneutical status. But to leave it there, however, to leave it with christology, with a pneumatological deficiency in interpretation, has been the great limitation of the Reformation at many crucial theological loci, not just this one.

What is required, lastly, is more robust recognition of justification as the work of the Spirit:

Justification as an act of the Spirit is the achieving of righteousness. That the Father’s speaking of the justifying Word actually creates faith in us, detaches us from bondage to our old selves and moves us toward the Kingdom and its justice, is the work of the Spirit’s eschatological liberating. The sending of the Spirit is the movement of our righteousness, is its eschatological liveliness without which it could not be God’s own righteousness. And again we must even say that the Spirit is the movement of God’s *own* righteousness, insofar as this too is not a timeless fact about God but rather a character of his liveliness.³⁴

³³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:300.

³⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:300.

The Spirit is the eschatological actuality of justification as it is an event with and in human creatures. The Spirit liberates the creature—as in other ways through his other gifts—to receive His own Holiness, which as divine transcends any finite creaturely capacities as such. The Spirit perfects the reality that human sinners stand righteous before God as a declaration of the Father and as enacted in the Son. To conclude: “What then is justification?” in Jenson’s rendering. “It is the underived event of communal faithfulness in God, as this is set free by the Spirit and is actual in the reality of the incarnate Son. That we are justified means that this history is not only God’s but is made to be ours also. And in *this* doctrine of justification, the three earlier discussed do come together,” the coherence of the authentic insights of justification (1), (2) and (3). For my particular purposes, that of exploring the pneumatological dimension of Jenson’s theology, we see in the work of justification, as we have seen in other of the Spirit’s work, that the Spirit’s particular role in the economy of the triune God is to perfect the End, to liberate for the culmination and to free creaturely reality for its divine destination.

§2.2: SCRIPTURE

The Spirit works amidst the People of God to coalesce the living communication of the Word of God through Prophets and Apostles into normative, written Scripture. Scripture represents the freedom of the assemblage of these seemingly unruly and disparate texts to be the Word of God written. The Spirit thus liberates human words—through the process of their integral human context of generation, composition, textualization, transmission, selection and canonization—from the vicissitudes of history in order to be deputized, to be able to bear God’s message. Scripture as the Word of God for

contemporary readers, however, cannot fully occur without the enduring accompaniment of a viva vox, a living voice; therefore Scripture as Word of God must be accompanied by the inspiration of the Spirit in personal, ecclesial interpretation.

Along with sacrament, as conduit of grace, has also gone in the Church's discourse "word." Along with the visible word, there is the written word. Scripture is another important sphere of the Spirit's work for Jenson's theology. Scripture represents one of the Spirit's special gifts to the Church and to the believer, as the textual locus to which the Church is called to recurrently return in its life, its theology, its service and its proclamation. Here also the Spirit liberates and sanctifies creaturely reality. Witness and testimony from the Prophets and Apostles are freed, through their transmission and then subsequently in their stability, to be faithful loci of the Word of God, the occurrence of which among the People of God constitutes their unique reality in the world. Pneumatology thus becomes decisive also for Jenson's doctrine of Scripture, in the whole broad sweep from inspiration to transmission to textualization to canonization to contemporary preaching, interpretation and reception. Fundamentally, "the Bible is the Spirit's book, who may do with it what he will; and the church as [the Spirit's] prophet knows what that is."³⁵ In a more broadly trinitarian context, Jenson says, the "Author of Scripture is the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,"³⁶ and thus attention to the trinitarian interpretation of Scripture will be vital. The pneumatological dimension of the understanding of Scripture,

³⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276.

³⁶ Braaten and Jenson, "Introduction: Gospel, Church, Scripture" from *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), xi-xii.

however, Jenson takes to have been significantly overlooked in much of the history of the doctrine of Scripture. It must thus be recovered.

“In Western theology of the Trinity the Holy Spirit usually comes up short,” Jenson says, playing on a standard—and somewhat artificial—trope. Scriptural interpretation, therefore, must now be animated by a “concern for a full-fledged doctrine of the Spirit....” A fundamental reason is that without “the activity of the Spirit the hermeneutical chain that links us with the mystery of divine salvation in the Word made flesh is broken.” It is the Spirit who makes the canon of Holy Scripture from a collection of ancient near eastern texts. “Without the Spirit the gospel is only a myth invented by the friends of Jesus to keep a good thing going....” In this respect, Jenson calls the Spirit, the “great communicator,” who forges the link between historical communication, transmission and text and the Divine Word. So, the Spirit is “the sine qua non of reclaiming the Bible for the church as canonical Scripture and of recovering true authority in the church.”³⁷ As the Spirit’s book, Scripture fulfills two particularly distinctive roles in the Church, according to Jenson’s larger doctrine that draws special inspiration from the work of the Lutheran scholastics. Scripture provides the norm of theological judgments made in the understanding, interpretation and speaking of the gospel³⁸ and the reading of Scripture, because it is a sphere of the action of the Word of God, becomes a reliable practice in the cultivation of faith.³⁹ Scripture thus fulfills both a regulatory function for the Church’s discourse and is itself a means by which the Spirit imparts grace.

³⁷ Braaten and Jenson, “Introduction: Gospel, Church, Scripture,” xi-xii.

³⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:26-33.

³⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:273.

§2.2.1: Scripture's Role in the Church—In the first case—which should not detain me long, since it relates more properly to theological method than to pneumatology—Scripture functions as norming criterion in the Church's theology. The regulatory function of Scripture in the Church's theological discourse enables “an identity of the sermon's message with that of the prophets and apostles.”⁴⁰ In the Church's task of speaking the Gospel about the Triune God, the Scriptures guarantee the continuity of witness with the apostolic message. Something must fulfill this role, in Jenson's view of things, because theology's task is inalienably hermeneutical and diachronic. As it is so, it is threatened by the potentially distorting, corrupting or centrifugal forces that threaten any communication over time and across the world. “In any living tradition, appeal can be made from one authority to another. In the continuing tradition of the gospel, such challenges are routine.” Scripture occupies a place, “*once a canon of Scripture is in place*” at all, that is the final and decisive location of authority in the Church (*norma normans non normata*). This is so for Christian Scripture because of the unique role of the Apostles in communicating the fundamental Gospel message, and, in turn, because Scripture is the stable, documentary witness to the Apostles. In controversy in the Church, “such challenges” to the interpretation of its message, “can continue until we come to the apostles” as the original, historical bearers of that message: “if the challenges go on long enough and become strenuous enough, we will be driven there” ... “if our perplexity becomes so extreme as to need such authority.” We come there to the end of the historically mediated pattern of authority in the Church “For...if the apostles did not get it right, no one ever did,”

⁴⁰ Jenson, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, 61.

Jesus himself having left no writings directly. So “when we arrive at the apostles, we have no place else to go, for...there can be no witness in any sense between them and the Resurrection.”⁴¹

In the second case, as a catalyst of faith, Jenson argues that the crucial relation of the Church to Scripture should be that the Bible’s peculiar rhetoric is privileged in the Church. The gift of the Spirit to the Church or the believer here is the gift of a linguistic shape by which to cultivate faith. The distinctive nature of the Church depends on the occurrence in her life of the Word of God. Scripture is one abiding locus of the Word of God in the Church. For Jenson, however, that does not mean that Scripture is “alone” the locus of such. Jenson loosely adopts Barth’s framework of the threefold form of the Word of God.⁴² The Son himself, the eternal logos, is paradigmatically the Word of God as “what God says to himself, to be eternally the triune God...the word-event reported in the Gospels.”⁴³ God as his own conversation is the fundamental communication, indeed fundamental Reality as such. The second, and derivative, referent of the Word of God is the living Word, the active Word, the occurrence of the Gospel as God’s Word through us in the human community. It is the living echo of the Gospel (*viva vox evangelii*). It is the proclamation of the Church. It is the event by which, “the triune conversation opens to creatures to be the converse of God within a historically actual human community.”⁴⁴ These two prior and precedent forms of the Word of God are the presupposition and foundation for the Word of

⁴¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:26-27.

⁴² Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1.1.88-124.

⁴³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:270.

⁴⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:270-271.

God textualized, for the Word of God made stable communication in Scripture—a determination that can be clearly seen from the predominant use of the phrase “Word of God” or “Word of the Lord” as found in Scripture itself. For the primary referent of the occurrence of the Word of God or the Word of the Lord in Scripture itself is a living, interpersonal communication, which God has adopted as His own, and not, first and foremost, a text by itself.

Because Scripture functions within this threefold form of the Word of God in the Church, the fundamental doctrine about Scripture is not an ontology of the text, but a liturgical and devotional mandate: “Let the Scripture be read, at every opportunity and with care for its actual address to hearers, even if these are only the reader” or, stated as follows, “privilege this book within the church’s living discourse.” The most important reality about Scripture, for Jenson, then, is not a doctrine *about it*, but rather the simple enactment that “its language and stories and sayings otherwise pervade...” the Christian community. Even in a more polemical barb, Jenson will say that, “The churches most faithful to Scripture are not those that legislate the most honorific propositions about Scripture but those that most often and thoughtfully read and heart it.”⁴⁵ Let Scripture be read in the Churches, so that the Word of God may resound through her life, worship, mission and service.

Of course, this form of the Word of God in Scripture, precisely as text, does bear special significance, even over and above the occurrence of the Word of God as proclamation and interpersonal communication, which the Triune God appropriates. Its significance as text is precisely its stability and objectivity over

⁴⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:273.

and against more spontaneous communication. In free communication, the potentiality exists for someone to simply dissolve and deluge a communicative word into the expression of their own subjectivity. Scripture as Word of God represents “an external word, a word that cannot be absorbed into the hearer’s subjectivity. Scripture’s character as text is a specific such objectivity...”⁴⁶ I can often and readily cajole or manipulate interpersonal communication for my own purposes. Certainly a similar thing can be done with the interpretation or application of a text, and those of a certain deconstructionist persuasion often vainly attempt to collapse the text itself into such. But there the text stands, nevertheless; there it abides as what it is, in its fixed form, in its intrinsic integrity, regardless of any hermeneutical campaign I wage upon it.

§2.2.2: *The Spirit Forges Scripture*—Regardless of their intrinsic importance, however, both the primordial liturgical, devotional mandate to read Scripture in the Church and the objectivity of the text *do* solicit the ontological question: what is it about *these particular books* that they should be so read? Why these and not others? It is at this point that the relation of the Spirit to Scripture becomes especially crucial. The special role of the Spirit in Scripture forges the sacramental relation whereby these particular texts resound as the living voice of Christ speaking to His Church. The Spirit frees this peculiar book, as the unwieldy collections of texts that it is, to be the bearer of the Divine Word, particularly in its narrative form as a witness to the Gospel narrative, the long story of God with His People. He frees these texts to be one, coherent book, to be the book, as text and stable word, that tells the definitive Christian story. This is,

⁴⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:275.

of course, a peculiar sacramental relation. In the tradition, the relation of the Divine Word to Scripture often goes under the term *canon*. In a basic sense, “it must be the Spirit who frees the composition, editing, preservation, collection, and reading of certain texts by the church to be apt to be the risen Christ’s word to his church.”⁴⁷

§2.2.3: Excursus 2, Confusions of the Spirit’s work in Scripture—This sacramental relation, Jenson demurs, must also be properly understood in the way in which it manifests the particular characteristics of the Spirit and His work. There are a number of ways the inspiration of Scripture has been mischaracterized, he thinks. For the Spirit liberates and perfects what is human. The neglect of a robustly pneumatological doctrine of Scripture had led, first, to a “deleterious habit [which] is a disastrous false start that might even be regarded as sinful.” This habit concerns itself with what we as recipients perceive our need to be from Scripture—in our perceived religious quandary or in our perceived epistemological morass. Then subsequently, Jenson says, “we have recruited the Spirit to assure us that our supposed needs are satisfied.” Particularly the Protestant Church has perceived the need for some sort of absolute criterion of authority located in the text, especially once Scripture had become dislodged from its ancient place in the constellation between Creed—as articulation of the rule of faith, the decisive hermeneutical theory for Scripture—and personal episcopal interpretation—as living, active embodiment. To guard that authority, the perceived need was that Scripture as text, in itself, must be free from any and all kinds of error. This gives rise to the quintessentially modern form of

⁴⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276.

inerrancy, once Scripture as such came to bear the full burden of prolegomenal scaffolding to Christian claims through modernity and enlightenment. Jenson claims that inspiration has been “invoked to assure ourselves that [Scripture] satisfies this criterion” of total inerrancy and absolute authority. As a result, many “were willing to perform rather spectacular mental gymnastics” to assure themselves that any of the difficulties or tensions in Scripture did not undermine its categorical truth on any and every level of meaning, whether historical, scientific, narrational or theological.

Certainly, Jenson is not here suggesting a subjection of Scripture to currently fashionable scholarly theories or conventions, as others have done. He is well aware that “[s]tranger reversals of established and well-justified scholarly opinion have happened.” He is suggesting primarily, rather, that we must encounter the concrete phenomenon of Scripture as it actually presents itself to us and not torturously contort Scripture to fit certain abstractly (and only quasi-theologically) determined apriori commitments. Jenson diagnoses the tendency to think that Scripture must be free of error in any and every way as “in any case profoundly wrong” theologically. “We cannot recruit God to arrange what we think we need from Scripture,” is his diagnosis. Instead the fundamental question must be what specifically the Holy Spirit hopes to accomplish with the phenomenon of Scripture in fact provided, given what we know of the Gospel’s and the Creed’s Spirit. Since the Spirit of inspiration is God the Spirit, “we must not in quite this fashion tell him what to do.” Rather, “we must start with the doctrine of the Spirit, with what we know of his character and work, and then ask to what ends this particular Spirit would have provided the church with the

Scripture we in fact have, and how he would have gone about this provision.” The doctrine of Scripture, then, must be given a more fully trinitarian basis. With such a basis, we are even empowered to ask, “what [the Spirit] intends to do with any errors found in them.” To such a possibility, he proposes a retrieval of some of the tradition of the Church, alluding to Origen (see §5.2.5) and Chrysostom: “some of the Fathers had a theory that may not be so bizarre as it sounds at first: manifest errors and lacunae are there to trip up our penchant for exegetical simplicities.”⁴⁸ That is, the Spirit frees us from captivity to our own self-enclosed hermeneutical systems and from our predilection for neat and tidy infallibilities.

§2.2.4: *The Inspiration of Scripture in Historical Unfolding*—The work of the Spirit in providing the Scriptures for the Church, furthermore according to Jenson, has to be seen in its fuller scope. A broader scope has two dimensions. Both, internally, the process by which these particular writings came to be stabilized as text, and, externally, the relation of the Scriptures to the other works of the Spirit in the Church’s life have to be given fuller articulation. In the first case, Jenson does concur with classic Protestant doctrine that the sacramental relation between the Word of God as such, as God’s communication in the world (*verbum dei*), and the text (*scriptura*) is forged by inspiration of the Spirit. The inspiration of the Spirit, however, cannot be confined simply to the *writing* of texts as such, as in the classical teaching. This teaching, Jenson avers, represents a shackling of the Spirit. It forgets that fundamentally “the Spirit is freedom.” Such a doctrine both obfuscates the preparatory and antecedent process that shapes the actual writing of a text, and even more importantly theologically, it

⁴⁸ Jenson, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, 7-9.

makes “a sacramental relation between God’s speech” and the actual reading and hearing of the Scriptures in the Church “unnecessary and indeed impossible.” On the first point, the limitation of the Spirit’s work of inspiration to textualization as such has faced profound, seemingly insuperable difficulties, from the rise of modern biblical criticism and textual criticism, which have unearthed more complexity to the layers, composition, editing, collection and transmission of the Scriptures in general. On the latter point, the limitation of inspiration to Scripture as text dislodges the text from its living echo in the Church and occludes “the true mystery of Scripture’s living divine voice,” which is its reception by the Church and by the believer.⁴⁹

Jenson employs Proverbs 6:19⁵⁰ as an uncanny test case to illuminate his point about inspiration. For this particular example, he queries: “How indeed...can the productions of some civil servant in the Jerusalem court, in part cribbed from Egyptian models, be God’s wisdom for my life?” or was even God’s wisdom to Israel? This does not occur because the Spirit guaranteed that wisdom independently and in spite of any historical context, says Jenson. Rather, it occurs, “because the whole event, from that civil servant’s memorizing of Egyptian and other wise maxims in his youth to his rethinking them in maturity, to the accidents of collecting and editing and preserving, to the way in which we attend to the Old Testament reading some Sunday morning,” the whole event as a very human process in the world, “is drawn on by the Spirit’s freedom.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276.

⁵⁰ “There are six things YHWH despises...[among others] a lying witness who testifies falsely and one who sows contention in a family...”

⁵¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276.

Because the Spirit is ultimate freedom, because the Spirit can liberate what it may seem to us could not ever be liberated, for that reason the whole event here from production to contemporary reception can be recognized as the sphere of the Spirit's work. The text itself remains an objective touchstone of what the Spirit accomplished and is accomplishing. But that work itself must be seen in its broader sweep. Forgetting that the sacramental relation of Scripture with the Divine Word belongs to the freedom of the Spirit in the long scope of his gathering Israel and the Church together as the People of God has led certain streams of Protestant theology especially to false expectations. In the case of Scripture, the sacramental relation between the Divine Word and the human text, "carries all the baggage of historical conditioning and limitations inherent in millennia of writing and editing and collecting," precisely the baggage that can be and is explored by contemporary biblical scholarship.⁵²

§2.2.5: *The Inspiration of Scripture in the life of the Church*—The second expansion of scope that Jenson requires for inspiration is the relation between Scripture as canon and the other gifts and works of the Spirit in the Church. For "Authoritative Scripture," he claims, "functions not as an isolated text in separation from the church, but only in conjunction with the gifts of the Spirit in the life of the church, its apostolic confession of faith and its life-giving sacraments of baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper."⁵³ The separation of Scripture as such from the rest of the Spirit's work in the life of the Church has proved disastrous, in Jenson's assessment, not least for Scripture itself. The

⁵² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276.

⁵³ Braaten and Jenson, "Introduction: Gospel, Church, Scripture" from *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, xi.

Protestant Church, “had tended to draw too sharp a line between the Spirit’s work to give the church her Scripture and his work in other aspects of the church’s life.” This division cannot stand up to a basic consideration of Scripture itself, which tells us that the “Spirit moves and directs the whole life of the church, in all its variety and energy, and we should at least begin by supposing that such events as Paul’s needing to write ahead to the Roman Christians, and his faithfulness to the gospel when he did it, simply belong to this whole sweep of the Spirit’s work—just as does whatever Paul said to the Roman faithful when he got there, that never become Scripture and about which we know little.”⁵⁴ The point connects back to the threefold sense of the Word of God elucidated earlier, and, in particular, Jenson’s insistence that the living communication of the Gospel (*viva vox evangelii*) provides the context and presupposition for Scripture in the narrower sense of the Word of God. The actual usage of the phrases Word of God and Divine Teaching in the New Testament itself amply and clearly demonstrate that this structure is in fact the order of the early church—of which Acts 4:31 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15 can function as paradigmatic examples respectively. The Protestant first identification of Word of God with Scripture as text has often served to obscure the manifestly biblical ecumenical point.

§2.2.6: *The Spirit in Scripture & Tradition*—A consideration of the full scope of the Spirit’s work in the Church through Scripture and other coordinated gifts, lastly, obviates for Jenson continued theological reliance on the

⁵⁴ Jenson, *On the Inspiration of Scripture*, 10-11.

Reformation slogan⁵⁵ “Scripture by itself” (*sola scriptura*). This is the seemingly indefatigable so-called problem of Scripture and Tradition. More narrowly, it is also the problem of the Christian canon as such. In consideration of this problem, differentiation must first be made in the semantic scope of the term Scripture as applied to the Christian Scriptures. Through an analysis of the historical situation of the Church, Jenson makes the often overlooked observation that clearly the Spirit uses different parts of Scripture *in different modes*. Thus, for Jenson, “parts of Scripture are Scripture in different ways.” We can see this foundationally in the different roles of Israel’s Scripture and the Apostolic Scripture. “[T]he canon of Israel’s Scripture is for the church a sheer given.” “Israel’s book is an underivable condition for the existence of [the Church].” This is more forceful than a “reception” of Israel’s book by the Church. And, indeed, the Church did not “appropriate” or “adopt” that book at all.⁵⁶ For that book itself is inextricably woven into the disciples own encounter and relation with Jesus and into their interpretation of the events they claimed happened with Jesus. As Jenson will put it in his pithy way, “The Old Testament was Scripture for the apostles and disciples before they were apostles and disciples.” These Scriptures are “just *there*, as a fact antecedent to [the Church’s] existence and foundational for its self-understanding.”⁵⁷ The Scriptures of Israel are themselves constitutive of the Church, since the very encounter of the Apostles with Jesus Christ occurs in the imaginative field shaped by those Scriptures, and indeed could not have

⁵⁵ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 5-8, for Jenson’s assessment of theological slogans in general.

⁵⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:30.

⁵⁷ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 14, 20.

occurred as it did without them. The earliest self-constituting exegetical act of the Church was the interpretation of Israel's Scriptures by what happened with Jesus. The Church does not exist without this act, and therefore cannot exist without thematic interpretation of those Scriptures.

By contrast, Jenson says, clearly what is called the New Testament or the Apostolic Scriptures did not, in the historical life of the Church, function in the same way *as* Scripture. The Spirit thus makes use of these two bodies of Scripture in different ways. The basic historical record shows us “the church perdured for over a century without a New Testament,”⁵⁸ and for a few more centuries without a determinatively fixed canon of the New Testament, as she also continues to make herself historically available today to cultures without direct translations of Scripture by her presence in mission, anterior to her translation of the Scriptures as text—except insofar, of course, as the text is inscribed on the hearts and embodied in the lives of the Church's missionaries. The Spirit's use of the Apostolic Scriptures, therefore, fulfills a different function in the life of the Church, and thus we must consider when and *how* it emerged to consider if anything else goes with it, to see if it is really or should be “alone.”

The Apostolic Scriptures, in Jenson's reconstruction, emerged at a particular point in the development of the Church's life: the threshold of the passing of the Apostolic generation. When the Apostles or those directly connected to their ministry were alive, they embodied in themselves the authenticity of Christian teaching and interpretation. At the passing of the Apostolic generation, however, the question arises as to where the Church should

⁵⁸ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 64.

look for criteria of Apostolic continuity, for authentic resonance with the originating Gospel message in history. Here is the role of the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) as text. Thus Jenson describes: “When the church found herself bereft of the Apostles, she was led—or so she believed—by the Spirit to gather those literary relics of the apostolic age in which she could recognize the authentic apostolic witness” to the Gospel.⁵⁹ “There is nothing viciously circular here; if the church had already forgotten the teaching of the apostles, she could not anyway have assembled a canon.”⁶⁰ To the question of sola scriptura, however, Jenson notes that the Apostolic Scriptures did not, in fact, emerge on their own. They co-emerged along with the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*) (→Creed), “a sort of communal linguistic awareness of the faith delivered to the apostles” in its elemental contour, and along with a sacramental role of churchly self-interpretation invested in a personal office (→Shepherding, Episcopacy). The trust that the Church places in the threefold pattern of communal faithfulness to its constituting message is itself trust in the “guiding presence of the Spirit.”⁶¹ At the juncture of the threshold of the passing of the Apostolic generation, “the Spirit...granted touchstones of the true gospel and just so institutions of the community’s historical self-identity. Three linked developments are...the formation of a specifically Christian scriptural canon of Old and New Testaments, increased attention to explicit statements of faith, and

⁵⁹ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 65.

⁶⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:27.

⁶¹ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 15.

the appearance of a sacramentally ordered church governance with special responsibilities for continuity of teaching and life: the episcopate.”⁶²

These developments have led to ecumenically conflictual tendencies: “Catholic theology is tempted to take these developments as unproblematic, Protestant theology to take them as illegitimate. Both temptations must be resisted,” if the Church is to fulfill its holistic mission.⁶³ The Catholic tendency must wrestle with the problem that these developments as institutionalizations are clearly somewhat incongruous over against what we know of the more charismatic and fluid life of the very earliest community of Jesus’s disciples—though the earliest Church itself, as Jenson argued about the work of the Spirit in Church Office, was not without order and structure. The Protestant tendency, either in its restorationist or biblicist iterations, must reckon with the problem that these developments were necessary for there to now be any Church at all. The retreat to Scripture by itself or even to the recovery of the earliest life of the Christian disciples is a retreat to saying the Gospel can not have been authentic after the Apostolic generation, which is tantamount to saying that there now cannot be any Church at all that has existed in diachronic continuity, against which the gates of Hell did not prevail. Thereby such a theology deprives itself of all the results of this development, notoriously including Scripture itself, since as *canon* it is one of these *very developments*.⁶⁴

⁶² Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 5; also Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 28.

⁶³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:24.

⁶⁴ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 32, advances the thesis thusly: “the canon without the creed will not serve to protect the church against perversion of the gospel, *and* neither will the creed without the canon. Perhaps even the two together will not finally serve without the third leg, a sacramentally constituted continuity of church governance.”

An analysis of this history leaves the slogan *sola scriptura* in tenuous position, concludes Jenson. To be clear, we need to understand what exactly the *sola* here intended to exclude. Some in the history of Protestantism have championed it as an exclusion of any creed or every churchly authority. Of course, this would wrench Scripture out of its ancient constellation that Jenson has described. Nor was this the actual position of the magisterial Reformers themselves, who adopted both the Creeds and modified forms of churchly structure. They adopted the Creeds under the theological justification that they are simply faithful distillations of Scripture's teaching, thus brining the Creedal tradition under the supreme authority of Scripture. But this move too has its difficulties. In the original sense, the Creeds are not merely summations of Scripture's teaching, but also an exterior critical theory for the proper theological reading of Scripture. The Creeds functioned as guarantees that one would read Scripture faithfully, in its broad sweep at least. To this point, Jenson adds the acerbic quip that "it is amazing how rigidly faithful to what is in fact creedal teaching groups who say they have no creeds often are, allowing less nuance than do those who recite the creed every Sunday."⁶⁵

The most frequent and prevalent deployment of the Reformation slogan seems to exclude "tradition": "it is widely supposed that the slogan affirms Scripture and denigrates tradition." Of course, this exclusion still remains ambiguous because there are manifold senses of "tradition" in the tradition, a distinction between Tradition, as the work of the Spirit, and traditions, as that

⁶⁵ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 65.

historical transmission which is not necessarily Divine.⁶⁶ There is also dispute about whether tradition constitutes an independent source of Christian teaching or only a necessary and subservient mediation of the one source, which is the Word of God. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding how one understands the proper role of tradition, if the slogan *sola scriptura* means to exclude tradition in any general or categorical sense, Jenson suggests this is incoherent. “The difficulty,” he says, “is that most of the books that make up the canon themselves came to pass by lengthy processes of community tradition, first of oral tradition and then of glossing, supplementing and editing texts. The documents’ selecting and collection into volumes understood as Scripture came similarly to pass.” Because of the fact that the emergence of the Scripture as text is ensconced within tradition, Jenson disputes any attempt to dichotomize between them absolutely: most bluntly and offensively phrased, “If we have no confidence in tradition under the leading of the Spirit, we can have no confidence in supposedly inspired Scripture.”⁶⁷ At the same time, the decision for a particularly shaped canon of Scripture necessarily cannot exclude at least *one* case of authoritative tradition. For a canonical list of either testament is not found within the text of Scripture itself. Thus it is clear that “The canon of Scripture...[as] a list of writings together with the instruction, ‘Take all these writings and none other as standard documents of the apostolic witness,’ is thus a dogmatic decision of the church. If

⁶⁶ Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: a Historical and Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

⁶⁷ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 66.

we will allow no final authority to churchly dogma, or to the organs by which the church can enunciate dogma, there can be no canon of Scripture.”⁶⁸

John Webster has recently advanced a sophisticated and searching critique of Jenson on precisely this matter. From the Protestant dogmatic perspective, Webster balks at Jenson’s “recent and rather startling account of the canon....” Webster reads Jenson as part of one larger drift in Protestant systematics towards “sophisticated theories of communal tradition and practice,” a tendency which he thinks undermines Christ’s and the Spirit’s Lordship over and against the Church by means of extrinsic criteria that challenge and confront the Church, especially Scripture. In Webster’s own account of Scripture and the Word of God, he himself is legitimately concerned with the integrity of the “the Word—faith—church nexus,”—in that particular order—which “for all its deep roots in classical Protestant dogmatics” has been undermined by such a drift. Webster counters that, “[s]uch theories are not doctrinally neutral...and it is precisely the doctrinal tug that they exert which makes the development of a distinctly dogmatic account a matter of some necessity.”⁶⁹ Webster reiterates his theme in the following prickly judgment: “Barth warned Roman Catholics around the time of Vatican II to beware lest they become liberal Protestants; my worry is that evangelicals will become catholicized Protestants who make the mistake of

⁶⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:27-28.

⁶⁹ John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 66.

thinking that the only ecclesiological improvement upon individualism and soul liberty is a rather ill-digested theology of the *totus Christus*.”⁷⁰

In the particular case of Jenson, as a classic example of this drift, Webster argues that an account of the canon as a “dogmatic decision of the church” “falls at just this point: it fails to give sufficient theological specificity to the notion of ‘decision’...” The outcome: “does not this subvert the very affirmation it seeks to make, by construing the church’s act of judgement as ‘a historically achieved commendation by the church as community to the church as association of persons’, and not as an act of deference to that which moves the judgement of the church from without? And how may the church resist its persistent desire to be in monologue with itself unless its ‘authoritative’ decision with respect to the canon is its avowal of a norm beneath which it already stands and beneath which it can only stand if it is to perceive the truth?”⁷¹ For Webster, the construal of the Church’s decision as active construction, as opposed to the Church’s deference to the command that is given to it from her Lord, cannot but conflate the human and the Divine Word, cannot but obscure the critical and reforming function of norms in the Church, cannot but untether the Church’s duty to truth and faithfulness from some kind of communal consensus or historical achievement of persons, rather than reception of Divine Communication. In this critique, Webster largely reads Jenson as belonging to the cultural-linguistic mode of recent theology and the drift toward ecclesiology as first theology, which, when

⁷⁰ John Webster, “The Visible attests the Invisible,” from Husbands and Treier, eds., *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 112.

⁷¹ Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 63-64: citing Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:27-28.

overemphasized, carries the potential difficulty of accounting for the unique nature of Christian claims and the difficulty of rescuing the Church from any of its own potential waywardness. Webster champions the hearing, the obeying and the reforming Church. Such a general attempt to vindicate the more classical Protestant dogmatic emphasis on the Church's primary relation to the canon as one of obedient reception and submission to the pattern of Divine Authority in its objectivity should be lauded, guarding as it does the collapse of churchly interpretation into text and the assumption that churchly tradition simply as such coincides with Scripture.

A general approbation does not settle the specific matter, however. In terms of the interpretation of Jenson's own theology, firstly: Webster simply does not reckon with the full scope of Jenson's description of both sides of the establishment of the canon. Particularly given the pneumatological location of Jenson's emphasis on churchly decision, Jenson refuses to bifurcate reception from decision. And, for him, the establishment of canon does evidence both aspects. As he says, "[i]f the Spirit creates the self-identity of the church through time, the process of canonization is also worked by the Spirit. There is thus a sense in which the *church does not make the canon but rather receives the canon.*"⁷² Jenson later describes both aspects of the canon decision in terms of Scriptures relation to the Word of God: "As Scripture is the Word of God simply understood, *it is God's saving gospel, which creates the church.* But the Scripture as such is a collection of writings put together *by* the church, some of

⁷² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:27, emphasis emended.

which were written *in* the church.”⁷³ For Jenson, therefore, both are true.

Scripture makes and constitutes the Church as the textual mode of the Divine Word among her. While Scripture as canon also represents the Church being led by the Spirit in its decisions about historical faithfulness to its originating Gospel message. The direction of thought will depend on the particular context of the question involved. Whether this is sufficiently robust for Webster, nevertheless, it is certainly a *theological* determination of canon and not *merely* an ecclesiological one. So his own expressed critique dissolves.

Webster’s general reading of Jenson, furthermore, is misleading. It places Jenson in the trajectory towards ecclesiology as first theology, which, at the extreme end, reduces to sociology and shares all of the liabilities of the consensus theory of theology in general.⁷⁴ While Jenson’s theology does tend toward a strong and high ecclesiology, Catholic in a number of aspects, the animating center of his theology is not ecclesiological. It is evangelical. His is a theology of the Word, a theology of conversation, a theology of the Gospel, before it is an ecclesiological theology. The Divine Conversation which opens up to creatures in the world through the Gospel grounds Jenson’s theology. Having the Gospel as the structural heart of his theology mitigates any criticism of it as ecclesologically over-assertive. The Gospel is the norm and objectivity of any and all theology for Jenson. It is, therefore, a misconstrual of the general character of his theology to accuse it of “ecclesial monologue.”

⁷³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:276, emphasis emended.

⁷⁴ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:12-13 and note 19.

§2.2.7: *The Spirit & the Canon*—Nor does Webster’s critique and then counter-proposal really solve the material question. Certainly it is salutary to re-affirm Scripture as norm beneath which the Church already stands in any of its decisions as the objective criterion of its faithfulness, witness and truth, insofar as Scripture is the textual mode of the singular Word of God in the world. To leave it at that, however, neither reckons with the basic historical realities by which the canon arises in the Church nor prevents the lapse into an ecclesial deism. Most fundamentally, the reality with which Webster’s critique has not still reckoned—and the crucial weakness of all Protestant theology, despite its manifold insights for authentic reform—is that Scripture nowhere internal to itself prescribes its own canonical list, nor explicitly delimits its own precise scope. Establishing a canon in the Church, therefore, could never be *merely* a matter of reception of the text as such—to reverse the critique. It would have to be a delimitation given and governed by the Spirit, one which occurs in the Church’s life outside of the text as such. That is, it would *have* to be a matter of *tradition*. Without an integration between some notion of the work of the Spirit in the enduring life of the Church in its proclamation, service, mission, witness and worship and the work of the Spirit in giving Scripture objectively to the Church, it would be difficult to understand the entire history of the early Church. Jenson describes the situation thusly: “...there was no New Testament for the first 150 years of the church...The use of sola scriptura to enforce ‘not tradition’ is thus a mere oxymoron, but for all that has done widespread damage in the life of the Protestant churches, fostering the delusion that we could ignore the centuries of theological reflection and debate that actually join us to the primal church,

without loss of access to Scripture itself. The church received the New Testament as a controlling *part of* her tradition, not as a substitute for it.”⁷⁵

The good and necessary recognition that the Church receives the canon as the Word of God spoken to it, “does not contravene the commonsensical point just here to be made,” about the historical reality of the Church: that the Church took 60 or 70 years to write all its Apostolic Scripture, 30 or 40 more years to develop the general structure of its canon and a few more centuries to generate a definitive list that corresponds to the final circumscription of that canon. In the meantime, of course, the Church perdured, conducting its life, service and mission. Webster’s critique and counter-proposal have overwhelming difficulty accounting for this reality. The question about ecclesial deism, then, is the question about *how* the Church goes about receiving the canon as Webster suggests. What does it look like? What is the creaturely and ecclesial side of this event? Does God simply give Scripture to his Church in the Apostolic reception of Jesus Christ and then leave it at that, absconding from the interpretive challenge surely to arise in the flux of history? Simply to assert that the Church only receives the Word of God does not say *how* that actually happens in ecclesiological life—a general difficulty with Protestant ecclesial genericism. If a historical decision of the Church, as the occurrence of the Spirit’s freedom within her diachronic life to guide her into all truth, to prevent the gates of Hades from prevailing against her, cannot itself be reconciled with an event of faithful reception of Christ’s command *to* his Church, over and against his Church, it is difficult to see how *any* new decision in the Church could be considered faithful.

⁷⁵ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 66-67, emphasis emended.

Revisionist theology has simply acquiesced here, and said yes. No churchly decision can have determinate authority. Therefore, there can be no final dogma, nor decisive interpretation of Scripture, nor even definitive canon itself.

Traditional Protestant dogmatics cannot follow this route, however, because of a material story within Scripture itself: the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. There Scripture as text tells the very story of an ecclesial and creaturely gathering having rendered at least one decision which does indeed coincide with the reception of the Spirit's Lordship over and against the Church. To the concern about the proper interpretation of the Gospel, as it related to gentile inclusion into Israel's covenant because of Jesus, the assembled Apostles reach a decision which both "seemed good to us" and "seemed good to the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶ Their decision, the text recording this event thus regards as an event of the Spirit's guidance of the Church. Because of that recognition, this decision can be disseminated by Paul, Silas and Timothy as authoritative teaching (τὰ δόγματα!) "for the people to obey"⁷⁷—a obedience that would only have been authentic had the decision of the Apostolic gathering itself been the Word of the Lord given by the Spirit: the biblical basis for the entire concept of "dogma" all together. The response could be that this decision itself is recorded in the text, and thus does not necessarily recognize any such decisions outside Scripture as text. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how this passage was not intended to inspire a more general pattern of the Church's life after the era which is recounted in the

⁷⁶ Acts 15:22-35.

⁷⁷ Acts 16:4.

text—including that of deciding on the canon itself—since the necessity of such decisions would only continue.

§2.2.8: *The Spirit, Interpretation & Magisterium*—The other difficulty with Webster’s cavil that Scripture as canon must simply be received in the Church—a difficulty with Scripture alone narrowly interpreted—is the problem with the assertion of a text. Earlier I mentioned Jenson’s affirmation of the objectivity and stability of Scripture as the textual mode of the Word of God, even against those who would simply collapse text and interpretation. That emphasis abides, but also does not sufficiently describe the difficulty of interpretation in relation to text. While a text has an intrinsic objectivity to it, while it does manifest itself as a particularly contoured structure of signs that opens up a defined sphere of possible meaning—and not an anarchy of meaning, if it is intentionally composed—within the sphere thus generated, *interpretive pliability* is also a possibility, indeed an inevitability. Within such interpretive pliability, the adjudication of alternative strategies of interpretation is a matter of profound struggle. This recognition does not simply collapse text and interpretation—as with some deconstructionists—for that would simply be doing violence to the text, demolishing its contour, leveling its environment, as the particular constellation of stable signs that it in fact is.

Nevertheless, the decisive insight of the whole trajectory of hermeneutics, to which deconstruction is indebted, is that human language, in most cases, defines spheres of possibility, ones that morph over time and across culture, and not strictly one to one correlations, as with, say, mathematical symbols. Within the sphere of possibility lies, along with the power of surplus, playfulness and

abundance, the potentiality for confusion.⁷⁸ Thus I can bend and finagle and manipulate that sphere. With a text, there cannot be an argument back at me. The text cannot speak for itself *in that sense*. It cannot retort that I have misinterpreted it. It cannot riposte that I am distorting it. A text, even in its objectivity, lacks a subjectivity over and against my personal agency to do with it what I will. What is needed is another *person*. In this way, Jenson reasons, a text “merely as such cannot defend itself against its readers....” What is required for the legitimacy of the text’s objectivity is something beyond it, something personal: “if the text itself is in any degree to adjudicate between proposed interpretations, some living, personal reality must maintain the text’s independence.”⁷⁹ Nor should Christian theology be surprised at this, or accept it merely as an insight of hermeneutical speculation. For, on its own terms, that of the Triune God, personal reality is fundamental reality; the Word, for Christian theology, is not merely the objective word but the inalienable personality of the Son in relation to the Father and the Spirit. In the beginning was the Word, not the text.

Because of this situation, says Jenson, some—my overzealous and flailing deconstructionists—have recently despaired of interpretation all together. Since “the interpreters individually or in association [cannot] make this defense” of the text, since they are themselves the problem...it is...in this situation that recently tempted some theorists to think that interpretations cannot at all be adjudicated

⁷⁸ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 62: “But how can the fixity definitive of a Scripture be independent of fixity of language? It is possible only if we again trust the Spirit. We must trust the purposes of the Spirit both in the history that leads us to the dual text, and in the problem with which he thus leave us.”

⁷⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:39.

by the texts they interpret.” Of course, the radical form of this despair entirely neglects the text as object: “thus there are facts about any actual text that no interpreter can ignore and sustain its claim to be interpretation of that text rather than some other,”⁸⁰ hence doing violence to the particularities and specifics of a given text. “If now we ask,” in response to the problem, “who is to defend a biblical text against its churchly interpreters...[the] final answer is that the Spirit must do so,” of course.

As in all cases, however, since the interpretive defense of Scripture has creaturely participants in mind, the question is *how* the Spirit does this. This work of the Spirit must also have a creaturely dimension. This is the theological determination of a “teaching charism” in the Church. Some person or association of persons is needed to represent “the church as church over against the church as a certain number of conjoined persons.” And this act of the Church itself must have a location and specification: “the church must have a voice with which to speak for herself to her own members.” Biblical authority is thus “not possible apart from a voice for the church as community speaking to the church as association, that is, in the church’s own language, apart from a teaching office, a magisterium.” Jenson affirms this is a necessity, with the qualification that, “[t]o affirm this, we need not yet commit ourselves about a mandated or appropriate *location* of teaching authority,”⁸¹ the location of which has probably become one of the most ecumenically contentious matters.

⁸⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:39.

⁸¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:40.

For theologically and creedal serious Protestant systematics, the sphere of teaching office has been the location where the slogan Scripture alone was really intended to apply. The phrase Scripture alone was never intended by the original Reformers to apply to “tradition” or “creed” indiscriminately, in the incoherent sense. The actual role of this phrase in Reformation polemics, Jenson says, was intended to undercut, not tradition as such, but directed “against any finally decisive *magisterium*, any final teaching authority in matters...which are necessary to salvation.” So while Councils, the Fathers, the Creeds, the Doctors of the Church, and even the Popes, could potentially be authentic and salutary witnesses for Luther, if it came to the point where the rockbottom salvific teaching of the Gospel was at stake, none of these could function as decisive locations of teaching office on the matter—which is the main theological point of his infamous stand at the Diet of Worms. Particularly, for other Reformation thought, “there is to be no pastorate on the order of the papacy” in its absolute juridical and teaching authority, for “only Scripture is to have such a role.”⁸²

Jenson entertains a relatively higher degree of sympathy for this articulation of the principle of Scripture alone. This interpretation, however, still does not deal with the problem of the non-personal nature of Scripture as such an authority, and how precisely a *text* by itself exerts such a final authority over and against persons who interpret. Through the Spirit, certainly, but *how* does that work of the Spirit come about in the Church, particularly if there is a conflict between various teachers and interpreters of the Scriptures? Here Jenson raises a point of embryonic comparative theology to heighten the contrast. It is

⁸² Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 67.

precisely Islam, he says, that is the more authentic representative of the final interpretive authority as text or book, and not Christianity. In Islam, the Arabic of the Qur'an resounds in heaven, and is said to be with God in the beginning. The Word as text or book is thus here absolute. But this is precisely not the case in Christianity, where the Word "which is in the beginning with a personal God must just so be personal." In Christian faith, we are not most fundamentally "justified or saved by believing the Bible," but we are saved by the work of the person, Jesus Christ, in the Spirit. Indeed, the difficulty that Islam has of conceiving of a Personal or Embodied Qur'an, the Word as eternal Person and not merely objective text alongside God, has given rise to one potential interpretation in the history of "Christian theology to classify Islam as a Christian heresy."⁸³

What was initially plausible for the Reformers, however, has encountered significant historical difficulties. Since "the difficulty is that Scripture is a book, and thus cannot itself exert its own authority" the conundrum for and quagmire of subsequent Protestantism has been *who* will there be to exert this authority? Who will be teacher of Scripture and for Scripture on behalf of the Church? Notoriously fissiparous Protestantism has seemed to suggest that every individual believer is to be the *magister*—generally, in its more responsible forms, with Calvin's addendum as led by the testimony of the Spirit (*testimonium Spiritus Sancti*). So the Spirit speaking *through* the Scriptures *in* the individual

⁸³ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 68; for example, John of Damascus, *On Heresies*, 101 from *Writings* (FC, 37:153-160); for a profound discussion of the matter, from the historical, missiological and phenomenological perspective: Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 252-276: "Translatability in Islam and Christianity".

believer is that final personal authority. This is quite a plausible position, though I do not think it is directly and *prima facie* (that is without augmentative theologoumena) any more “biblical” than the idea of “office” necessarily.

But, in any case, we must also reckon with the history of effects that this position has resulted in uncontrolled proliferation of doctrines and churches on the basis of manifold individual interpretations. Even within the same movement, one pastor debates another pastor about an interpretation of some particular Scriptural ambiguity on the basis of their roles as magister, and a whole new church is formed. Communities schism; and the flock divides. Here Jenson also asks the pointed counter-question: whom does each individual believer teach then in the extreme case, only themselves? In other cases, a “decentralized magisterium” has been the assumed operation of much of Protestantism, but Jenson also surmises here, “with discouraging results.” In other cases, some Churches of the “Reformation have treated their theological faculties as magisterial bodies; most have with good reason given this up,” given the contemporary status of many theological faculties. Jenson asks the question historically: if the Reformers were convinced in their context of the authenticity of their interpretation of Scripture, who was it that actually carried the Reformation program and advocated personally for its implementation. Archbishops in Scandanavia, posturing for their own socio-political authority? University theologians in Germany, empowered by Princes with decisively their own agenda? The monarch in England, certainly for his own peculiar motives? Once various factions of the Reformation turned from a common object of reform

in the Catholic Church to consider each other, the difficulty of the question then became fully exposed.

For Jenson, this does not mean that “Protestantism can immediately return” to the magisterial locations of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches, only to say, negatively, that the use of the Scripture alone principle to avoid the question of the magisterium and its concrete location “to cover the disasters of Protestantism’s lack of a magisterium” is now patently observable as “an abuse,” which must be honestly confronted.⁸⁴ The location and parameters of the teaching office have been what has been and remains ecumenically contentious. The Protestant suspicion has been that this pattern “could set the teaching office adrift to define the gospel as whatever pleases its momentary holders,” and there have been actual occasions for such suspicion. “Sensitivity to this threat has notoriously made Protestantism uneasy with the posit of an authoritative magisterium.” The concerns about the specific operation of such an office do not, in Jenson’s final analysis, justify the obviation of the question in the general sense. For him, it has been decisively shown that it is only the “teaching office by which Scripture and dogmatic texts can assert themselves” and that “a teaching office is necessary if Scripture or dogma are themselves to exercise authority.” The conundrum, says Jenson, as with so many historical unfurlings in the life of the Church, can only be solved—if it is thus truly and authentically posed—in the freedom of the Spirit. It will only be if the Spirit liberates a teaching office to be a charism that such an office will be an “enunciator of the gospel’s diachronic identity,” an authentic defender of Scripture’s meaning and integrity, rather

⁸⁴ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 68.

“than a threat to it.” Only if the teaching office “is the instrument of God the Spirit” can it “be the defense of Scripture and existing dogma rather than a danger to them”⁸⁵ or an occultation or abuse of them. As a gift of the Spirit, the teaching office will be the freedom that is needed.⁸⁶

§2.3: TONGUES

To some believers, the Spirit gives the gift of speaking in tongues, which represents the freedom of language from its entanglement with sinful human cultures and oppressive structures of the past for the future harmonious discourse of the Kingdom. When the freedom of tongues is appropriately paired with the freedom of music to evoke the Kingdom, and authentically anchored in the Church’s Word and Sacrament, this practice can cease to be seen as an esoteric one for an anomalous, eccentric sphere of believers and instead be seen as one crucial aspect of the Spirit’s work in the global, ecumenical Church.

Jenson fears not to interpret one of the more controversial gifts attributed to the Spirit: that of speaking in tongues. With the rise of Pentecostal Christianity, in which this particular gift has played an exalted role, speaking in tongues has once again become a prominent, even daunting, ecumenical question posed to any theology of the Spirit. Ecstatic speech as such occurs in a number of religious contexts, and so is not necessarily a thematically Christian practice. Yet

⁸⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:40-41.

⁸⁶ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 68: “That is to say, we must trust that the Spirit guided the council, that one can put in the bishops’ mouths the formula with which the so-called apostolic council proclaimed its decisions...Generalizing, dogma rests on Scripture and creed *and* on what is now called the magisterium, an institution in the continuing life of the church that is credited with Spirit-led authority to discern the underlying scriptural and creedal truth. There is, to be sure, no ecumenical agreement about where such a teaching authority might be located...” citing Acts 15:28.

speaking in tongues clearly exercised an important role in the charismatic experience of the earliest Apostolic Church, and it has periodically recurred throughout her history, as Jenson says, “at various crisis times,” such that speaking in tongues even “has been treasured as *the* gift of the Spirit.”⁸⁷ Jenson takes an adventurous position. On the one hand, he repudiates any strict cessationist dampening. He decisively affirms the possibility and laudability of authentic tongue speaking. That does not mean, however, that Jenson will entertain a categorical endorsement. Any imposition of speaking in tongues as a necessity for believers, creating some sub-class of spiritually elitist Christians among their more mundane and common siblings, Jenson will not abide. Nor will he approve any separation of speaking in tongues from either its proper anchorage in Word or its anchorage in Sacrament, as if baptism in the Spirit could somehow be categorically divorced from baptism with water, as if any particular manifestation of a tongues gift was not an outflow of the original impartation of the Spirit to the believer in baptism.

§2.3.1: *The Spirit & the Freedom of Language*—Speaking in tongues, Jenson argues, does faithfully represent the Gospel and the Spirit, precisely in the Spirit’s proper ethos of freedom. Glossolalia represents a freedom from linguistic constraints and a freedom for primal ecstatic expression that are the works of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues becomes a freedom of utterance from linguistic ossification, traditionalism and the oppressive aspect of the past, insofar as it is not open to the movement from the future and insofar as cultural marginalization can potentially be mediated through the linguistic orchestration of society. The

⁸⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 57.

Gospel's Spirit is precisely such freedom and such future. In Jenson's phenomenology of the matter: "[o]ne speaks in tongues by deranging the semantic rules of language so that no world-coordinated articulation can occur; then the only thing communicated is openness to the future merely as such, abstract spiritedness."⁸⁸ Speaking in tongues—leaving aside for the moment the case of xenolalia, as most likely the authentic interpretation of the actual Pentecost Event in Acts 2—is a freedom over against the constraints of language. The structures of language are, of course, also a great achievement, as with many common societal structures and institutions. Linguistically, we share a world by agreeing upon common referents—or spheres of reference—of our linguistic symbols, thereby correlating phenomena in the world with communicative ways of mutually describing and interacting with those phenomena. The stability of our references—even in their gradual evolution—between symbol and world allow the particular symbol system to be shared with those around us, augmented, challenged, played with, exulted in, etc. Such a stability is all to the good, and particularly necessary to the wide sharing and the diachronic, intergenerational dissemination of something like a language.

§2.3.2: *Tongues Anticipate the Language of the Kingdom*—Any such stability, however, also has the potential to foreclose new possibilities over against what is already established. In pernicious cases, established structures even embed broader stratifications of power within their very linguistic orchestration. It would be exactly in this case that speaking in tongues is holy protest against the fallen earthly city on behalf of the righteous City of God, and

⁸⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 57.

thus insofar, the discourse of the Kingdom. Speaking in tongues, where and when it is *in fact* a gift of the Spirit, brings the freedom of the Spirit, from the Spirit's future, to the linguistic sphere of creaturely experience. By refusing to acquiesce to the structures as they are, but by bespeaking openness to the future, by bespeaking the promise that God "will make all things new,"⁸⁹ speaking in tongues represents the decisively eschatological and messianic orientation of Christian faith in hope, as embrace of the promised future. As Jenson describes, "[s]peaking in tongues was exactly language that almost ceased to be language by detaching itself from inherited rules and so from the need or ability to say anything about the given world. Speaking in tongues was an attempt to be the language of the angels, an experience of something like language that was life in the future fulfillment alone."⁹⁰ The association of speaking in tongues with the future fulfillment, with new creative possibilities, with Kingdom promises, perhaps offers one potential component of the interpretation why so many of the global poor have opted for Pentecostalism in this century past.

§2.3.3: *Tongues as a Pneumatological Correlate to Music*—Jenson, nevertheless, compares speaking in tongues to something that already goes on in more established churches: instrumental music. "Purely instrumental music is the sophisticated church's tongue speaking,"⁹¹ he analogizes. Speaking in tongues might be compared to linguistic music. The analog is that both evoke primordial, deeply existential dimensions of human experience. Music is thus also central for Jenson's theology insofar as it also anticipates the consummation.

⁸⁹ Revelation 21:5.

⁹⁰ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 5.

⁹¹ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 57.

Following Jonathan Edwards's vision of the Kingdom as a society sweetly singing antiphonic melody, Jenson describes the consummation of God's life with his people, under the aspect of beauty, as the great "Divine Fugue." In the "perfect harmony of the triune communal life," "the harmony of discourse taken for itself is its beauty...is music."⁹² So the "enlivening *telos* of the Kingdom's own life is perfect harmony between the conversation of the redeemed and the conversation that God is...The end is music."⁹³ This is the consummation that the Church anticipates in the beauty of its instrumental musical tradition. Thus, he proposes, speaking in tongues, for those so called, might function analogously to how instrumental music by itself already does in many Churches. It could function as prelude and postlude to the more concrete Word and Sacrament of the service and by doing so invoke the Gospel's Spirit upon the service and summon the vision of the Kingdom for the community.

§2.3.4: *The Anchorage of Tongues in Word & Sacrament*—Both instrumental music and speaking in tongues, however, cannot function by themselves alone in any thematic Christian liturgy. Thus they must be seen in the appropriate place as prelude, postlude or accompaniment. As Jenson explains, "[t]he notorious danger of this communication [primordial, existential] is that within it there is no way of identifying which spirit is invoked."⁹⁴ The characteristic specificity of the Gospel, its scandalous particularity, its narrational and aesthetic singularities, mean that its proclamation must belong decisively to the realm of the Word. The Church's worship must identify the One whom it

⁹² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:234-235.

⁹³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:369.

⁹⁴ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 57.

praises, and because of the nature of that One, it must do so by historical recollection, by word, by description, precisely by the continuity of language that belongs to historical tradition. The Church, decisively eschatological, does not live by eschatology alone. Because the Church celebrates events—Exodus and Resurrection—that occupy historical space, the Church must also necessarily be anamnestic, must have recollection, must be protologically determined, even where it also anticipates the final future that is promised. The two must go together. It is this recognition that distances Jenson somewhat from much of the rest of the recent theologians of hope and the shift towards eschatological theology that is one prevalent contemporary theological movement. While Jenson resonates with the basic theme of eschatological theology, this emphasis cannot be leveraged to relativize the past, nor as legitimization for a failure to see the Gospel’s eschatological fulfillment as occurring in dramatic continuity with the Gospel’s known history.⁹⁵ For this reason, Jenson cannot abide in the

⁹⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:239-240; Here Jenson will even criticize Moltmann, despite obvious affinities, because of his sense that Moltmann’s theology has gone in that direction. Jenson thinks that Moltmann’s eschatological theology has too severely relativized what the Church claims to know has already actually happened in salvation history, and so what will be dramatically continuous with the End that will come, with the result that Moltmann’s evocation of the coming Kingdom does not have enough material content, has lost its vision of *what* might be anticipated. Or, as he says in the case of Bultmann, “...there must be a way in which what will come ‘unexpectedly’ may nevertheless be told in advance. There must be a way in which the closure of death is anticipated, not merely in general but in anticipation of a determinate end.” ... “This is the point at which Rudolf Bultmann’s program breaks down. The future divested of all material dramatic specification cannot in fact be that to which authentic existence is open.” Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:67 and note 22. In winsomely autobiographical terms, Jenson further describes his relation to the eschatological shift: “The specific point of my departure from Bultmann is worth mentioning, since it continues to move my theology. Faith, said Bultmann, is ‘openness to the future.’ Good, but what is the content of that future? The Bultmannian answer had to be ‘openness to the future.’ One day this regress struck me as absurd, which left me with the abiding question: ‘What describable future does the gospel open?’ That is the root of my later labeling as a ‘theologian of hope’; though in fact I knew nothing about the movement until the book

Church's worship any instrumental music or speaking in tongues by themselves, any invocation of generic spirit that is not explicitly the Gospel's Spirit, any experience of the Spirit that is bereft of the Word. Such wordlessly divested practice in the worship of the Church occurs "[w]hen purely decorative visual arts, textless music, and abstract dance claim an independent place as language in the church"; in this case, "they represent in the church the gnostic enthusiasm that claims to be already liberated from the facts, from the conditions of this world, and to directly possess the fulfillment."⁹⁶ Such would be the case with speaking in tongues by itself, dislodged from Word and Sacrament, and gnosticism will be its perennial temptation. The Word and Spirit must go together. For the Spirit of freedom and future is the one always together with the Word in the Father's work in the world.

§2.3.5: *Tongues & Spiritual Renewal*—With its properly acknowledged role, together with Word and Sacrament, nevertheless, speaking in tongues could do much to reinvigorate the Church, Jenson thinks. While the potentiality for an amorphously invoked Spirit does exist in certain quarters, "in most churches," Jenson oscillates, "the danger is surely still the opposite: unmusical, halting, rhetorically feeble utterance, by which we do not move..." In many established Churches, he suggests, our overreliance on structures as they are has become an indifference, "by which we share all too conclusively the world that already is," by

that got me the label—*Story and Promise*—was almost finished": Jenson, "Theological Autobiography to Date," 48; The Church cannot confess that Jesus has actually come, even if he is still to come again, if it fails to uphold this balance. It will remain a question for subsequent discussion and evaluation of Jenson's own program whether he himself has sufficiently reincorporated the necessarily protological and traditional dimension back into his penchant for eschatological reorientation.

⁹⁶ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 5.

which we fail to invoke the transformative liberation of the Kingdom which the very Spirit of Christ promises. Jenson affirms the necessarily thematic dimension of the Gospel's celebration, which precludes an unthinking sentimentality, but also recognizes how the failure to cultivate our emotional liturgical life as an impoverishment of the Spirit: "Insofar as the gospel is a verbal event, it is fundamentally by the motion of its utterance, by clear and springing rhythm, lifting music, precise rhetoric, that we are specifically grasped by the Spirit." Such a grasping by the Spirit has an intentional—as opposed to an arbitrary or chaotic—spontaneity and evocation to it: "I can most easily make the point negatively. If the language of our gospel-address is broken and unnatural in its speech rhythms, if we read texts that set us glumly aback just as we are well launched into declamation, if 'free' prayer simply means clumsy and repetitious prayer, this is not merely an aesthetic misfortune; it is quenching of the Spirit."⁹⁷ Such an intentional spontaneity, Jenson thinks, which coordinates musical and rhetorical virtuoso with Word, for the Spirit's sacramentality and embodiment belongs especially to the sphere of dance. "If music and rhetoric are the Spirit's home in the gospel's sentences, *choreography* is the Spirit's home in the gospel's embodiment. Every sacramental performance is, in one respect, a dance." A liturgy of Word and Sacrament, animated by the freedom of the Spirit will be surrounding by a dancing speaking in tongues, as "our bodies share the eschatological tension of the Spirit in that they move together through space with dramatic intent."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 57.

⁹⁸ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 58.

Within its proper context, therefore, Jenson advocates for a place for speaking in tongues in the contemporary ecumenical Church. This nuanced interpretation of its role he offers as an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14. “Paul saw value in tongues,” Jenson remarks. “He saw that the one who already believed might very well so press toward the final consummation of his fellowship with the Lord as to acquire from time to time something like language that was freed from language’s inherited conventions...” But also speaking in tongues must takes its appropriate place with interpretation and with thematic articulation of the Gospel message: “If there was to be tongue-speaking in common worship, said Paul, let it be interpreted, subsequently pinned to a specific set of statements in the common language.”⁹⁹ Says Paul himself: “For I will pray in the Spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing in the Spirit, but I will sing in my mind also.” Thus “if anyone speaks in a tongue...let someone interpret,” commands Paul. “Let everything be done for building up” the community. In Church, Paul said, “I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousands words in a tongue.” For “God is not a God of chaos but of peace.”¹⁰⁰ With that recognition, tongues, concludes Jenson, might just be an appropriate invocation of the Spirit who comes from the future Kingdom and who gives freedom over and against the simple unfolding of what already is in history. Thus Jenson has coordinated the biblical gift of speaking in tongues with the animating ethos of his theology of the Spirit: freedom and future.

§2.4: CREATION

⁹⁹ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:1-33.

It is from the Spirit's work among the People of God that believers can identify the Spirit's thematic hypostatic face. Believers must also recognize, however, that the Spirit blows throughout all creation and in all the world. Creation itself is the first and foundational gift of the Spirit, against which horizon all other gifts of the Spirit can be fully interpreted. Creation is itself the liberation of Being from non-being, and the freedom of the Spirit for spontaneity in nature, meaning in history and beauty in the human world, as the reality of the future New Creation, the transfigured Creation, the Heavenly Jerusalem, is anticipated even now.

Exclusively thus far, Jenson's discussion of the work of the Spirit has been confined to the believing community, whether in Israel or the Church. This is appropriate to the broad contour of the Christian message, since the Spirit is YHWH's ruach, Jesus's Spirit, the Spirit who enables believers to testify to the Gospel about Jesus, the Spirit whose primary work is to make Israel and the Church, which is where we encounter the Spirit in the creedal form—the *Holy Spirit*. The question *must* be asked, however, whether the understanding of Christian theology can exclusively limit its acknowledgement of the work of the Spirit to the sphere of the Church, whether Christian theology can and should recognize the work of the Spirit in the Creation as such, however ambiguously or tentatively or inchoately. To put the question another way, it is the question of the relationship of the Kingdom to the Creation, whether the Church, in an eschatological sense, is the redeemed Creation as a whole.

The question has been a contentious one, given the critique of theologies of experience as first theology, concerns about cosmic pneumatology, the

identification of the Spirit with the sinful processes of history, and the deployment of Spirit language as a cipher for merely generic human religious sentiment.¹⁰¹ Michael Welker has phrased this concern in a felicitously profound and succinct way: “The biblical traditions know about [both] good and evil spirits, salvific and demonic powers.” “Every age,” he elaborates, “is [also] haunted by deceiving spirits, by individual and shared certainties which prove to be wrong, misleading, and distorted, by devastating forms of consensus breeding dangerous ideologies or stale theories that block insights...Thus the discernment of the spirits is a most important task in all fields of experience, knowledge, and conviction.”¹⁰² Jenson thinks that despite the immense “perils of the enterprise”—that of simply identifying any and every created spirit with the Holy Spirit—we must affirm the work of the Spirit in the world and seek to discern the gifts of the Spirit in Creation more generally; there must be a “cosmic pneumatology” which labors to reclaim the insights of the Spirit’s gifts in the world at large as those of “the specific Spirit of Jesus and his Father.”¹⁰³ In the creation and cosmos as a whole, in Jenson’s understanding here, we find also that the Spirit labors for liberation.

§2.4.1: *The Ground of Cosmic Pneumatology*—There must be a cosmic pneumatology, says Jenson, grounded in a number of considerations. The Scriptures of Israel and the doctrine of the Trinity compel this assessment. Without tortuous exegesis of Israel’s Scriptures, it cannot be denied that they teach “this Spirit’s wind must blow on and through all things,” for “Israel’s God is

¹⁰¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 3:17-24, 413-429.

¹⁰² Michael Welker, “The Holy Spirit” from *OHST*, 241.

¹⁰³ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:165.

creator of all things” and still God of all nations, even if his relationship to Israel is unique. Jenson does not think that the New Testament is quite so clear that the Spirit’s work is global in the same way, such that one stream of Christian tradition consequently limits the work of the Spirit to the Church. However, “the very meaningfulness of this New Testament discourse depends on the Hebrew Scriptures, *which evoke the Spirit as a universal creativity.*” While most of the thematic articulation on the Spirit in the Scriptures refers to events in the development or knowledge of Israel or the mission of the Church specifically, nevertheless the Spirit also stands at the creation as the Creator Spirit and at the consummation of all reality as the redeeming and glorifying Spirit, at work with the Father and the Son.¹⁰⁴

The doctrine of the Trinity, furthermore, necessitates a cosmic view of the Spirit as “dogmatically mandated.” For the Father, who is the Father of all, who desires all to be saved, is one in Being with the Spirit, who is the Spirit in Israel and of the Church. Jenson describes the deftly delicate balance that must be upheld as follows: “As we will see, those who have ventured cosmic pneumatology have not always been able to avoid producing nonsense or myth...[for] the enterprise exposes theology to powerful temptation: to mitigate the offense by relaxing the restriction by ‘of Jesus and the church’...[so as] to fudge the particularity of the Spirit.” Such an enterprise, which must be done but which is fraught by predicaments, in which “it must be the particular Spirit of Jesus and of

¹⁰⁴ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:165, emphasis added.

the church to whom we attribute cosmic efficacy” “strains the Western intellectual tradition to its breaking,” in Jenson’s assessment.¹⁰⁵

§2.4.2: *The Freedom of History*—The Spirit, says Jenson, is not only the freedom of the Church but moreover the freedom of universal history. The basic pattern of this claim is taken from Hegel. If we are not to view reality as *mere* machine, Hegel says, as a determined unfolding of what must always operate on the basis of natural laws, that is, if we are to view reality as intrinsically meaningful and purposeful, its meaning must be the very actuality of its being. Precisely “*to be* anything at all, and so to be a possible object, is intrinsically *to be known...*” In this sense, reality is meaning and meaning is reality. In the philosophical tradition, this insight has been taken to be plausible on two models, based on our own experience of meaning in the world, as either (1) “mind” or as (2) “spirit.” Most of western history and classical metaphysics, in Jenson’s reconstruction, generally advocated the former understanding, such that God as *Mind* is the paradigm for the convertibility of being and knowing or reality and meaning. Jenson largely sees Hegel’s “philosophically revolutionary choice” in the positing of “universal Consciousness as Spirit,” as the required Christian insight. The contrast: mind leaves objects as they are; their being is in their perdurance (θεωρία). On this pattern, the true understanding of cosmos is that “the world would always remain as it is...a changeless structure encompassing the processes of history...” If, with Hegel however, we conceive of the meaning of the world as Spirit, which encounters its object not by leaving it as it is, but “by intruding transformingly on it,” then the meaning of the world is in its openness

¹⁰⁵ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:166.

to new possibility (πρᾶξις). In this conception, “the world subsists in that it is transformed by a God who is...lively Spirit.” “Therefore historical change does not have its sense only in something else, the structure of a changeless cosmos within which it occurs. Historical change has its own kind of sense, the sense that spirit finds in its object: the sense of a community’s lively debate or of creative process in the arts or of lifelong love.”¹⁰⁶ There is an intrinsic sense or meaning that history has as reality precisely in its change and unfolding.

In Hegel, the sense that history makes, as history, occurs in the process of his (in)famous thesis, antithesis and synthesis. So every historical reality evokes its counter-occurrence, and its meaning is found when Spirit frees the standoff from its polarity, from its intractability, “embracing the contradiction in a larger meaning, as does the resolution of a good play’s dramatic conflict.” As the liberating intentionality of this historical process, “the Spirit not only creates but involves the world; the Spirit is the freedom of universal history. The Spirit is the freedom of whatever merely is, and just so is involved in some contradiction, for the new synthesis that will come out of that conflict.” Jenson’s assessment of Hegel’s program here is that it is resonantly biblical, having significant debt to the Gospel, but that it is also alienated from the Gospel. Hegel’s “doctrine of God is clearly and intentionally trinitarian, but with the world where Christ ought to be, as the Object in whom the Father finds himself.” In a classic passage of Jenson, he summarizes, “To reclaim Hegel’s truth for the gospel, we need only a small but drastic amendment: Absolute Consciousness finds its own meaning and self in the one historical object, Jesus, and so posits Jesus’ fellows as its fellows

¹⁰⁶ Jenson, “Holy Spirit” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:167-168.

and Jesus' world as its world. What we thereby provide a theory for is the assertion of the risen Jesus' universal lordship."¹⁰⁷ Where Hegel posited the world itself as the intention of Absolute Consciousness, and so Spirit as the freedom and resolution of the world's tensions, Jenson suggests that a thoroughly baptized version of this teaching holds Jesus as the intention of the Father's meaning, and Jesus's Spirit as the freedom of his own history in which we all play a role. Thus the Spirit is the meaning of all history. The Spirit liberates the world from mere unfurling to be known by the Father, intending Himself in the Son.¹⁰⁸

§2.4.3: *The Spontaneity of Nature*—Insofar as the biblical worldview is authoritative, Jenson thinks, *history* must be viewed as paradigmatic reality, for the narrative of God with His people, culminating in the life of Jesus and the

¹⁰⁷ Jenson, "Holy Spirit" *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:168-169.

¹⁰⁸ Jenson has often been interpreted as a thoroughgoing "Hegelian," by both sympathizers, Russell Rook, *Rhyming Hope and History: Theology and Culture in the Work of Robert Jenson* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 30 and detractors, most severely, George Hunsinger, "Robert Jenson's Systematic Theology: a Review Essay" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55:2 (2002): 161-200. It would require a diachronic approach to fully evaluate this claim. But stated so baldly, it is surely false. For Jenson clearly criticizes and dispenses with a number of aspects of Hegel's program, in addition those aspects that he adopts. For some clarification and a more nuanced discussion of Jenson's continuities and discontinuities with Hegel, see Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics*, xvii, 94-96, 101-141. It is most accurate to see Jenson as engaged in what he himself describes as part of the method of systematic theology: mutually critical dialogue with some surrounding culture, simply taking Hegel as one leading intellectual representative of the current culture in the west, especially with respect to the particular "sense" that history makes. On a formal level, it would be callow to rule this out entirely, even while relative degrees of convergence and divergence can be argued. It is formally what Augustine did and what Aquinas did. Only the dialogue partners, and their content, have changed (though that does make a *difference*). And since Hegel explicitly uses biblical/theological thematics, and since the Scriptures are the paradigmatic historical unfolding of which he is trying to make philosophical sense, some engagement seems apriori plausible, even while there are certainly theologically heterodox elements with which to reckon. Hart's problem with this in *Beauty of the Infinite* vis-à-vis Jenson, while he appreciates more the nuanced relationship, is that he thinks Hegel's thought world is so tightly woven, that to grasp any thread leads is to become totally enrobed. But that claim would rely a totalizing, overly idealized and artificially discrete view of thought worlds, precisely what Hart argues against modernity's patterns of thinking.

sending of the Spirit, is the decisive interpretation of all reality. The distinction between history and nature, nevertheless, must be upheld as a penultimate one, for one sphere of reality does concern the regularity and predictability of natural processes in relation to the freedom that is appropriate to human history with its narrational and aesthetic singularities, with the unpredictability of its events. The discernment of a particular method to evaluate reality according to this dimension has been the monumental and indisputable achievement of natural science in modernity—and its triumphs must be interpreted in any fully aware contemporary theology. The question of the activity of the Spirit within the sphere of “nature,” thus delineated, Jenson takes to have been particularly associated with the work of process theology and philosophy in the 20th century.

The occurrence of reality in process thought, as Jenson describes it, obtains in “actual occasions,” in events which find their place in a sequence of some such events, many of which can be predicted based on their underlying structure. Each event, however, also manifests an “event-spontaneity” whereby it is not reducible to the antecedent chain of relations described by natural science. In process thought, “the spontaneity of temporal process is the referent of Christianity’s discourse about the Spirit.”¹⁰⁹ Where process thought takes natural processes as paradigmatic of reality, Jenson thinks this fundamental decision is irreconcilable with the biblical witness. Furthermore, that this spontaneity in itself is taken as foundationally “Spirit,” which cannot be compared to an appropriately trinitarian discourse, in which the Spirit is fundamentally *person* in the Divine Life, an actor in the Divine Drama in the world, and only derivatively

¹⁰⁹ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:171.

thereby a force in the world. Still, the necessity of recognizing nature as such means that Christian theology must not consider it “a realm in which Jesus’ Spirit is ineffective.” So a pneumatology in which reality is seen as the sphere of the Spirit’s work must “reclaim natural spiritedness as Jesus’ Spirit. And it must be a spontaneity of natural process in which we have to locate a natural reality of the Spirit....” Thus the radically revisionary insight emerges that the “Spirit of Jesus is the spontaneity of natural process.”¹¹⁰

The occurrences of nature in modern physics can be described by complex models and statistical odds: for a given set of phenomena, “it is x to y , that any one member of this population will do f under conditions F, G , etc... .” The proposition defines some natural law or, more rigorously, some natural model. What these describe, however, are general tendencies and patterns. What they precisely cannot describe exhaustively is any actual individual occasion in the concreteness of its occurrence. Here Jenson says we must remember, “what every gambler must”—that any particular hand, while governed by a given statistical model, is not thereby determined to result in their favor. Despite a preponderance of any statistical outcome, the river may just be the gambler’s demise in that particular event. Interpreted from the theological perspective, therefore, the occurrence of any concrete occasion is itself the freedom of the Spirit, a freedom that is at once integral and regular, so as to be describable by models, and also surprising, such that any individual occurrence still retains a mystery.

¹¹⁰ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:171.

If this interpretation is so, Christian theology construes the unfolding of natural processes in two distinctive ways: (1) at the foundation of the animation of nature itself is *personality*. “Apprehending any actual occasion, we confront someone’s communicative freedom, we are in someone’s intrusive presence,” the presence of God in His Spirit.¹¹¹ Nature itself is irreducibly personal. (2) If the spontaneity of natural process is the work of the Spirit, nature itself “has not merely a direction but a *goal*.” In certain ways in relation to the structure of natural processes themselves, we may or may not actually know how that goal is obtained. But we do know its most basic structure, nevertheless: “we know the goal: unconditional love. That is, we know the tendency of cosmic evolution: toward a world apt for love.”¹¹² Thus the Spirit, for Jenson, ensures the spontaneity of the natural world exhibits both its personal element and its destiny in love.

§2.4.4: *The Beauty of the World*—Because the world, *both* as history and nature, as Jenson has argued, anticipates a final meaning, the triumph of love, the openness to that love, the hope of that love, as encountered either in history or nature is *beautiful*. Now beauty is a notoriously ambiguous and promiscuous category of experience, elusive of even the greatest minds to have contemplated it. And yet, what it attempts to describe is so powerful as to continually press the necessity of its exploration upon us. Jenson adopts the minimalist results of philosophical inquiry into the ambiguous category of the beautiful: “Beauty at once is a real character of certain objects, whether only natural or also historic,

¹¹¹ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:172.

¹¹² Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:173, emphasis added.

and is in those objects only for personal subjects. Beauty is not only natural and historic; it transcends the distinction.” Certainly beauty cannot be really conceived to exist without humanly subjects, their historical life and the desires that are incited within them. This is the subjective pole of beauty. It manifests itself in the creation of aesthetic objects—art, music, architecture, crafts, story—which express a particular subject’s attention to some aspect of the world as beautiful. Yet also beauty is not *merely* subjective in that it seems to inhabit certain world items themselves, such that beauty can be shared and communicated to others. Natural phenomena aptly capture the objective pole of beauty, where particular natural events or objects, on a communal and shared level, entice the appreciation of beauty. Even for dissenters in evaluations of beauty in particular cases (the “eye of the beholder”), there stands particular natural phenomena always waiting to surprise me, to attract my notice, where I thought none was worthy. Beauty’s objectivity can be recognized in that it, at least potentially, holds open the possibility of conversion for even the subjectively suspicious.

So Jenson provides a basic sketch of beauty as a creaturely or as a philosophical phenomenon. To recapture this insight for the Gospel, to tether a cosmic pneumatology to the Triune God, Jenson thinks this insight only need be construed *liturgically*. Liturgy is the paradigmatic home of beauty as the Spirit’s work, and an appreciation of beauty theologically cascades from there. “In liturgy,” Jenson comments, “nature and history are brought into the proclamation of the gospel and into answering prayer and praise...liturgy says with manifest sense that nature and history belong to the community in which

Jesus' Spirit lives." Here there is a connection to Jenson's understanding of the sacraments as visible words. In the sacrament, a concrete item of the world is made to serve the visible and thematic speaking of the Gospel. In liturgy more broadly, as the home for the sacraments, nature and history are also made to speak, in a more general way, the praise of God by the freedom of the Spirit for those realities to so speak: "In liturgy natural and historical events appear with spirit." The Spirit is the freedom for these sheer occurrences whether of history or of nature, to be endowed with meaning which they do not possess of themselves. In one of Jenson's favorite examples: the emergence of a constellation of Semitic tribes out of bondage in Egypt and into their own little, relatively insignificant country in the Ancient Near East, this historical occurrence could and does lapse into one of the innumerable events of the ebb and flow of societies and empires in the world's history. In the liturgy, however, because Israel's Messiah is Risen and thus gives his Spirit to be the meaning of the liturgical gathering, "the exodus says liberation and unconditional love." Similarly for natural phenomena, as the Psalms attest.

To say that the "beauty of the world, natural or historic, is the cosmic actuality of Jesus' Spirit, is the world's occurring openness to the final triumph of his love," is to make a radical claim from the perspective of the world's beauty. But such a claim can be liturgically inhabited: "Dogmatically...the reclamation of the world's beauty for Jesus' particular Spirit can be asserted only liturgically; the propositional form of our thesis is only an instruction to do this...The claim that the world's beauty is Christ's Spirit is thus appropriately made only by celebrating the christological liturgy beautifully." The beautiful celebration of the liturgy itself,

therefore, is the most authentic churchly theology of cosmic pneumatology. Because the liturgy is art, and so is the Spirit's beauty, it is perfectly coherent in the liturgically mediated world to proclaim that "angels and archangels and streams and stars are spirited in it," that those items of the world can speak. For this reason, in Jenson's assessment, since the beauty of the liturgy is the gift of the Spirit whereby nature and history together speak meaningfully, this beauty must be received and cultivated, as with the other gifts of the Spirit. "Therefore the beauty of the liturgy is not, as generally supposed in the contemporary church, a nice extra, adventitious to the essential function of the liturgy. By its beauty, liturgy reveals Jesus' Spirit as Beauty, and so as a wind blowing through the world to open it to the final transformation."¹¹³ He makes the point even more polemical: "A liturgy is, in any case, a work of art, and a liturgical order is an instruction for works of art, like a musical score or a playbook. Liturgical experimenters of the sort who suppose that 'relevance' or 'communication' is achieved by imposing the language, tunes, and ceremonies of 'everyday' do not succeed in making liturgies that are not works of art; they only succeed in making bad works of art, dispirited works of art..." In the case of the liturgy, ugly works of art, preventing the speaking of nature and history by the Spirit, are "prisons for Jesus' Beauty [!]."¹¹⁴ All of that to say that, in Jenson's view, the Church's mission and the Church's worship cannot be separated from the Church's beauty, if it is to do either in a holistic and integral way.

¹¹³ Jenson, "Holy Spirit," *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:175-176.

¹¹⁴ Jenson, "Holy Spirit," *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:176.

Jenson considers this whole tradition of reflection on creaturely beauty as the work of Jesus' Spirit to have been "a decidedly esoteric tradition" from Irenaeus to the contemporary era. He takes Bulgakov's sophiology as one contemporary articulation of this tradition of reflection. The Spirit, for Bulgakov, "lives in the cosmos as an aspect of Sophia, the divine Wisdom by which the Lord created all things." For Bulgakov, there is both a Divine and a creaturely Sophia. The Divine Sophia is the self-revelation of God in His own Life through the Son and the Spirit. Divine Sophia is the non-hypostatic, eternal Divine archetype of creaturely realities, endowing them with order and meaningfulness. "Divine Wisdom is the nature of God, insofar as this nature is love, and so must be also outside itself, to be an object of love, insofar, that is, as it is God's nature to reveal himself." Wisdom appears particularly as beauty to those who seek the knowledge or presence of God in visionary or mystical experience. Jenson applauds the retrieval of the notion of universal beauty as the gift of the Spirit, but also challenges what he sees as an unbaptized notion of wisdom and beauty that he finds in Bulgakov's theology. "The alienation of this sort of experience and construction from the gospel," Jenson concludes, "is obvious."¹¹⁵ This is the generic cosmic pneumatology of which Jenson is wary. He derides the reduction of the Son and the Spirit to aspect of Divine Sophia, thereby displacing the Logos theology of the early church, and ultimately undoing the Nicene achievement.

For Jenson, by contrast, the thematic encounter with the world's true beauty must come through public experience of the Gospel about Christ, and decisively not primarily through a mystical encounter of a private vision or

¹¹⁵ Jenson, "Holy Spirit," *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:174-175.

through a philosophical speculation on general creaturely structures—what he would take to be Bulgakov’s synthesis of the “wisdom” tradition. Jenson counters: “The Beauty we here wish to acknowledge, the one that Jesus’ Spirit is, does not introduce herself in private visionary or aesthetic experience. She introduces herself through the public liturgy of the congregation, where the gospel about Jesus is communally spoken, and just so necessarily spoken dramatically and by formalized and thereby heightened audible and visible words.”¹¹⁶ Connected to the thematic gospel word—but not otherwise—the beauty of the publically available liturgy inaugurates us into the experience of the world as the beautiful gift of the Spirit.

§CODA

As the Spirit forges a People of God in history, in Israel and the Church, and liberates matter within that community to be the liturgical freedom for communion with God, the Spirit also distributes various gifts of Grace to the individual believer in the world. Representative—though not exhaustive—of those gifts are (1) justification, the soteriological freedom for righteousness before God, (2) Scripture, the textual freedom of written, creaturely words to bear the Word of God, to be deputized as the Word of God, (3) tongues, the linguistic freedom of verbal and emotive expression to evoke the Kingdom and (4) creation, the primal gift of the Spirit that sets the stage for all the others, as the freedom for being, for spontaneity in nature, for meaning in history and for beauty in the world. All of these works of the Spirit that I have discussed so far can be interpreted in their character as freedom. For Jenson, then, these works of the

¹¹⁶ Jenson, “Holy Spirit,” *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:176.

Spirit as freedom occur as the disclosure of the person of the Spirit, the identity of the Spirit; this is how we know who the Spirit is in the eternal Life of God and in relation to the other Divine Persons. To this, I now turn in Part II.

CHAPTER 3: **THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT**

§INTRODUCTION

The Spirit's work for freedom in the world provides the basis of understanding the Spirit's eternal hypostasis. The self-identification of God by and with the events of His saving work is an interpretation of the Triune God by a trinitarian narrational hermeneutics. This hermeneutics presents certain challenges but also opportunities for a theological conceptualization of the Spirit's Person.

So far I have discussed various aspects of the Spirit's work in the world according to Jenson (Part I). Forging the people or community of God has been the primary such work, within which individual gifts of the Spirit to the believer are also given. That work, furthermore, has been interpreted particularly by Jenson's emphasis on its character as freedom, as the liberation from strictly creaturely possibilities and limitations for the fullness, gloriousness, and wholeness of the spiritual, divine possibility. It is where the Spirit works that creaturely realities can be seen to be also the sites of the divine occurrence that they are. The question underlying this discussion can no longer be deferred. *Who* is this Spirit who does this work? What does the character of that work tell us about its agent? These questions will be the questions that take us to the highest level of pneumatological analysis in Jenson's theology: the trinitarian role of the Spirit, the place of the Spirit in the Divine Life—as I now discuss in Part II.

For heuristic purposes, I have dealt separately with the work and the person of the Spirit in two parts, along more traditional categories. This formal

distinction, it must be emphasized again however, should be recognized as tenuous for Jenson's own theology, since he is convinced that God's very own identity—thus the Spirit's particular hypostasis—is determined in the events of the Gospel that are the action of the Spirit as God has freely self-determined them. To invoke the terms of 20th century trinitarian theology, and especially Rahner, to whom he often appeals architectonically, Jenson holds unwavering adherence to the identity of the “immanent” and the “economic” Spirit. The person of the Spirit is the very one who works for the sanctification and completion of the world as the Gospel narrates it.

Expositing Jenson's pneumatology along the traditional distinction of person and work, nevertheless, still has analytical value for the clarification of the various facets of his pneumatology, while it will also allow me to entertain whether or not Jenson has provoked some decisive insights into the Spirit, regardless of whether or not one fully accepts the radical implementation of the Rahnerian trinitarian superstructure wholesale. In this chapter, then, I begin to turn more directly to an engagement with the person of the Spirit in Jenson's pneumatology. The “face” or “hypostatic ethos” of the Spirit becomes evident when we understand what I will call Jenson's “trinitarian narrational hermeneutics.” That cumbersome phrase attempts to encapsulate how Jenson understands the interpretation of the biblical narrative insofar as that narrative discloses the very identity of God in a maximalist way. In Jenson's view, God identifies Himself in and with that narrative, its words and events, such that in the encounter with the historical actions of God what is disclosed is God's very Being. The Spirit's face or persona, then, will be seen as one of those three

dramatic characters or agents of the biblical action, in which action the Spirit's hypostasis is made manifest.

§3.1: THE IDENTIFICATION OF GOD

To understand more fully how Jenson interprets the particular hypostasis of the Spirit, however, I will first have to discuss at more length how Jenson envisions the role of all trinitarian discourse, and how, for Jenson, the self-disclosure of God for us in the Gospel is the same event by which, in which and through which God has freely determined the identity of His own Life. For Jenson, the primary function of all trinitarian language—so including language about the person of the Spirit—is the *identification* of God. Jenson describes this function succinctly in an essay from the middle of his career: “The foundational theological task...is the identification of God,” and thereby, in particular, “[t]he function of the doctrine of Trinity is to identify which God we mean when in the Christian church we talk of God.”¹ This is a point on which Jenson repeatedly insists. To talk about the Trinity is to talk about a foundationally “triune narrativel” way by which the Church anchors its talk about the specific God of the Scriptures over and against any other potential candidates to which the semantic signifier “God” might refer. This whole theological structure attempts to interpret the biblical phenomenon of God’s distinctive name, and God’s specifiable presence in Temple, Torah, Jesus, sacrament, et al., that has particular contour, even while God is also the God of all at all times.

§3.1.1: *The Basic Human Religious Identification of God as Eternity—*
The identification of God by his Name occurs in inalienable connection with

¹ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 88.

particular events that disclose that particular naming. The broad trajectory of the Bible, of course, clearly claims that its particular God is the one, true God—the only reality that in fact can be authentically called God—and not merely one candidate among others. This represents the bible’s universalizing dimension. But at the same time the religious and philosophical worlds of humanity, including the cultural worlds that surrounded the composers of the Scriptures, proffer a number of possible deities, or conceptions of deity, such that “many gods and lords” abound, the Apostle says ironically.² It is currently a pressing comparative theological question to what degree the various names and conceptions of God in the religious pantheon overlap or converge or identify the same or different and mutually exclusive realities. There is much work that is being done and can be done about the potential spheres of overlap that might be discerned in interreligious dialogue. Nevertheless, the pole of particularity of the biblical testimony describes the self-identification of its God by specific terms and in narratively singular events. In the biblical experience, God even has a proper name. And that name is associated with his self-disclosure in particular events. For Jenson, the paradigmatic events that function this way are *exodus* and *resurrection*.

The generic term “God,” even prior to its further differentiation and delimitation, does signify something meaningful for Jenson. It can signify, formally, whatever is a person’s “ultimate concern” (Tillich), whatever the culminating focus of a person’s worldview, whatever the decisive criterion for meaning and value in the world. Jenson himself finds illuminating the analysis

² 1 Corinthians 8:5.

of “religion” as the suffered experience of ultimate dependence (Schleiermacher), even if he doesn’t think this analysis can be used in a prolegomenally foundational way.³ Jenson also often recurs to Luther’s vivid adage that God is whatever a person “hangs their heart on.”⁴ The most significant sense of God that Jenson deploys is that of some “posited eternity,” some enclosure of the rupture in time between past, present and future, which for human persons is experienced as the agony of loss or the anxiety of uncertain possibility. “Human life is possible...or meaningful,” he says, “only if past and future are somehow bracketed,⁵ only if their disconnection is somehow transcended, only if our lives somehow cohere to make a story. Life in time is possible [meaningful] only...if there is eternity” somehow. It seems, on the initial assessment, that if matter alone is what is ultimate, then “life” as such is merely the unintelligible succession of events, “one damn thing after another.”⁶ But meaning to *human* life is discovered precisely if “no-more, still, and not-yet do not exhaust the structure of reality.”

Of course, people attempt to craft the meaning of their own lives. But then they die. They attempt to discover their meaning in the communal life of their family, group, nation or culture. That is more stable and enduring for a time. But then nations rise and fall; whole societies emerge and collapse. Current cosmology seems to tell us that even the physical universe as a whole is destined

³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:9.

⁴ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 10.

⁵ “Bracket” being a quite unfortunately stiff and sterile metaphor here, but one takes his point, I think.

⁶ In this context, I owe the phraseology to the inestimable Fred Lawrence, “Lectures in Foundational Theology” Fall 2010, Boston College.

for final conflagration, and so cosmologists desperately posit philosophical and quasi-religious theories to escape the fact.⁷ In Jenson's analysis, then, "in all we do we seek eternity. If our seeking becomes explicit, we practice 'religion'" in some form or another. If religion perceives the eternal as somehow also a subject of action in the world, we use the word "God."⁸

All of this, nevertheless, remains at a highly abstract and generic level. When it comes down to particulars, and to concrete situations, there are "many possible eternities." Indeed, "[l]ife is enabled not by a posit *that* life means, but by a posit of *what* it means," in particular. "The plot and energy of life are determined by *which* eternity we rely upon, and the truth of any mode of life is determined by the reality of the eternity it posits." In the final analysis, a life's meaning depends on whether the posited eternity that shapes its interpretation is in fact valid, "whether this is the God that really is."⁹ In Jenson's view, the question "whether God" is peripheral. Whatever functions ultimately can be god. The decisive question is who or what or how is God. The query about God's *identity* is the religiously and spiritually most vital one: to put it forcefully, "One religion's heaven is another religion's hell; one community's God is another community's Satan. Life and death and all their meaning depend on the *identity*

⁷ The interpretation of this fact for human meaning is both considerably controversial and in its inchoate stages of discernment. But that it is a reality that must be reckoned with nonetheless seems to be supported by increasingly overwhelming amounts of scientific data: European Southern Observatory "Charting the Slow Death of the Universe" Galaxy and Mass Assembly (GAMA) Study (most recently, 10 August 2015): [<http://www.eso.org/public/news/eso1533/>]

⁸ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 1-2.

⁹ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 2.

of God, and finally on nothing else.”¹⁰ Or again: “The question of whether there is any God is profoundly uninteresting—nothing whatsoever follows from its answer. The religiously and intellectually interesting question is, Which candidate do you mean when you say ‘God?’”¹¹ Trinitarian discourse, in Jenson’s understanding, represents a particular way to identify the God of the Christian community through a particular mode of relating God’s identifiers to the historical events in which those identifiers are given and made accessible to us.

§3.1.2: *The Biblical God’s Name and Narrative Identity*—The question of the identity of God, and how one identifies God, then becomes crucial for Jenson, and really the decisive contribution of theological discourse to human meaning more broadly. The Christian community, says Jenson, does in fact have a way to do this: the tradition of God’s Name, where the Name represents a self-disclosure of God directly associated with specifiable historical actions of God. Thus, due to the intrinsic connection between the naming and the self-revelation in action, the Name itself is not merely formal but iconic, a type of “verbal icon.”¹² In biblical faith, God self-identifies himself by specific, narratively singular, events. Now, in one sense, the biblical tradition of the Divine Names offers “many names,” a plurality of these identifications by which God is known, intended, worshipped and adored.¹³ Reflecting the abundance of the Divine Reality itself, the many divine names in Scripture, then, may be seen to present a glorious “surplus of

¹⁰ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 7.

¹¹ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 88.

¹² For an even more robust articulation, along the sophiological basis of the resonance in human language between creaturely sophia and Divine Sophia, Sergius Bulgakov, *Icons and the Name of God*, Boris Jakim, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

¹³ Classically formulated: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 1.6.

description” for the theological imagination,¹⁴ a surplus relished profoundly by the Islamic tradition of the 99 names for the Abrahamic God.¹⁵

The question of biblical names lies at the nexus of a constellation of serious and vexing questions about the status of any language, biblical or theological, and also theological concepts and categories, in relation to Divine Reality: how well, how accurately, does such language or concepts bear the ontological reality of God? Stephen Holmes perceptively describes the question as an “ubiquitous” one of theological inquiry, for it is “impossible to speak *about* or *to* God without some commitment concerning the divine attributes” or perfections or naming. That is to say, the question about the divine names and theological language is so freighted because it involves not only the (seemingly esoteric!) intellectual reflection *about* God, but also the direct doxological, liturgical and ethical relation *to* God in the life, action and mission of faith. As Holmes continues, any “sentence that begins ‘God is...’, praise that asserts ‘Lord, you are...’, or intercession that pleads some aspect of the character of God (‘have mercy, Lord, for you are...’) all already betray a doctrine of the divine perfections. That a word (e.g., ‘good’) is held to be a more adequate continuation of each of these statements than other possible words (e.g., ‘bad’, ‘morally indifferent’) is a theological commitment.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Denys Turner, “On Denying the Right God: Aquinas on Atheism and Idolatry,” *Modern Theology*, 20 (2004): 148.

¹⁵ “Names of God” in *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, John L. Esposito, gen. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); L. Gardet “Allāh,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., P. Bearman, et al., gen eds. Brill Online (2016): http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.bc.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/allah-COM_0047>.

¹⁶ Stephen Holmes, “The Attributes of God,” *OHST*, 55-56, emphasis added.

Jenson advocates a particular framework for biblical naming that has many systematic ramifications, including for how we are to understand the person of the Spirit. Who is the biblical God, we might ask? There are two paradigmatic responses for Jenson, which depend for their foundational significance on the narrativial identifying descriptions they give of God, and so are the two Names around which the other biblical descriptions coalesce. Not all the biblical names as such have equivalent status in specifying the biblical God among other posited deities who, for instance, might share the characteristics, and so the names, of “holy” or “just” or “merciful” or whatever. Nor do they all have equivalent status in disclosing the *Being* of God in their very naming, in providing a *grammar* for God. Most fundamentally and thoroughly, for Jenson, the biblical God is identified in and through Exodus and Resurrection, with the Exile and Crucifixion as key inflection points between the two. The biblical God is thus **(1)** the one who “liberated Israel from bondage in Egypt” (Exodus) and is **(2)** the one who “raised the faithful Israelite Jesus of Nazareth from the dead” (Resurrection). As a differentiated complex of biblical naming, I will call this framework Jenson’s “trinitarian narrativial hermeneutics.”

§3.1.3: The Name YHWH and its Identifying Descriptions—The first identifying description corresponds to the traditional *proper* Holy Name of God in Israel: YHWH.¹⁷ The second description catalogues the augmentation of the

¹⁷ The consonantal representation of the divine name is the most appropriate rendering. The cavalier bandying about of the vocalized form, insofar as it attempts to convey the Hebrew, is—ecumenically—a misstep in the context of Jewish-Christian relations and—theologically—often a failure to appreciate the sacramental significance of the name as “verbal icon.” Should I then have settled, as most English translations, with the circumlocution, “The Lord”? In the influential Bible translation, Bruce M. Metzger,

divine name in the Scriptures of Israel by its interpretation through what happened with Jesus: generating the triune name, Father, Son & Spirit, which

for the committee, “To The Reader,” *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 4th ed., *New Revised Standard Version* [1989] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii-xviii, argues for the consistent use of the nominal form on the theological basis of universality: “The use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom the true God had to be distinguished, began to be discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church”: therefore, always “the Lord” or “God” instead of YHWH (יהוה). While this reasoning is surely persuasive in the philosophical sense, its broader cultural currency belongs to the Christendom period of the Church’s history, where it was relatively less disputed who “the Lord” is or what “God” would be. In the postmodern situation, what is needed is precisely a renewed sense of particularity, texture, narrativel and aesthetic singularity. While the intensity of such resurgence can be disputed, it is no longer culturally certain, and indeed increasingly disputed, *who exactly “the Lord” might be or what precise sense the qualitative “God” might convey*. For the internal discourse of the Church, and certainly on the ontological register, it is all the good for believers to continue to use “the Lord” and “God” in their universal sense. Certainly, the Church confesses with Paul the ontological irrelevance of the idols: “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:5-6). And yet, in the register of cultural epistemology, insofar as the Church attempts to communicate its faith to the larger society, a renewed emphasis on the personal name, which is particularly, which intrinsically identifies a unique referent, is called for. Which Lord, what God? The use of the form “G*d” to convey the same sense as YHWH, however, is not necessary because it relies on a confusion of the specific *proper name*, YHWH, with the abstract nominal, “God.” Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 13.4b: 239; Henry O. Thompson, “Yahweh” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. David Noel Freedman, gen. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1011-1012; M. P. O’Connor and David Noel Freedman, “YHWH” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 14 vols. G. Botterweck, et al., gen. ed., trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 5:500-521; the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* profoundly expresses the dual reality: “In revealing his mysterious name, YHWH (‘I AM HE WHO IS,’ ‘I AM WHO AM’ or ‘I AM WHO I AM’), God says who he is and by what name he is to be called. This divine name is mysterious just as God is mysterious. It is at once a name revealed and something like the refusal of a name, and hence it better expresses God as what he is—infinity above everything we can understand or say: he is the ‘hidden God,’ his name is ineffable, and he is the God who makes himself close to men. By revealing his name God at the same time reveals his faithfulness which is from everlasting to everlasting, valid for the past...as for the future...The revelation of the ineffable name ‘I Am who Am’ contains then the truth God alone IS. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and following it in the Church’s Tradition, understood the divine name in this sense: God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without origin and without end. All creatures receive all that they are have from him; but he alone is his very being, and he is of himself everything that he is” CCC, §205-214.

marks the most complete disclosure of God's naming in the Church.¹⁸ Thus, "Christian talk of God intends a specific reality, that is identified by the apostles as the agent of Jesus' Resurrection...He is the agent of Jesus' Resurrection, having been the one to whom Jesus committed his life at death, as he had committed it to him by all the prayer of his life. Thus he is the one addressed as 'my Father,' in which relation he permitted the disciples to join." But it is also "the God of Israel whom Jesus called Father and to whom the disciples wanted to pray." Therefore, the triune naming of God—including the Spirit—can only have its place in the coherent interpretation of the God already identified in Israel as the God of Exodus Liberation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even explicitly trinitarian theology, which identifies its God by the triune name, must include and interpret the identification of God in Israel, and is an interpretation of the whole of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, a point which must be reinforced for Jenson given that, in his judgment, Marcionism remains the faithful Church's still "most regular occasion of apostasy."¹⁹

We must first look to the Scriptures of Israel, therefore, to discover the identification of God. The central identifying act of God in Israel, Jenson surmises, is the Exodus. The Exodus event as a whole—from bondage to liberation to wandering to disclosure of *Torah* for a liberated and ennobled life to the entrance into the land of promise and so the proliferation of the descendants—becomes the archetypal soteriological event of YHWH's

¹⁸ Further to the matter, and more differentiated: R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity: Distinguishing the Voices* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:42-46.

relationship to His special People. For Jenson, however, this event does not merely concern an act of salvation as such. It is also the means through which YHWH *determines His own very Being* by relationship to His People: that He will be their God and they will be His People.²⁰ What is at stake in the identity of Israel's God? The same God who would not yet hand over his name to Jacob even as they wrestled at Jabbok,²¹ now His name (reality) is at stake once again in the bondage of His people. Jenson's reading of the entire Exodus event can be crystallized in Pharaoh's query to Moses: "Who is YHWH that I should heed him and let Israel go?"²² Often, this text is read as simply a hubristic dismissal by Pharaoh, because of the typical English translation of the Divine Name as "the Lord." But the passage is much more subtle than that. Pharaoh's question is also legitimately interrogative. Who is this God of Israel? I have not heard of him. His name has not made the Egyptian papers. Egypt has its own gods and lords, in whose celebrity names a mighty empire has been established. Pharaoh is honestly bamboozled that he should listen to a god with a name unrenowned for such exploits. In Jenson's terms, Pharaoh's question is a human question: who is the identity of this posited eternity that I should so conform my life's decisions?

The whole Exodus event can, in Jenson's interpretation, be read as a vindication of this Name. Even more so, the whole scope of the narrative from Exodus through Kings (the National History, reprised theologically by the Chronicler) can be read as a narrative rendering of the identity of God as YHWH, who acts to uphold his loving covenant loyalty (𐤇𐤍𐤅) to His People through the

²⁰ Exodus 29:45-46; Jeremiah 31:33.

²¹ Genesis 32:22-32.

²² Exodus 5:2.

vicissitudes of Israel's experience, and so to show Israel who He Is. At the Exodus, what Jenson takes to be the "foundation of biblical faith,"²³ the question was not one for Pharaoh only, but also for the Israelites themselves. So Moses, still tentative at first, queries what to do when the Israelites ask who has sent him to the people, by what authority he comes. The people will ask: "What is his name?" And Moses wonders, "what shall I say to them?"²⁴ Jenson glosses: "If Israel was to risk the future of this God, to leave secure political nonexistence in Egypt and venture on his promises, Israel had first and fundamentally to know which future this was."²⁵ YHWH responds with the famous, "I am/will be who I am/will be,"²⁶ the "metaphysics of Exodus," as a philosopher called it. But the great "I am" also immediately specifies further to Moses: "You will say thus to the people of Israel: **YHWH**, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has sent me to you. *This is my **name forever**, and this is my title for all generations.*"²⁷ Because of Jenson's triune narrational hermeneutic of the Scriptures, this event of disclosure is taken to be not simply nominally descriptive but ontologically self-determinative.

At the other pole of the experience documented in Israel's Scriptures stands the Babylonian Exile, that other great inflection point in biblical Israel's history with her God. The Exile is the potential undoing of the Exodus. So the

²³ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 2.

²⁴ Exodus 3:13.

²⁵ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 2.

²⁶ Which is not to say that either this translation or this interpretation is uncontroversial. As Brevard Childs says: "Few verses in the entire OT" (with the exception of perhaps Genesis 1:1-2) "have evoked such heated controversy and such widely divergent opinions" in biblical scholarship and commentary: *Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 61.

²⁷ Exodus 3:15, emphasis added.

question is posed another time: how or will YHWH be faithful to His promises yet again? Will His Name stand? The lament rises from the people: how can they sing YHWH's song in an alien land?²⁸ The second half of Israel's Scriptures—in very broad strokes—deals with the eschatological re-orientation of YHWH's promises, and so the Lord's identity, as the one who will make a “new covenant” and do “a new thing.” While I cannot here comment on all the complexities of this aspect of Israel's experience and Scripture, suffice it to say that in Jenson's construal of the biblical arc, the shift from anamnestic to eschatological and messianic orientation of the Divine salvific events is precisely the opening for the full recognition of the Divine Identity of the Spirit, the one who comes from the future, the one who brings the messianic and eschatological Kingdom to the people.

In and through and by these events, the biblical God entrusts His Name to His people. A name, however, does not specify by itself alone, unless it is also accompanied by what Jenson calls “identifying descriptions” or delimitations. Jenson's makes the point primarily of proper names, which are particularly pliable. In an even more critical moment, however, the question could also be asked of the nouns or adjectives traditionally attributed to God. In the classical doctrine, grounded in the *via eminentiae* or the *via negativa*, it might initially seem self-evident to call God paradigmatically “Holy” or “Just” or “Merciful” or “Liberator” or not subject to “time” or “finitude” or “suffering.” But, of course, any of these are perfections or limitations are actually not neutral in relation to, or even structurally prior to, an implied content or coherence of a posited good.

²⁸ Psalm 137.

Even such cases rely upon an implicated vision of reality, and its contours, that, at least tacitly, assumes an ethical fideism about which aspects of creaturely experience are good, what liberation is, or which aspects of human experience are limitations. The performative content and precise boundaries and applications of the understanding of “justice,” “holiness,” and “love,” furthermore, are not simply uncontroversial nor contextually invariant.

To return to Jenson’s own emphasis on proper names, nevertheless, a “proper name” further specifies identity narratively and dramatically, when it is accompanied by its corresponding “identifying descriptions.” Who is YHWH? The name, if unfamiliar, can then be specified by a series of descriptions: the one who has done *x* and *y* and *z*, in place *Q*, at time *R*. For creatures, these descriptions may have a range of possibilities depending on material characteristics or location in space-time. With respect to God, the Bible identifies agentially: by the actions of a personal actor. The Church may say, “Yahweh always forgives,” and be answered with, who do you mean by “YHWH”? “Do you mean the Inner Self?” The Church may then have to say, “No,” not exactly. “We mean,” primarily, “the one who rescued Israel from Egypt, and...” so on.²⁹ Jenson further elaborates: “Israel’s and the church’s God is thus identified by specific temporal actions and is known within certain temporal communities by personal names and identifying descriptions thereby provided. Nor does Scripture contain permission to transcend these relations at any height of spiritual experience, even though craving to rise above such temporal and limiting modes of experience is

²⁹ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 3.

endemic in religion.”³⁰ Jenson’s reading of this pattern, as a grammar for the identification of the biblical God, is that these relations are *non-exchangeable*, for they are the authentic self-identification of God by these particular occurrences, not simply tentative or penultimate placeholders.

Such a reading follows a strict revelational understanding, funded by a broadly Barthian orientation to theological knowledge. These are the ways *God* introduces himself to His creatures, commandeers certain historical events and creaturely linguistic signs for Himself, and not projections or experimentations of the creature onto the God they seek. Jenson brings all of this together as what he takes to be the structure of our relationship to the biblical God. This particular way of identification, for Jenson, underlies the whole phenomenon of the Scriptures of Israel that the biblical God has a personal name. It also provides a fundamental interpretation of the biblical thematics that describe the character of God as “a jealous God,” who neither shares His Name, contaminates His Name, amalgamates His Name, nor approves anything but exclusive devotion to His Name; in fact, it interprets the whole phenomenon of the critique of idolatry in the Scriptures of Israel—one of the prominent recurrent motifs therein.³¹ For Jenson, the primordial act of theological idolatry, interpreting this biblical tradition, would be to fail to identify God as God has identified Himself, particularly in Exodus and Resurrection.

Jenson pushes this analysis further, however. The identification of the biblical God by temporal events as his identifying descriptions is not merely

³⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:46.

³¹ Citing representatively: Exodus 34:14, Isaiah 42:8, Exodus 20:3-5, Deuteronomy 4:24, 6, 15.

related to a disclosure of *knowledge*, or a way of knowing, but furthermore to a disclosure of *being*, or to God's way of Being. The event of self-disclosure, for Jenson, is not merely epistemological but also ontologically constitutive or metaphysical in import. Jenson reads the whole triune narrational pattern of divine naming as metaphysically implicative. This reading Jenson draws from the prominent trajectory of 20th century theology that God's revelation is self-revelation or self-communication. Thus, God's identification as such in Israel does not merely represent descriptions *about* him from creatures but descriptions *of* him, of his own Life, as God is for Himself. According to Jenson, God's own Being is expressed in these identifications. Jenson describes the architectonic of this analysis: "a conceptual move has been made from the biblical God's self-identification *by* events in time to his identification *with* those events."³² The evangelical events witnessed in the Scriptures are not only conduits for God to identify Himself but part of His very own self-identification. God for us depicted in the Gospel is the same as God is in Himself. Here we see the shift to the historical account of God's being that remains decisive for Jenson's theology, and will be decisive for understanding, in our case in particular, the person of the Spirit.

This particular conception of the grammar of God, of the structure by which God is identified with the evangelical events, is one of the animating centers of Jenson's theology. Indeed, Jenson himself will say that, "the whole argument of the work depends on this move,"³³ that work being the first volume

³² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:59.

³³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:59, emphasis added.

of his *Systematic Theology* and his account of the doctrine of the Triune God. In support of this conceptual move, Jenson argues from the reduction of the opposite, and, in particular, how that connects to his theory of generic religion and its contrast with biblical faith:

Were God identified by Israel's Exodus or Jesus' Resurrection, without being identified with them, *the identification would be a revelation ontologically other than God himself*. The revealing events would be our clues *to* God, but would not *be* God. And this, of course, is the normal pattern of religion...It is precisely this distinction between the god and its revelation that the biblical critique of religion attacks. For the space normal religion leaves between revelation and deity...is exactly the space across which we make our idolatrous projections. The religious impulse is never satisfied with anything short of deity itself. Thus the revelations of normal religion, which are not deity but only point to it, become the mere occasions and triggers of the religious quest, of a journey to what lies behind them.³⁴

The biblical God gives us His very Self. He Himself crosses the distance between His own life and His self-disclosure to us. This broad pattern of interpretation will be generally familiar to any readers of Barth and Rahner, and their acolytes on this doctrine, but here in Jenson what we will see is the logic of this identification pushed to its most extreme and consistent extent, and thereby leveraged as revisionary against some other traditional theological loci and classical theological commitments. As Jenson describes one of the hallmarks of Barth's instruction, his own theology promotes and unfurls an "interpretation of God under rigorous obedience to the rule: God is in himself *precisely* what he is in the history between Jesus, and the one he called 'Father,' and us in their

³⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:59, emphasis added.

mutual Spirit.”³⁵ The logic of this rule will become particularly clear and revolutionary in its application to the doctrine of the Spirit, where—among us—the animation of the Christian community is where the Spirit has decided his identity.

§3.1.4: *The Triune Name*—The Resurrection of Jesus completes the self-identification of God that began in the Scriptures of Israel, and thereby, correlatively, the naming of God that grounds the triune narrational hermeneutic. At all points, Jenson insists on the intimate connection of the Triune name of God given to the Church and the disclosure of God to Israel. The former merely unfolds the latter in the particular situation of the climatic event in Israel’s story. Jenson claims, “All aspects of the Lord’s hypostatic being appear in Israel’s Scripture. The church’s trinitarianism is commonly thought to depart from Israel’s interpretation of God. This is the exact contrary of the truth.” Jenson thinks that this is the case because the characters of the divine drama that the doctrine of the Trinity discerns in the whole work of God, interpreted by what happened with Jesus, are all inchoately presented and preliminarily identified in Israel. The doctrine of the Trinity specifies and clarifies the particular ontological status of the other divine identities in relation to the specific person of the Father. But those identities are already anticipated in Israel: “...the doctrine of the Trinity only explicates Israel’s faith in a situation in which it is believed that the God of Israel has prior to the general resurrection [the messianic and eschatological

³⁵ Jenson, “Karl Barth,” in *The Modern Theologians*, David F. Ford, ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 31.

reorientation of YHWH's promises] raised one of his servants from the dead," in the midst of history.³⁶

What Jenson sees in the New Testament is the further specification of YHWH as "Father" by the roles clearly determined by the mission of the "Son" and the "Spirit" in the world, bringing God's work in Israel to culmination. Thus "Father, Son, Spirit," the very baptismal name into which believers in Jesus' resurrection are inducted,³⁷ becomes the Church's fundamental naming of God, which in turn identifies the Being of God, as Jenson has said, not only by the events described between Father, Son and Spirit but *with* these events, as God's personal self-determination. The specific identification of the character of the Spirit, therefore, occurs as one inalienable pole of this triadic structure, of the biblical God's self-identification in terms of what happened with Jesus. Jenson elaborates further on the significance of the distinctive triune name in the Church: "The triadic 'Father...Son...Spirit' is not a collection of names. Rather, the three names make the internal structure of one name, which names the church's God from the plot of his history with us, a plot represented by biblical names for the dramatis personae of the story." The triune name, including the Spirit, "here make an internal structure of the one God's personal name," the implication being that this name is the crystallized emblem of "the great biblical claim that God's history with his people is not only their history but also his own, that he truly is in his one self the Father, Son, and Spirit of saving history."³⁸ Thus the triune name, Father, Son & Spirit, is not merely nominal, as YHWH

³⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:63.

³⁷ Matthew 28:19.

³⁸ Jenson, *Canon and Creed*, 45.

alone was not either. The Triune name implicates in its very naming its accompanying identifying descriptions—those of the Gospel events as they unfold in the Church’s life. The Triune name as such, therefore, represents the “phrase that is precisely the maximally compressed version of the one God’s particular story.”³⁹

The Triune Name is needed to augment the Name already given in the Scriptures of Israel because the story of God with His people there ends ambiguously, awaiting its fulfillment, awaiting its messianic resolution or eschatological denouement. Jenson reads it as follows: the Old Testament materially concludes with the question posed to Ezekiel: “Can these bones live?”⁴⁰ As such, there is no final response to this query within the Scriptures of Israel, in Jenson’s reading. Even the rebuilding of the Temple, championed by Haggai and Zechariah, is not quite clearly a resolution in itself. The irresolution continues right up through Mary’s faithful fiat and the announcement of the coming of the Kingdom by the Servant who bears the Spirit to the Crucifixion, “the crisis of the total biblical narrative.” The great climax of that narrative is when God Himself undergoes the enslavement and exodus, the exile and the restoration that threatens the integrity of His People. “As the cry of dereliction laments, the one called Father here hands the one called Son over to oppositional and deadly creatures. Therewith it becomes problematic that anything specified by listing ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ can be one God and not rather a mutually betraying pantheon. If the phrase can still be the name of one self-identical

³⁹ Jenson, “How the World Lost its Story,” *First Things* (October 1993): 23.

⁴⁰ Jenson, *A Theology in Outline*, 11-12.

personal reality, his identity must be constituted precisely in the integration of this abandonment. The God of crucifixion and resurrection is one with himself in a moment of supreme dramatic self-transcendence or not at all.” For in the allowance of exile and death, in the lingering question of whether the Spirit will ultimately vivify them dry bones, the Lord has “explicitly [put] his own self-identity at narrative risk.”⁴¹

The event of the Resurrection, in the Spirit, is the self-vindication of God’s own dramatic identity. The Triune Name, correspondingly, is the word-icon, that identifies the God of this particular dramatic story—the One God—by and with precisely *these* events. The Triune Name evokes by implication not only YHWH, the covenants and the drama of biblical Israel, but further the climax of this drama in the crucifixion and resurrection of this one, faithful Israelite. The Spirit, as one pole of this internally differentiated singular name, therefore, is invoked alongside the Son and the Father in the occurrence of these events and this drama. These three together, therefore, and the Spirit as an irreducible one of them, are marked as the Divine bearers or dramatic persons, in Jenson’s language, of the Divine identity and self-identification as constituted by God’s decision to be God for us in the Gospel.⁴²

⁴¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:65, emphasis emended.

⁴² Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 77: “All this may be summarized by saying that right and rightly used Christian theological slogans are tethered to the *triunity* of God. For the doctrine of the Trinity, for all its seemingly remote ramifications, is nothing else than sustained insistence that the biblical story of God with his people, with its eschatological dynamics and its *dramatis personae*, is not only the story he lives for us but the story he eternally lives for himself. The carriers of God’s action in the story, which Scripture teaches us to call ‘Father,’ ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit,’ are the carriers of God’s inner identity. The dynamics of the story’s plot, ‘begetting/sending,’ ‘being begotten/being sent,’ ‘breathing,’ ‘proceeding’ and whatever other active relations between these *personae* may be found, are the active being of the eternal God.”

§3.2 THE DRAMATIC PERSONS OF THE DIVINE SELF-IDENTIFICATION

The Spirit is thus one pole of the fully revealed Triune Name of God. As we have seen, such naming in Scripture—the triune narrational hermeneutics—in Jenson’s view not only describes God but itself recounts the events whereby God freely determines His own identity by and with the accompanying historical identifying descriptions that correspond to the Name as such. The Triune Name, as a result, represents the occasion by which God clarifies His own identity in the relations of the persons therein catalogued: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Name corresponds to the identifying descriptions of the Gospel events that describe these relations, and the salvific dramatic action among these three “identities.” In Jenson’s view, then, the Triune Name signifies that these three identities constitute God’s own self-determination, not only for us but even as God lives for Himself. Therefore, these three must be understood as what Jenson will describe as the dramatic Persons of the whole biblical story (reality) of God with His People: the *dramatis personae dei*. Put most simply: “Father, Son and Spirit are the three personae” or agents or bearers or crafters, “of the story that is at once God’s story and ours”—and because it encompasses God’s personal agency and ours, it is The Story of the world (reality), not simply a partial or constructed story (a point many of Jenson’s detractors fail to sufficiently understand).⁴³

§3.2.1: *Plurality and Unity in the Divine Action*—That there are plural “personae” in the Divine Action in the world may seem to sit rather incongruously with the oneness of the Divine Name YHWH in Israel, as faithfully

⁴³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:110.

confessed by the *Shema*. Jenson explains, however, that this is a necessary implication of the recognition that God has truly identified Himself by and with and in His actions with His People—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, my name forever. Such an identification implicates a plurality of some kind, since there is God and an other with whom God identifies. The question is whether that plurality is internal to God’s Life or external. “Since God’s identity is told”—fully and truly—“by his story with creatures,” it cannot be the case that, “the plurality of agents” in the biblical story “be constituted only by external relations between God and persons who are simply other than God.” Alterity of agency in the driving of the story must then entail an identification of some kind of plural agency with the Divine Life itself. Otherwise, “God’s identity would then be determined extrinsically by creatures,” if it were the case that the plurality of agency simply belongs to the various creatures. Or it would be the case that God’s identity “would at some depth be after all immune to the gospel event” after all, because the agency by which the Gospel events are depicted would then not truly and fully disclose God’s own Identity. The unfolding of this theological logic suggests that “we must reckon with and seek to identify a plurality of what can only be called *dramatis dei personae, characters of the drama of God*.”⁴⁴

At one point, Jenson enumerates the process of identification relatively more straightforwardly as follows: “There are three in God in that (1) the Bible tells a story about God; (2) we cannot transcend the story on the way to find some ‘real’ God, without declaring the story simply to be false; (3) this story about God presents us with three agents of its action; and (4) within the story each of the

⁴⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:75, emphasis added.

three agents acts as divine precisely by confessing one of the other two as God and referring away from himself to that other.”⁴⁵ That there are multiple agents or bearers of the biblical drama of God with His people, and that this plurality has its basis back in the narrative identification of YHWH in the tumultuous course of his experience with Israel, Jenson takes to be the trinitarian architectonic of the entire biblical experience. Jenson does not think that this compromises the oneness of Israel’s God, since “God is himself but one monadic agent of the history,” while “the proclamation of God’s singularity is not in Israel the outcome of a metaphysical analysis but the slogan for a drama.”⁴⁶ That God is one in Israel, according to Jenson, is not primarily a philosophical claim about the Divine Nature as such, but rather the confession that only the God identified in Exodus, by and with His people Israel, is the true and sole Agent of history. This One, the same Person, is the selfsame One who continues to act in that history. Therefore, to comment on the internal differentiation of that identity is not to compromise unity vis-à-vis the world, but simply to expound more fully upon the original proclamation.

§3.2.2: Excursus 1, Jenson’s Triune Narrational Hermeneutics and Metaphysics—One of the most significant areas of criticism against Jenson’s theology has been advanced at this point, concerning Jenson’s triune narrational hermeneutics and the radicality of the identification between God’s action for us in the scope of salvation history and God’s being as such. The critique has been phrased in a few ways. One way is in relation to metaphysics. Because of his

⁴⁵ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 192.

⁴⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:75.

emphasis on story and hermeneutics, Jenson's proposal has often been read in the tradition of Lindbeck's, *The Nature of Doctrine*, which raises questions about the incorrigible status of the community's grammar in relation to the world, and about the extraecclesial status of its ontological claims, that is, its ontological *realism*.

Since this is a very common misunderstanding of Jenson's theology as a whole, that it tends in non-realist directions, the relation between Jenson and hermeneutical, grammatical and story theology is worth some extended comment. Here is one area when we cannot strictly approach Jenson's theology systematically, but must understand it diachronically or historically. Most of the charges do have relative legitimacy vis-à-vis the "early Jenson." However, they are more problematic when we consider the "later Jenson" of the *Systematics*; so let me begin there.

Jenson, after describing theology in both its authentically speculative (Thomas) and practical (Scotus, Reformation) modes—as both governed by its contemplative object (the Triune God, its *lex orandi*) and its practical task (mission and service, its *lex proclamandi*)—does consider theology also as fundamentally "hermeneutical": "Theology is reflection on how to do something, and the thing to be done is to carry on with a specified message, whether as proclamatory word from God or as appeal of petition and praise to God...Thinking located at such a place in life, where past hearing turns to new speaking, is what twentieth-century usage has called hermeneutics." Theology as hermeneutics is second-level reflection on how to interpret the primary constituting message of the Church, the Gospel, and "insofar as theology is

second-level discourse, it is best described as a sort of *grammar*. The church, we may say, is the community that speaks Christianese, and theology formulates the syntax and semantics of this language. Doctrinal statements function as accepted rules of proper usage; theological opinions of theologians or schools are attempts to point out such rules.”⁴⁷

Jenson does connect theology’s hermeneutical function explicitly with Lindbeck’s notion of doctrine: “This point has been made most decisively, as a deliberately postmodern program, by George Lindbeck.” However, Jenson also finds Lindbeck’s program by itself insufficient in its abstention from description of the material ontological referents of doctrine’s grammar. “Theological propositions...however, never actually appear as *pure* grammatical rules...” They labor “to say something not just about language but also about an extralinguistic entity, the person of Jesus Christ, and the drafters and promulgators of the doctrine would certainly have denied that it could accomplish its grammatical task *except just as it has this descriptive force*.” In that theological proposals derive their regulatory force from their grounding in “extralinguistic fact,” therefore, “they [also] belong to...‘the material mode’ of discourse....” Even as hermeneutical rules, the force of theological grammar as rules depends on their reference to reality. Jenson explain with the doctrine of Trinity: “The ineradicable materiality of theological propositions appear clearly, for example, in the classical doctrine of Trinity. The doctrine asserts that God in himself is *in fact* not other than he is in his history among and with us...*Therefore*, says the

⁴⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:18.

doctrine of the Trinity, we will speak falsely of God if we speak of him otherwise than as we speak of him in telling this story.”⁴⁸

The extralinguistic and material dimension of theology is an emphasis that Jenson makes in explicit contrast to Lindbeck’s original program:

This point must be made against Lindbeck’s *The Nature of Doctrine*, with which the present discussion otherwise so much concurs. It appears that Lindbeck may not have fully shaken off positivist prejudgments. E.g., 107: ‘Rule theory does not prohibit speculations on the possible correspondence of the Trinitarian pattern of Christian language to the metaphysical structure of the Godhead, but simply says that these are not doctrinally necessary.’ The contention is plainly false. Nor can it be supported by Lindbeck’s argument that if rival trinitarian speculations could be doctrinally true or false ‘one of the two main streams of Christian theological thinking about the Trinity is unwittingly heretical...’ ...Quite probably every currently working theologian is an unwitting heretic on some point or other, which is exactly the same thing as not now being a heretic at all. Nor need we suppose that every theological error will be discovered before the End, at which point judgments of heresy will presumably lose their bite.⁴⁹

In the end, therefore, Jenson outflanks—while harvesting the legitimate insights—this whole trend of theology by insisting that theology *must also necessarily be metaphysical*, despite all the recent cadre of—especially Protestant—theologians, whether Barthian, existentialist or revisionist, who have fled from that dreaded term like the plague:⁵⁰ “...if Christian theology is grammar,

⁴⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:19, emphasis added.

⁴⁹ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th anniversary ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009). Lest we misunderstand Lindbeck himself, as whole hosts of interpreters have been content with the reductionist narrative: Bruce D. Marshall, “Introduction to the 25th Anniversary Ed.,” also the exchange between Avery Dulles, “Postmodern Ecumenism” *First Things* (October 2003) and George Lindbeck, “Reply to Avery Cardinal Dulles” *First Things* (January 2004) are appropriate tonics.

⁵⁰ For a robustly theological project that heartily develops this antimetaphysical tradition in various respects, see now: Kevin Hector, *Theology Without Metaphysics*:

then it is *prescriptive* grammar” and as such claims, to a certain degree, to describe what *is* and how what is *should* be understood.

The material mode of theology means that theology “must also be what they derided as ‘metaphysics.’ That is, it claims to know elements of reality that are not directly available to the empirical sciences or their predecessor modes of cognition...We may press theology’s claim very bluntly by noting that theology, with whatever sophistication or lack thereof, claims to know the one God of all and so to know the one decisive fact about all things, so that theology must be either a universal and founding discipline or a delusion.” So, if theology is a hermeneutical and grammatical enterprise, it is also “*universal hermeneutics*.” This is such that, “the act of interpreting with which it is concerned can turn to anything at all.” But the interpretation of anything at all actually coincides with what was classically called metaphysics, only from a different, historically self-aware approach: “*But when hermeneutics become universal they just so become metaphysics*.”⁵¹ Where many of Jenson’s critics on this point dichotomize between the language of story and the language of ontological realism, the language of hermeneutics and the language of metaphysics, Jenson here provides the basis for transcending those bifurcations. He has provided the basis for a dialogue between the two ontological emphases. He suggests how the pervading theme of story in his theology actually also functions metaphysically, once we consider the grand story and universal hermeneutics, which in their scope are precisely and necessarily metaphysical.

God, Language and the Spirit of Recognition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:14, 18-20, note 43 and note 45, emphasis emended.

Jenson discusses how this way of viewing things in his *Systematics* is a diachronic development in his thought—a *retractio*. As he writes in a recent preface, “For a time I shared the German supposition that the [western philosophical] tradition culminating with Hegel was identical with metaphysics as such, and that we were past all that.” One interpreter relays a humorous story to this effect that Jenson still takes Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* as one of the select texts that he takes with him when he travels!⁵² Though not explicitly expressed in precisely these categories, such a narrative can be clearly exegeted from *Alpha and Omega* (1963), his dissertation on Barth’s doctrine of election, where he largely takes the German philosophical problematic about “history” as axiomatic, and does, at one point, correlate metaphysics to the subject of Barth’s critique of Feuerbachian projectionism in religion, in the most pejorative sense of “religion.”⁵³

Jenson, more recently, describes the problematic with his own earlier view of metaphysics, dependent on Heidegger’s own totalizing and misleading metanarrative about metaphysics as such: “This was an error on my part, of which I hereby publically repent.” For, of course, “[t]he question ‘What is it to be?’ has not gone away, though it is now often discussed in egregiously jejune fashion.”⁵⁴ The question has not gone away because it cannot go away. Critique of a *certain type* of metaphysics or tradition of metaphysics, whether warranted or superficial, does not speak against metaphysics wholesale. If metaphysics is

⁵² Stephen John Wright, “Introduction” to Robert W. Jenson, *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics*, xi.

⁵³ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 170.

⁵⁴ Jenson, “Preface” to *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics*, vii.

conceived more broadly as any stance in relation to a posited real and the human access to understanding the implications of the stance adopted, then no fundamental ontology, in the Heideggerian sense, or deconstruction, in the Derridian sense, or radical receptivity to the other, in the Levinasian sense, could ever be “a- or post- metaphysical.” For any such word, account, description, and yes action, always already implicates or corresponds to a certain position over against a posited real, that is, a certain metaphysics. The real that is so posited does not have to be so explicated explicitly or thematically. It may be tacitly or inchoately or ambiguously or even incoherently implicated. But certain intimations are indeed posited if an account or action has any coherence or plausibility whatsoever. Even something as seemingly innocuous as an axiomatic positing of non-contradiction does such in a certain basic sense. An account of or a position towards the conditions of reality obtains, and is, in this sense, a *metaphysic*, an after physics, a beyond reality which attempts to appropriately comport to and construe the meaning of the material.

What Jenson has come to realize in his more recent theology is that even the development of the radically new and revised christological ontology drawn from Barth itself implicates a certain metaphysics. As one perceptive observer notes, the shift, for Jenson, was the recognition that, “this new ontology was itself a metaphysics, albeit in a slightly different sense.”⁵⁵ The required recognition is that every Christian theological effort, precisely as the movement between interpretation of and communication of the specific Gospel is also necessarily, “involved in the church’s conversation with some surrounding religious culture,”

⁵⁵ Wright, “Introduction” to Jenson, *Theology as Revisionary Metaphysics*, xi.

and the conversation is reciprocal, a conversation in which both critical judgments are exercised and common insights are gleaned and received.⁵⁶ (We can leave aside for the moment, the question of whether the biblical messages themselves insofar as they are encapsulated in the cultural forms of their time are not themselves already philosophical-cultural and so a strict division between a christological ontology and philosophical-cultural dialogue is impossible). Nevertheless, with this view of theology and the Gospel as necessarily involved in conversation with surrounding religious cultures—intellectual mission and evangelism—Jenson has come to recognize that the millennia-long conversation of theology with the particular metaphysical tradition emanating from Plato and Aristotle simply *cannot* be circumvented wholesale or dismissed as such but must be constructively negotiated.

§3.2.3: *The Person of the Son*—Returning to the primary thread of triune narrational hermeneutics, after my prolix digression: God’s Name tells us that there are three in God who bear the Divine Action in the world. Each pole of the Triune Name plays their indispensable role in that Divine Action. Given my focus on pneumatology, I will emphasize what this means for the person of the Spirit in Jenson’s theology. But I will delay, just briefly, to register, preliminarily, the role of the other two persons. There is also the identification of the Son as a second dramatic character of God. Strenuously opposed to a number of ascendant readings of Israel’s Scripture, both classical and revisionist, Jenson argues that this way of looking at things actually makes it clear that the sense of the Son as another Divine Actor actually “picks out a continuous and dominant

⁵⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:ix.

feature in Israel's telling of God's identity." Jenson here coalesces all the traditions in Israel's Scripture that speak of God's Son, God's Word, God's Servant, God's Messenger, God's Messiah, and paradigmatically what the Rabbis called God's *Shekinah*, as all testifying in a manifold, yet nevertheless coherent, way to the alterity of an identity in God who is both intimately related to but also differentiated from the One God. What occurs in all of these cases, according to Jenson, is that "we see Israel's need to speak of God as himself identified with Israel as a settled participant in her story with him, who yet is other than the perpetrator of the identification. We see the way in which the narrative identification of God by his involvement with Israel displays a mutuality of personae whose differentiating relations are between God and Israel and somehow between God and God."⁵⁷

Jenson does admit that this reading of the various Divine Action in the Scriptures of Israel traces "God's reality as Son from the viewpoint of faith that a resurrection has indeed occurred." However, he will further argue that this tracing from the perspective of the Resurrection only further explicates and specifies a dynamic wholly authentic and inchoately present already in Israel's Scriptures.⁵⁸ Again, the trinitarian narrativel hermeneutic is grounded in a creedal critical theory that "in the variety of scriptural discourse we identify just these two, the Son and the Spirit as personae of God's story besides the Lord himself depends, of course, on the teaching of the Trinity." Such an identification, however, does not force an alien extrinsic paradigm onto the biblical story, but

⁵⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:76-77.

⁵⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:84.

rather draws out and explicates a predominant pattern already anticipatorily present therein. Thus Jenson can reference the Rabbinic tradition to say “that the rabbis often saw much the same three” analogously present there as a dramatic pattern in Israel’s Scriptures, even if they would not hypostatically differentiate that pattern in the same way that the trinitarian narrativial hermeneutics does.⁵⁹

§3.2.4: *The Person of the Father*—The person of the “Father” in Jenson’s theology, lastly, should be addressed. The unique theological weight that Jenson gives to the dramatic character of the person of the Father indicates the whole shape of his trinitarian doctrine. Jenson even fashions a new systematic locus, “patrology,” for his emphasis on this dramatic character. Giving more explicit consideration to the distinct character of the Father than is usual or typical, Jenson ventures to describe the persona of the God of Israel: “Not only the Son and the Spirit appear as *dramatis dei personae*; also the God whose Son and Spirit these are is identified as himself one *persona* of God, as the Father of the Son and sender of the Spirit. The God of Israel appears as himself one of the *personae dramatis* of the very God he is.” In his unique patrological locus, Jenson primarily entertains the question, then: “The Father is the God of Israel;” but also “the Father is one among three identities of the God of Israel. How can both of these propositions be true?”⁶⁰ While Thomas can stand roughly representatively for the tradition that this question has never entirely been

⁵⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:89; citing Isaac Rottenberg, “‘Comparative Theology’ vs. ‘Reactive Theology,’” *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994), 416: “Even a cursory reading of the Targumim will show that almost all divine appearances in the Hebrew Bible and virtually every act of God are attributed to the *Memra* and the Holy Spirit.”

⁶⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:115.

obscured,⁶¹ the more common pattern of the movement of theological loci directly from “the One God” to christology and pneumatology, can actually be interpreted as potentially allowing the distinct dramatic character of the first Divine Person often to disappear from the theological rendering of the Divine Action in the world.

§3.3 THE SPIRIT AS DRAMATIS PERSONA DEI

With this identification of the various dramatic actors of God’s activity in the world, the Spirit appears as a third such. The identification of the Spirit actually comes more straightforwardly, says Jenson, than that of the Son, which undergoes a number of inflections in its biblical differentiation. Comparatively, in “identifying biblical *dramatis dei personae*, we find also the Spirit of the Lord.”⁶² While the identity of the Son combines a number of forms of God’s presence among his people in Israel—Word, Servant, Glory, Angel, Messiah—and can therefore only be known as such when the one servant, Jesus of Nazareth, comes, by contrast, the Spirit’s identity as a bearer of the Divine Action in Israel is relatively consistent. That does not mean that from the Scriptures of Israel alone one can read clearly that the “Spirit” is distinctly hypostatic or not potentially another aspect of the Lord’s presence or a permutation of one role of the Son. It is only with Pentecost, with its decisive disclosure of the “face” of the Spirit, that we can clearly and irrevocably identify—epistemologically—His hypostatic presence in the Old Testament.

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 1.33.1-4.

⁶² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:86, emphasis emended.

§3.3.1: *The Integrity of the Spirit's Identity in Scripture*—Nevertheless, in Jenson's reading of the biblical narrative, the role of the Spirit appears relatively uniformly. There are two primary contexts. The first is historical: "the Lord's *ruach* is his historical agency through Israel's leadership." Thereby the dramatic role of the Spirit is to liberate or free Israel's life from its intrahistorical intractability by the decisive action of new possibility; when the Spirit arrives on the scene, the historical life of Israel becomes viable again. As examples under this category, Jenson cites Moses, the Judges of Israel, the early Kings and their faithful successors.⁶³ With the action of the Spirit of the Lord through such leaders—even in ambiguous ways—the impasses of Israel's history are overcome and transcended. Secondly, the Spirit is the agent of prophecy. "Prophecy is speaking God's own word, and the Spirit is the freedom to do this." The Spirit liberates the prophet for the possibility of being a conduit for the Word of the Lord, just as the Spirit gave freedom to the historical leadership of Israel to be the vehicle for God's accompaniment in the unfolding of His design. Under these two categories, Jenson thinks he can unify the themes regarding the Spirit that are present in the Scriptures of Israel (the role of the Spirit in creation or life would perhaps fit in the first category). The question about the Spirit's coherent dramatic role, then, is about the possible unification of these two themes: historical leadership and communicative prophecy. In the case of both Moses and Saul, Jenson discerns a dramatic connection. The Spirit of the charismatic leader, either in themselves or shared with others, results in a situation of

⁶³ Citing Numbers 11:17-30, Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:25, 1 Samuel 16:13.

prophecy.⁶⁴ Conceptually, how might we understand this together? For Jenson, the convergence is eschatological in orientation. In the promised final community, the shared Spirit will be the Spirit of the community's life to live by the Word of God—and so to live ultimately: "...the very ground of eschatological hope is that the Lord gives Spirit, and so is the God of life and not of death"⁶⁵ (as addressed more fully in §1.1).

§3.3.2: *The Coalescing of the Spirit's Identity in the New Testament*—The New Testament harmonizes these two roles in the person of Jesus, the Messiah. Jenson comments that, "For Israel's experience of the Spirit to come fully together, to display the Spirit's face, two further steps were needed." First, the historically experienced prophetic and creative Spirit, in Israel's leadership and in the reception of the Word of the Lord, needed to become the eschatologically promised and outpoured Spirit. The Spirit who animated the Leaders and Prophets of Israel, and who was also encountered as the creativity and liveliness of the world, had to become the Spirit poured out on "all flesh"⁶⁶ in eschatological orientation. This expectation has a messianic focal point: "There will be new life [after Exile] because God's people will be gathered by a final bearer of the Spirit: the Messiah will bring universal peace because the Spirit will 'rest' upon him..."

Secondly, the gift of the Spirit had to become *universal* (or universalizing) because, "the Spirit will cease to be a special endowment"⁶⁷ for selected leaders and will become apportioned in respective ways to each member of the messianic

⁶⁴ Numbers 11:17-20 and 1 Samuel 10-11.

⁶⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:86-87.

⁶⁶ Joel 2:28.

⁶⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:87.

community. Thus the face of the Spirit will be known when there is a people gathered, “all of whom have the prophetic Spirit, precisely because they are gathered by a messianic prophet.”⁶⁸ The Spirit’s decisive and irrevocable face will be shown, therefore, when, among a messianic community, among the Spirit’s community, a carrier of the Spirit emerges whose prophetic mission is precisely to be the giver of the Spirit to all those in the community.

Jesus’s relationship to the Spirit in the New Testament occurs at the nexus of all these thematics. And so, the logic of the Spirit’s identity, in relation to the Father and the Son, is therein revealed. Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit, endowed at his baptism, to inaugurate a prophetic mission, to bring Good News to the poor, and all his other life giving acts and signs done in the Spirit, which just so are interpreted as the arrival of the final “Kingdom of God.” The Spirit bearer is then presented as the Spirit giver, the one who will give the Spirit to his followers. When the Spirit bearer is raised and ascended, the final conditions for Pentecost are complete: “As these personal and communal relations are established, the Spirit appears in his personhood; he shows his face.” This is why it is in the Gospel of John—the narrative of Jesus’s life most thoroughly and explicitly saturated by the retrospective interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection—that the Spirit appears most decisively *not just* as the power of God for action in the world, but precisely as a distinct divine dramatic person. He appears there with his own particular relations to the Father and the Son (citing John 14:16-17). The Church is the community that enacts in history the network of thematics that belong to the Spirit. And so, “as the Spirit shows his face, the church appears.

⁶⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:87-88.

The Messiah's community is a single communal prophet; just so, the relations we have traced in Israel's Bible are fulfilled."⁶⁹ With the emergence of the New Testament Church, Jenson suggests, the identity of the Spirit merges all of the manifold ways in which the Spirit was depicted throughout the entire trajectory of the biblical narrative.

§3.4 THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SPIRIT'S IDENTITY

To say that the primary identification of the Spirit by His action in the biblical narrative is relatively straightforward, however, is not to say that all the questions that accompany this identification, specifically questions about the relation of the Spirit to the other divine persons, questions of trinitarian ontology, of divine relations, of the trinitarian taxis and mission, questions of the immanent Spirit as such, are all similarly straightforward. In actuality, the tradition has bequeathed a constellation of questions about the distinct hypostatic ethos of the Holy Spirit, especially given that trinitarian description has often taken the Father-Son dyad as representative for its explications. The person of the Holy Spirit has often occasioned a challenge to trinitarian discourse and understanding, precisely due to the particularities of the Spirit's biblical role and identification. What has been lacking, Jenson argues, is a full appreciation of the distinct hypostatic initiative, role and location of the Spirit in the Divine Life.

§3.4.1: *The Proper Name of the Holy Spirit and Relationality*—Jenson notes the elemental difficulty embedded in the name "Holy Spirit" as the designation of the third divine hypostasis: "spirit is what God is, and so spirit is what the three triune persons are together and equally, as the divine nature." Of

⁶⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:88-89.

course, the same is true of “holy,” and so neither “holy” nor “spirit” necessarily on the surface identify any distinct divine hypostasis, as opposed to qualities or aspects of Divine Reality in general. “The problem is imposed by Scripture” itself, Jenson exegetes, for “[t]he same Gospel in which the Spirit appears most explicitly as another than the Son and the Father [in reciprocal relation] also contains the Bible’s closest approach to a definition of the divine nature, that ‘God is Spirit...’.”⁷⁰

The problem is not a new one, and goes back at least as far as Augustine. Everything that is predicated of the Divine Life, says Augustine, is said “substance-wise,” whereas what is said of the particular divine hypostases is said “relationship-wise.” So it is insofar as the Holy Spirit “is so called relationship-wise, being referred to both the Father and the Son,” that the Holy Spirit is thereby “properly or peculiarly called the Holy Spirit,” thereby differentiated from the divine hypostases of the Father and the Son. “This relationship,” however, “is not apparent in this particular name....”⁷¹ The name Holy Spirit does not seem to signify immediately or naturally by itself any type of relation. By contrast, it is comparatively evident that the names Father and Son identify some specific relation. So the logic of the differentiation of the Holy Spirit thus sits somewhat awkwardly in comparison to the dyad of the Father and the Son, an awkwardness that will linger through much of the theological tradition.

Augustine himself comes at this problem in two ways. First, designating the proper name of the Holy Spirit as “gift of God” (Acts 8:20, John 4:10), which

⁷⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:146, emphasis emended, citing John 4:24.

⁷¹ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5.3 (Hill, 199), 5.1-5.3 (Hill, 190-202).

implicates the corresponding dative relationship of giver, gift, giving and recipient. That does not quite suffice, however, for the exegetical warrant for the description of the Spirit as gift is clearly economic. Therefore, the “to whom” of the dative relationship in this case is clearly the creature. “But what has been given is referred both to him who gave and to those it was given to; and so the Holy Spirit is not only called the Spirit of the Father and the Son who gave him, but also our Spirit who received him...So the Spirit is both God’s who gave it and ours who received it,” Augustine notes. In what way, then, can the Holy Spirit be eternally defined as gift in relationship to the creature? Does that not make the Spirit’s eternal identity contingent on the enactment of the gift of creation? The Holy Spirit could be gift in relation to one of the other divine persons, but that would entail some reverse directionality that Augustine is not ready to entertain within the order of divine processions. Augustine raises the query, “But if he only proceeds when he is given, he would surely not proceed before there was anyone for him to be given to.” Can the Holy Spirit be “gift” in whatever way prior to the event of the giving, or is there some anticipation of the gift by which the Holy Spirit is the eternal hypostatic identity that he is in relation as gift? Augustine tentatively suggests that the Holy Spirit is eternally “giveable” in the Divine Life, which is the condition of the possibility of his being gift in relation to the creature: “the Holy Spirit always proceeds and proceeds from eternity, not from a point of time; but because he so proceeds as *to be giveable*,” thus “he was already gift even before there was anyone to give him to...” He therein distinguishes: a

gift (*donum*) from a donation (*donatum*): “it can be a gift even before it is given, but it cannot be called...donation unless it has been given (tense).”⁷²

The other major possibility that Augustine entertains, as has become prominent in the theological tradition, is that the Holy Spirit is hypostatic *love* in particular. Again, there is an ambiguity however. For “God is Love” is one of the other great New Testament declarations of a decisive divine ontology. As Augustine himself also notes, “So God is love” (*caritas*)...[but] “the question is whether it is the Father and the Son or the Holy Spirit or the triad” who is properly called such. In that case, Augustine demurs, “then I do not know why Father and Son and Holy Spirit should not all be called love and all together be one love, just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are all called wisdom and are all together not three wisdoms but one wisdom. In the same way the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and they are all together one God.” Analogously to gift, nevertheless, love is especially appropriated to the Holy Spirit, he avers: “And yet it is not without point that in this triad...only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God...If therefore any of these three can be distinctively named love, which could it more suitably be than the Holy Spirit?”⁷³ The argument in this passage is somewhat fudged. In the broad scope, however, Augustine differentiates the Spirit as uniquely hypostatic love by arguing that the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son as what is shared between them, so the “bond” (*vinculum caritatis*) between them, what is common to them—love. Jenson, in assessment, observes the ecumenical difficulty that became embroiled in this

⁷² Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5.3 (Hill, 201-202), emphasis added.

⁷³ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15.5 (Hill, 422-423, translation emended); 1 John 4:8: Gk: ἀγάπη; Vg: *caritas*.

resolution: “The solution of course presumes that the Spirit indeed proceeds from the Father and the Son (*ex patre filioque*), as Augustine did teach and as the Western interpolation into the Nicene creed was to have it...Augustine’s solution to his problem thus only provided matter for a further and ecclesially more severe problem....”⁷⁴

§3.4.2—*The Lived Significance of the Spirit’s Hypostatic*

Differentiation—For Jenson, Augustine hit upon a vital and profound problem for the Church’s discourse, not simply a frivolous or speculative one of overzealous trinitarian metaphysical dynamics or logical fixations. The question of the relation by which the Spirit is eternally “other” than the Father and the Son is “religiously weighty,” he says, because “if we cannot...identify the Spirit by a specific unique relation of origin and if we posit in God only relations of origin, *we cannot specifically invoke the Spirit*, as the church in fact intends to do.”⁷⁵ Most severely, perhaps—to consider the counterfactual—if such were the case, the invocation of the Spirit’s liberation upon the bread and the wine to be the site of the body and blood of Christ would then be an exercise in religious mythology. Similarly for all the pressing cases, in which the specific identity of the Spirit is invoked as the triune basis of the divine activity of Grace in the world and in the Church’s life.

Here Jenson remains unsatisfied with some of the traditional certainties: “The ancient recourse that the Spirit proceeds from the Father in a way *unknowably* different from that in which the Son proceeds from the Father only

⁷⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:147, emphasis emended.

⁷⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:148, emphasis added.

restates the difficulty; the concluding scholastic formula, that the Spirit's relation of origin is anonymous is mere resignation."⁷⁶ That is not quite accurate, for Thomas' understanding of the opposed relation of the Father and Son to the Spirit in the second procession (*processio operationis*) under the modality love (*per modum caritatis*) does indeed logically specify the Spirit otherwise than the first procession. However, it also has the ecclesial liability of making the filioque intrinsically necessary for any distinct identification of the Spirit from the Son.

For Jenson, nevertheless, the tradition's simple *assertion* of the eternal hypostatic differentiation of the Spirit from the Son as axiomatic is insufficient for all those times in the Church's life when the Spirit needs to be knowingly invoked in His particularity. Such an assertion would implicate a failure of revelation to have sufficiently clarified the matter of the Spirit's particular identity in relation to the Father and the Son so as to be particularly identifiable. To anticipate, Jenson's own ventured theologoumenon here will be that tradition has been overly circumscribed by consideration of "relations of origin" alone, thus failing to recognize the uniquely identifiable relation of the Spirit as a "relation of end or telos"; the tradition has failed to view the relations of the Spirit, that is, as ones of completion, from the unique location of the Spirit: at the end of God's ways, or in Jenson's more controversial idiom as God's own "future."

§3.4.3: *The Traditional Difficulty with the Spirit's Identity*—Jenson summarizes the inherited difficulty of the tradition when he claims that, "The common factor in Western problems with the Spirit, one may suggest, is a tendency of the Spirit simply to disappear from theology's description of God's

⁷⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:148, citing Aquinas, *ST*, 1.36.1.

triune action, often just when he might be expected to have the leading role.”⁷⁷ This sweeping statement obviously needs some qualification, not only from the Patristic era, but also from the tradition of the “West,” which is Jenson’s primary target here. More careful attention could be given to Calvin’s theology of Word & Spirit, Wesley’s theology of sanctification, liberalism’s theology of experience—for some examples. Nevertheless, Jenson is adopting—to greater or lesser degree—a recirculated charge that has some plausibility as a generalization on the formal level. To do so, he takes—curiously perhaps—Barth as representative, but precisely since his “rhetoric” about the Trinity being the doctrine in which all other theological problems find their resolution “leads us to anticipate something else.”⁷⁸ Since, for Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity has a fundamental explanatory significance for Christian doctrine, that is why Jenson is surprised that the Spirit does not take more of a personal initiatory role there.

§3.4.4: *The Example of Barth*—Let me consider why Jenson renders this assessment. In the third volume of Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation, where Barth looks at the completed work of the mediator—who ventures from Lord to servant and servant to Lord—in its totality, its completeness and unity, where the prophetism of Jesus counters the falsehood of humanity, Barth describes the *objectivity* of the Gospel proclamation. As Jenson exegetes, “[t]he gospel proclaims a specific event that is antecedent to our hearing of the proclamation, and the first historical proclamation of the gospel [Apostolic] is also antecedent to any of us now hearing it.” But the Gospel is not merely an “it is,” but also a

⁷⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:153.

⁷⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:153.

“pro nobis,” a for us. Even so this for-us must be a salvific event that is antecedent to our hearing, one that is already completed. For Barth, this objectivity is located in the Resurrection of the Son and His “universal prophetic role.” As the Risen prophet, ascendant at the right hand of the Father, Jesus can guarantee the continuing objectivity of the gospel message even in its ever new manifestations and events of proclamation.

Jenson finds it curious, however, that Barth undergoes “some of the most tortuous dialectic in all his writing in order to locate the proclamation’s objectivity” in this way, in the universal prophetic role of the Risen and Ascendant Jesus. Jenson counters that Barth could have easily invoked Pentecost and the life of the Spirit in the community of the Church to similarly, more directly, and more faithfully to the unfolding of the biblical narrative, guarantee the objectivity of the Gospel proclamation. Perhaps, of course, we might speculate that position implicated an overly exalted view of the Church’s teaching office and sacramental objectivity for Barth’s more Reformed sensibilities. As Jenson renders it, nevertheless, Barth’s doctrine implies an assumed *lack* of personality for the Spirit. “It appears that,” he surmises, “for Barth, an act of the Spirit would not transcend the subjectivity of our hearing,” certainly haunted here by the (perceived at least) specter of Schleiermacher. The Spirit could not guarantee an integrity to the Gospel communication that would not be dissolved in our own concerns. But then where is the Spirit to be personal agent, both in relation to the work of the Son, and over against us? The Spirit, it seems, remains an impersonal force either to be faithfully channeled by the Son or to be potentially unfaithfully redirected by human subjectivity.

Next Jenson adduces Barth's description of the Church in its identification in being with Jesus Christ. This is also the "work of the Spirit," but in Jenson's assessment, Barth finally does not credit the personal agency of the Spirit with "actively uniting Christ and the church." "It is invariably Christ himself who is specified as the agent, with the Spirit denoted only by impersonal terms, as a *capacity* of Christ."⁷⁹ In Jenson's reading of Barth, therefore, the Spirit has become merely a function of the accomplishment of what Jesus Christ intends for His Church. As such, the description is authentic, but nothing else appears to describe the actual personality and liveliness of the Spirit in these networks of relations. The Spirit does (can do) nothing over and above this, over and above what the agency of the Son has *already done*. The Spirit Himself never fully emerges in His personal initiative, never finally appears as a distinct *dramatis persona dei* in theological description. To summarize, Jenson concludes his reading: "the inner-divine community of the Father and the Son is, explicitly, two-sided; the Spirit is the fellowship itself and so *not* a partner thereof...." The Holy Spirit not being recognized in His agential partnership, Jenson attributes to the a strict "I-Thou trinitarianism:" "Barth's exemplary use of Western doctrine thus displays what can only be called an 'I-Thou' trinitarianism. The Father and the Son are unproblematically understood as persons in mutual converse, whose mutuality constitutes the triune life and is the ground of God's acts *ad extra*. *But the Spirit is not a party to this converse. And, indeed, it is at the heart of the I-*

⁷⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:154.

Thou relation,' as it has been normative in Western thinking, to allow no third party."⁸⁰

§3.4.5: The I-Thou-We Personalist Paradigm of the Spirit—Jenson

argues that while Barth, among other examples of the western tradition, remains in the I-Thou paradigm, the necessary development for a full appreciation of the personality of the Spirit is an expansion to the "I-Thou-We paradigm."⁸¹ Here is another instance of Jenson's critical appropriation of Hegel. Jenson takes over Hegel's I-Thou analysis from the Master-Servant section of the *Phenomenology* to say that the endemic problem with the bilateral (I-Thou) relation is one of *mutual* objectification. It is not strictly speaking a problem of objectification as such, as a number of contemporary thinkers have sentimentalized it. For objectification is intrinsically part of the subject's relation to the world, indeed to itself (I am first, as subject, object to and for myself). The real problem of the I-Thou encounter is the hedging on *reciprocal* objectification, the objectification of the other while at the same time the protection of the self, the clinging to hold on to the self, the refusal of the vulnerability and availability of the self to the other. So in the I-Thou encounter, the self will inevitably have the other as object for subject, "[b]ut if I am not also an object for you as subject, if I in some way or degree evade reciprocal availability to you as one whom you in your turn can locate and deal with, I enslave you, no matter with what otherwise good

⁸⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:155, emphasis emended.

⁸¹ Though, curiously, I find no explicit reference here to Mühlen's classic formulation of this position with regard to pneumatology in *Der Heilige Geist als Person* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1963).

disposition I intend you.”⁸² How is this not to happen? How is the self to guard against the instinct to objectify without risking the liabilities of availability?

“Most postmodern thought, carrying out Hegel’s insight under the tutelage of horror, has given up such questions except as rhetorical, and supposes that in fact all personal converse is openly or hiddenly a struggle for domination.”⁸³

Christian thought need not resign in this way, however, because the Christian view of God invokes the destabilizing or provocative but liberating and completing “third.” The shift to the true diversity of the I-Thou-We paradigm opens up the initial encounter for mutual availability. So, phenomenologically, infers Jenson, “Surely we must acknowledge that if there is to be freely given love there must be a third party in the meeting of ‘I’ and ‘Thou.’ If you and I are to be free for one another, someone must be our liberator.” Or again, “If I am to be your object and you mine, so that we may [both] be subjects for each other, there has to be one for whom we are both objects, and whose intention for us is our love for each other.”⁸⁴ The phenomenology of the I-Thou-We encounter, whereby the third liberates the first and second parties from ossified self-enclosure because that one desires and holds accountable those parties to mutual availability, to love one another fully, this becomes for Jenson the appropriate creaturely analogue of the trinitarian dynamics of the Spirit. The active personal agency of the Spirit is thus required for the full communion of God, just as the Spirit’s distinct agency—though always in concert with the other divine persons—

⁸² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:155; Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 145.

⁸³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:156.

⁸⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:156.

is required for the full objectification, appropriation and completion of the divine work in the world's salvation and consummation.

In the relations of the Divine Life, the Spirit is this third, the We of the I-Thou-We paradigm. Continues Jenson: "the Spirit is indeed the love between two personal lovers, the Father and the Son, but he can be this just in that he is antecedently himself. He is another who in his own intention liberates Father and Son to love each other. The Father begets the Son, but it is the Spirit who presents this Son to his Father as an object of the love that begot him, that is, to be actively loved. The Son adores the Father, but it is the Spirit who shows the Father to the Son not merely as ineffable Source but as the available and lovable Father."⁸⁵ In a final synthesis of the Spirit's identification, which coalesces the themes of kingdom, future, freedom and communion, Jenson suggests that in the theological tradition, the distinctive role of the Spirit has been recurrently obfuscated because His explicit "location" in the Divine Life has not been acknowledged, and therefore the particular character of the Spirit's antecedence has not been fully appreciated: "traditional trinitarian teaching deprives him of his Archimedean standpoint, of the place from which he might himself move the life he lives with the Father and the Son."

The acknowledgement of that place finally facilitates the full and holistic identification of the Spirit as uniquely invoked by the Church and the Church's life. So Jenson argues: the Spirit "stands...at the End of all God's ways because he is the End of all God's ways. The Spirit is the Liveliness of the divine life because he is the Power of the divine future. He is the one who, when he in time gives a

⁸⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:156.

‘down payment’⁸⁶ on the Kingdom, gives precisely himself. He is the Love into which all things will at the last be brought, who is thus the fulfillment not only of created life but of the divine life.”⁸⁷ This recognition occurs as the full identification of the biblical God with the “eschatological character” of the biblical narrative, and not only by the “protological character,” which Jenson will associate more with “Hellenistic” theology. In this way, the Spirit is fully identified in His distinct hypostatic ethos when His position at the End of the Divine Life is recognized, when “the divine *goal*” complements the divine origin, when the freedom of the future is seen to be the particular endowment of the Spirit. This, says Jenson, the tradition has not explicitly done, “in West *or* East.”⁸⁸ Having looked at how the holistic identification of the Spirit clarifies the Spirit’s location at the End and His character as freedom, as the One who in the economy liberates created realities from their limitations and their sin to bear their divine possibility, just as in the immanent life of God, the Spirit liberates the Son for communion and love with the Father as the Divine Completion, I will turn, finally, to consider what that location and character of the Spirit looks like more precisely in Jenson’s theology for his construal of Divine Reality.

§CODA

The person of the Holy Spirit is identified through his works in the biblical narrative. As such, the Spirit exists as one pole in the most fully disclosed Divine naming—the Triune Name—in relation to the action of the Father and the Son. Such naming does not simply give knowledge *about* God but is the event in which

⁸⁶ Alluding to 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5.

⁸⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:156-157.

⁸⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:156-157.

God determines His own identity by and with His historical actions with us: the triune narrational hermeneutics. The Spirit thus becomes identifiable as one of the *dramatis personae dei* driving the biblical story. His identification culminates in the unification of His works in and through the Son, and so His distinctive face appears when the Church, the community of the Son, emerges in the biblical narrative. This initial biblical identification of the person of the Spirit, however, triggers further theological and conceptual difficulties about the differentiation of the Spirit in the Divine Life, about His eternal role in relation to the Father and the Son. The beginning of the resolution to this difficulty comes when the distinct hypostatic initiative and location of the Spirit is fully recognized. A full recognition of the appropriate location of the Spirit necessitates a reconsideration of certain aspects of the traditional understanding of trinitarian relations, trinitarian processions and trinitarian ontology in the Divine Life.

CHAPTER 4:
THE SPIRIT IN THE DIVINE LIFE

§INTRODUCTION

The Spirit's work of freedom in the world discloses who the Spirit is as the eternal Freedom of and in God Himself. In recognizing the Spirit's character as freedom, the traditional processional model of the Divine Life can be complemented with the liberation model. The Spirit is thus fully known hypostatically as the eternal Unsurpassed of the Divine Life who witnesses to the Son and liberates the Son for Communion with the Father. The liberation model interprets the Spirit → Son taxis of the biblical data, the Spirit-leading experience of the Spirit in salvation history and the return movement of the Church as Bride of Christ into eschatological, eternal fellowship with God.

The Spirit works to bring freedom and liberation in the world, the freedom that the arrival of the Kingdom heralds, first and foremost to the People of God in their own communal life—as the Spirit's face becomes revealed, the Church appears—then also in particular gifts given to individual believers. I have also canvassed how the Spirit is identified not simply as a force for Divine Action in the world, but—trinitarianly—as one of the dramatic persons of the Divine Identity, as God constitutes Himself in His decisions for us in the Gospel. At last, I will examine more specifically the role of the Spirit in the Divine Life—the “immanent” Spirit—and the eternal relation of the Spirit to the other Divine Persons in Jenson's theology. Because of Jenson's close identification of the economic and the immanent Spirit, the Spirit's action in the unfurling of the biblical narrative and the Spirit's eternal identity in relation to the Father and the

Son, the character of the eternal Spirit, will be revealed to us through the character of His work in the economy of salvation. As Jenson pithily crystallizes his pneumatology, “The Spirit is the freedom by which the triune identities are a communion.”¹ Eternally, therefore, the Spirit is personal freedom of God and in God. The Spirit is this Freedom as the Divine Future, as the personal Goal and End of all God’s Reality. Understanding the Spirit in this way leads Jenson to modify the traditional characterization of the dynamics of divine life, in order to define more fully the place or location of the Spirit. This characterization of the Spirit, as the One who frees the Son for Communion with the Father also has further ramifications for our understanding of Divine Reality (Being) and also creaturely being. Jenson’s unique doctrine of pneumatology both underwrites, and also stands at the nexus of, a number of other creative aspects of Jenson’s theology: our understanding of trinitarian ontology, the relation of the immanent and economic trinity and creaturely ontology.

§4.1: THE DIVINE LOCATION OF THE SPIRIT

At the end of Chapter 3, I catalogued how Jenson describes many of the traditional difficulties of the distinctiveness of the Spirit as a failure to fully and completely identify the Spirit’s proper location in the Triune Life: as goal or destiny. Here I will more fully elaborate on how Jenson interprets that distinctive location of the Spirit, primarily by a chronological analogy and not primarily as a spatial, social or psychological one. The goal, telos or completion analogue is an interpretation of purpose and intention. The designation of the Spirit as “future” is an interpretation of temporal movement, by temporal

¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:226.

experience. Both of these correspond to the analogy of the Spirit as Freedom, which is the power of the future to bestow a given goal.

§4.1.1: *The Spirit as Divine Future*—Jenson frequently identifies the Spirit with the future, among his other constellation of concepts, in a temporal analogy. In a representative passage, Jenson writes: “God the Spirit, the ‘third’ divine ‘hypostasis’ of classical trinitarian theology, is *God as the power of his own future*, God as beyond himself to be life and act, God as his own goal.” Clarifying what he means by this, Jenson articulates how this future does not represent something alien imposed on God, but represents his own self-differentiation: “That God is absolute and has no purposes that come to him from beyond himself, does not in Christian theology mean that he has no purpose and is captive in himself; it means that he is his own goal, that he himself is the spiritual freedom in which he lives and acts. It means that God needs no other than God for the mutual life and communication in which his freedom occurs. *God is Spirit*: the creative freedom and longing in which he is his own future is his very being.”² That God has future—not in the disanalogous creaturely sense whereby the future looms with the contingency of destruction or entices with the possibility of newness given from outside—means in the paradigmatic sense that God relates to His own Self with life, purpose, internal dynamism and freedom.

Here Jenson interprets the irreducibility of the hypostasis of the Spirit according to this distinction between origin and goal in God. Not that origin and goal are imposed *on* God, but that extending the Nicene logic of the Father as absolute origin in God, the Spirit hypostatically represents orientation or goal *in*

² Jenson, *Visible Words*, 54, emphasis emended.

God, as God exists in and for Himself. This distinction can then be understood as analogically co-ordinate to creaturely temporal categories, if *both* the aspects of similitude and dissimilitude are held in balance: “In that God is future to himself, he *has* future. In that God as future to himself is indeed *God*, he has *final* future, future in which all the hopes of time can be achieved. In that God has final future, he is able to be the goal also of others than himself. The Spirit is God as the present power of his fulfillment and ours. The Spirit is eschatological possibility.”³ To say that there is irreducible hypostatic plurality in God is to say, according to Jenson, that there is some sort of difference.

§4.1.2: Time as Analogical Locus (the Chronological Analogy)—In the creaturely case, difference is primarily differentiated by space (geographical) or time (chronological)—and consequently all the cultural variability constructed across those dimensions in the world of human meaning. Most classical theology has used space as the predominant metaphor in this respect. Jenson’s preference for time corresponds to his taking Word as metaphysically fundamental for his theology: a hearing theology, a musical theology, wherein the distention of notes over time constitutes rhythm and song (and so his final evocation of the eschaton in his *Systematics* is that of music, God as “the Great Fugue”). That creaturely time functions as a governing analogy does raise some difficulties, particularly the specter of modalism, insofar as the Divine Persons were conceived as simply and exclusively appropriated to particular epochs of creaturely time. Jenson responds to this: “Finally, I must note the connection between the poles of time and the mutual roles played by Father, Son and Spirit in the biblical story of God.

³ Jenson, *Visible Words*, 54.

That this connection has been the permanent occasion of ‘modalist’ degradations of the doctrine of the Trinity must not prevent us from noting it and reckoning with it.”⁴ The employment of the temporal analogy, however, whether in modalist or process forms of theology, has been irretrievably entwined with the conceptualization of creaturely time *as we experience it* as paradigmatic, with the inevitable evisceration of any meaningful sense of God as either absolute Creator or Providential over time.

The hidden architecture in Jenson’s appropriation of the temporal association of the Divine Persons, however, is the question of whether or not Divine Time is not paradigmatic, compared to which creaturely time is only an analogical echo. Similar to what had to be done in pro-Nicene theology with regard to generation and origination, the concept of time, goal and destiny here do require the purgation or tropification corresponding to their appropriately theological usage. The concept of time as it relates to God in modalism and process theology is still primarily anthropomorphic. Jenson is attempting to employ this concept in theological language with the appropriate calibration to their transcendent meaning. It remains an open question whether he fully succeeds in this. But many misinterpretations of Jenson’s theology have arisen from the false understanding that he is using time, when he speaks of a Divine Origin and Future, in the univocal creaturely sense, structurally similar to modalism or process theology. Jenson, however, introduces into the analogy of the Divine Persons with time the qualification that God certainly does not

⁴ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 194; Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:218-219.

experience time as we experience time, as passing, as loss, as dissonance, and thus perhaps the analogical interval between the two can be reckoned with. (In the subsequent chapters, I will explore the question of whether in his doctrines of trinity and christology, Jenson fully appreciates the significance of, or is consistent about, this analogical interval).

As the chronological analogy relates to trinitarian relations, nevertheless, to say that God is Father and Spirit thus is to say that God includes the irreducible difference of “whence” and “whither” within the scope of His own harmonious Life: “But as God is the Father and the Spirit there are a Whence and a Whither in God; and as he is the Son there is a reconciliation of God’s Whence and his Whither.”⁵ God comes from God (Father). God is always the everpresence of His own Intention (Son). And God always goes to God (Spirit). Jenson employs this language at a number of crucial points in his theology for understanding the particularity of the Spirit: “for throughout Scripture ‘the Spirit’ is God as the one who comes to open us to the future.”⁶ Or again, coordinating some of his favored language: “The Spirit is the Power of the End, God as his own and our Fulfillment rushing upon us. Thus confession of the Spirit must culminate as confession of the great End for which God creates us and which is anticipated in the Son’s resurrection.”⁷

Jenson further elaborates on the connection between the role of the Spirit as future, as the whither, the goal or destiny of the Divine Life and the freedom to do so: “Correspondingly, the Spirit appears as the ‘whither’ of God’s life.

⁵ Jenson, “The Great Transformation,” Braaten and Jenson, *The Last Things*, 41.

⁶ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 17.

⁷ Jenson, *Large Catechism*, 27.

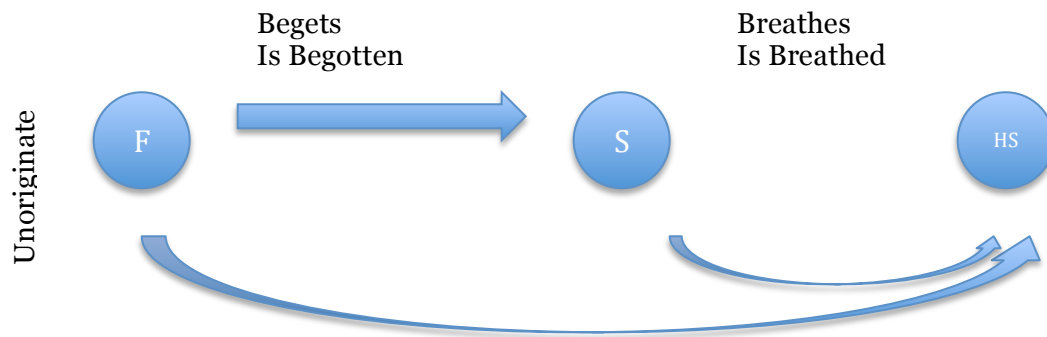
Throughout the biblical story, the Spirit is God as the Power of the future...The Spirit is God coming from the future to break the present open to himself. The Spirit is divine self-transcendence, insofar as God does not depend upon what is not God to be the referent or energy of his coming to himself. The whither of divine events is not their passive aiming point, but their emergence and activation from the future.”⁸ The conceptualization of the Divine Persons by association with Divine Temporality further allows Jenson to consider the unique “location” or role of the Spirit in the Divine Life, doubling back to the spatial analogy. The temporal differentiation between past, present, future allows Jenson to describe the special “time” of the Person of the Spirit, and so the “place” where the Spirit stands hypostatically to be irreducible.

§4.1.3: *The Unsurpassedness of the Spirit*—The full and robust identification of the Spirit’s distinct and irreducible personhood, Jenson argues, has been occluded in the theological tradition because of the failure to recognize this particular “location” proper to the Spirit in the Divine Relations. He delineates the argument as follows: “The tradition does affirm the proposition that needs to be supported. So John of Damascus: ‘We do not conceive of the Spirit as an anhypostatic breath...but as a substantial power, self-related in his own individuating hypostasis.’” The corrective is needed, however, in his view, because “the tradition does not then provide the needed support. *Where* does the Spirit stand, thus to be himself over against the Father and the Son?” Jenson’s own envisioned contribution is to fully specify the “place” of the Spirit in the Divine Life as Future-Goal: “[W]e have already many times noted and said where

⁸ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 194, emphasis emended.

in fact the Spirit stands: at the End of all God's ways because he is the End of all God's ways. The Spirit is the Liveliness of the divine life because he is the Power of the divine future. He is the one who, when he in time gives a 'down payment' on the Kingdom, gives precisely himself. He is the Love into which all things will at the last be brought...the fulfillment not only of created life but of the divine life."⁹

The Classical Model:¹⁰



When the distinctive location of the Spirit as the Goal of God's Life is recognized, the truly proper "notion" distinctive to the Spirit can be conceptualized. From His place at the Goal of Divine Reality, and corresponding to the unoriginate personal property or *innascibilitas* of the Father, Jenson designates the Spirit's proper notion as *unsurpassedness*. The proprium of the Spirit is as the one who cannot be exceeded or surpassed, the Goal of every goal, the Absolute Finality and Culmination of Divine Reality, just as the Father is the

⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:157, emphasis emended.

¹⁰ Adapted from Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 122.

Absolute Origin of Divine Reality.¹¹ We could say the *monotelos* of the Spirit, similarly to the *monarche* of the Father in classical Eastern idiom. As classical theology has articulated, the origin of Divinity as such is personal, being located in the wellspring of the Father's hypostatic unbegottenness (and so His inexhaustible *fecunditas*: the Father as *primus fons*, the *fons bonitatis*, the *fons plenitudinis*—to use the language of Bonaventure).

So also, Jenson will suggest the complementary consideration that the culmination, orientation and conclusion (*destinatum*) of Divine Being is also personal, being found in the inexhaustibility of the Spirit, the Spirit's inexhaustible *profunditas et improvisatio* (my terms for Jenson's notions). From this location of the Spirit as the personal (hypostatic) Future-End of Divine Reality, the Absolute Culmination of Divine Being, the dynamics of trinitarian relations can also be considered from the "reverse direction" of the processional model. In Jenson's assessment, the traditional processional model operates on the philosophical presupposition of "God as fundamentally located at the beginning rather than the End," such that the active relations of Divine Reality only have "movement" one way. The result is that "to command, beget, give, and so on," were envisioned to be divinely constituting, and "more appropriate to deity than to be given, obey, and the like." The result was that the Spirit the Father "gave to the future was only passively so."¹² In response, Jenson suggests that the Spirit from the Last Future of God also actively constitutes the Divine Reality in His own proper relations.

¹¹ Jenson, *Lutheran Slogans*, 11: "...the Father is the sole source of the triune divine life."

¹² Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142.

Jenson affirms the traditional doctrine of the Father as the sole source of Divine Being; what he suggests is that the understanding of Divine Reality only by origination is incomplete. Divine Reality itself must also be understood according to goal, meaning, intention. "It is the standard teaching in East and West that the Father is the 'source' of triune deity and the 'cause' of the hypostatic reality of the Son and the Spirit," Jenson affirms. "To this standard teaching," he adds however, "must now be paired another: that the Spirit is the *goal* of deity and the *liberator* by which the hypostatic reality of the Father or of the Son is set *free*, by which these 'hypostases' are actual *persons*." If the origin of Divine Being as such in the Father is affirmed, then the particular personal role of the Spirit as the Divine End of God can be correlatively affirmed. The Spirit thus endows the freedom of personhood on the Son and the Father, the personhood necessary for Ultimate Communion and Love, from the Divine End. This movement of the Divine Reality is eternally co-constitutive with the self-establishment of God from His origination: "This self-establishment of God from his own Future is as constitutive of deity as is his self-establishment from the Father as 'fountain.' Not only Jesus the Son must be liberated from mere historicity, God the Father is not God unless he is liberated from mere causality."¹³ That the Father receives his personhood as a freedom from the Spirit will sound problematic to classical ears. For Jenson, however, this implication is to take the Nicene logic that the Spirit is fully equi-divine with the Father to its furthest reach. What Jenson thinks he has accomplished is a rounding out of Nicene thinking: a pneumatological reconstruction of Divine transcendence from

¹³ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 138.

the perspective of its goal, future and destiny, just as Nicaea itself was a christological reconstruction of Divine transcendence from the perspective of the Son who became Incarnate.

§4.2: DIVINE DYNAMICS AND RELATIONS

The full reconstruction of Divine transcendence pneumatologically, from the unique hypostatic location of the Spirit in the Divine Life, precipitates some reconsideration of the traditional account of the Divine dynamics and relations. Whereas the traditional trinitarian theology considers the dynamics and relations of the Divine Persons unidirectionally, solely in terms of origination (*processio*), the full recognition of the Spirit's person entails an augmentative model of the Divine Life from the perspective of the Spirit, from the viewpoint of its goal and destiny. Jenson describes this dynamic in terms of movements of "liberation" and "witness," which he draws from his account of the economic activity of the Spirit in the world.

§4.2.1: *The Liberative Movements of the Spirit*—The location of the Spirit at the End of God's ways, or the telos of God's ways, in relation to the Father who stands at the origin and is the unoriginated, who in the classical model is the sole fount and wellspring of Divine Reality, complements the traditional "processional" model of Divine Reality with a model of freedom-liberation, witness, affirmation, meaning and telos: what I will call either the "liberation" or the "completion" model—interchangeably—of Divine Reality. That is, the designation of a distinctive place for the Spirit in the Divine Life to correspond to that of the Father and the Son opens up a new way to conceptualization the Divine Relations, provoking a number of further ontological implications.

In the classical model, the dynamics of Divine Reality flow unidirectionally from the Father → Spirit, where the hypostatic differentiation in the Divine Being occurs only by “relations of origin.” The ontological revolution that Jenson proposes is that the classical model represents the “interpretation of eternity as Persistence of the first past that causes them.” Certainly, this classical conceptualization is grounded in the biblical narrative, where God stands protologically at the origin of all things, just as the Father does so in the Divine Life. Likewise, the processional model corresponds to a clear taxis in the unfurling of the biblical narrative: in the sending of the Son and the Spirit from the Father; the Father is never sent (while the precise relation of the Son to the Spirit is not quite so exegetically clear as the classical model has suggested). As Jenson appropriates it, “The Father appears in biblical narrative of God’s life with us as the ‘whence’ of divine events, as the Given from which they come or to which they return.” Since the Father is clearly the whence of divine events in the biblical story, the sending of the Son and the Spirit makes clear the basis for the traditional theology of the eternal processions: “In classical technical formulations, the biblical story about God is summarized in the two ‘sendings’ of the Son and the Spirit; the Father is the Unsent Sender. And when this story is asserted to be true of and in God himself, by the doctrine of ‘processions’ correlated to the ‘sendings,’ classical formulations summarize the relational life of God again in only two processions, of the Son and the Spirit from the Father who has himself no procession.”¹⁴ Many of those who have criticized the classical

¹⁴ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 194.

ontology, the traditional account of processions and structure of taxis have failed to reckon with how thoroughly biblically saturated those theological accounts are.

The question remains, however, whether those traditional accounts are exhaustive of the biblical experience? Simply by itself, Jenson argues, the processional model of these two sendings from the Father is incomplete. It is incomplete, he avers, because the “interpretation of eternity” should also be understood “as Faithfulness to the last future,” thereby also drawing out the biblical narrative’s decisively “eschatological” character and the identity of God delineated therein. God must be trusted as the One who is Faithful throughout the various stages and reconstructions of many promises—as we have seen further elaborated in previous chapters.¹⁵ Jenson connects the oversight of the tradition in this respect to his narrative about the influence of Hellenistic assumptions over-determining our understanding of the nature of Divinity. So his culprit becomes fully revealed: “It is the chief residual paganism of the way in which the churches descended from the mission in Mediterranean antiquity have thought of God, that all the derivations run one way, from the Father through the Son to the Spirit... All active-voice relations run from origin to goal.” In this view, “the relations from goal to origin are but their passive voice.” Jenson takes this as emblematic of “unbaptized Hellenism’s” conceptual, existential and so metaphysical “celebration of beginning over ending, of persistence over openness, of security over freedom.” And this unbaptized Hellenistic presupposition, “maintains itself even within the doctrine of Trinity. The God whose eternity is

¹⁵ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 141.

immunity to time lurks even within the church's vision of the God whose eternity is faithful adventure in and through time."¹⁶

The more thorough interpretation of God by the Gospel, and by the Gospel's eschatological character—the bible's orientation to promise and fulfillment—opens up the space to consider the liberative relations, suggests Jenson: the movement of Divine Reality from its own Outcome, that is, from the distinctive role of the Spirit in the Divine Life. "When our interpretation of God shall have been wrenched into a next level of conformity with the gospel—that is to say, when our liturgy and preaching and church year shall have come to honor Pentecost and epiclesis equally with Easter and anamnesis—we will see the eschaton in God at least as clearly as we see in him the origin, experience him in freedom at least as potently as security, know ourselves in him by anticipation at least as definitively as by recall." When we see God as clearly in the End as in the Origin, says Jenson, on "our implicit flowchart of deity," we will make the corresponding augmentation to our understanding of the Divine Relations: "if the Father is in the language of the old theology marked as unoriginate, the Spirit will be marked as something like unsurpassed. If the Father is shown as begetting the Son and breathing the Spirit, the Spirit will be shown as liberating the Father and achieving the Son."¹⁷

§4.2.2: *The Liberative Model*—What Jenson thus calls the "asymmetry of the trinitarian relations" in the classical processional model, by articulating only relations of origin, is "remarkable" because according to his reading "the Bible

¹⁶ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 139.

¹⁷ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 139, emphasis emended.

clearly presses candidates” for the return or reciprocal relations, for relations of completion or finality. Jenson particularly identifies two biblical categories for completion or affirmation that correspond to begetting and proceeding (spiration) in the processional model:

(1) *Witness* describes the relation of the Spirit to the Son, from the perspective of the Final End or Goal of all things and Divine Reality. The term witness embraces a number of crucial New Testament themes of the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the “Interpreter,”¹⁸ who exegetes and declares the meaning of the Son, who testifies to the Son. Since the accomplishment of the work of redemption is to bring the Church as Bride (*totus Christus*) into the eternal Divine Fellowship and Life, the Spirit is the eternal Witness and Confessor to this reality as the final Outcome of the world story. From Pentecost onward, with its preexistence in Israel and Creation, the unfolding of this truth in history is the interpretive work of the Spirit to confess this final Truth.

(2) *Freedom* describes the communion between the Son and the Father, as catalyzed by the Spirit from the final outcome of Divine Reality, which is Archetypal and Absolute Communion. Integratively, Jenson writes: “[u]sing ‘witnesses’ for the Spirit and ‘frees’ for the Spirit with the Son...The Spirit’s witness to the Son, and the Son’s and the Spirit’s joint reality as the Openness into which the Father is freed from mere persistence in his pretemporal transcendence, are equally God-constituting with the traditional relations.” This is offered as an interpretation of the fact that, “the only biblical approach to a definition of deity is ‘God is Spirit,’” and this interpretation, “demands that the

¹⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 3:61-104.

Spirit be recognized as differently but equally ‘principle and source’ with the Father....” In this way, Jenson claims to have rectified the traditional asymmetry by using “*witnesses* for the Spirit and *frees* for the Spirit with the Son.”¹⁹

Divine Being considered from its absolute logical origin is “unoriginated,” the personal property of the Father. Divine Being, however, can also be considered from its End, as absolute conclusion or destiny. That would be the particular property of the Spirit, what Jenson calls “unsurpassed.” The dynamic of the Divine Life considered from the perspective of origin would yield the traditional trinitarian processions of begetting and breathing. But there can also be a consideration of the dynamic of the Divine Life from its absolute end. The biblical language attributed to the Spirit that captures this dynamic is what Jenson calls “witnessing” and “liberating” or “freeing.”²⁰ So Jenson: “as there are two sendings/ processions of/in God, so there are two...‘liberations,’ of the Father and the Son by the Spirit. And these liberations are as constitutive of the identity and reality of God as are the processions.”²¹

Classically, the Son and the Spirit are two termini of the “processions” from the Person of the Father that remain within the subject: that of intellect and that of will (Thomas) or by way of nature (*concomitante voluntatis*) and love (*concomitante naturae*) (Bonaventure). In either case, derivation flows strictly

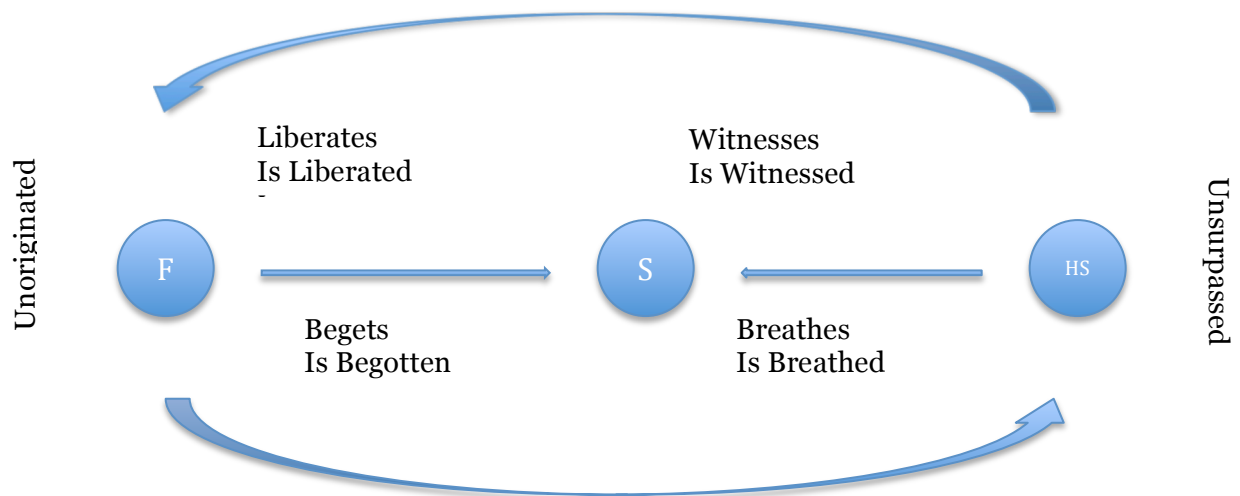
¹⁹ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142-143. To say that, “God is Spirit” is the *only*, or the *primary*, direct predicative biblical definition of God, however, is misleading (or would require more interpretive argument than Jenson actually offers), even though it is certainly *one* very important one. How do, “God is True” (John 3:33), “God is Faithful (πιστὸς)” (1 Cor 10:13), “God is One” (Galatians 3:20), “Our God is Consuming Fire” (Hebrews 12:29), “God is Light” (1 John 1:5), and “God is Love” (1 John 4:8) fit into this exegetical claim?

²⁰ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142, emphasis emended.

²¹ Jenson, *Essays in Theology of Culture*, 195.

from the Father as Divine Person to the other two Divine Persons, the Father being the sole foundation of Divine Life: his *monarche* or *innascibilitas*. “On a traditional diagram of trinitarian relations,” as Jenson describes it, “the procession of divine being is all one way, from the Father. Son and Spirit derive their deity from the Father, but Father and Son do not derive deity from the Spirit.”²² The eschatological construal of Divine Being allows, Jenson thinks, for a view of movement from the other direction, so to speak, a role for Divine agency from the direction of the Spirit towards the Father through the Son. Jenson thinks this more fully completes the imaginative representation of the Divine Life. Thus, the eschatological re-construal of the Divine Identity leads Jenson to revise the traditional description of the trinitarian relations. This revision could be represented schematically as follows:

Jenson’s Revised Model²³:



²² Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 141.

²³ Adapted from Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 143.

§4.2.3: *The Exegetical Foundations*—As a whole, Jenson has proposed this complementary model of Divine self-establishment as a general exegesis of the biblical definition of God as Spirit. The whole model corresponds to the dynamic of Divine Life whereby God is ontological defined as Spirit. But this model, furthermore, also exegetically signifies a clue about the role of the person of the Spirit within the common Divine Life. The classical model of Divine processions is a construal of God’s pretemporal transcendence that is particularly located in the person of the Father. Jenson suggests that a corresponding eschatological transcendence exists for the Divine Reality that is particularly located in the person of the Spirit, where the person of the Son is the focal point of God’s own Life in both origination and destiny, alpha and omega.

The classical categories for “begetting” and “proceeding” were taken from specific Gospel passages that were exegetically determined to disclose inner Divine processions. Under the influence of Rahner’s rule, however, Jenson takes the whole scope of the biblical narrative in its thematic depictions of the interaction between the Father and the Son and the Spirit as identified with the inner Divine relations (the economic trinity is the immanent trinity). Thereby other categories for the dynamics of the inner Divine Life become available for conceptualizing the personal relations. That Jenson’s “witnesses” and “frees” have broad biblical ground is certain. The principle of selection of these two as significations of the immanent and not just the economic Spirit, however, as well as the differentiation of the various ways in which the New Testament describes the relations of the Son and the Spirit to the Father—some of which if taken strictly would be either subordinationist or mutually conflicting—is not entirely

clear, a difficulty I will take up in the subsequent chapters. Still, I would argue that the broad contours of his description of the character of the Spirit's work in the world—as explored in the previous chapters—here tacitly influence his determination of the appropriate categories to describe these particular relations in the Divine Life.

§4.2.4: *Synthesis*—Jenson, lastly, further transposes the dynamics and relations into modern language of personalism. Thereby he also keeps many insights of the “psychological analogy,” even if it has been reconstrued in novel ways. Drawing on some of Hegel's phenomenological language, Jenson transfers the classical language of “begetting” → “intention” (Word) and prefers the language of “giving” to that of “spiration” (Spirit). All of this culminates in the subject-object-spirit language, though employed differently from how Hegel would do so. Jenson crystallizes his own rendering of trinitarian theology as follows: “[T]he Father gives and intends, the Spirit frees and witnesses, Jesus is intended and is witnessed to.” Interpreting each pair of relations in personalist language, we get a final synthesis of the classical processional model together with the augmentative theologoumena of Jenson's liberative model: **“the Father gives and intends = is Subject; Jesus is intended and is witnessed to = is Object; the Spirit frees and witnesses = is Spirit.”**²⁴ The Father establishes all Divine Reality by his intention of a determinate object, the Son, and with an overflowing donation with the Son of the Spirit. The Spirit co-establishes Divine Reality by liberating the Son for Ultimate Communion with the Father and by testifying to the intention of the Father in the Son. The Son occurs

²⁴ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 148.

as the basic intention of origination of the Divine Life from the Father and as the fundamental testimony of the destiny of the Divine Life in the Spirit. All of this, together and eternally, is the dynamic reality of the Triune and Living God.

§4.3: THE FILIOQUE

To talk about the Divine Processions in the context of traditional and ecumenical theology is, inexorably, to further raise the vexing question of the filioque, as different understandings of the dynamics of the Divine Processions have occasioned a longstanding dissensus. Jenson locates this problem at the nexus of a network of questions about the full identity of the Spirit in the tradition, and he thinks that his particular construal of the Divine Life provides illumination here also. Understanding the proper location of the Spirit also gives better understanding of the questions concerning filioque.

§4.3.1: *The Classical Problematic*—The nature of the Spirit’s procession has been one of those tortuous and interminable disputes in the history of the Church; Pelikan once quipped, epically, that the history of the filioque dispute will be “the principle homework assigned” to that “special circle” of hell’s inferno devoted to historians of doctrine.²⁵ Nevertheless, there have been two questions in regard to this dispute that, even if seemingly obscure and marginal of themselves, actually open up to—and are intertwined with—a number of other decisive theological styles and positions. In that way, the filioque eminently represents the challenges and possibilities of a truly “systematic” theology, and that, more so, is perhaps why it has continued to recur in the tradition.

²⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 90.

The first matter is one of ecclesiological order and authority in regard to the ecumenical Church, insofar as the Nicene Creed represents a truly global statement of faith. To this matter of procedure and order, Jenson simply defers to much recent ecumenical convergence: “That the Western church should not unilaterally have added this phrase to the text of an ecumenically dogmatized creed is now widely agreed.”²⁶ Indeed a number of faithful theologians from across ecclesial divides have echoed this assessment, such that resolution on the matter of form and suggestion that the actual practice of the Church revert to conformity with the original text of the Creed could be regarded as one item of triumph of modern ecumenical theology. To trace the spider’s web of the matter, however, even here on the matter of Church order, takes us out into nodes with theological authority, the interpretation of revelation, ecclesiology, pneumatology, the discernment of the Spirit in tradition, the role of the Church’s universal pastorate, and where the “final buck,” so to speak, of the Church’s magisterium should stop, where it should be located when contentious matters become so grave as to necessitate it. Still, those who continue to argue in favor of the “West” at this point of Church order have to rely on a highly maximalist, aggressive and interventionist theology of the Church’s universal pastorate to defend the position that the insertion of the *filioque* into the Nicene Creed should be simply accepted as such.

That a significant movement has crested in favor of the “East” on the question of Church order, however, has not and does not settle the second

²⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:149; citing K. Ware and C. Davey, eds., *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 1977).

dimension of the problem, that of the material theological content of the proposal. That the filioque should not be dogmatized at the point of Nicene consensus does not necessarily mean or imply that it is theologically false, or that it is not conceptually salubrious or biblically sound as a theologoumenal model of the Divine Life. A theologian as wary of fruitless and needless speculation as José Comblin has defended its importance for Christian praxis.²⁷

§4.3.2: *An Initial Justification*—Jenson attempts to navigate these waters. Regardless of the final assessment of the historical unfolding, “the *filioque* has also its own [theological] meaning,” says Jenson, “and this cannot be abandoned.” His primary warrant for this statement is the prevalence in the New Testament description of the Spirit’s dependence on the Son: “In the biblical narrative, the Spirit indeed comes to us not only from the Father but also from the Son.”²⁸ The Spirit is repeatedly described as sent “through” the Son, “from” the Son, or described as “of the Son.”²⁹ Here we encounter the unswerving, unrelenting

²⁷ José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, Paul Burns, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 166-175.

²⁸ Citing representatively: John 20:22, “decisive for John’s understanding of the Resurrection: ‘He breathed on them and said...Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

²⁹ I have to leave the precise exegesis of John 15:26 alone for the time being: “When the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, that one will witness to me” Gk: Όταν ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ. But this passage is invoked by many traditionalist Orthodox authors definitively against the *filioque* in a strictly minimalist interpretation to say that the Spirit is *only* said to proceed from the Father: Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., Serpahim Rose, trans. and ed. (Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2009), 89-94, 100-102; The other passages that describe the Spirit being sent through the Son, it is argued, are economic in import not immanent, whereas this passage authentically describes the inner Divine relations. The “procession” of the Spirit is eternal and solely from the Father; the “sending” of the Spirit is economic and only in that case “through” or “from” the Son. It seems from context, however, that the John 15:26 passage is actually also economic in referent and not primarily immanent (if such a distinction is to be made). It is in the same verse that the

commitment to and implementation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* in Jenson's pneumatological thought. For, he argues, the economic description of the Son's sending of the Spirit must also, therefore, have its correlate in the Divine Life, if indeed God's revelation discloses who God is in Himself: "The *filioque* reads this giving into God himself, and just therefore must be maintained, however it is to be systematically integrated or whatever may be worked out about the creed. For it is the very function of trinitarian propositions to say that the relations that appear in the biblical narrative between Father, Son and Spirit are the truth about God himself."³⁰ The frequent reliance of the Spirit on the Son in the economic unfolding of the events of the Gospel necessitates, for Jenson, a reckoning with the *filioque* immanently in some way.

Jenson describes how the *filioque* emerges from the biblical identification of the relations between the divine hypostases, but also does explore the deeper theological logic behind the *filioque*, especially as the western teaching is "brought to perfection by Thomas...." The meaning of the *filioque* relates to how

Spirit is said to proceed from the Father that the Spirit is also said to be sent from the Son! The very purpose of the proceeding Spirit here is to testify to the Son in the world, such that the disciples will likewise be enabled (v. 27). It is far from clear, therefore, by what exegetical principle of differentiation the other passages are said to be "*merely*" "economic" whereas this passage alone is certainly held to be speaking directly of the Divine Life. The only possible sign that the clause about the Spirit's proceeding is wholly immanent, whereas the "sending" is strictly economic is verb tense: πέμψω is future active, whereas ἐκπορεύεται is present middle. This would depend on whether one takes the present here as intentionally a "customary" or "gnomic" present, thus implying a continuous, structural occurrence or general timeless statement (eternal procession v. temporal sending); this is possible but ambiguous, and in any case would be a weighty theological point to hang on a single word with no other definitive signifiers. Nor does the identical repetition of the prepositional phrase "παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς" in both clauses bode well for such a fine distinction. Even if this passage is "immanent," furthermore, it does not say explicitly that the Spirit *does not* proceed through and/or from the Son; it leaves the matter unstated. In that case, its interpretation could potentially be influenced by the others passages which do so speak of the relation of the Spirit to the Son.

³⁰ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:150.

we are to understand and get purchase on the differentiation of the Divine persons, particularly between the Son and the Spirit: or “the trinitarian relations’ capacity to distinguish triune identities,” as Jenson describes it. In his exegesis of Thomas, Jenson describes how the trinitarian identities are “distinguished only by their relations,” and that “relations can be distinguished only by opposition,” only by being “mutually exclusive.” In this broadly western way of thinking, the precise problem is how to differentiate the Spirit from the Son when they both seem to have the same relation to the Father. To simply state that the relations—of generation and of procession—are sheerly of a different type only recapitulates the problem; that would provide no way for our understanding to *specify* the Spirit from the Son, and so God wouldn’t have fully and truly revealed Himself to us after all, but only partially—we’d only get diet God with lime.

§4.3.3: *The Insight of the Orthodox Demurral*—Jenson sympathizes with this analysis, but at the same time also finds the Orthodox demurral to be compelling. For, in his assessment, the precise logic of Thomas intra-Divine relations “depends in large part on sheer geometry.”³¹ It is difficult to avoid this association, in many cases, of the medieval western development of Augustine’s doctrine that its final power emerges from its resonance with arithmetical harmony, which may or may not have an apologetic value—Anselm’s “necessary reasons”—but which has taken us away from how the relations are portrayed in the biblical narrative into a logical construct, even if crafted as a tremendously beautiful and surgically precise one in itself.

³¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:151.

Taking Vladimir Lossky as representative of the antagonistic position of the “East” on this position, Jenson points out that it is “this whole way of thinking that Lossky... disapproved, to set the style of recent Orthodox argument with the Latins.”³² In his exegesis of Lossky, Jenson recounts the major problem of the Orthodox with this type of reasoning: its *impersonalism*. It is impersonal in that it attempts to excavate a deeper logic “behind” the Divine Persons. Whereas, in the analysis of Lossky & company, the Divine Persons are simply axiomatic. The Divine Persons themselves are the primordial *given* in the Divine Disclosure. They themselves are the ground beyond which we simply cannot go because the Divine Persons simply *are* the final “explanation” so to speak, or they include their own epistemological warrant in themselves. As Jenson describes it, “statements of triune relations are only to display what is *sheerly given in the Christian revelation*: the ultimate mere facts of God’s personal [threefold hypostatic] diversity and essential singularity. That the Son is begotten by the Father and the Spirit proceeds ineffably otherwise from the Father, are irreducible starting points for Christian thinking, and are not to be deduced,” from any other postulate.³³ The Orthodox counter that procession in God must be Personal or Hypostatic is undermined by the joint procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. For what is shared between the Father and the Son must be the Divine Essence, precisely not hypostatic: “Thus in the Western scheme

³² Lossky takes this difference in trinitarian thinking to an extreme degree, seeing in it a kind of primal sin of Catholic theology that taints the whole rest of it: “The difference between the two trinitarian conceptions determines in each case the whole character of theological thinking, and *to such an extent that it becomes hard even to call both theology in any unequivocal sense...*” [!], Vladimir Lossky, *Image and Likeness of God*, 76, emphasis added.

³³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:151.

either the Spirit proceeds not from the Father and the Son as identities but from their divine nature, or what proceeds from the Father and the Son is not a person but a sort of manifestation of the other person's nature." Jenson concludes, "the argument is surely powerful."³⁴

§4.3.4: A Plague on Both Houses—While the argument is surely powerful, Jenson contends, it also comes at its own cost. The riposte of the West then comes again: "If the Father in his identity as Father is thus left as the sole *arche* in deity, is this not indeed subordinationist?" Jenson does not think that recourse to "logical," and not "temporal," priority finally resolves the lingering suspicion. If the Father is deity as such, some ontological gap, however small or qualified, is left between the divinity of the Father and the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Precisely the filioque guarantees that even the capacity for procession in God is something the Father shares with the Son, gives over to the Son, thus attempting to reckon with the radicality of the Nicene "*homooousion*." Whether this solution of the West ever quite fully or radically applied to the Spirit—so as to entirely eliminate suspicions of a final subordinationism—is a disputed matter.

What Jenson discerns in Lossky's articulation of Orthodox tradition, nevertheless, "shows the disaster also of the Eastern position." The Eastern interpretation of the Father's *arche*, says Lossky, is not finally subordinationist because, "terms such as...procession and origin are but inappropriate expressions for a reality alien to all becoming, all process, all beginning." In Jenson's thinking, this response to the claim of subordinationism also betrays a theological disaster: "[t]his is a vision of God as frozen as any we have encountered, and a new

³⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:151.

evacuation of trinitarianism. The trinitarian propositions in their Eastern use fail to describe...[subordinationism] we discover, only *because they do not describe any action at all*; in which case, given their semantic foundation and content, they can mean nothing whatever, also not as items of a negative, ‘apophatic’ theology.” The terms are eviscerated of any of their analogical meaning with regard to God’s own Life. Thus the economy does not truly reveal the Divine Life after all. The relations described therein do not really refer to God’s Life as God is. “And trinitarian teaching’s underivable starting point in revelation,” which, to recall, was the great global critique of Lossky against western trinitarianism, “turns out to be not the biblical narrative but rather *some other revelation of God*, whatever that may be.”³⁵

Jenson’s own resolution of the question again invokes his sense of the divine “tenses,” the whence and wither of God, the positions of origin and future in God. He coordinates this conception with the distinction between the “essence” and the “energies” of God derived from Orthodox tradition. He further modulates this traditional Eastern distinction, however, and gives it a personalist and hypostatic interpretation and not an essential one. “Within the construal of the divine life solely in terms of origin, and particularly within the Palamite framework from which it is advanced, this proposition [the distinction between the essence and energies in God] would be as abstract as the Western and Eastern positions it modifies.” It is Jenson’s hypostatic reorientation of the Divine eschatology—and therefore not an essentialist rendering of it—that he thinks allows for the distinction between essence and energies to be fully tied to the

³⁵ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:152, emphasis added.

concrete biblical narrative. The distinction between essence and energies, then, can be fully situated within the divine perichoretic relations as witnessed in the biblical narrative, and thusly fully personalized: “But if the eschatological character of the gospel’s plot line is recognized... the life that the Spirit enables as the divine life has its plot from the Son’s relations to the Father and to the Spirit; it is Christ who gives the Spirit to Israel and the Church, that very Spirit who does *not* derive his being otherwise than from the Father and who is in himself the perfection, the liveliness, of the divine life.”³⁶

In terms of “Being,” Jenson can agree with the East about the “monarchy” of the Father, that the Father is the sole arche of the Divine Being as such: “only the Father is the source of the Spirit’s *being*, of his sheer givenness as an other than the Father or the Son,” as Jenson will gloss that doctrine. The question about the distinct identity of the Spirit in relation to the Son, however, can be resolved in terms of the Divine Energies. The energies of the Spirit to be the agent that he is in the Divine Life is endowed from the Father through the Son—and the Son: “but the Spirit’s *energies*, his participation and agency in the triune life, come to him from the Father through the Son or, it can even be said, from the Father and the Son.” So, on the one hand, the “the Spirit does not derive his being from the Son,” thereby Jenson maintains the insistence of the East that Being in God is personally endowed from the Father and not essentially endowed from the Father-Son dyad acting as *principium*. But the Spirit “does derive his energy from the Son,” which precisely differentiates the Spirit from the Son and

³⁶ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:159.

corresponds to the predominant dependence of the Spirit upon the sending of the Son in the Divine Missions.³⁷

Parsing Palamas's proposition that, "[t]here are then three in God: *ousia*, energy, and triune hypostases," Jenson concludes drastically that "[i]ronically enough, Orthodoxy is here driven to a bluntly modalist doctrine: God himself is above the biblical narrative, which applies only to his activities," and not to His Being.³⁸ The coordination of the triune hypostases, with which we come into participation in salvation history, with the Divine Energies distinguishes the God whom we encounter in the Gospel with God strictly speaking: God in God's Essence. The location of God's energies hypostatically, however, allows us to affirm both. The Spirit's derivation of being is solely of the Father (Orthodox), while the Spirit's derivation of energies comes filioque (Latin). The derivation of being corresponds to the relations of origin in the traditional model. The endowment of energies corresponds to the relations of goal that Jenson has articulated and the liberations of the Spirit. Thereby we are able to uniquely differentiate the Spirit from the Son, without relying on the derivation of the Spirit's being through the Father and the Son, in resolution of Thomas' problem.³⁹

We have seen, however, how Jenson thinks this putative resolution of the filioque dispute occasions somewhat radical realignment of Divine Ontology all together—for both the Orthodox and the Catholic understanding. I turn now to

³⁷ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:158-159.

³⁸ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:153.

³⁹ Further to the historical material, we now have the excellent: A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

that realignment, a intellectual configuration which coalesces Jenson's pneumatology, his larger trinitarian theology under Rahnerian warrants, and a "revisionary metaphysic" and Divine Ontology. This cluster of theological judgments represents the pinnacle of Jenson's unique proposal for systematic pneumatology.

§4.4: A PNEUMATOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

The complementation of the processional model of Divine Relations with the liberation or completion model, what I have called a pneumatological reconstruction of divine transcendence, is a Divine ontology that Jenson thinks has some revisionary metaphysical implications, also for our understanding of creaturely being. A fully trinitarian ontology, in which the Spirit is accorded his proper place in the Divine Life, complements the perdurance understanding of Being with an anticipatory understanding of Being. Such an ontological reconstruction also has ramifications for the interpretation of certain values. First, the interpretation of some creaturely realities.

§4.4.1: *The Criticism of Classical Ontology*—The condemnation of classical thought's affinity for the perduring, the resolute, the non-temporal has become commonplace in certain centers of intellectual culture, indeed perhaps hackneyed in its totalizing narrative of the whole of previous thought. But this contrast was still fresh in the midst of the 20th century, during Jenson's early and decisive intellectual formation. The characterization of modern theology as concerned primarily with the historical problematic thus bears its indelible mark on Jenson's thought, especially, for my purposes, on his trinitarian ontology, throughout his career.

Already in his first major work, a revision of his dissertation on Barth's doctrine of election, *Alpha and Omega*, Jenson betrayed his animating concern for the historical question and so the contrast with classical theology. "Classical theology," he poses the problem there, described "a unique relation between the historical event of Jesus' existence and timeless realities standing triumphant above the one-thing-after-another of human history. Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and the 'Being' of which these were aspects—these were in the beginning, granting solidarity to the seemingly fleeting life of man, they would be in the end, guaranteeing that we were indeed getting some place, and always they enfolded and protected man, given meaning to life and providing norms for its decisions and actions."⁴⁰ Eternal entities, over and above time, thus funded the plausibility and meaning of classical theology, Jenson diagnosed, even in regard to the very historical person Jesus of Nazareth.

As Christian theology attempts to articulate the meaning of Jesus Christ as decisive for reality, the problem it encountered, especially from the 19th century onward, with the intensification of historical consciousness and with the ascendancy of empiricist scientific method, was that of the collapse of the classical worldview. Jenson took it as axiomatic—again, now we are not so sure—that "we do not live from day to day over against a timeless structure of reality, sustained and judged by unchanging certainties." The Church, and so its theology, simply finds us "forlorn in history, awaiting from its succession of events only that they shall lead to yet other events." Jenson doesn't take such developments as necessarily pejorative: "Nor is there any need to decide whether the

⁴⁰ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 13-14.

disappearance of the timeless is a catastrophe, a boon, or neither.” It is simply where the Church finds people of this era, and so where the Church must speak the Gospel.⁴¹ Jenson there offered the thought of Karl Barth as “a grandiose and pioneering answer to this challenge.” Barth’s thought, on the whole, claimed Jenson, represented a response to the intensification of historicized experience without evading the question or capitulating to the attempt to locate meaning in something other than God’s disclosure in Jesus Christ. This recognition implicated two considerations that influence Jenson’s notion of Divine Being, and so of the Persons of God: “We are asserting that God himself is not atemporal but in some sense is really involved in time, that He ‘has’ a history” and “We are asserting something about the final nature of reality, that we must look, not to the timeless, but to history, to discover it.”⁴²

In the shift from classical to historical metaphysics, which defines distinctively modern theology, Jenson generally aligned himself with other theologians who charged that Christian theology’s strict adherence to the former had resulted in an artificial and superficial Christian praxis. Jenson particularly contrasts the conception of the eternal as escape from creaturely time with the conception of the eternal as the embrace of creaturely time, the former being what Jenson narrates as generic “religion,”⁴³ against which he indefatigably campaigns and the contrast of which with the Gospel is a recurrent sub-plot of his theology, especially in the earliest phases of his work. Jenson’s early theological program employs Barth, especially Barth’s doctrine of election and notion of

⁴¹ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 15-16.

⁴² Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 16-17.

⁴³ Obviously influenced by Barth’s critical reading of Feuerbach.

Divine Being, as the solution to this sterilization of Christian faith. The historicization of God's Being leads to the collapse of the distinction between an imminent and economic Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity, for Jenson, funds the antireligious account of God, because it identifies God precisely by his triune action in history and by nothing abstractly behind or beyond this action. The particular identity of the Spirit, then, obviously coordinates with the future of things, with the power of change, with fulfillment.⁴⁴ As Jenson explains the significance of historical grounding, in connection of the theme of timelessness, escape from history with the phoniness of much religion in the mid-20th century America: "This enclosure of our lives in time is not to be explained in terms of a deeper, timeless reality of God above his temporal reality. In God, past, future, and present are both one event and three...and this is not to be explained by putting the 'real' God in a dream-realm beyond time. It is rather simply the ultimate fact about time: God is the occurrence *now* of a *past* event as our *future*, he is Jesus' love as origin and goal—and...this occurrence gives us time at all."⁴⁵

As I detailed in the last chapter on the relationship of Jenson to metaphysics, Jenson has modulated his position somewhat in terms of the totalizing relation of this narrative vis-à-vis classical thought—a narrative that has been largely debunked by the most intensive historical research—

⁴⁴ Jenson, *A Religion Against Itself*, 36: The Triune God is the Christian antireligious identification of God: "Thus the shape of what happened and will happen with Jesus is this: Origin and Fulfillment crossing in the History between Jesus and us. God is God Creator, God Perfector, and God Revealer; he is God past, God future, and God present; he is God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son. If you will, Creation, Fulfillment, and Revelation are the plot of God's life, the plot of his life-for-us in what happens with Jesus Christ."

⁴⁵ Jenson, *A Religion Against Itself*, 37.

nevertheless he remains committed to a relative confrontation between certain, specific emphases of classical ontology and an ontology fully informed by the Gospel. While Jenson's position has become more nuanced, in recognition that the reciprocal conversation between the Gospel and classical ontology was unavoidable, responsible and necessary for much of the Church's history. Still, specifically with regard to God's "timelessness" and God's "impassibility," Jenson regards these classical ontological characterizations of God as still in need of purification by the ontology of the Gospel. In a pneumatological ontology that gives full ontological standing to the future and anticipation, together with origination and perdurance, as the special sense that history makes, the complementation of the insights of historicist ontology with classical ontology can be fully achieved.

§4.4.2: *An Ontology of Gospel*—To put the matter most starkly, for Jenson, "[t]he tradition could say how sending and obedience, giving and being given, are realities not merely between God and us, but in God—and so final goods." Particularly in terms of political theology, however, the set of final goods is incomplete, and the limitation to that particular set often corresponded to a predilection for the social status quo. By contrast, Jenson suggests, what could not be said was how "freedom and being freed, witnessing and being witnessed to, are equally realities in God." Jenson himself first maps this distinction onto a distinctively Lutheran analytical array of law and gospel. Law here represents precisely what binds from the past and is the persistence of some origination. Gospel is the freedom of the future, the promise by which something new can be appropriated as anticipation of what will be, the decisive characteristic that

makes the Gospel *good* news for sinful humanity: “a promise makes the past depend on the future, for it grants a future free from the past, and so allows us to appropriate also the past in a new way. This is the point of all the biblical and churchly talk of ‘forgiveness;’ if we are accepted in spite of what we have been, we are thereby permitted to appropriate what we have been afresh, as the occasion and object of that acceptance.”⁴⁶ Law here corresponds to an ontology of unfolding, an ontology of the continuance of some origin. Gospel here corresponds to a liberative ontology, as that which is freed from mere unfolding, for the anticipation of the meaning of an ultimate end, to which the being given it in origination is not simply reducible.

In Jenson’s view, the classical portrayal of God whereby God in His own Life is constituted by origination, by sending, by commanding, accurately portrays the nature of origination in the world that corresponds to the reality of Divine Law. By itself, however, the traditional categories could not portray how God is simultaneously and equally constituted by anticipation of His End, by the Freedom of God’s own Future, that is, by Gospel: “Thus the tradition could show that...God’s *law* is his own true self-expression. But it could not show that the *gospel* is similarly anchored in God’s being.” It could show how “God in himself is indeed God of the law.” But it could not show how God is God “of the gospel, defined in his deity by command but not by promise.” For humanly being, the question is whether there is a possibility of human being not constituted by sin, whether personal or original. This can be possible only if human being can anticipate an End in which sin no longer adheres to it. God can grant such an

⁴⁶ Jenson, *Story and Promise*, 8.

End to humanity, because God has the Power in Himself for the giving of such a gift: the condition of its possibility, the condition of the possibility of the Gospel in history, therefore, are the relations of liberation in God's own Life. The Spirit is the hypostatic guarantee of the reality of freedom in the Divine Life, just as the Father is the guarantee of stability in the Divine Life. In this way, an ontology of the Gospel is *also* anchored in God's Life.

§4.4.3: *An Ontology of Freedom & Political Theology*—In a cryptic, but pregnant, explication of the relations of the Spirit, of their correlates in ontologies of law and gospel, Jenson then further interweaves the unfolding of this model with creaturely liberation and, specifically, with the insights of liberation theology. The classical model accurately articulates the ways in which God commands the world, and this dimension of Divine Reality cannot be coherently dispensed with. However, the failure also to anchor Gospel in God's own Reality means that much classical theology has overlooked the Divine character of God as Liberator. The practical result, in Jenson's assessment, was the many "pious Christians still regard liberations as threats to faith," since theological teaching on the doctrine of God and the "textbooks" "reflect habits of speech about God that are deeply ingrained in the discourse of the church and that simply do not present [God] as an overly plausible liberator."⁴⁷ The consideration of Divine Being from the location of the Spirit, and so the consideration of the ontology of anticipation, facilitates the recognition of the full scope of Divine Reality: the ground for the understanding of God as Liberator (see further Chapter 7).

⁴⁷ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142-143.

Jenson also notes a metaphysical implication that resonates with feminist concerns. “The traditional asymmetry of the trinitarian relations,” he says, “by which deity runs only one way, displays command as constitutive of deity, but not obedience, assertion but not reception.” These characteristics, he suggests, are lingering influences of associating Divine Reality with culturally traditional masculine, active characteristics in opposition to receptive, feminine characteristics. Whereas in reality, both of these dimensions are equally constitutive of Divine Reality, and so analogically goods in their own way. Now Jenson does not read this in the same way as feminist theology, for his awareness of this point is not done, he says, in order to “emphasize the feminine” in terms of a gendered cultural reading. “The point,” for him, “is rather to eliminate altogether any inheritances from antiquity’s polytheistic distinction of male and female deity, and from its attribution of dominance to the male.”⁴⁸

§4.4.4: *Narrative Ontology*—A holistic pneumatological reconstruction of Divine Reality, lastly, implicates a final, radical, metaphysical revision. Jenson connects his doctrine of the Triune God to a “final overcoming...of pagan antiquity’s interpretation of *being as persistence*.”⁴⁹ To always remain as one began, in Jenson’s understanding, is the great classical rendition of paradigmatic being. And we should pause to recognize the great truth in that. Time decays. And in the premodern world, such decay was eminently threatening to life, to the tenuous and fragile constructions that society or individuals had built as shelter from the ravages of time. What is paradigmatic being, therefore, would be

⁴⁸ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 143-144.

⁴⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:159, emphasis added.

something that preserves itself in some way from such ravages. In philosophical language, “[f]or Aristotle or Plato, to be is to remain as one began; therefore to be the *arche* in some realm is the one great ontological distinction.” Jenson acknowledges this: “insofar as nothing is real that has no origin, except the absolute *arche* himself.” But Jenson disputes that this is the *whole* story: “The Father is the sole *arche* indeed; having said that, we have not yet interpreted the reality of the triune God,” nor interpreted the reality of creaturely being as created by the Triune God. We have not yet interpreted Being *by the Spirit*. Indeed, the full reality has to be interpreted as “story”—Jenson’s great ontological category. Being, as interpreted by the Gospel—by crucifixion and resurrection—cannot be seen *merely* as the preservation of a primal origination, but must also be construed as the anticipation of a final outcome. *Story*, in Jenson’s parlance, is “the power of a self-determining future to liberate each specious present from mere predictabilities, from being the mere consequence of what has gone before, and open it to itself, to itself as what the present is precisely not yet.” The metaphysical question is whether such a structure has its own peculiar “causality” or “logic”: “Can Aristotle’s criterion of a good story apply to nonfiction, as he himself did not think it did.”⁵⁰ In trinitarian theology, the question is posed thusly: “Is there such causation in God? Is his life ordered by an Outcome that is his outcome, and so in a freedom that is more than abstract aseity?” Does the outcome of God’s own Life structure that Life in a way that is not merely or strictly identical with its origin or beginning? Is there some hypostatic

⁵⁰ Citing, in a number of places, Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452A:3 (can be found in: *Complete Works*, 2 vols., Jonathan Barnes, ed. Bollingen Series, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984): 2:2323).

distinction between Origin and Outcome? Jenson argues that this is the ontology of the Gospel. It is an ontology derived from the doctrine of the Trinity, by a pneumatological transcendence in which the Holy Spirit is “without qualification one of the Trinity.” This is to say, “the dynamism of God’s life is a narrative causation in and so of God.”⁵¹

The contrast can be posed as follows: is paradigmatic Being, as God discloses it, determined only by persistence of some beginning, only by continuity with what came before, only by harkening back to the primordial origin? Or can the End of a development govern the meaning of its unfolding, as in Aristotle’s good story? A fully pneumatological doctrine of the Trinity provides the ground for this metaphysical revision. For the Spirit, who stands at the End of God’s ways, as the telos of Divine Being, as the Unsurpassed with the Father’s Unbegotten, also “causes” or “determines” or “guarantees” the Divine Being to be what it is: “To say that the Holy Spirit is without qualification one of the Trinity is to say that the dynamism of God’s life is a narrative causation in and so of God.” Precisely in the unexpected possibility of the future, that cannot be predicted but once realized is exactly what had to happen—as Aristotle defines the perfect story—is there a distinct hypostatic identity of the Spirit. That the unfolding of God’s origin does not merely exhaust all there is of God’s Life, there is exactly the needed and proper otherness of the Spirit within the unity of the singular Divine Being. As Jenson phrases most provocatively: “It is in that the Spirit is God as the Power of God’s *own* and our future...the Power of a future that also for God is not bound by the predictabilities, that the Spirit is a distinct identity of and in

⁵¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:159-160.

God.” “The Spirit is God as his and our future rushing upon him and us; he is the eschatological reality of God, the Power as which God is the active Goal of all things, as which God is for himself and for us those things not seen that with us call for faith and with him are his infinity.” In His own Life, in paradigmatic Being, “God confronts his own future; he confronts that Spirit who is the Spirit ‘of the Father,’” and just so Triune Being and derivatively created have the quality of anticipation, “the novelty of a genuine narrative.”⁵² Because the Spirit is one of the three in God, equi-divine with the Father and the Son, the constitution of Divine Being occurs not only from an Absolute Origin, but also from an Absolute Goal. Since the Divine Being is constituted also by a Future for itself, it has the character of *story*. Since the creation is God’s creature, so also does creaturely being.

§4.5: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TRINITY

Jenson’s theology is not just an account of Divine Reality and creaturely reality, and how each is shaped narratively by an ontology of anticipation. Jenson’s pneumatology is also part of a constellation of theological judgments that Jenson makes about the nature of the relationship between God’s Eternal Life for Himself and his historical Action for us in the Gospel. This represents one of the more controversial areas of Jenson’s theology. First, let me clarify this by consideration of how he views the relationship between the “immanent” and the “economic” Trinity with regard to his proposed pneumatology. The identification of the Spirit as the final future of God, in Jenson’s theology, is not only a description of the immanent Life of God. Precisely insofar as Jenson has

⁵² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:160, 214-221.

identified the immanent and economic Spirit, that the work of the Spirit in the economy of salvation represents the self-constitution of God's own Life, Jenson takes the insight about God's narrative being or dramatic identity to re-envision the doctrine of God more globally. One way in which Jenson applies this insight to other aspects of his theology is in his account of the relation between the immanent and economic trinity, between God's own Life and God's self-determination to be God for us in the events of the Gospel.

§4.5.1: *Eschatological Immanence*—The resolution of the relation between the immanent and economic understanding of the Trinity, Jenson proposes, is itself eschatological. The immanent trinity, in this view, does not articulate God's Reality abstract from salvation history. For His identity is constituted in this decision, and so there is no such other reality. Rather, the immanent trinity, as a description of God's eternity, describes the final, enduring outcome of the unfolding of the salvation historical narrative: "The two rules are compatible," says Jenson, "only if the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity is *eschatological*, if the immanent Trinity is simply the eschatological reality of the economic." That the tradition did not or could not think in such terms—that it had to posit a not yet enfleshed logos (*Logos asarkos*)—was due, in Jenson's reading, to its "captivity" to the "timelessness-axiom," instead of a relation that is made final, ultimate and eternal by its being the fundamental outcome of the Divine and world story together.⁵³

§4.5.2: *The Immanent Spirit*—As with the Son, so it is with the Spirit. A not yet Given Spirit, as the freedom of the human community to be the Church,

⁵³ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 140, emphasis emended.

does not have to be conjured: “Instead of interpreting Christ’s deity as a separate entity that always was—and preceding analogously with the Spirit—we should interpret it as a final *outcome*, and just *so* as eternal, just *so* as the bracket around all beginnings and endings.”⁵⁴ So the events of the Gospel, whose interactions form the disclosure of the trinitarian relations, “are, in their eschatological finality, God’s transcendence of time, His eternity, so that we need posit no timelessly antecedent extra entities—Logos *asarkos* or non-yet-given-Spirit to assert the unmitigated eternity of Son and Spirit.”⁵⁵ In the free decision of God, by which He constitutes Himself, therefore, the “immanent” person of the Spirit is the Spirit who will always be at the End: the Spirit who is given to the people of God and who liberates them to participate in the eternal Divine Communion. The Eternal Spirit is thus always the one who was and is and will accomplish this giving and this liberation as the final outcome of God’s decision for reality.

§4.5.3: Divine Freedom—In this eschatological re-construal of the nature of the trinitarian relations, Jenson at many places has argued that he still upholds the traditional warrant for asserting the distinction between the immanent and economic trinity: God’s freedom in relation to creation, that creation always remains a free event within God’s decision and not an external imposition on the nature of God. A significant critique—that we will have to engage more thoroughly in subsequent chapters—is that the collapse of the immanent and economic (given) Spirit makes the creation fundamentally necessary to God’s Reality in some way and thus would eliminate its gratuity. As Jenson sees it,

⁵⁴ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 140.

⁵⁵ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 141.

however, even if God decides—as He has in fact decided—to determine His identity through His relation to the creature in the Gospel, that does not mean that the creature represents some sort of external constraint upon God’s election.

In summary, therefore, “[t]he legitimate theological reason for the ‘immanent’/ ‘economic’ distinction is the freedom of God: it must be that God in himself could have been the same God he is, and so triune, had there been no creation, or no saving of fallen creation, and so also not the trinitarian history there has in fact been.”⁵⁶ This is a clarification that Jenson makes throughout most of his corpus: *that* God could have decided differently we do know because of the character of God, but we cannot know, and should not particularly bother with, the *counterfactual* of *how* that could have been otherwise. God has in fact chosen to be God with us and God for us in the salvific events of the Gospel, which culminate with the redeemed being given an eternal share and space and time in the very Being of God. It *might* have been otherwise. But we cannot properly conceive of that scenario, according to Jenson, because in the limitation of our theological knowledge we cannot imagine a scenario “behind,” “before,” or “whether or not,” God had made the decision He in fact made to be God for us.

Most recently, however, Jenson may have retracted even this concession as a capitulation to an “unbaptized notion of time.”⁵⁷ This is a puzzling claim—and one that incites much criticism. On the one hand, there is Jenson’s admirable desire to emphasize the integrity of creaturely history as we experience it, that this sphere is precisely the realm of God’s decision to be God with us and

⁵⁶ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 139.

⁵⁷ Jenson, “Once More the Logos Asarkos” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 13:2 (April 2011), 131.

for us, and that the counterfactual speculation of what might have been philosophically possible otherwise should not be allowed to undermine this integrity. Jenson's point is that we should take what *is real* strictly as such; in the Divine realm particularly it is nonsensical to attempt to formulate theological propositions based on Divine possibility, or Divine counterfactuals. On the other, however, there is danger of an immanentism here. There are a host of traditional metaphysical concerns about simply collapsing the Divine Being as such (in the person of the Son) with the creaturely existence of Jesus of Nazareth, particularly about the gratuitousness of the Incarnation, the distinctive moments of Creation and Redemption in salvation history and the Divine Freedom in relation to the world.

Jenson further reverses the argument to claim that only his eschatological proposal of the identity of triune relations *fully attests God's freedom!* : "As for God's freedom, only this proposal fully asserts it. The immanent Trinity of previous Western interpretation had but the spurious freedom of unaffectedness. Genuine freedom is the reality of possibility, is openness to the future; genuine freedom is Spirit. And it is only if we interpret God's eternity as the certainty of his triumph that we are able without qualification to say that God is Spirit...."⁵⁸ Of course, the dispute here would be about the very meaning and interpretation of the notion of "freedom." Jenson's view of freedom corresponds to his view of the eschatological nature of God's identity and to the embrace of future possibility that is his understanding of the broad meaning of "spirit," and so the personal property of the Holy Spirit. However, where Jenson is disingenuous here is his

⁵⁸ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 141.

assertion that his advanced notion of freedom as possibility rests *simply and exclusively* on biblical warrants, from which he thinks all necessarily metaphysical theological claims derive their legitimacy. It is manifestly evident that the notion of freedom as unaffectedness does have *some* resonance in the biblical witness.⁵⁹ Jenson's argument that his view of freedom here is straightforwardly biblical in a way that the classical view of freedom is not is a canard. Therefore, what Jenson is disputing is a philosophical dispute about the proper and fundamental characterization of freedom, on which the biblical data is ambiguous. What Jenson has done here is to privilege one notion of the meaning of freedom (openness) that has biblical resonance over and above another notion of the meaning of freedom (unaffectedness) that also has biblical resonance on phenomenological and existential grounds. All that is merely to say his claim here is uncertain.

§4.5.4: *Divine Unity*—This becomes particularly difficult when discussing the unity of God, as Jenson attempts to navigate the shoals of tritheism after he has tacked so hard away from modalism. This is particularly the case when one crucial component of the Nicene conceptual apparatus was to emphasize the unity of Being among the Divine Persons and not simply the unity of will or function. Jenson raises this question himself: “If the Father is the fountainhead of Trinity *and* the Spirit is the liberation of Trinity, and if both of these self-establishments

⁵⁹ This, of course, would require a more extended exegetical discussion involving a constellation of biblical language and descriptions, together with judgments about their ontological function, but, as an intimation, at least: Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 2:2, 2 Samuel 22:3 Isaiah 40:13-14, Isaiah 44:24, Psalm 102:27, Malachi 3:6, Acts 17:25, Hebrews 6:17-19, and James 1:17, but also how about the prominent metaphor of God as “rock,” as “refuge,” “bulwark,” “fortress”—who will not be shaken!

are intrinsic to God, how is this God *one*?”⁶⁰ The eschatological identity of the immanent and economic trinity implies a unique consideration of the unity of God: “*The unity of the triune God cannot simply be given in advance as itself a timeless fact.*” Since God is identified (in Jenson’s strong sense) with the events of the Gospel, and so constituted “in” them, “his identity with himself must truly be *at risk* as Moses and the Pharaoh struggle or as Jesus dies.” These events as experienced not only in history but also by and for God represent the dramatic unfolding of God’s own Story for Himself and for us. The events between the Triune Persons, as true drama—under Aristotle’s canon that what happens is unpredictable but after the fact exactly what had to happen—are resolved in their mysterious contingency-in-necessity in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus: “[i]n the fate of Jesus, the existing world that is given by the Father, and the world that is not yet, to which the Spirit liberates, collided.” It is a collision in which the cry of dereliction, the sin and brokenness of the given world is shown to be reconciled with the final vindication of life and love in the resurrection: “in that collision the unity of the triune God was the very thing at issue.”⁶¹ Belief in the one God, the only God, is belief that the continuity of that Agent is achieved in and through all these events, an achievement that will be completed at the End in the Spirit.

Jenson locates the unity of the Divine Reality in God’s infinity, appropriating (somewhat drastically) Gregory of Nyssa’s account of Divine Infinity. In the drama of the unfolding relation of the three Divine persons in the

⁶⁰ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 139.

⁶¹ Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, 140, emphasis emended.

events of the Gospel, the three instantiations of the Divine Essence are unified in their “mutual *action*...to the perichoretic triune *life*.” Because “all divine action is the singular mutual work of Father, Son and Spirit, there is only one such life and *therefore* only one subject of the predicate God.”⁶² This common life is singular in its infinity, and in this way in its singularity. Jenson locates the singularity of the infinity in the asymmetry of Goal to Origin. Since it is the Destiny of God’s Life with us that endures as what is truly, really eternal, that finality constitutes its unity. There is one End, which is the fundamental meaning of all present and past, and since God’s infinity is defined by that End, God is One. As a fundamental interpretation of the biblical ontology of God as Spirit (John 4:24), Jenson summarizes: God “is temporally infinite because source and goal are present and *asymmetrical* in him, because he is *primarily future* to himself and only thereupon past and present for himself. It is in that he is Spirit ...God is not eternal in that he adamantly remains as he began, but in that he always creatively opens to what he will be; not in that he hangs on, but in that he gives and receives; not in that he perfectly persists, but in that he *perfectly anticipates*.”⁶³ What might be a false dichotomy here, in any case, leads Jenson to locate Divine unity in Divine infinity and, in turn, Divine infinity in the ontology priority of an outcome which is unified even in its differentiation.

§CODA

⁶² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:214, emphasis emended.

⁶³ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:217, emphasis emended.

In an explosive passage that is probably the most dramatic crystallization of Jenson's entire pneumatology, we can see the coalescing of the various themes of the person of the Spirit:

The Spirit is God coming to us from the last future; he is God coming from and as the Kingdom. The temporal infinity of God is the unsurpassability of this event: such things as the unconditionality of the gospel-promise, the immunity of sacramental presence to the unbelief of worshippers, the impossibility of building the Kingdom by our labors, are not results or illustrations of God's infinity, they *are* that infinity...[furthermore] The triune God's infinity is the Spirit of someone; thus it has the *recursive* shape marked by the preposition. The someone...is Jesus. Therefore the infinity of the Spirit's coming...is the inexhaustible richness of the transformation of all temporal events by Jesus' sacrifice and victory.⁶⁴

The character of that sacrifice and that victory is love, and the outcome of its triumph is Communion (or in Jenson's temporal-aesthetic language: music). Because its triumph is guaranteed by the hypostatic role of the Spirit as the Final Outcome of the Divine Life, and so of all things created and sustained by God, that ultimate love and communion can be tasted and savored, even if in still fragmentary ways, in history where the Spirit works to anticipate His final Goal.

This is the highest articulation and synthesis of Jenson's pneumatology, a pneumatological reconstruction of Divine transcendence and a more holistic understanding of the Spirit's irreducible hypostasis. These last aspects also signify the import of Jenson's pneumatology as revisionary theologoumena proposed to the Church's understanding of her faith in the Spirit as the "Lord and Giver of Life." In the final Part III of this dissertation, I will enter into a constructive, dialectical engagement with this presentation of Jenson's

⁶⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:219.

pneumatology, in order to attempt to discern which aspects of it might present an enduring achievement of theological insights and which aspects of its entanglement with other theological judgments might prove more problematic.

CHAPTER 5:
THE HORIZON OF CLASSICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

§INTRODUCTION

In a dialectical interaction of mutual enrichment and mutual challenge with three different horizons, an evaluation of Jenson's unique pneumatological proposals is initiated. The first such horizon is that of classical pneumatology. The fixation of the trinitarian taxis in early Christian theology facilitated the achievement of the Nicene homoousios with regard to the Spirit. Once the full co-equality, equi-divinity and co-hypostatic constitution of the Spirit had been secured, however, the question arises whether or not other trajectories of earliest Christian pneumatology, especially those which interpret the Spirit → Son order, can be retrieved as having import for our understanding of the eternal Divine Life. The early tradition did not entirely achieve an analogous reconstruction of Divine transcendence from the Person of the Spirit, as it did with the Persons of the Father and the Son.

So far in this work in Parts I and II, I have journeyed through the ambitious range of Jenson's pneumatology, largely under the methodological rubric of what Lonergan would call "interpretation" (§0.3.2). I have excavated his understanding of the work of the Spirit in the history of salvation, throughout various other systematic loci and in regard to a number of ecumenically significant concerns, as well as argued for a synthesis of that understanding under the framework of "freedom." I have then detailed the most innovative and significant proposal of Jenson's pneumatology: the reconstrual of trinitarian ontology from the perspective of the Spirit, discerning a unique location of the

Spirit (vis-à-vis the tradition) on the basis of the analogy of the Spirit's character in the economy to His irreducible hypostatic role in the Divine Life. In doing so, as a matter of interpretation, I hope to have advanced the argument that Jenson's pneumatology here represents an intriguing augmentative theologoumena posed to the Church's understanding of the Holy Spirit, both in considerable continuity with the tradition but also pushing its boundaries through a pneumatological reconstruction of Divine transcendence. It should be evident, at the very least, that Jenson's pneumatology—systematic in scope and ecumenical in import—deserves consideration and evaluation along with the other leading and influential pneumatologists of the 20th century.¹

To conclude this dissertation, I now venture some preliminary pieces of that evaluation, roughly by way of what Lonergan would call “dialectic” (§0.3.3). I have attempted to evaluate Jenson's pneumatology in encounter with three other specific horizons: (1) classical pneumatology, (2) modern trinitarian thought, and (3) liberation theology. Given my own argument for and basis in a “theology of retrieval” (§0.3.5), as well as Jenson's own view of his trinitarian theology (despite its innovations and idiosyncratic readings) as immersed in conversation with the originating period of Christian thought, the interface of Jenson's distinctive theology with the achievements of pro-Nicene theology is crucial. We will then have to explore the trinitarian context of 20th century Christian thought, the presuppositions of which shape much of Jenson's distinctive pneumatology, and in which movement Jenson himself is one major

¹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), chapters 5 & 6.

figure at the confluence of post-Barthian, anti-metaphysical dogmatics, as shaped by the historicist rendering of the doctrine of trinitarian election, and the implementation and interpretation of Karl Rahner's program for the identity of the immanent and economic trinity. Lastly, I take a look at one potential application—among a number of other possibilities—of Jenson's pneumatological discourse of the Spirit as freedom or liberator, understandably, for the interface of liberation and classical theologies.

Without interacting with every aspect of Jenson's pneumatology in its entirety, this chapter hones in on the most distinctive aspect of it: his understanding of the active movement of the Spirit from the "future" of Divine Being. My dialogue shows, first, how there is a significant degree of continuity with certain aspects of the tradition, particularly in how it derives the characterization of the person of the Spirit from the work of the Spirit. I, nevertheless, raise significant questions about the viability of certain aspects of Jenson's pneumatology, insofar as Jenson's understanding of the Spirit depends on the temporal view of God's self-constitution in creaturely history and insofar as the identity of the immanent Spirit is determined by and with the economic relation of the Spirit to the Spirit's community, all the way down. With much of the most recent scholarship on Nicaea and trinitarian doctrine, I interrogate the sufficiency of the trinitarian narratives influencing Jenson, both as faithful appropriations of Nicaea and as coherent, constructive Divine ontologies. Nevertheless, and while attempting to navigate the complex entanglements of Jenson's pneumatology with this theological program, I would like to propose certain insights for adoption. Jenson's pneumatology does provide a framework

to more fully interpret the biblical data on the Spirit beyond the fixation of the Father → Son → Spirit taxis, to more fully integrate the holistic and robust experience of the Spirit in contemporary world Christianity, and to more fully conceptualize in formal theology the distinctive personality of the Spirit.

§5.1: A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING ANCESTRAL PNEUMATOLOGY

In the following, I venture an interface of Jenson's pneumatology with what could broadly be called "classical pneumatology," the doctrine of the Spirit as understood by the Church Ancestors² and traditional theological categories that, generally and broadly speaking (and obviously not without some contestation and controversy), became enshrined in the Church's creeds, conciliar decisions and doctrinal transmission, that became the shared inheritance of mainstream Christian thought.³ Of course, I cannot here offer anything remotely like a fully orbbed or differentiated historical theology of the doctrine of the Spirit in this era, nor an exhaustive account of the pneumatology of any particular figure. What I have attempted to identify are some of the main

² I give preference to the term "ancestral" as opposed to the traditional "patristic," or "Church Fathers," though my usage is largely synonymous and I see no intrinsic problem with the traditional terminology, depending on how it is deployed. The "ancestral" or "patristic" category, as a theological one particularly encodes the role of this constellation of figures as a theologically formative, generative and relatively stable & coherent "consensus" (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:332-357) for subsequent eras. This judgment, as a theological one as opposed to a historical one, represents a positive decision for the interpretation of Scripture as performed in acts of diachronic ecclesial communion, understood as the Spirit leading the Church into all truth in its broad trajectories. Periodization is, as always, highly debatable and somewhat artificial; for my purposes here, I delimit ancestral to refer primarily to the era of the first four great councils (to Chalcedon of 451 CE).

³ The Holy Spirit is radically "co-equal" to the Father and the Son, and shares the same "nature," "consubstantial" (of the same reality), dignity and power, mutually indwells the Father and the Son, the HS being neither "ungenerated" nor "generated," though "without beginning" "from all eternity," and is distinctly the "Personal Love of God" and in God: DH: 29, 42, 46, 55, 71, 75, 147, 150, 152, 175, 441, 485, 490, 527, 546, 568-569, 617, 683, 800, 850, 853, 1300, 1331, 3326, 3331, 4522, 4780-4781.

trajectories and broad developments of pneumatology in this era, in order to have a sketch to compare the aspects of continuity and development found in Jenson's pneumatology. What I argue here is that while the development of ancestral pneumatology set the stage for the necessary achievement of the pro-Nicene, homoousian theology of the Spirit—in which Jenson's pneumatology basically operates, even though he presents a somewhat revisionary account of the Divine *ousia*—the fixation of the Father → Son → Spirit taxis in the process of that unfolding did result in some dimensions of the Spirit's personality and the biblical presentation of the Spirit's relations being decentered. Jenson's pneumatology, properly corrected, presents an opportunity to recover some of them.

§5.1.1: *Phases of Classical Pneumatology*—Largely following the threefold schematization of Michel Barnes and Lewis Ayres (and then supplementing), I heuristically interpret the unfolding of ancestral (and then classical) pneumatology in four primary phases:

(1) an initial period of fluid transition from Jewish pneumatology to distinctively Christian pneumatology, in which a multiplicity of embryonic pneumatological models and a contrast in basic trinitarian “taxis” between Father → Spirit → Son and Father → Son → Spirit occur contemporaneously, though in relatively nascent, tacit or evocative theologizing.

(2) In the sphere of orthodox consensus, a shift to the stabilization of the trinitarian taxis and a preference for the processional model of trinitarian dynamics as predominant. This transition is largely associated with Origen and Tertullian. The decisive turning point of these figures represented the “fixing of

the threefold *taxis* or order of Father, Son and Spirit...taken to demonstrate both the inseparability of the three and the fundamental relationships between them.” The achievement of this particular stabilization, “remained the central point of departure for virtually all pneumatologies over the rest of the” entire ancestral period.⁴ The crystallization of this *taxis* became foundational for the fourth century debates over pro-Nicene pneumatology, such that “In the fourth century, neither the most primitive Nicene nor the most extreme anti-Nicene ever ventures into revising the received *taxis*. Indeed, much of [*sic*] we might call fourth century heterodoxy is built upon insisting, with energy and imagination, upon the canonical *taxis* and the ‘meaning’ of that *taxis*.”⁵ The fourth century anti-Nicenes or non-Nicenes often took what was, by then, the *traditional* *taxis*, and interpreted it as signifying a definite ontological ordering and gradation (and not merely a logical one), a type of ontological cascade.

(3) The development into the 4th century of pro-Nicene pneumatology, in which the interpretation of the then established trinitarian *taxis* was brought into conformity with the *homoousios* of the Council. The particular relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son was interpreted, primarily, as a “unity of being” or essence, over against merely a trinitarian model of “unity of will,” while the relation of the Spirit was argued to be “internal” to the Divine Nature and not external to it. The ontological subordination of the Spirit, implied by the ontological cascade model of the traditional *taxis*, was contested especially

⁴ Lewis Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology” *Augustinian Studies*, 39:2 (2008): 187-205, 187.

⁵ Michel René Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology” *Augustinian Studies*, 39:2 (2008): 169-186, 186.

potently by Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, in whom “we see the clear confession of the full divinity of the Holy Spirit becoming another significant ingredient in the formation of a pro-Nicene consensus that was now spreading in both East and West.”⁶ The emergence and ascendance of pro-Nicene pneumatology occurred within the sphere of the articulation of the “logic of divine existence as three irreducible agents as sharing or constituting one indivisible nature and power.”⁷

(4) My own survey will not extend into the medieval period, as I will circumscribe my task here to consider the main emphases of the ancestral period strictly defined. But, nevertheless, I would like to mention for reference some medieval currents in pneumatology. The zenith of formal classical trinitarian theology can be represented in the sophisticated syntheses of Thomas, Bonaventure and Scotus, which push the processional model, the psychological analogy and the specification of trinitarian relations to their most logically rigorous and robust culmination. Within this surgical and shared analysis, the major site of contestation between the “Dominican” and “Franciscan” paradigms respectively occurred as a question about the fundamental ground of divine hypostatic constitution.⁸ Is the irreducibility of the divine persons fundamentally derived from their relation to other trinitarian persons or from their procession or origin? So, for example, in the case of the first divine person: is the Father distinctly and “incommunicably” Father, *primarily* because He is from no other,

⁶ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 30-31, 41-98, 24-25.

⁷ Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 190.

⁸ Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

and then, secondarily, because He generates an other, or *primarily* because He is intrinsically related to the Son? Is the Spirit primarily Spirit as in relation to Father and Son, or because He proceeds as the logical terminus of Divine Life, because no other divine person is “from him”? The seemingly slight and esoteric distinction actually opens up two quite different styles of trinitarian and pneumatological theologizing in their systematic import, especially for the question of the filioque, which the relational model requires for differentiation but the processional model does not necessarily. It was the question of the filioque that most vexed the pneumatology of this period. Alongside the formal, scholastic-doctrinal categories, of course, there were a plethora of experiential, spiritual, exegetical, mystical and vernacular pneumatologies that also served as important sites for the interpretation of the Spirit in the medieval period.⁹

In traversing this history as a context for the encounter of horizons between Jenson’s and classical pneumatology, an argument will emerge from this romp through theological history as to the evaluation of Jenson’s contribution. On the one hand, there is a significant degree of continuity, especially in terms of the interpretation of the work of the Spirit and in terms of the basic theological affirmations about the Spirit’s being and identity. Jenson does not always express these affirmations in quite the same language or categories, but they are certainly isomorphic in theological substance. Jenson’s full commitment to the *homoousios* of the Spirit and the processional model of the Spirit’s Divine location is clearly evident for what I have already analyzed—even if the

⁹ For a broad survey: Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, 5 vols. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004-2012).

relationship of his doctrine to some of the infrastructure of classical divine ontology, such as impassibility or the traditional distinction between God's Being in Himself and God's Being for us in the events of the Gospel, remains somewhat contentious. By contrast, nevertheless, this survey also shows that fixation of the divine taxis in classical pneumatology decentered something of the biblical dynamics of Spirit → Son relation. This is something for which Jenson's model might be able to account. Certainly the fixation of the Father-Son-Spirit taxis played a great and decisive role in the homoousian achievement of the Spirit, while the ascendancy of the processional model gave a stabilizing contour to the discussion about the Spirit's constitution (the filioque notwithstanding). Even with the great sophistication and nuance of this theological trajectory, however, it is difficult to avoid the sneaking suspicion that the traditional taxis and the processional model of the Divine Life do not by themselves fully interpret the biblical dynamics of the Holy Spirit or the fully active personality of the Spirit. This is where some insights from Jenson's pneumatology can complement the traditional model.

§5.1.2: *Creational Pneumatology*—In the first period of ancestral pneumatology, Barnes identifies four pneumatologies that were co-present as developments of Jewish pneumatology:¹⁰ (1) creator pneumatology, (2) angelic pneumatology, (3) wisdom pneumatology, and (4) feminine pneumatology.¹¹ The

¹⁰ More differentiated on the Jewish context of early Christian pneumatology, John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

¹¹ I have adapted this last category from Barnes' somewhat misleading "consort pneumatology."

first category associates the Spirit especially with the divine work of creation.¹² It was prominent in the Rabbinic interpretation of certain Second Temple scriptural texts, which describe the Spirit/breath/wind, often in parallel to the Word, as divine power catalyzing the creation of the world, especially Psalm 33:6, Psalm 104:30 and Isaiah 42:5.¹³ Other apocryphal texts, such as Judith 16:14 and 2 Baruch 21:4, seem to testify to a charged belief in creational pneumatology.¹⁴ This does not seem to have been an overly famous theme in ancestral Christian theology, but it is picked up by Athenagoras¹⁵—whose pneumatology has been compared to that of the Middle Platonic “world soul” in the maintenance and governance of creation,¹⁶ and in whose pneumatology the Father, Son and Spirit are joined in the “unity and power of the Spirit”¹⁷—Theophilus¹⁸ and, most notably, Irenaeus.

¹² Though this was not necessarily determinative for the pro-Nicene question one way or the other, as anti-Nicenes could say, as they did with the Son-Word, that the power to create could be a *delegated* power from the Father of a different order from the creation itself but also not the same as the eternal divine being as such.

¹³ “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were spread out, And by the Spirit of His mouth all their Power”; “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth”; “Thus says the God and God the creator of the heavens, and the earth, and that which comes out of it, the Giver of breath to the people upon it, and spirit to those walking in it” (For the Isaiah passage see especially *DSS*).

¹⁴ Judith 16:14 seems like an explicit textual allusion: “Let all your creatures serve you, for you spoke, and they were made. You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them; there is none that can resist your voice”; “O hear me, you who created the earth, the one who fixed the firmament by the word and fastened the height of heaven by the spirit, the one who in the beginning of the world called that which did not yet exist and they obeyed you” James H. Charlesworth, gen. ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) [OTP], 1:628.

¹⁵ Athenagoras, Plea VII, *Embassy for the Christians & Resurrection of the Dead*, Ancient Christian Writers, 23, Joseph Hugh Crehan, trans. (New York: Newman Press, 1956), 37.

¹⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Holy Spirit in Athenagoras” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 20 (1969): 538-542.

¹⁷ Anthony Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 170-171.

In Irenaeus (d. 202) we encounter a robust and multifaceted early pneumatology, particularly in his early sounding of creational pneumatology. Polemicizing against various tendencies in the strands of Valentinus, Basilides and Marcion that he counters in his work, *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus emphasizes the role of the Spirit in Creation, in contrast to the antithesis of spirit and matter, and the publicity of the Spirit in the available disclosure of revelation, in contrast to the secret view of gnosis. Irenaeus first catalogues what he sees as the “perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions” of the spirit in the various schemes, emanations and Aeons of these thinkers, in one of which the “monogenes” demiurge of the Absolute God generates “Christ and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ Irenaeus instead argues that the Spirit was with God in the beginning and all things were created in Him, similarly to the Word. The “Word and Wisdom,” associating the Spirit here with the Wisdom tradition, “from everlasting...” were with God, for “from the same God who made all things by the Word, and adorned them with Wisdom....” Through an exegesis of Proverbs 3:19-20 and Proverbs 8:27-31, Irenaeus concludes, “that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation...There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom [=Spirit] created and arranged all things.”²⁰

§5.1.3: Angelic Pneumatology—In addition to the nascent creational pneumatology, there is also a strand of angelic pneumatology emanating from the Jewish inheritance. The Angel-Spirit association brings together the revelatory

¹⁸ Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 1.5, 1.7, 2.13 (ANF, 2:90, 91, 100).

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.3.6, 1.2.5, 1.2.6, 1.3.1, 1.12.7.

²⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.2-4, 3.24.2.

and inspirational aspects that can be attributed to both as “messengers” in the Scriptures. Some scholars interpret this as an ancient trend in Israelite thought reaching back into Exodus and 1 Samuel through Isaiah 63 into the postexilic prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Acts 8:26-40, where Philip, like some of the Israelite prophets, is supernaturally transported away from his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch by the Spirit, who had been the one described earlier as the “messenger (Ἄγγελος) of the Lord,” has been interpreted along these lines. The same angelic-pneumatic transportation is read into the story of Jesus’ ministry by the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. While much more direct associations of the Angel of the Lord with the Spirit occur in the Jewish apocryphal *Odes of Solomon*²¹ and the *Ascension of Isaiah*.²² Origen speaks of a fascinating reading that his “Hebrew master” had recounted to him of the two Seraphim in Isaiah who guard the Temple and proclaim the trisagion as ciphers for the Son and the Spirit, an interpretation that would trade on the angelical-pneumatic association.²³ Some scholars speculate that it was still an open question in the earliest Christian communities what form the Spirit Comforter whom Jesus promised might take, whether another individual or perhaps angelic. This is the question Acts 2 answers, and following strands of Paul, the eventual orthodox response was that

²¹ *Odes of Solomon*, 36 (OTP, 2:765-766).

²² *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, 9:33-36 (OTP, 2:172): Most emphatically—“And while I was still speaking, I saw another glorious (person) who was like him [the Lord], and the righteous approached him, and worshipped, and sang praises, and I also sang praises with them; but his glory was not transformed to accord with their form...And I asked the angel who led me...Who is this one? And he said to me, *Worship him, for this is **the angel of the Holy Spirit** who has spoken in you and also in the other righteous.*” Emphasis added.

²³ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.4 and 4.3.14 (AMP = G. W. Butterworth, trans., Henri de Lubac, intro, John Cavadini, new ed. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 42 & 414.

the Spirit takes the form of the community of believers all together, but it seems that other possible expectations died not entirely die out right away.

§5.1.4: *Wisdom Pneumatology*—Wisdom pneumatology represented a third strand of early Christian pneumatology. Between passages in Proverbs, 1 Enoch, Wisdom of Ben Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon there were “sufficient exegetical links between wisdom and spirit—especially in their common association with the act of giving life and with the elements of water—that the association is common in Second Temple and post-Second Temple Jewish authors.”²⁴ In early Christianity, the Spirit as Wisdom exegetical interpretation vied with the Word as Wisdom (Justin Martyr) for the first few centuries, before the former gradually fell out of favor. That seems to have been so until the contemporary resurrection of wisdom pneumatology in the Russian sophiologists, and most notably, in Bulgakov’s framework of eternal Divine Sophia, in which both Word and Spirit participate, in relation to creaturely sophia.²⁵ Irenaeus stands also as the consummate early example of the possibilities of this wisdom pneumatology, the Spirit as the personal agent of all the high attributions of wisdom in the OT wisdom literature, as we already saw in the passage above in connection with creational pneumatology.²⁶

§5.1.5: *Feminine Pneumatology*—The fourth, and final, prominent strand with which Barnes reckons is that of what he calls “consort pneumatology,” or more aptly “feminine” or “motherly pneumatology.” A number of passages in writings from Philo to various pseudoepigraphical texts attest to intimations of

²⁴ Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology,” 177.

²⁵ Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, Boris Jakim, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.2-4.

the Spirit as the Mother of the Son paired with the Father of the Son, or the sister of the Son, or as the feminine principle of divinity generally. The feminine presentation of the Spirit became especially prominent in the Syriac tradition, which also has the Semitic grammatical feminine gender of “spirit” (*ruach*), in addition to the masculine usage.²⁷ Barnes notes how this tradition has a particular influence on Origen’s theology of the Spirit, though it also gradually diminished in other areas of the Church’s theology.²⁸

§5.2: FURTHER PLURIFORMITY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

These four represent four great, extant themes of earliest Christian pneumatology insofar as these thinkers are negotiating the inheritance of Jewish and Rabbinic pneumatology—the continuity especially evident, as Barnes argues, in that pneumatology does not even become an explicit matter of dispute between the two parties in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. Even these four should be enough to undermine the hypertrophic indictment often advanced that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Ancestral period was an impoverished one, particularly prior to the emergence of the question of the Spirit’s ontological relation to the other Divine Persons in the mid 4th century that set the stage for Constantinople in 381.

A number of extenuating factors, including the relatively more sparse, elliptical and enigmatic biblical description of the Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son, did exercise the pressure of constraint and restraint on the holistic

²⁷ Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, The *Odes of Solomon*, and Early Syriac Tradition” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 37 (1993): 111-139; Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:155-162.

²⁸ Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology,” 179-180.

development of the early theology of the Spirit. But, nevertheless, many potentially lavish, even if at this stage nascent, trajectories for the theological understanding of the Spirit were present. To say, furthermore, that elite theology did not include robust and extensive thematic articulation of the doctrine of the Spirit is not to say that such theology did not implicitly include or implicate such a theology, or the foundations of such a theology, even if developed primarily under other doctrinal loci. Even more so, to say that much formal theology in the early Church only implicitly depended on pneumatology is not to say that the lived faith of the Church and its believers did not include a rich liturgical, devotional, embodied, popular and experiential pneumatology.

§5.2.1: Themes in First Clement—Even Ayres and Barnes’ fourfold schematic of ancestral pneumatology does not exhaust all the possibilities, especially if we consider the description of the work of the Holy Spirit as indicating something, at least tacitly, of the theology of the person of the Spirit. Barnes and Ayres do not consider *Clement* in this context, perhaps the earliest piece of Christian literature outside of what would become Apostolic Scripture.²⁹ The Letter from “the church of God which sojourns in Rome to the church of God which sojourns in Corinth,” manifests a number of embryonic themes of early pneumatology, even at this stage. It anticipates what would become a central creedal emphasis by associating the work and gift of the Spirit with the inspiration of prophecy and “Scripture,” both in Israel & in Paul, and as the conduit of Divine communication in the words and ministry of Jesus, as well as in

²⁹ Michael W. Holmes, “Introduction” in Holmes, rev. and ed., *Apostolic Fathers*, Greek Texts and Translations, 2nd ed., J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, original trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), [=AF]: 22-25.

the teaching about Jesus: paradigmatically, “You have searched the Scriptures, which are true, which were given by the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ The pneumatology of prophetic, apostolic and scriptural inspiration recurs frequently throughout the early centuries as it formally makes its way into the abiding rule of faith. One typical assessment that, “References to the Holy Spirit were rare, and limited to his gift of inspiration” is not entirely accurate, however, even if understandable.³¹ Certainly a predominant theme here is the inspiration of prophecy, the Scriptures of Israel or the Apostolic Writings. But that does not exhaust the pneumatology, even at this embryonic stage.

Other fragments are present. Already *Clement* also sees the work of the Holy Spirit in what we might call a pneumatology of tradition, or a pneumatology of diachronic Gospel proclamation, communication and transmission. So, the Apostles, “went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God was about to come.” The Apostles then subsequently, “appointed their firstfruits, when they had tested them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons many years ago.”³² The writing of the letter itself, furthermore, is taken to be performed *in* the Holy Spirit, such that there is at least some continuity between the inspiration in which the Apostles wrote the Apostolic Scriptures and the current authority of the Roman Church in penning its own letter: “if you obey what we have written through the Holy Spirit and root out the unlawful anger of your jealousy, in accordance with the appeal for peace

³⁰ *1 Clement*, Preface (AF: 29); *1 Clement* 45, also 8, 13, 16, 22, 47, 63 (AF: 79, 43, 45, 55, 83).

³¹ J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit: Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1984), 17.

³² *1 Clement* 42 (AF: 75).

and harmony which we have made in this letter” (ἡμῶν γεγραμμένοις δια τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος).³³

Connected to this, but also differentiated, are the themes of both the outpouring of and endowment with the Spirit on current believers, and the unity of the community that this should bring, which is the animating concern of the letter, written to implore harmony and concord (ὁμονοία 14 occurrences), the “peace and concord which we have prayed for and desire...,” while lamenting the “detestable and unholy schism, so alien and strange to those chosen by God,” which had befallen the Corinthian Church when it seems a group of young believers usurped and overthrew the established leadership of presbyters there. For the Christian who lives in the Spirit, suggests *Clement*, “Love knows nothing of schisms...love does everything in harmony.” From that perspective, those “who laid the foundation of the revolt must submit to the presbyters and accept discipline leading to repentance, bending the knees of your heart.” The unity implored is both the unity the Spirit brings to the community as a whole, in the Spirit, and the unity that should result if the individual believers are sufficiently immersed in the Spirit: thus the indignant and poignant interrogative: “Do we not have one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace which was poured out upon us?”³⁴

The Spirit is also the Spirit who governs and animates the ethical life. The Spirit prompts “repentance.” The Spirit catalyzes a disposition in the Corinthians to be “humble and free from arrogance” to inhabit “a profound and rich peace” to

³³ 1 *Clement* 63 (AF: 101).

³⁴ 1 *Clement* 65, 1, 49, 57, 46 (AF: 101, 29, 85, 93, 81).

be equipped with an “insatiable desire to do good,” yielding free “obedience” not having it “extorted,” to give heed to the words, doctrine and sufferings of God in Christ.³⁵ Although *Clement* often relies on the God-Lord Jesus Christ dyad, furthermore, there is even at least one example of a robustly triadic formulation: “For as God lives, and as the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit (who are the faith and the hope of the elect)...”³⁶ Lastly, we should note that the Holy Spirit is invoked both at the beginning and the end of the letter, as something of a frame for the letter, and the performative context in which the action of the Roman Church taking responsibility for the good of the Corinthian Church makes sense.

Already just with *Clement*, therefore, a number of—at the very least—pneumatological gestures or fragments, can be discerned, as long as we take a holistic view of pneumatology, in its tacit interconnection with other Christian doctrinal themes, and if we follow the methodological principle that “scholars have become wary of using later categories to describe earlier thought,” that is, of retrojecting the decisions of later formulations back onto thinkers for whom the more precise categories did not exist.³⁷ Some others themes are also worth sketching. There is the significant theme of baptismal pneumatology, which will become one of the crucial liturgical and spiritual loci for the fully divine and hypostatic interpretation of the Spirit in pro-Nicene pneumatological ontology, to which *Didache* is an early witness. *Didache* describes the early practice of baptism in the Triune Name, as opposed to the practice of baptism in the name of

³⁵ 1 *Clement* 2 (AF: 31)

³⁶ 1 *Clement* 58 (AF: 95).

³⁷ Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, “The Doctrine of God” in Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 866.

Jesus by itself, together with threefold immersion.³⁸ A sacramental pneumatology is also present in Justin: baptism in the Triune Name, together with a eucharistic pneumatology and worship in the Spirit.³⁹

§5.2.2: Ignatius of Antioch—Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107) also goes beyond the mere association of the Spirit with inspiration in the context of the three main themes of his extant written theology: (1) the authority of the bishop in the unity of the local Church, (2) the eschatological and soteriological realism of the eucharist (around which the bishop gathers the Church), and (3) the power of the witness of martyrdom. Ignatius attests to the christological work of the Spirit in the conception of Jesus the Christ.⁴⁰ He employs trinitarian doxological and liturgical invocations: “in faith and love, in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit, in the beginning and the end...,”⁴¹ even if he also switches between binitarian codae.⁴² The doxological and liturgical perdurance, drawing from New Testament passages, of the witness to the Spirit in trinitarian formulae is also found in something like *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,⁴³ again however alongside the continuance in other early literature of doxological binitarian formulae.⁴⁴

Ignatius, additionally in his own theology, invokes the work of the Spirit as an aspect of his theology of episcopacy and Church order to say that Christ

³⁸ *Didache*, 7 (AF: 259).

³⁹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 61, 65-66, 67 (FC, 6: 99-100, 104-106, 106-107).

⁴⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 9 (AF: 143); *Letter to the Smyrnaens*, 1 (AF: 185).

⁴¹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Magnesians*, 13 (AF: 157).

⁴² Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 21 (AF: 151).

⁴³ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 22 (AF: 245); *2 Clement*, 20 (AF: 127).

⁴⁴ Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, 12 (AF: 219).

securely established his lineage of Bishops, “by his Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵ Ignatius’s most delightfully vivid and unique image of the Spirit—even if his Greek style is described pejoratively as “breathless and inelegant,”⁴⁶ his theological imaginative purview certainly is not—is as a soteriological “rope” (σχοινίω) that pulls us up by the “hoist” (μηχανῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) of Christ to be built into a “temple” for the Father: “because you are stones of a temple (ὡς ὄντες λίθοι ναοῦ)...for the building of God the Father, hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a rope the Holy Spirit; your faith is what lifts you up, and love is the way that leads up to God.”⁴⁷

§5.2.3: Justin Martyr—Justin (d. 165) can serve as an example of some of the pneumatological fragments found in the apologists. The Apologists did often relatively neglect the theology of the Spirit in favor of the theology of the Logos, by which they could forge intellectual, missional connections with philosophical culture; though, it is an unwarranted retrojection to conclude that their theology of the Spirit was “meager, scarcely deserving the name scientific theology.”⁴⁸ Justin evidences some of the main themes. In his polemic with the Jewish figure Trypho, Justin reckons with a number of passages from the Scriptures of Israel regarding the messianic Spirit as applied to Jesus, or as fulfilled in his subsequent community, where Justin points to Christians around him, “both

⁴⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians*, Pro (AF: 177).

⁴⁶ Richard A. Norris Jr., “Apostolic and Sub-Apostolic Writings” in Lewis Ayres, Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday, eds., *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 14.

⁴⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 9 (AF: 142-143).

⁴⁸ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 101.

men and women endowed with gifts of the Spirit of God.”⁴⁹ Justin attests to the standard theme of prophetic inspiration, in his favorite phrase, by the “Prophetic Spirit,” detailing various ways in which the Spirit orchestrated and guaranteed Old Testament prophecy, through which he “teaches,” and interprets.⁵⁰ But Justin furthermore witnesses to other embryonic developments in pneumatology: the Spirit Christology of the incarnation and conception of Jesus, as he interprets the traditional doctrine, that it was the “Spirit who came upon the virgin...by divine power.” However, it is not quite clear here whether Justin uses the Spirit as functionally interchangeable with the Word, not “as anything other than the Word,” or whether the Spirit is a distinct “third,” after the “Son of the living God...in the second place.”⁵¹ When Justin attempts to show how Plato’s doctrine of God was appropriated from Moses, there is the threefold pattern, which seems to suggest the latter.⁵² One place where it would have been interesting to see how Justin would have extended his thought is in his classic passage on the “seeds of the Word,” “the Word in whom all mankind partakes.” The potentially global participation in the Word allows Justin to claim that all “those who lived by reason are Christians,” particularly forging the connection with the Greek philosophers.⁵³

§5.2.4: Irenaeus Reprised—Some last examples come from the rich, even if still sketchy, pneumatology of Irenaeus. The theology of Irenaeus (d. c. 202

⁴⁹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 87-88 (FC, 6: 285-290).

⁵⁰ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 13, 31, 32, 35, 36, 39, 41, 42, 44, 63 (FC, 6: 46, 66, 68, 72, 73, 75, 78, 80, 101).

⁵¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 33, 13 (FC, 6: 70-71, 46).

⁵² Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 60 (FC, 6: 97-98).

⁵³ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 46; *Second Apology*, 13 (FC, 6: 83-84, 133-134).

CE) in particular stands as a refutation of the view that the early Church Ancestors had an impoverished view of the Spirit. We have already seen above how Ayres and Barnes reference Irenaeus in connection with the traditions of both creation and wisdom pneumatology. At a number of other points and in a number of other loci, Irenaeus' pneumatology emphasizes "both the remarkably active" and the "radically self-effacing" nature of the Spirit's work.⁵⁴ The latter aspect is perhaps why Irenaeus—among other early theologians—has not been fully appreciated for the theologies of the Spirit in the past.

Irenaeus's pneumatology further includes themes of (1) christological anointing, in which Irenaeus argues, the very name "Christ," already implicitly includes the Father and the Spirit, as the one who anoints and the accomplished event of messianic anointing itself.⁵⁵ (2) a strong connection between ecclesiology and pneumatology, as in his widely famous passage: "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth,"⁵⁶ (3) ecclesiological unity in diversity,⁵⁷ (4) in developing his high theology of apostolic succession and church

⁵⁴ Brendan Leahy, "Hiding behind the works': the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian rhythm of human fulfillment in the theology of Irenaeus" from Vincent Twomey and Janet Elaine Rutherford, eds. *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010): 11-31.

⁵⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.17.1, 3.17.3 (where deficient christology is tellingly linked to deficient pneumatology), 3.18.3

⁵⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.24.1.

⁵⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.17.2: "having power to admit all nations to the entrance of life, and to the opening of the new covenant; from whence also, with one accord in languages, they uttered praise to God, the Spirit bringing distant tribes to unity, and offering to the Father the first-fruits of all nations. Wherefore also the Lord promised to send the Comforter, who should join us to God."

office in the authenticity of the transmission of faith,⁵⁸ (5) the discernment of spirits and interpretation,⁵⁹ which picks up a theme from *Didache*,⁶⁰ (6) eschatological completion and incorruptibility,⁶¹ resonating with an eschatological-completion theme from *Polycarp*,⁶² (7) communion, with God and between believers,⁶³ (8) as well as the by then very traditional themes of prophetic, apostolic and scriptural inspiration and the enduring of charismatic gifts in the Church.⁶⁴

At that same time, Irenaeus recognizes the dangers of claims to the spirit, such as in the Montanist movement, that “set aside at once both the Gospel and the prophetic spirit, acting like those who, on account of such as come in hypocrisy, hold themselves aloof from the communion of the brothers....”⁶⁵ In a powerful image, which has been retrieved in the contemporary liturgy, Irenaeus likens the Spirit to the “dew of God.”⁶⁶ Then, of course, there is Irenaeus’s most famous and indelible image of the Spirit, together with the Son, as the two “hands

⁵⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1, 3.24.1, 4.26.2.

⁵⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.6.4.

⁶⁰ *Didache*, 12 (AF: 267). The *Didache* envisions some kind of enduring ministry of prophets in addition to the more familiar one of teachers, though its precise nature, scope and prevalence is ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a fear encoded about “testing” these prophets, for fear of committing the “unforgiveable sin” against the Spirit (Matthew 12:32). And yet, there is a recognition of the necessity of discerning spirits, for “not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord’s ways.”

⁶¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.8, 5.8.1, 5.12.4.

⁶² *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14 (AF: 238-239): the eschatological perfection and enactment of the Spirit, when he describes the hope of the martyrs in the “resurrection to eternal life...in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit (εις αναστασιν ζωης αιωνιου...εν αφθαπσια πνευματος ‘αγιου) ”

⁶³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.24.1, 4.14.2, 5.1.1, 5.12.2.

⁶⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.6.1, 3.9.1, 3.21.4, 5.6.1.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.9.

⁶⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.17.3.

of God” at work in the world.⁶⁷ The latter has been taken as a subordinationist image, but that seems to be an anachronistic retrojection of the distinctions of later theology, given Irenaeus’ affirmation of at least the co-eternality of the Father, Son and Spirit. A more plausible interpretation is that it simply reflects the biblical taxis of the missions.⁶⁸

§5.2.5: *The Complex Case of Origen*—With Origen (d. 254), we encounter a rich, multifaceted and complex pneumatology, weaved into the interrelated and systematic character of his thought, which is developed not only in his great work of systematics, the *De Principiis*, but also obliquely in many of his spiritual and exegetical writings. Obviously, I cannot deal with Origen’s pneumatology thoroughly here, only a few prominent aspects of it. *On First Principles* labors to respond to the proliferation of Christian beliefs, “[s]ince many...of those who profess to believe in Christ differ from each other, not only in small and trifling matters, but also on subjects of the highest importance...regarding God, or the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit.” Origen first articulates the central aspects of what he sees as Christian faith, “it seems on that account necessary first of all to fix a definite limit and to lay down an unmistakable rule regarding” the central aspects, and “then to pass to the investigation of other points” based on their relation to and derivation from the central rule of faith. The central rule of faith is that which has been preserved under the guidance of the Spirit in the continuity of apostolic tradition: “as the teaching of the Church, transmitted in orderly succession from the apostles, and remaining in the Churches to the present day,

⁶⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.6.1, 5.28.4.

⁶⁸ To the whole: Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyon and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolical tradition.”⁶⁹

Starting from and grounded in what is most assured of the faith, then, Origen sees the role of the theologian to attempt to engage the other disputed questions in the Spirit. So theology itself, insofar as practiced in the Church, for Origen, is a work of the Spirit by those who have been equipped by the Spirit to do so: “leaving, however, the grounds of their statements to be examined into by those who should deserve the excellent gifts of the Spirit, and who, especially by means of the Holy Spirit Himself, should obtain the gift of language, of wisdom, and of knowledge....those persons...who should prepare themselves to be fit and worthy receivers of wisdom.” Integrative and responsible theology, therefore, for Origen, must pay attention to its foundations and to its operation: “Every one, therefore, must make use of elements and foundations of this sort, according to the precept, ‘Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge....’” Then, if the theologian desires, “to form a connected series and body of truths agreeably to the reason of all these things,” they “may ascertain the truth regarding each individual topic” by derivation of “clear and necessary statements.” In the end, the theologian will “form, as we have said, one body of doctrine, by means of illustrations and arguments—either those which he has discovered in holy Scripture, or which he has deduced by closely tracing out the consequences and following a correct method.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface.2-3 (AMP, 2-3).

⁷⁰ Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface.2-3, 10; citing Hosea 10:12 LXX differs from MT (AMP, 2-3, 7).

Origen, first and foremost, does see the Spirit, as had become commonplace, in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and sees this as one of the fundamental doctrines of the faith that must be embraced as an elemental principle: “Then there is the doctrine that the scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God...”⁷¹ Origen attempts even to demonstrate that these texts are “the divine Scriptures...inspired by the Spirit of God” by their attestation in the life of the saints and martyrs, by the spread of Christian mission and by the classic appeal to the fulfillment of prophecy.⁷² The role of the Spirit in forming the Scriptures endows them with a “divine inspiration that extends through the entire body of sacred Scripture” and is not undermined or compromised “because of the inability of our weakness to discover in every different verse the obscure and hidden meanings.”⁷³

Origen thereby enfoldes the work of the Spirit in the inspiration, composition, reception and interpretation of the Scriptures into his particular hermeneutical theory about understanding them: that the Scriptures do not have “only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. For the contents of scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and images of divine things. On this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognized by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy

⁷¹ Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface.8 (AMP, 6), 2.7.1 (AMP, 145).

⁷² Origen, *On First Principles*, 4.1.1-5 (CWS = *Selected Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality Series, Rowan A. Greer, trans. and intro. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1979), 171-175); Gk of the *Philocalia* and the Lt of Rufinus variable.

⁷³ Origen, *On First Principles*, 4.1.7 (CWS: 177, translation emended); citing 2 Corinthians 4:7 “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels’ so that the strength of divine power may shine forth all the more...”

Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge.”⁷⁴ Origen, then, argues that the Scriptures must be understood according to both their “literal” and “metaliteral” senses. The literal is the “somatic” or “bodily” sense, while the “metaliteral” can be either “psychic” (soulful) or “pneumatic” (spiritual), where the psychic sense typically leads to the moral transformation of the reader and the spiritual sense typically catalyzes the eschatological and salvific transformation.⁷⁵

For Origen, precisely since the Spirit has inspired the Scriptures, in many cases their ultimate goal cannot reside only with the literal sense of the text. The Spirit directs us to spiritual things. This is made clear by the fact that “the aim of the Holy Spirit...is not that we might be able to be edified by the letter alone or in all cases...” We know this because it is clear that “we often discover that the letter” or plain sense of Scripture is “impossible and insufficient in itself because by it sometimes not only irrationalities but even impossibilities are described.” Origen continues: “But where the narrative of events could not be coherent with the

⁷⁴ Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface.8 (AMP, 6).

⁷⁵ Origen, *On First Principles*, 4.2.4 (CWS: 182); Elizabeth Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen’s Exegesis* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2005), 36, 238: “This work concludes the following: First, Origen does define three senses of meaning fully and clearly in theory. Second, his practice promotes them as separate senses. Third, the nonliteral, moral sense, and more specifically its practical distinction from and relationship with the other nonliteral, spiritual sense, is the key to his exegetical effort to effect Scripture’s spiritual purpose of transforming its hearer in preparation for salvation...This work has established that Origen defines three senses of scriptural meaning within his exegetical theory and applies them within his homilies and commentaries. Examination of his practical works shows that the two nonliteral—psychic and pneumatic—senses independently edify Scripture’s hearer and also relate to complement the other’s spiritually transformative effects...[T]he height of Origen’s exegetical effort to transform his audience occurs through the interrelationship between psychic and pneumatic readings of the same biblical passage. Each is a pedagogy within Scripture, but together, they form a dialectic of mutual reinforcement...” Lauro supplants the sometimes tendentious, R. C. P. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture*, up. ed., Joseph W. Trigg, intro. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

spiritual logic, [the Spirit] sometimes interspersed either events less likely or absolutely impossible to have happened and sometimes even events that could have happened but in fact did not...[sometimes] if anywhere He found that what happened according to the narrative could be fitted to the spiritual meaning, He composed something woven out of both kinds in a single verbal account, always hiding the secret meaning more deeply...” In another passage, Origen comments further on how sometimes the literal sense of Scripture is confused, but that very confusion leads us, in the Spirit, to the deeper spiritual meaning intended: “...we must not ignore the fact that there are certain passages in Scripture in which what we have called the body, that is a logically coherent narrative meaning, is not always to be found....” The ambiguity of the somatic sense of Scripture, even through—precisely through—its inspiration by the Spirit, this leads us to its more profound “spiritual” (metalevel) meaning. The spiritual meaning is never signified simply by overthrowing or neglecting the somatic sense. But it often does go beyond it. The primary meaning so entailed by the spiritual sense of Scripture is itself a doctrine of the Spirit in the Trinity: “Therefore, it is chiefly the doctrine of God, that is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that is described by those men filled with the divine Spirit.”⁷⁶ That is, the primary spiritual referent of all Scripture in its wild and wonderful somatic, literal sense is the Triune God Himself. That meaning is not always directly and thematically evident; but it is entailed.

Origen affirms the necessity of personal belief in the Holy Spirit as manifestly coincident belief in the authority of the Old Testament or belief in

⁷⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 4.3.4, 4.2.9, 4.2.5, 4.2.7 (CWS: 188, 183, 186).

Christ. For those who are “familiar with the law and the prophets, or...profess belief in Christ,” could not harbor “even a suspicion,” as to person of the Holy Spirit, whose existence, Origen infers, “we are taught in many passages of Scripture.”⁷⁷ Origen derives the lived importance of this belief in the Holy Spirit from the liturgical formula for baptism, as indeed would become a central locus of theological argumentation about the Spirit in the whole ancestral era. From the triadic baptismal formula, Origen argues, we can glean that the Spirit “is of so great authority and dignity that saving baptism is not complete except when performed with the authority of the whole most excellent Trinity.” The three therefore belong together in any consideration of the saving work of God. The name of the Holy Spirit, therefore, “must be joined to that of the unbegotten God the Father and his only-begotten Son.” The precise relationship of these three names, and so these three persons, among one another, is not quite clear here, and has been an enduring source of cavil against Origen’s trinitarianism.⁷⁸ But it is clear that the Spirit belongs with the Father and the Son as the agents of the saving work performed in baptism and not otherwise. So, at the very least, Origen confesses bewonderment at the “tremendous majesty of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹

Origen does not go so far as to call the Spirit Divine as such, or to specify the Divine location or relation of the Spirit. So he has been interpreted as significantly subordinationist in his particular account of the relation of the Spirit

⁷⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.1-2 (AMP, 39-40).

⁷⁸ That the interpretation of Origen’s trinitarianism by Proclus’s first principles in middle Platonism helps decipher the “Rufinian problem,” see Janet E. Rutherford, “The Alexandrian Spirit: Clement and Origen in Context” from Twomey and Rutherford, eds. *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church*, 40-46.

⁷⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.2 (AMP, 40-41).

to the Father and Son as a type of Divine cascade (though, this would be assuming Nicene categories).⁸⁰ But he, nevertheless, does argue explicitly against locating the Spirit on the creaturely side of the ontological divide: the Holy Spirit can nowhere in Scripture be shown to be a creature, and therefore, He belongs in the realm of the Divine: “But up to the present we have been able to find no passage in the holy scriptures which would warrant us in saying that the Holy Spirit was a being made or created, not even in that manner in which we have shown above that Solomon speaks of wisdom, nor in the manner in which the expressions we have dealt with, such as life, or word, or other titles of the Son of God are to be understood.”⁸¹

The baptismal role of the Spirit evidences the necessity of the Spirit’s work in the Divine plan, for Origen, both epistemologically and ontologically. Epistemologically, the Spirit interprets the Son who exegetes the Father. The Spirit communicates the Son’s revelation of the Father, making it accessible and available to all of us.⁸² There is also a pivot between knowing and being here, moreover, as the “truth” that is made know to us is a saturated truth, a truth beyond what can be thematized explicitly. We must also know, Origen later says, that the truths the Spirit imparts to us are also “greater than can be uttered...unspeakable...which cannot be indicated in human language.”⁸³ They

⁸⁰ Compellingly against this long-standing interpretation of Origen’s trinitarianism as fundamentally subordinationist, we now have: Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappodocian Line,” *Vigiliae Christianiae*, 65 (2011): 21-49.

⁸¹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.3 (AMP, 41).

⁸² Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.4 (AMP, 41-43); citing Matthew 11:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10, John 3:8.

⁸³ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.7.4 (AMP, 148).

are truths that are made part of us, beyond our knowing. Ontologically, in the union of salvation, we need “Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and will not obtain salvation apart from the entire Trinity.” We cannot “partake” of the eternal life of the faith without being joined to the Son in his identity with humanity. And we cannot partake of the Son’s divine-human communion, unless we universally partake of the Spirit.⁸⁴ The intrahistorical outcome of disposition is joy: “for anyone who has been deemed worthy to partake of the Holy Spirit, when he has learned his unspeakable mysteries, undoubtedly obtains consolation and gladness of heart.”⁸⁵

There is dispute about Origen, lastly, whether or not, he envisions the work of the Spirit globally or only confined to the Church and to believers, to those who have professed the name of Christ. He does connect the distinct person of the Holy Spirit to the universal Creator Spirit in Gen 1:2, though “not, however, according to [the] literal but according to the spiritual meaning.”⁸⁶ In other places, he argues that “undoubtedly everyone who walks upon the earth...is a partaker of the Holy Spirit, which he receives from God” simply by virtue of his life and reason, while he also claims that, “every rational creature receives without any difference share in the Holy Spirit just as in the wisdom of God and the word of God.”⁸⁷ However, exegetical constraints lead him to hedge on this affirmation about the Holy Spirit’s particular presence to believers. He re-reads Gen 2:7 later to say, “If this *breath of life* is understood to have been given to men

⁸⁴ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.5 (AMP, 44).

⁸⁵ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.7.4 (AMP, 149).

⁸⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.3 (AMP, 41).

⁸⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.4 (AMP, 42); *On First Principles*, 2.7.2 (AMP, 146).

in general, then all men have a share in God. But if we are to understand the expression as referring to the *Spirit of God*...then the breath of life may be regarded as given not universally but only to the saints.” Exegeting Genesis 6:3, where the Spirit of the Lord is said to depart from humanity under the conditions of sin, together with the work of renewal and sanctification attributed to the Spirit (Psalm 104:29-30, Col 3:9, Rom 6:4), Origen concludes that such passages “fitly” apply to the person of the Holy Spirit, “because he will dwell not in all men, nor in those who are flesh, but in those whose earth has been renewed.” Therefore, “the working of the power of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone...” (1 Cor 12:3).⁸⁸

§5.2.6: *The Fixation of the Trinitarian Taxis*—The question about the scope of the Holy Spirit’s activity provides the background for what Ayres and Barnes chronicle as the decisive turning point in ancestral pneumatology: the fixation of the trinitarian taxis as Father-Son-Spirit. In the context of the Spirit-Monarchian controversy, Origen counterexegetes those who are arguing that since the Spirit belongs only to the sphere of holiness in the world, unlike the Father and the Son who are involved in tainted universality, associated with both pure and impure, that this indicates actually the *superiority* of the Spirit, what Barnes calls “hyper-pneumatology.” Origen’s fixation of the trinitarian taxis in *On First Principles* and in his *Commentary on John* occurs in the context of those who would subordinate the Son to the Spirit. The argument about the subordination of the Son is based on the fact that the Son compromised Himself

⁸⁸ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3.6, 1.3.7 (AMP, 45-47, emphasis added).

with sinful human nature, those passages which seem to imply that the Spirit sent or christened the work of the Son, thus implicating an ontological authority, and the fact that the blasphemy of the Spirit, Jesus seems to say in the Gospels, is eternally weighty in a way not so of the blasphemy of the Son. In Origin's attempt to outflank this hyper-pneumatology, he reforged the exegetical link between Wisdom and the Son, along the lines of the Logos theology, instead of a wisdom pneumatology, a shift in which Tertullian also participates.

This establishes a fundamental and fixed trinitarian taxis in the theologies of Origin and Tertullian (d. c. 240) (Father → Son → Spirit) that becomes the most significant horizon for differentiating the Divine Persons and interpreting their Relations.⁸⁹ In other words, the fixation of this particular trinitarian taxis becomes the ground of the whole processional model of Divine Reality. The broad scope of this phase of development in classical pneumatology was understandable and salutary for the Church's theology. There were, however, also insights lost. Most crucially, there are biblical dimensions that point to the significance of the Spirit → Son taxis, such as the Incarnation itself, the baptism of Jesus, the christological anointing, the driving into the wilderness, the power for ministry and healing, and the movement towards the crucifixion and resurrection.⁹⁰ While the employment of this order in either adoptionist Christology or hyper-pneumatology renders the retrieval of this other order

⁸⁹ Barnes, "The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology," 182-186.

⁹⁰ In a dissertation of primarily biblical theology, these passages would all require much more extended and delicate exegesis, but, at the very least, they *gesture* towards one exegetical *pattern*: Mark 1:10, Mt 3:16-17, Luke 3:22, John 1:32, Mark 1:12, Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:1, Luke 4:14, Luke 4:18, Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:35, Matthew 12:28, Luke 10:21, Luke 12:12, Acts 2:33, Acts 4:31, Acts 10:38, Romans 1:4, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Peter 3:18.

problematic, the purification of the Spirit → Son taxis by the Nicene *homoousion* might present possibilities for a more biblical and holistic account of the role of the Spirit. *Such, I will argue, is one possibility that Jenson's pneumatology represents when considering the Spirit → Son taxis as one of the relations of future*, in comparison to the co-constitutive relations of origin, and the liberative model as it complements the processional, all within the space governed by the pro-Nicene *homoousion*.

§5.3: THE HOMOOUSIOS OF THE SPIRIT

The third decisive phase in the development of classical pneumatology was the conceptualization of the full divinity—not diet God with lime—of the Holy Spirit and the rigorous application of *homoousion* theology to the Spirit under governance of the principle that there are no gradations of the Divine Reality, only irreducible *personal* distinctions within the unique Divine Reality. The emergence of this dimension of pro-Nicene pneumatology was contentious, even for those who had accepted the *homoousios* of the Son.

§5.3.1: *The Oversight of the Spirit*—The absence of the Spirit from the often dyadic considerations of early pro-Nicene theology provoked something of a controversy in the 4th century. The pneumatology of Nicaea itself has been deliciously described as one of “lapidary brevity.” And it was not until well into the fourth century that we begin to see (extant at least) theological treatises devoted specifically to the Holy Spirit as such. Pelikan hypothesized that the Montanist controversy of the second century might have both provoked the question of the Spirit's hypostasis in the tradition but also generated a wariness

about excessive speculation.⁹¹ The “relative neglect” (and not absolute) of pneumatology in the early development of the Nicene controversy has been interpreted, not in terms of the *necessary* theological priority of the question of Christ’s divinity to that of the Spirit, for certainly the divine characteristics of the work of the Spirit at least punctuated pre-Nicene theology. But the heuristic and exegetical specificity and complexity of the “Father-Son” and “God-world binaries,” (dyads, perhaps) as the primary sites of unfolding theological framework did preempt the extension of these subtle interpretations “to the consideration of the third of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.”⁹²

Once the question about the Spirit had been provoked, however, it was a question that had to be answered. And it became entangled in the unfolding articulation of pro-Nicene theology. So here, as in other areas of the ancestral Church’s theology, it is when a basic belief gets interrogated that the Church’s theology discovers the opportunity to clarify, refine, craft and substantiate its theology about that particular topic, not that no theology existed beforehand. In this case, once raised the absence of the pneumatological question in prior debates “itself became a question” for 4th century theologians, a question about the theology of tradition and doctrine itself.⁹³ Amphilochius of Iconium, in 376, suggested that as well as the theory of biblical development, that the Father was manifest in the Torah, the Father and the Son in the Prophets, and the Spirit together with the other two only in the unfolding of the Gospels, also proposed a simple observation: “It was quite necessary for the fathers then to expound more

⁹¹ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:211-225.

⁹² Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 133.

⁹³ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:133.

amply about the glory of the Only-Begotten, since they had to cut off the Arians heresy...But since the question about the Holy Spirit was not being discussed at the time, they did not go into it at any great length.”⁹⁴

The Nazianzen’s famous passage, about the gradual unfolding of knowledge the Trinity in the history of salvation, orients the question to the development of doctrine: “the old covenant,” he explains, “made clear proclamation of the Father” but “a less definite one of the Son.” While the “new covenant,” by gradation, “made the Son manifest and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit’s Godhead.” So the intimations of the Spirit’s person are present in the Apostolic Writings but, for Gregory, require the Spirit’s own continuing work in the discernment of the Church in order to be fully unfurled: “At the present time, the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before.” Why, says Gregory? Such precipitous knowledge would have been “dangerous,” for humans in their progress of “ascent,” not having reached sufficient maturity and awareness to receive this truth in their “humble vessels”;⁹⁵ it would have, Gregory says, as if to “gaze at sunlight with eyes as yet too feeble for it.”⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the discussion of the precise ontological status and relational characterization of the Spirit to the Father and the Son had its own distinctive vicissitudes. All of those involved in the 4th century debates inherited the threefold taxis as axiomatic. But those opposed to the understanding of the Spirit

⁹⁴ Quoted in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 1:133.

⁹⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:7.

⁹⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, 31.26, *On God and Christ*, Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham, trans. and eds., Popular Patristic Series, 23 (Crestwood, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 137.

as having full divinity in the same way as the Father, the groups subsequent labeled Tropici (Athanasius) and the “Macedonians” or “Pneumatomacians” (Basil, Gregory), shared with various other anti or non-Nicenes, homoiousians or heterousians, the belief that the threefold taxis, “implied distinctions that could only be marked by insisting on a clear ontological subordination between Father, Son and Spirit.”⁹⁷

§5.3.2: Athanasius & the Spirit’s Co-Divinity—To see how classical pneumatology came to respond to the subordinationists of the Spirit with the pro-Nicene affirmation of the homoousian theology of the Spirit, I look in particular at Athanasius (d. 373) and Gregory of Nyssa (d. c. 395) as presented in the synthetic interpretation of Khaled Anatolios. Athanasius first counter-exegetes various passages that seem to suggest the ontological inferiority of the Spirit. The Tropici employ scriptural passages that seem to suggest either the Spirit is created, or that, since the Spirit is clearly sent by the Son in the economy that implies an eternal gradation of Son and Spirit. Athanasius responds that such passages refer to created spirit, while he distinguished various nuances of meaning in the biblical term “spirit,” and ripostes that similarly to the case of the Son, a divine mission of self-emptying does not necessarily imply an eternal ontological subordination. (These very pro-Nicene arguments imply a difficulty for a strict and maximalist interpretation of Rahner’s Rule, because they are saying that not everything that we see in the economy (missional and kenotic subordination) necessarily corresponds directly to the eternal “immanent” Divine Life).

⁹⁷ Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 190.

Athanasius then has to respond to the trajectory of angelic pneumatology, mentioned earlier. The Tropici employed this Jewish tradition to associate the Holy Spirit with the ontological level of the angels. This provided the exegetical background to interpret 1 Timothy 5:21 on behalf of the ontological gradation of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. In that passage, Paul invokes the triad of “God and Jesus Christ and the elect angels” in seeming parallel to what would typically be the triad of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Athanasius responds that the connections between the Spirit and angels are actually tenuous, and the Scriptures make clear to distinguish the two when they occur together in the same narratives. Paul mentions the angels in that Timothy passage, Athanasius contends, because the “angels minister to our affairs, overseeing the actions of each person, and thus would keep the exhortations of his teacher...,” which was relevant to the point that Paul was making in the passage about guarding teaching and being impartial in relations with other believers.⁹⁸

Athanasius then provides positive arguments. The two most decisive arguments in favor of the fully divine status of the Spirit he provides are (1) the baptismal invocation, and, more broadly, (2) the soteriological: the Spirit does what only God can do in saving us by uniting us to the Divine Life. The argument hinges on the premise: “Since the Scriptures attribute to the Spirit the creative and sanctifying work of God, the Spirit must be God [full stop, as they say].” This is connected to the triune name invoked in baptism, for the work of eternal life is

⁹⁸ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.10-1.14, from *Works on the Spirit*, Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres, trans., PPS, 43 (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 69-75; recurs in Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, Stephen Hildebrand, trans. PPS, 42 (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 13 (60-62).

“brought to consummation in the individual Christian through the sacramental event of baptism, in which the Spirit is an agent.”⁹⁹ As Athanasius will conclude, extrapolating the pro-Nicene logic of the relation of the Son to the Father: “For just as the Son, who is in the Father and the Father is in him, is not a creature...so too it is incorrect for the Spirit, who is in the Son and the Son in him, to be ranked with creatures or to be separated from the Word, thereby destroying the perfection of the Trinity.”¹⁰⁰

For Athanasius, furthermore, the biblical pattern of divine naming represents a threefold structure to the one singular work of salvation, which is to unite us to God. For salvation thus to be actual, eternal, efficacious, then, all three agents in the distinction of this work must share the same reality. Anatolios summarizes Athanasius’ position thusly: “To sum up the relations among the three according to Athanasius’s presentation of the biblical patterns, we could say that in each case the Father is source, the Son is outgoing manifestation and imaged content of the source, and the Spirit is the outward actualization of that content in and toward creation.”¹⁰¹ The soteriological logic of this position is flawless, at least as built on the architectonic of the fundamental distinction between Creator and creation. However, Anatolios also raises a poignant question about the identification of the particularity of the Spirit in this way: it seems to depend on the Spirit’s work in creation for its differentiating force. Therefore, “[i]f the Spirit is distinguished as the one in whom creation’s participation in divine life is actualized how does this distinction hold in the

⁹⁹ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 25, also 133-148.

¹⁰⁰ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.21 (PPS, 43: 86).

¹⁰¹ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 142-143.

divine being, considered independently of creation?” Anatolios responds that this is simply “not the sort of question that Athanasius is motivated to ask.”

Athanasius does not have in mind such counterfactuals insofar as they pertain to the Divine Being considered independently of the act of creation and salvation, “He only asks questions that presume the concrete reference of creation existing in relation to its Creator. Within that relation, the Spirit is the active agency by which divine life is actualized in us; that agency identifies both the Spirit’s claim to the divine title and its specific role within the trinitarian divine agency in relation to creation.”¹⁰²

In that respect, Jenson’s view of the Spirit’s identity would concur, though he pushes the logic against the counterfactual to the point of obliterating the distinction that the question poses altogether. The lingering question here, regardless of whether one embraces Jenson’s collapse of the immanent/economic distinction, is whether or not Jenson’s notion of the Spirit’s distinctive location vis-à-vis the Father and the Son does indeed provide an “immanent,” intra-divine distinction of the Spirit as the one who actualizes and completes, in Athanasius’s language, not just in the Divine work of salvation in relation to creation, but also in the Divine Life itself, in God’s intrinsic, eternal Reality.

§5.3.3: *Gregory of Nyssa & the Spirit’s Order*—The force of this question becomes even more evident in an analysis of Gregory of Nyssa’s thought on the Holy Spirit. Like Athanasius and a number of other homoousians, Gregory argues for the full divinity of the Spirit based on the “trinitarian patterns of the Christian believer’s relation to God,” especially in terms of sanctification and in

¹⁰² Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 143.

the liturgical-sacramental site of our baptism.¹⁰³ Anatolios characterizes this “sacramental logic” as a coherence between our knowledge of God, as God has disclosed it, our “participation” in God, culminating in eternal life, and the sacramental-liturgical acts by which we embody that participation: “The fundamental principle of this approach is to insist on a chain of continuity between knowledge of God, participation in divine life, and the material form of the sacramental event that initiates and actualizes that participation....”¹⁰⁴

The threefold pattern of our knowledge of God through the Divine naming in Scripture, the distinctive role of the Spirit therein, corresponds to the threefold pattern of the Divine work, the threefold name invoked at our baptism, and ultimately to the threefold subsistence of the Divine Hypostases. The unity of God, on the other hand, is grounded in the nexus of principles related to the non-gradation of Divinity, to divine perfection and to divine simplicity: “Gregory’s conception of the full divinity of the Spirit is the reiteration of the principle that variations in divinity are logically inconceivable. As we have already noted, this principle follows upon the strict conflation of the categories of divinity and perfection, such that divine simplicity is defined in turn as non-variability with regard to perfection.”¹⁰⁵ The unity of God is also evident from the harmonious unity of activity, though that is not merely by itself the basis of unity: “Gregory of Nyssa also cites the principle that the unity of nature among the trinitarian

¹⁰³ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 207, 208.

¹⁰⁴ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 208.

¹⁰⁵ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 206.

persons is deducible from the identity of operations or activities (*dia ton energeion*).”¹⁰⁶

Anatolios crystallizes Gregory’s thought on the Spirit by saying that for Gregory, “the Spirit is a distinct subsistence (hypostasis), and the distinction of his being is constituted by the order of causality within the divine essence.”¹⁰⁷ The distinct subsistence of the Holy Spirit within the singular Divine Reality is differentiated by the “order of causality.” In this way, however, the irreducible distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit becomes defined primarily *negatively*: “His most particular characteristic is that he is neither of those things which we contemplate in the Father and the Son respectively. He is simply, neither as unbegotten nor as only-begotten; this is what constitutes his chief particularity.”¹⁰⁸ So the Spirit is neither the unbegotten one nor the only-begotten one—but the *other* one than that!

Gregory does, subsequently then, give more positive content to this interpretation in relation to the Son: “More positively, the Spirit can be distinguished as the one who ‘is manifested by means of the Son.’ The Son seems to have a causal role in the procession of the Spirit, such that it can be said that the Son is prior to the Spirit in terms of the order of causation.” We can only push Gregory so far, however, as the “nature of that priority is not explained any more precisely, but Gregory insists that it does not amount to an ontological inferiority of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁹ While this account here does coalesce the identity of the Spirit

¹⁰⁶ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 207.

¹⁰⁷ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 205.

¹⁰⁸ Nyssa, *Contra Eunomius*, 1.279-280 quoted in Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 205.

¹⁰⁹ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 205.

within the sphere of the *homousios*, there does seem to be something incomplete in this account, which leaves the specific, positive identity of the Spirit somewhat amorphous. As long as the trinitarian taxis is considered *only* from the Son → Spirit, and the hypostatic differentiation by means of the order of causality, from the Origin, *alone*, there will be lingering suspicion about the positive, equi-primordial hypostatic basis of the Spirit's Identity: the "other" one.

§5.3.4: *Work Left Undone*—Gregory's theology of the Spirit, Anatolios crucially reminds us, should not be reduced simply to that of "order of causation." He, in fact, criticizes Jenson, among others, for doing just this: "Some currents in modern theology have manifested dissatisfaction with this Cappadocian 'reduction' of the distinction of trinitarian persons to the order of causality." Anatolios counters that this criticism fails to reflect the holistic biblical context and manifold dimensions of the patristic development of specific trinitarian doctrinal formulations. The order of causality in the Divine Life grounds the eternal distinction of Divine Persons. But that is not the same as saying this is the only characterization that can be made about the Divine Persons. Ironically, Anatolios notes, "[t]he very motifs that later critics have latched onto in order to attain a thicker description of the distinctions and relations between the *hypostaseis*, such as *kenosis* and mutual glorification, are already anticipated in Gregory, as we have shown."¹¹⁰ The Spirit's identity, in Gregory, is also brought out in a pneumatology of anointing, implied in the name of Christ and in the theme of mutual glorification. Where modern theologians have criticized ancestral trinitarian theology for reducing the eternal persons to their order of

¹¹⁰ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 232, citing Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:108.

causality, already Gregory shows us that some of the themes suggested to augment that account are already found there. So Gregory has already elaborated how the analysis of Divine Persons portrays their reciprocal eternal glorification, “as an immanently intra-trinitarian event in which the human honoring of God is enfolded. The human glorification of God is not merely an acknowledgment of the intrinsic worth of the divine being but rather a participation in the mutually self-glorifying being of the Trinity. Christian worship is thus a matter of being included within ‘the circle’ of the mutual glorification of Father, Son, and Spirit.”¹¹¹

With all those essential qualifications in mind, notwithstanding even the robust pneumatology of the Ancestors, and despite the incredible and decisive intellectual achievement in interpreting the Father → Son → Spirit trinitarian taxis within the parameters of the *homousios*, it is not clear, nevertheless, whether the full personality of the Spirit was allowed to emerge in this theology structured as it was so rigidly by this taxis. The full personality of the Spirit in the Divine Life will probably not be recognized until, at the very least, the complementary and augmentative, Spirit → Son taxis has been fully incorporated into the description of the eternal Divine dynamics.

In classical pneumatology, with the fixation of the Divine taxis as Father → Son → Spirit, all those cases where the Spirit seems to play a leading role vis-à-vis the Son, such as the Incarnation itself, or the Spirit “anointing” the Son, “driving” the Son, “leading” the Son, catalyzing the ministry of the Son (note 90), all of these have been read simply as belonging to the *status exinationis*, as being read

¹¹¹ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 208-209, 210.

into the receptivity of Jesus' human nature. But this reading alone cannot suffice to explain how it is that we know the person of the Spirit in His unique hypostatic initiative, the way in which He is the eternal witness to the Father and the Son, the way in which He is equi-primordially the generation of their mutual love. Similarly, the Spirit-leading and Spirit-directed experience of salvation in the life of the Church, insofar as it is not merely reducible to the work of cruciform atonement in the role of the Son but further the work of deification into the eternal life of God (as God Lives), this must also have a condition of possibility in the Divine Life, one which resonates with the person of the Spirit as the completer, as the final sanctifier, as the Holy Spirit.

Such an interpretation, starting perhaps precisely where Gregory does with a theology of the "anointing" (Spirit→Son), but incorporating that relation somehow into the eternal divine "order," will have to avoid both the adoptionist christology entailed by previous theologies of such a taxis, and will also have to enter into the same exegetical and structural space of homoousian theology in order to faithfully, viably, but also constructively, extend pro-Nicene thought to include the opposite taxis. As long as pro-Nicene thought, however, is limited only to the traditional taxis, a number of dimensions of the Spirit's distinctive personality will be overlooked and our understanding of the Spirit's role will be impoverished.

§CODA

Ancestral pneumatology achieved the fixation of the trinitarian taxis and the articulation of the Nicene homoousios with regard to the Spirit as the decisive doctrinal interpretations of the Divine Person of the Spirit. The dialectical

engagement of this traditional pneumatology with Jenson's pneumatology yields a significant degree of overlap about the character of the Holy Spirit, despite the different theological idioms and even notwithstanding the different trinitarian ontological infrastructure. Within the scope of the Nicene homoousion, with the affirmation of the full co-equality, equi-divinity and co-hypostatic constitution of the Spirit secured, however, I have argued for a retrieval from Jenson of the complementary Spirit → Son relation. If we take this relation in the economy as also having import for the eternal Divine Life in the Person of the Spirit—which Ancestral pneumatology did not do—the active relation of the Spirit to the Son does provide a framework to more fully interpret all the biblical data on the Spirit, to more fully integrate the holistic and robust experience of the Spirit, and to more fully conceptualize in formal theology the distinctive personality of the Spirit. This development would represent a holistic reconstruction of Divine transcendence from the Person of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 6: **THE HORIZON OF MODERN TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY**

§INTRODUCTION

The trend in recent trinitarian theology that advocates a strict and maximalist interpretation of the identity of the immanent and economic trinity funds and structures Jenson's most adventurous pneumatological proposals. Insofar as this tendency influences Jenson's account of the sheer self-determination of the Spirit by His identification with the People of God in historical being, his proposals require interrogation. For the maximalist version of that identity formulation encounters insuperable difficulties in its negotiation with the theological inheritance. Nevertheless, certain insights of this trajectory of theology should be retrieved to fully interpret the trinitarian personality of the Spirit. Calibrated within a more classical Divine ontology, the notion of the Spirit as freedom and unsurpassed is retrieved from Jenson as an interpretive model of the Spirit-Son taxis and the Spirit-leading, eschatological return experience of the Spirit in the economy.

A second horizon that is crucial for the assessment of Jenson's pneumatology is that of modern trinitarian theology, and how the movement's view of the 20th century trinitarian revival¹ shapes Jenson's trinitarian discourse, more generally, and his understanding of the person of the Spirit in particular. Jenson's view of the immanent person of the Spirit occurs in the space

¹ Bruce D. Marshall, "Trinity" from Gareth Jones, ed., *Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), interrogates whether this should be seen as a revival at all, cataloguing how what it views as its own most distinctive proposals have precursors.

established by what has been called “trinitarian historicism,” the view of post-Barthian Protestant interpretation that sees God’s decision of election for Jesus and in the Spirit as the historical determination of God’s very Being, together with that of Rahner’s Rule, which articulates the problem as an identity of the immanent and economic trinity. Jenson’s pneumatology, in its distinctive emphases, unfolds as the complex interweaving of theological judgments concerning: the relation of God’s Eternity to creaturely time, the association of the atemporality of God with pejorative “religion,” the rejection of impassibility as a divine attribute, the self-determination of the Triune Identity in the economy of salvation—as God with us and for us—and the narrational rendering of divine ontology, which preferences being as story or anticipation over against being as perdurance and immunity.

Some of these judgments are seriously flawed, I will argue, either as historical interpretations and appropriations of pro-Nicene theology, or on their own as sufficiently coherent constructive proposals of trinitarian ontology. Nevertheless, I will also argue that some of Jenson’s distinctive proposals should be adopted to interpret various facets of the Spirit’s full eternal hypostasis: especially as evident in the Spirit → Son biblical taxis, a Spirit-leading spirituality movement of salvation, the “return” movement of the Spirit in Grace and the full equi-primordiality of the Spirit in the Divine Life.

§6.1: RAHNER’S RULE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

In order to evaluate Jenson’s pneumatological proposals, I will have to reckon with the decisive structural influence of Rahner’s so-called trinitarian rule (*Grundaxiom*). Indeed, Jenson’s trinitarian theology represents one of the most

radical, scrupulous and ambitious deployments of the implications of Rahner's Rule, while still attempting to abide within the general orientation of critical Nicene retrieval. At numerous points, Jenson betrays his deep reliance on Rahner's Rule as a biblically essential hermeneutical, and indicates his desire to go beyond Rahner in even more rigorous adherence to the rule than Jenson perceived in Rahner himself.² As such, Jenson's overall vision, notwithstanding particular doctrine formulations, remains one of the most important trajectories within contemporary dogmatics. Much of the implementation of Rahner's paradigm, however, has unfolded within the christological sphere. Jenson's pneumatology, therefore, represents a unique application of Rahner's broad program within the locus of the Spirit, though David Coffey's work on Grace as the proper work of the Spirit represents another important work in this regard.³

Jenson describes explicitly how Rahner's trinitarian grammar concerning the relation of the economic and immanent trinity applies specifically to the Spirit in this way: "we should no more want to specify an identity of the Spirit without reference to Israel and the church, without the created community whose Spirit he in fact is, than we should want to specify an identity of the Son without Jesus."⁴ The specification of the identity of the Spirit in and by what the Spirit uniquely does in the freeing of the community to be God's People, therefore, is the animating structural principle of Jenson's pneumatology and determines its most creative and surprising elements. I will have to consider, therefore, whether

² Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 138-140, see note 172; *Systematic Theology*, 1:60, 1:113, 1:144.

³ David Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, rev ed. (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2011).

⁴ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:148.

the degree and radicality of role that Rahner's Rule plays in Jenson's pneumatology is theologically sound.

§6.1.1: *The Varieties of the Rule*—A number of grave concerns have been raised about the interpretation and viability of this trinitarian structure. Already by the time of Congar's magisterial volume on the Spirit, there were some cogent cavils raised about the full reciprocity of Rahner's Rule. Now, there are various ways in which Rahner's program can be interpreted. And it can also be disputed whether Rahner's original reversal of his formula was more rhetorical than substantive. Many of the interpreters who have implemented his program, nevertheless, have taken it in the maximalist sense. Congar argues that the first element of Rahner's trinitarian rule is "beyond dispute," formulating the necessary revelational epistemological ground for theological awareness of the triune divine ontology. That is, the divine disclosure as tri-personal in the biblical witness authentically represents God's self-presentation for creatures as He truly is for Himself.

While accepting, furthermore, the broad theological warrant for his trinitarian rule, insofar as the "history of salvation is not simply the history of God's revelation of himself. It is also the history of his communication of himself," Congar demurs, however, at the reversibility of this formula as an epistemological and ontological confusion. He argues, "we cannot simply affirm the reciprocity of Rahner's fundamental axiom [that the economic trinity is the immanent trinity] when we read the statements that result from a purely logical proposal to develop and affirm this reciprocity." Congar opposes the collapse of the "necessary mystery of the Tri-unity of God" into the "free mystery of the economy,"

implicated by the reciprocity (*umgekehrt*) of Rahner's trinitarian structure. He goes on to—correctly—critique Piet Schoonenberg for failing to reckon with this distinction in his more radical implementation of Rahner's program.⁵

There is a question here of the transgression between epistemology and ontology. Of course, Congar affirms it is biblically essential that the economy is transparent to the Divine Reality in a way in which its epistemological bridge transports us to the ontological reality of God. But it also becomes prohibitively problematic to assume that the authentic knowledge we do receive in the economy as such exhausts the full ontological reality of God, as *God* is fundamental or paradigmatic reality, prior to and not contingent upon the creation. So Congar: "The economic trinity [truly] reveals the immanent Trinity" but does not exhaust it. "There is always a limit to this revelation, and the incarnation imposes its own conditions, which go back to its nature as a created work." If the immanent trinity were strictly as such the economic trinity, and "all the data of the incarnation" indiscriminately "were transposed into the eternity of the Logos, it would be necessary [for example] to say that the Son proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit—a *Patre Spirituque*," and that the "*forma servi* belongs to what God is, but so does the *forma Dei*" (Philippians 2).⁶ Although Congar did not fully elaborate on this critique, he gestured toward lingering difficulties for any appropriation of Rahner's Rule, and so for Jenson's thorough reliance on it: not only does the collapse between theological epistemology and divine ontology entail difficulties for many other aspects of our understanding of

⁵ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:12-13.

⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:16-17.

the Being of God and the gratuity of creation, but a fully reversible trinitarian structure actually also faces insuperable exegetical difficulties with the various relations portrayed in Scripture.

§6.1.2: *The Necessity of the Distinctions*—David Bentley Hart supplies further qualifications. As a general principle, Hart lauds Rahner’s Rule as representative of the “renewed and earnest attention to the particularities of Christian history, the concrete details of the story of Christ and his church,” in contrast to what he trenchantly calls the “dogmatic pathology” of “progressive and irrepressible abstraction,” the “moralization and spiritualization of salvation” that make Christ and the Spirit merely functional aspects of the generic God’s relation to the world as opposed to the distinctive ontological content of Christian faith. Rahner’s Rule represents a theological return to the dramatic singularities and narrational contour of Christian faith, without which it might as well be vacuous, in Hart’s view. Thus, “Rahner’s maxim” in general for Hart, encapsulates the “necessary shape of all theological rationality” and in its general shape “should be regarded as axiomatic for all meditation upon the Christian doctrine of God.” “Two perils,” Hart balks nevertheless, attend Rahner’s program. First, says Hart, is the abolishment of any meaningful distinction between the two concepts, the immanent and the economic trinity, the result of which is that God “is robbed of his true transcendence and creation of its true gratuity.”⁷

Since Hart here takes Jenson himself as the emblematic example of where this obliteration has occurred, I will linger on this point. Hart lambasts Jenson’s understanding of history as the theater in which God “determines” or “constitutes”

⁷ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 155-157.

His identity as God as an ontological flirtation “with calamity.” Although Hart has not fully appreciated here how Jenson understands this decision of divine constitution as an event within the sphere of God’s Freedom, as presented biblically in Jesus, and beyond which simply no logical speculation can pierce (and therefore could not be said to entail either a lack in God, nor an event of “necessity,” it is just the basic occurrence of all reality), Hart nevertheless raises a crucial concern here: that the economic trinity as portrayed in Scripture is the trinity as involved in the work of redemption from sin and evil. To conflate the immanent and economic trinity, strictly speaking and without the appropriate ontological qualifications, is therefore to be presented with a God for whom evil and sin are *intrinsic* to the constitution of His own identity. As Hart puts it, in the case whereby the Son’s eternal identity is merely conflated with the of the human person Jesus in the integrity of his historical world, “Everything that allows Jesus to be who and what he is...belong to that identity, as does every condition of cosmic and historical becoming.”⁸

As a result of that implication, Jenson’s trinitarian theology “cannot work unless one posits not only the necessity of evil, but indeed the necessity of the actual history of evil.” Accepting the most radical “supralapsarian” understanding not only of Incarnation but of God’s very Being-in-decision, in “its depressing Lutheran and Calvinist form,” says Hart, must inevitably depict a God for whom “evil belongs eternally to his identity.” Since no “analogical interval is allowed to be introduced between God’s eternal being as Trinity and God’s acts as Trinity in time, all of history is this identity: every painful death of a child, every casual act

⁸ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 157, 164.

of brutality, all war, famine, pestilence, disease, murder,” all of these are required moments in the theatre of the constitution in which God determines who He is, on the way to final ontological victory, yes, as determined by the resurrection, but all part of the same, undifferentiated unfolding of Divine Reality nonetheless. “The collapse of the analogical interval between the immanent and economic Trinity, between timeless eternity and the time in which eternity shows itself, has not made God our companion in pain, but simply the truth of our pain and our only *pathetic* hope of rescue....”⁹

Certainly, Hart qualifies, Jenson does not explicitly intend this view of things. However, “one must ask of him and of every theologian who seeks to make the doctrine of the Trinity the place where time and eternity meet as absolute identity whether, when the logic of their theology is pressed on toward its ultimate implications, it can arrive at any other end.”¹⁰ In his assessment, Hart has often been negligently sanguine about these same questions of theodicy posed similarly to classical divine ontology; in either case, certainly, such sin and evil are *permitted* to occur in God’s world *somehow*. But that somehow does make a massive difference. The entire collapse of the immanent into the economic trinity corresponds to a collapse between the biblical moments of creation → fall → redemption, and it is precisely in the space of the distinction between those moments that we can see “creation” as a pure gift of elemental peace, loveliness, goodness and joy, in which sin, brokenness, oppression and death are *not* essential but only consequential elements.

⁹ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 164-165.

¹⁰ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 165-166.

§6.1.3: *Potential Dissolution of the Immanent Trinity*—Walter Kasper further comments on the potential ambiguity of Rahner’s Rule insofar as it has come to shape much trinitarian discussion in contemporary systematic and philosophical theology: “The identification of the immanent and economic Trinities as established in this axiom is, of course, susceptible of several meanings and open to various misinterpretations.” On the one hand, Kasper cautions, there is a potentially dehistoricizing interpretation of the rule, which he sees as evident in some traditional theology whereby the notion of the eternal Divine Persons simply overwhelms the authentic and integral historical reality of the Divine Persons as they inhabit the work of creation and redemption. “It would certainly be a misinterpretation,” he avers, “if as a result of this identification the economic Trinity were stripped of its proper historical reality and were understood simply as a temporal manifestation of the eternal immanent Trinity....”¹¹

On the other hand, Kasper is just as wary of the countervailing tendency: “Today, of course, the opposite misinterpretation is more likely: the identification is taken to mean that the immanent Trinity is dissolved in the economic Trinity, as though the eternal Trinity first came into existence in and through history.” Even more so, Kasper cautions, “the axiom is being completely misunderstood when it is turned into a pretext for pushing the immanent Trinity more or less out of the picture and limiting oneself more or less to consideration of the Trinity in the economy of salvation.” One trajectory of post-Rahnerian interpretation,

¹¹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, Matthew J. O’Connell, trans. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 276.

amalgamated with antimetaphysical trends in philosophical theology, indeed interprets the Trinity in just such a way. The only Trinity is the Triune Persons as we encounter them in the history of salvation, and this exhausts their being as such. The positing of an extra-economic Trinity is claimed to be a metaphysical projection beyond historical reality. Kasper summarizes the deleterious consequence of such a position: “Such a course only deprives the economic Trinity of all meaning and significance. For it has meaning and significance only if God is present in the history of salvation as the one who he is from eternity; more accurately, if God does not simply show himself to us as Father, Son and Spirit in the history of salvation, but is in fact Father, Son and Spirit from all eternity.”¹²

Kasper argues that this is a misapplication of what Rahner intended to encapsulated with his Rule: the axiom “...cannot be used in order to reduce the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity. Rather, this axiom presupposes knowledge of the immanent Trinity and is meant to interpret and concretize the immanent Trinity in an appropriate way.” To be meaningful, the axiom requires that God exists eternally replete in the superabundance of his own ontological lavishness. It is only then that the identification (self-communication) that comes about in the Incarnation and Grace makes sense as the mystery and the decisive events of the world that they are. In that identification, Kasper describes what is to be viewed distinctly: “in the economic self-communication the intra-trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure

¹² Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 276.

of the man Jesus of Nazareth. The need is to maintain not only the kenotic character of the economic Trinity but also its character of graciousness and freedom in relation to the immanent Trinity and thus to do justice to the immanent mystery of God in ...his self-revelation.”¹³

Kasper suggests that to understand Rahner’s decisive contribution, we have to keep in mind the distinction of the “order of being” from the “order of knowing.” The traditional theology described the order of being, “in which the eternal processions are antecedent to the missions and provide the basis for them.” Where Rahner’s rule, properly interpreted, can augment traditional theology, is by following the “order of knowledge” or the “order of understanding,” in which case “we must begin with the missions as these occur in the history of salvation and with the revelation of these in words, and then come to know the eternal processions via the missions as their ground and presupposition.” Kasper himself unfolds his trinitarian theology by following that second path, but such a theology can never be coherent, complete or meaningful without presupposing the “order of being” as its structural foundation.¹⁴

§6.1.4: *The Integrity of the Immanent Trinity*—To see that Kasper’s concern about the dissolution of the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity, and the false disjunction pressed between the order of knowledge and the order of being, is not a mythical one, a specter conjured for the sake of rhetorical posturing, we can see this very concern play out concretely in the theology of Catherine LaCugna. Here we see one of the maximalizing interpretations of

¹³ Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ*, 276-277.

¹⁴ Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ*, 276-277.

Rahner's Rule gone astray, in which the discussion of the immanent Trinity is foreclosed. LaCugna both attempts to commend enthusiastically the vital meaning of trinitarian doctrine for contemporary Christian spirituality, while at the same time attempting to deny that trinitarian doctrine truly says anything about God as such.

On the one hand, LaCugna accurately qualifies that Rahner's rule requires "interpretation and application." It cannot be taken as a strictly ontological identification. She queries, "Is God with us exactly identical to God as such? Is there...a strict ontological identity between the eternal and temporal aspects of the one divine self-communication?" If so, she states, "it would be difficult to see how Rahner's axiom differs from pantheism (Hegelianism or otherwise)... ." But, in fact, "Rahner does not intend the axiom in this way and in fact his understanding of self-communication prevents this type of misinterpretation, which would simply dissolve the two trinities into one another."¹⁵ The fundamental reason, she again laudably recognizes, "...there can be no strict ontological identity because we must leave room for the freedom of divine self-expression in salvation history, *and* the freedom of the recipient to accept the divine self-communication."¹⁶

After affirming the necessary ontological distinction between "God as such" and "God for us," however, LaCugna then continues on to eviscerate any meaningful notion of God's immanence by suggesting that God as such is never really considered apart from God for us. She begins with a critique of the whole

¹⁵ LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1993), 216.

¹⁶ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 219.

tradition of the psychological analogy and with a reliance on the discredited narrative of fundamentally different “Eastern” and “Western” models for the Divine Life, with preference for the former. In her broad, sweeping narrational rendering, “for a millennium and a half” classical theologians’ “strong preference for psychological analogies for the immanent processes of divine self-consciousness guaranteed that trinitarian discussions would remain at the level of God’s ‘inner’ life,”¹⁷ a summation that is about as tendentiously inaccurate a view of classical trinitarian theology as possible—which always related the divine processions to the divine missions *in some fashion*.

To a severe misunderstanding of the history of trinitarian doctrine, LaCugna then subsequently and unfortunately departs from Rahner precisely at the crucial point, in precisely the wrong direction, whom she judges as being insufficiently radical in understanding the implications of his own program: by contesting the claim that the “distinctions in the economy originate in and are grounded in God.”¹⁸ LaCugna condemns the understanding of “intradivine relations,” which she sees as not having a basis in our knowledge of the divine economy. So “the economy itself does not necessarily imply real distinctions ‘in’ God that are of a different ontological order than the distinctions in the economy.” At this point, she doubles back, “There may be such distinctions, and it may be a legitimate enterprise for a purely speculative theology to posit such intradivine distinctions”—if such distinctions couldn’t be known from the economy, then it would be curious as to how we think we could know them, and furthermore, that

¹⁷ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 217.

¹⁸ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 221.

they would be of concern to something called “purely speculative theology,” but if they were true would not influence of our understanding of God as it relates to worship, service, faith and mission...? LaCugna continues to elaborate, “there is no transeconomic perspective from which to establish their existence. And, as the history of the doctrine of the Trinity shows, as soon as we begin to argue on the basis of such intradivine distinctions, we leave the economy behind. As soon as we leave the economy behind, the doctrine of the Trinity has no bearing on life or faith.”¹⁹

It is difficult to understand how LaCugna arrives at such a conflicted position from her earlier statements. If the economic relations do not tell us of intradivine relations, then the revelatory event through which we encounter the economic relations does not actually tell us anything about *God* (unless, that is, she is assuming that the economy is strictly co-eternal and co-constitutive with God?). Not only does this go against the entire sense of pro-Nicene theology, within which the abiding conviction of God’s essential incomprehensibility and the cautious, trophic nature of trinitarian language still does “clearly intend to say something about God in God’s very being,” but furthermore this understanding of the economy undermines the very structure of the economy as divine *self*-disclosure and *self*-communication, and so would eviscerate, “the intelligibility of Christian revelation as a whole.”²⁰ The economy would not then be *Revelation*. For the distinctions that we encounter there would then be a limited and misleading pretense.

¹⁹ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 227.

²⁰ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 4.

LaCugna operates under the presupposition of a false disjunction between God having given us *exhaustive* knowledge of His own Life (always classically denied) and God having given us *some* authentic knowledge, accommodated insofar as creaturely categories can contain it, of God's own eternal life in the immanent divine relations (which LaCugna also rejects). LaCugna has done precisely what she cautioned against earlier: confused our epistemological entry into knowledge of God, which is through the revelatory event of the economic relations, with an ontological statement about God's own Being, that there are no "intradivine relations." Furthermore, it is a curious statement to claim that our having knowledge about who God is *absolutely*, with or without us (one clear component of the biblical worldview), would somehow be alien to lived faith. To have been given knowledge about the fundamental principle of all reality, and what that reality is like not contingent on whether we know it or not, would seem to be a most decisive fact for one's interpretation of how one lives and acts. So in LaCugna's view, something that she admits could *potentially* be true for something curiously described as "purely speculative theology," even if it were true would have no impact on what we consider good, just and beautiful. That seems to be a fundamental misconception about the nature of truth and the holistic interrelationship of the true, the good and the beautiful.

LaCugna decries the "stranglehold of the post-Nicene problematic" and the classical theology of the "*intradivine* relations, God in Godself," which she claims "is at odds with the Bible, creeds, and Greek theology that Rahner explicitly seeks to follow" (John 1:1?!). It is only the false problematic of classical theology, LaCugna suggests, that facilitated pseudo-discourse about the

immanent life of God. Whereas, in her reading, “the existence of such an intradivine realm is precisely what cannot be established on the basis of the economy, despite the fact that it has functioned within speculative theology ever since the late fourth century.” The campaign against the conception of the Divine Life as such continues: “An immanent theology of the Trinity therefore is not, properly speaking, a theology of an intradivine Trinity of persons unrelated to the world,” while she decries the “self-defeating fixation on ‘God *in se*’ and be content with contemplating the mystery of God’s activity in creation.” Trinitarian theology, “cannot be an analysis of what is ‘inside’ God, but a way of thinking and speaking about the structure or pattern of God’s self-expression in salvation history.”²¹ Barth, for one, already anticipated the riposte to this possibility in his own theology—against many of his own subsequent acolytes: “What would ‘God for us’ mean if it were not set against the background of ‘God in Himself?’”²²

This polemic ultimately leads LaCugna to the contradictory conclusion that, “[a]t the same time, God’s presence to us does not exhaust without remainder the absolute mystery of God.” Now what would this “absolute mystery” be exactly, except God’s own Life for Himself?! And, if there is something of God’s presence that is not exhausted in its disclosure to us then how could that be known apart from the economy? This is precisely the opposite of what LaCugna assumes must be the case: the *economy* itself tells us that God is *not simply or only* God with us, but also God before us and beyond us! The conclusion for LaCugna is: “The life of God is not something that belongs to God alone.

²¹ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 224, 225.

²² Barth, *CD*, 1.1.171.

*Trinitarian life is also our life....*The doctrine of the Trinity is not ultimately a teaching about ‘God’ but a teaching about *God’s life with us and our life with each other.*”²³ The preceding premise of LaCugna’s claim here is eschatologically true, but not *protologically* true (another confusion and conflation that LaCugna recurrently succumbs to in addition to the epistemological and the ontological one). After all of that rhetoric, lastly, what we have come to in the conclusion is simply the fundamental misunderstanding derived from a false disjunction. For the doctrine of the Trinity is, of course, *both* a teaching about God *and* God’s life with us & our life with each other. This meandering digression I have made here for the purposes of *caution* with the interpretation and implementation of Rahner’s Rule. Jenson himself is caught up in a hypertrophic reception of Rahner’s Rule, but this discussion shows that he was not the only one, but a part of one fashionable trend in late 20th century trinitarian theology.

§6.1.5: As an Interpretation of Nicaea—While Hart and Kasper’s critiques, even while partially sympathetic, raise significant moral, ontological and philosophical questions about the interpretation and appropriation of Rahner’s Rule, the maximalist interpretation of it has also been challenged on grounds of historical theology and biblical theology, which were originally its putative strengths. Khaled Anatolios poignantly describes a pernicious case-in-point of the irony of the situation. “In fact, the development of Nicene orthodoxy hinges on the insistence that, at least in one crucial respect, the ‘form’ or appearance of the economic Trinity *does not correspond* to that of the eternal immanent Trinity.” That distinction must be made, because a “strict and

²³ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 228.

unqualified conflation of the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity would entail that the subordination of the incarnate Son to the Father reflects the same order of subordination in the immanent Trinity. *But a large part of the logic of Nicene theology consists precisely in overcoming this inference.*"²⁴

Anatolios has pithily emphasized the heart of the problem of an undifferentiated equation of the immanent and economic trinity (or at least the reversibility) here. In other words, one aspect of the concrete details of the economy is the subordination of the Son to the Father in the μορφή δούλου. If the immanent Trinity is strictly equated to the economic Trinity, we would have to say that the epistemological awareness of the subordination of the Son in the work of the divine salvific economy corresponds directly to an eternal ontological subordination in God's own Life, thereby unraveling the whole Nicene achievement. It is only because Nicaea has authentically isolated aspects of the divine economy that do not as such directly correspond ontologically to the Divine Life as such, but function otherwise in theological discourse, that the Nicene *homoousios* can be confessed. This must be taken as a central problem for anyone broadly influenced by Rahner's trinitarian program but also committed to the—at least general—affirmation of the work of the Spirit in tradition of the Church and the conciliar decisions, Nicaea paradigmatically. Jenson remains theologically committed to the latter, and so finds himself problematically entangled in the former. Ironically, then, Jenson's radical and rigorous application of the strict Rahnerian equation would ultimately overthrow the very affirmation that Jenson is attempting to make.

²⁴ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 4, emphasis added.

Let me suggest that one problem with Jenson's reading of the trinitarian rule is the failure to recognize historically, in fact, how biblically sensitive Arius was in drawing his theological inferences. Arius was in many ways an archetypal biblicist. The unqualified and undifferentiated association of Arius with "Hellenistic" theory and Athanasius with fidelity to the biblical contour historically misconstrues the situation and has functioned as a historical canard driving the 20th century trinitarian program, including Jenson's theology. Nicaea's opposition to Arius was not because he insufficiently neglected the biblical details of the economy—he marshaled many passages describing the economy in support of his eternal ontological subordination of the Son to the Father—but rather because as a global hermeneutic his particular identification of certain aspects of the economy with certain ontological realities of the immanent Trinity unraveled the logic of salvation and the holistic interpretation of Christian life as a governing hermeneutic. Jenson's adaptation of pro-Nicene theology in his Rahnerian historicist trinitarianism has failed to recognize these differentiations.

While the genius of Jenson's program may be taken as a more thorough application of Rahner's principle to the actual concrete details of the biblical narrative, Jenson himself has not fully reckoned with the diversity of the details that the biblical economy displays, and therefore, has simply imposed his own selection on which economic data function as fully revelatory of the immanent Divine Life in contrast to the pattern established by classical trinitarianism. This is not to say that Jenson presents no possibilities here for a more faithful pattern of interpretation of the relation between the economy and the eternal life of God,

as I think he does, only that an unqualified acceptance of his particular proposals are interwoven with tacit implications that actually overthrow the Nicene achievement—despite his explicitly stated desire to faithfully retrieve Nicaea—and fail Hart’s previously mentioned concern of arriving at the relative degree of “speculative closure” that Nicaea itself represents.

Stephen Holmes has been even more excoriating of the relation of 20th century trinitarian theology to classical theology in this respect. After a lengthy historical exposition, he attempts to crystallize formally (not without reduction from its spiritual, exegetical and existential context) the broad trajectory of classical trinitarian theology shared by the tradition up through the 18th century, broadly common to Catholicism, Orthodoxy and traditional Reformation theology:

1. The Divine nature is simple, incomposite, and ineffable. It is also unrepeatable, and so, in crude and inexact terms, one.
2. Language referring to the divine nature is always inexact and trophic; nonetheless, if formulated with much care and more prayer, it might adequately, if not fully, refer.
3. There are three divine hypostases that are instantiations of the divine nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. The three divine hypostases exist really, eternally, and necessarily, and there is nothing divine that exists beyond or outside their existence.
5. The three divine hypostases are distinguished by eternal relations of origin—begetting and proceeding—and not otherwise.
6. All that is spoken of God, with the...very limited exception of that language which refers to the relations of origin of the three hypostases, is spoken of the one life the three share, and so is indivisibly spoken of all three.
7. The relationships of origin express/establish relational distinctions between the three existent hypostases; no other distinctions are permissible.²⁵

²⁵ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 146.

At each one of these points, Holmes sees divergence with modern trinitarian thought. Though, I would argue that he has been overly rigid in his conclusions, and fails to see how certain modern trinitarian thought might be a needed integral development on some of these points. Nevertheless, for those 20th century trinitarians who see themselves as breathing new vitality into Nicene retrieval, Holmes counters their own envisioned security vis-à-vis the reception of Nicaea: “I see the twentieth century renewal of Trinitarian theology as depending in large part on concepts and ideas that cannot be found in patristic, medieval, or Reformation accounts of the doctrine of the Trinity. In some cases, they are points explicitly and energetically repudiated as erroneous—even occasionally as formally heretical—by the earlier tradition.”²⁶

So Holmes becomes more and more skeptical of the faithfulness of the trinitarian revivalists influenced by the post-Barthian and post-Rahnerian trajectories in relation to the “patristic doctrine” and to much of the centuries-long inheritance of trinitarian doctrine, which has been “the story of acceptance, re-presentation, and faithful transmission” of it. Those who proclaim the “recovery” of trinitarian doctrine, Holmes argues acerbically, have more likely been “methodologically and materially...thoroughgoing departures” from it. In this work, he cites this as merely a postulate of “historical theology” (although his own preference is evident: “I do not, here, attempt to prove that the older tradition was right...,” though he does seek to prove that the older tradition was

²⁶ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 2.

primarily exegetically based) only that the 20th century “recovery” of Nicaea was actually a departure from the whole mainstream inheritance.²⁷

Holmes concludes with the explicit points of contrast:

We returned to the Scriptures, but we chose...to focus exclusively on the New Testament texts, instead of listening to the whole of Scripture...We thought about God’s relationship with the creation in the economy, but we chose...to believe that the Son must be the mode of mediation of the Father’s presence to creation, instead of...proposing God’s ability to mediate his own presence. We tried to understand the divine unity, but we chose...to believe that we could reason adequately about the divine essence...We addressed divine simplicity, and chose...to discard it, rather than...affirming it as the heart of Trinitarian doctrine. We thought about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but chose...to affirm the true personality of each, rather than...believing in one divine personality. We called what we were doing a “Trinitarian revival”; future historians might want to ask us why.²⁸

I am not going to enter into a point-by-point negotiation with Holmes’s assessments here. For my purposes, I am only going to register how forceful the broad argument is: the maximalist implementation of Rahner’s program, which has attempted to uphold the Nicene conclusions while rearranging the other buttressing ontological and theologoumenal equipment, has actually served to destabilize the whole Nicene program.

§6.1.6: As an Actual Exegetical Program—Exegetically, moreover, Rahner’s Rule has come under siege from the recent work of Scott Harrower. Harrower sets out to show how ambiguous Rahner’s Rule is when tested against the actual data of Scripture, in his test case: Luke-Acts. As Fred Sanders powerfully captures the concern, the trinitarian slogan of Rahner has often incited the general desire to be “more biblical” in trinitarian ontological thinking.

²⁷ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, xvi.

²⁸ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 200.

Nevertheless, the broad invocation of the slogan has often “signified a hermeneutical wave of the hand at the general sweep of biblical history, the broad outlines of the entire scope of the canonical narrative,” while at the same time exculpated an obliviousness to “detailed reading, the kind of close exegesis that engages hard facts, peculiar details, thick descriptions, and unexpected phraseology” of the biblical text itself.²⁹ Harrower, then, sets out to perform such a detailed reading of Luke-Acts with Rahner’s trinitarian program in view. Harrower first distinguishes between broad schools of interpretation a “loose realist reading” (LRR) and a “strict realist reading” (SRR) of Rahner’s Rule, arguing that those committed to the latter are typically the most revisionist when it comes to traditional trinitarian ontology, on occasion dismissing the whole dimension of the immanent trinity, as we saw in LaCugna for example.

In terms of the strict interpretation (SRR), Harrower sets out to demonstrate that this understanding of Rahner’s Rule is highly problematic in that (1) there is “indirect resistance” to its coherence with a number of texts of Luke-Acts, and (2) if it were strictly maintained to other texts in Luke-Acts, a number of highly problematic and confusing theological conclusions would result.³⁰ Now Harrower’s study operates on the Evangelical theological presuppositions of sola scriptura and in the context of the hearty embrace of Rahner’s Rule in certain spheres of Evangelical theology. As an interpretation of Rahner himself, Harrower’s study suffers drastically from a severe misunderstanding of the Catholic and traditional theological warrants that

²⁹ Fred Sanders, “Foreword,” Scott Harrower, *Trinitarian Self and Salvation: An Evangelical Engagement with Rahner’s Rule* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), x.

³⁰ Harrower, *Trinitarian Self and Salvation*, 155-158.

undergird Rahner's own theology—especially Rahner's understanding of what the “economy” means, the broad history of salvation, in which we are now involved through Grace. Even if Harrower's own stated parameters are circumscribed to the Evangelical reception of Rahner—within those terms—as a matter of understanding he has also failed to adequately understand Rahner on his own terms. Additionally, Harrower entertains (or fails to entertain the highly problematic implications for Nicene theology altogether) some highly dubious and suspect exegetical possibilities in his almost unwavering fixation to undermine the plausibility of Rahner's Rule for Evangelical theology, as he uncritically considers as serious counter-examples a number of theologically problematic exegetical strategies. (For example, the wildly implausible hypothesis that Luke 10:22,³¹ if read under Rahner's Rule would necessarily entail an eternal subordination of the Father to the will of the Son!)

All that notwithstanding, as a holistic case, it has to be conceded that Harrower is—broadly speaking—right. By attentive reading of Luke-Acts, he does show, in the end and on the whole, that a strict identity between the relations of the Divine Persons in the economy as such and the eternal Divine Relations cannot be maintained by reference to the scriptural data. There are too many contrasting patterns of relations, and so passages that have to be understood as not necessarily referring to the eternal life of God, for a strict reading of Rahner's Rule to actually be a theologically viable interpretation of the concrete details of

³¹ “All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,” as if the rhetorical “anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” would imply an ontological supremacy of the Son's will in the disclosure of salvation.

the Scriptures. To maintain the Nicene homoousian insight requires reading certain passages of Scripture, in their exegetical contour, precisely as *not* applying directly or unqualifiedly to the immanent life of God.

This recognition is a problem for Jenson also. The problem is that in his laudable quest to wrench the doctrine of God ever more into conformity with the biblical narrative as the God of the Gospel, and so to revise a number of aspects of the Nicene inheritance, Jenson at all points relies on an unexamined assumption that the basic homoousian insight of Nicaea is manifestly “biblical.” The matter is more complicated than that, however, which is emphatically not to say that Nicaea is nonbiblical, only that it involves a complex exegetical framework for Scripture that is not the only one possible—if we ignore the context of that framework. To read the relations of the biblical narrative straightforwardly and without distinction (the economic trinity) actually does not give us an uncomplicated picture of the immanent Trinity at all. That is what the whole struggle of pro-Nicene theology was about: how to appropriately determine the holistic and encompassing interpretive strategy for the variously portrayed relations in Scripture, especially as those relations concern the integrity of the work of salvation. Jenson overlooks just how significant the passages were to which the various hereterousians and homoiousians defaulted in their exegetical campaigns, and just so, how challenging some of the portrayals are when strictly considering their economic appearance.

The achievement of the decisive Nicene interpretation, therefore, does not come about merely or only by reading off the economy what is manifestly evident therein, as Jenson seems to suppose. It involves a laborious and multifaceted

exegetical effort to demonstrate that the Nicene homoousios represents the fundamental and overall trajectory of Scripture, the soteriological and doxological arc of Scripture, even where there are passages that seem to suggest—or could be interpreted without the Nicene framework—as contrasting relations and roles between the Son, the Spirit and the Father. By dismantling the other scaffolding of this Nicene exegetical labor, even while adhering to the basic formula, it is not clear whether Jenson has not undermined his own position, from which he then goes on to press for the ontological revisions to trinitarian doctrine.

What we learn from Harrower is that when all the contour and complexity of the biblical data of the relations between the Divine Persons is taken into account, the patterns are not clear enough by themselves, one way or the other, to support a strict or maximalist reading of Rahner's Rule, without invoking other crucial theological and ontological principles of interpretation affirmed by ecclesial witness. It is not a simple matter, then, of the post-Rahnerian and post-Barthian trinitarian hermeneutics that Jenson adopts enthusiastically—together with their ontological revisions—being simply and more straightforwardly more “biblical” as they have often portrayed themselves in contrast to the ostensibly more “Hellenistic” framework of traditional theology. To maintain the Nicene doctrine actually requires the patient process of differentiating which aspects of the economy describe God's condescension with and for us in the context of sinful history and which aspects of the economy do implicate God's eternal self-presentation as He is for Himself.

§6.2: THE NARRATION OF THE PAST

§6.2.1: *Stories from Modernity*—Many of the late 20th century implementations of Rahner’s Rule and/or post-Barthian historicist electionism, often in ways much more dramatic than Rahner or Barth themselves, employ certain narrative strategies about the theological tradition in their retrieval and revival of trinitarian doctrine. Jenson is among those who, to varying degrees, deploy these narratives as prolegomena to and warrant for their constructive labors. While the modern trinitarian theologians often adhere to the formal result of Nicaea, their presentation of the history of these theological debates and their dismantling of the conceptual scaffolding of pro-Nicene theology typically circumscribes the options available to the modern theology. These narratives have also increasingly come under interrogation. Lewis Ayres provides one example, and he explicitly references Jenson in his assessment of 20th century trinitarian thought that, “engagement with pro-Nicene theology is usually fairly shallow and...this stems from the very culture of modern systematic theology.”³² These ways of viewing, describing, critiquing and retrieving pro-Nicene theology also must be scrutinized.

§6.2.2: *Greek & Latin Dichotomies*—One narrative strategy has been to press an exaggerated and dichotomous contrast between a Latin Western “essentialism” and a Greek Eastern “personalism,” typically mapped onto a stark juxtaposition between the psychological and social analogies for the Triune Life,

³² Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 385; Ayres has a crucially searing analysis here, though in defense of the so-called culture of “modern systematic theology,” it must be noted that often Ayres himself sometimes simply reverses the practice of simplistic reading, without sufficiently appreciating the nuances of contemporary thinkers or the particularly novel challenges that modern and postmodern culture do present to Christian faith.

with a decided preference, in most of the influential cases at the turn of the 21st century, for the latter, as we saw in LaCugna. Though, this narrative is employed for an array of ends in a broad spectrum of theologies. This juxtaposition depends, whether explicitly or tacitly, on an interpretive tradition emerging from the work of Théodore de Régnon.³³ This narrative has been sufficiently dismantled by careful historical scholarship regarding the complexities of pro-Nicene trinitarianism, the vast shared inheritance between Eastern and Western Nicenes, a recognition of the necessity for *any* trinitarian theology to speak in ways both of singularity and plurality in God, and the elementary, but crucial and restraining observation that the trinitarian analogies are precisely that: *analogies* which must reckon with the analogical interval in their terms and the spheres of both similarity and dissimilarity within their analogical structure, and which, in either case, are not themselves the primary and fundamental *meaning* of trinitarian doctrine, but attempts to get some conceptual purchase on it.³⁴

More charitable and nuanced readings³⁵ would be available if the simple reality were remembered that Nicaea is a tightrope, and a light breeze can easily blow thought to modalism, on the one side, or tritheism, on the other. Often the charge of one or the other leveled against a particular thinker involves some unnecessary and superficial rhetorical posturing. In any case, with regard to the contrast between the psychological and social analogies, Hart probably makes the

³³ Michel René Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered” *Augustinian Studies* 26:2 (1995): 51-79.

³⁴ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 7-13, 281-292.

³⁵ Of course, De Régnon’s original text also now has its own apologists and clarifiers as well, lest it get merely swept up in one of the narratives: the meticulous work of Kristin Hennessy, “An Answer to de Régnon’s Accusers: Why We Should Not Speak of ‘His’ Paradigm” *Harvard Theological Review*, 100:2 (April 2007): 179-197.

necessary constructive point best: “Certainly here especially, one must be acutely conscious of the analogical interval within the word ‘person’ when applied to both God and creatures.” For when we use the word person from the creaturely side, “the relationality of human persons, however essential it may be, remains a multiple reality, which must be described now in social terms, now in psychological, now in metaphysical; it is infinitely remote from that perfect indwelling, reciprocal containment, transparency, recurrence, and absolute giving away that is the meaning of περιχώρησις.” For in neglecting the analogical interval in which we are operating when using the term person, or the psychological or social analogies, “we not only risk lapsing into either a collectivist or solipsistic reduction of human relationality...but we are likely to adopt either a tritheistic or a unitarian idiom when speaking of God.”³⁶

Unfortunately, Jenson has adopted certain aspects of this reductionist East/West contrast, and the critique of Latin Augustinianism entailed therein, and insofar as his own program depends on a deconstruction of the tradition, his employment of this narrative requires some counter-consideration.³⁷

³⁶ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 172, emphasis emended.

³⁷ Which is not to say that there is a complete harmonization between Greek and Latin, Orthodox and Catholic, emphases: as John Behr, “Response to Ayres: The Legacies of Nicaea, East and West” *Harvard Theological Review*, 100:2 (April 2007): 145-152 ripostes with the weighty charge that simply subsuming all 4th century homooousians under the same category of “pro-Nicene” theology itself “constitutes an appropriation of what they were doing by an Augustinian tradition of theology mediated through the categories of contemporary systematics. And, if the latter, does this point to a difference of approach more profound than the one posited by de Régnon? Is it possible that Ayres’s opposition...is really an opposition as construed from within a ‘Western’ framework, where the issue is the relation between the one and the three, so that the “Eastern” position, as it would be articulated by its proponents, is not even on the horizon? If this is the case, then the de Régnon paradigm has been removed, not in order to allow these diverse writers to appear in their distinctiveness...but rather to subsume their distinct voices within a particular (and particularly totalizing) discourse.”

§6.2.3: *The Hellenistic Taint*—Second among characteristically modern positions is the narrative strategy of presenting classical Christian thought as tainted and corrupted from its biblical purity by its entanglement with Greek or Platonist metaphysics. Jenson is susceptible to this narrative, as he makes the contrast between human natural religiosity, which seeks an escape from temporality, and biblical faith, which embraces human temporality and lives through it, one fundamental narrative structure of his whole theology, associating Greek philosophy facilely with the former. In his (admirable) quest to faithfully render the biblical God, one of the main foci of Jenson's theology is to overthrow the centrality of atemporality, correspondingly God's simplicity and God's impassibility, to the traditional divine attributes. Jenson does this in a much more nuanced way than most of his theological co-conspirators, not simply as a puerile recapitulation of the Harnackian narrative, because he is convinced that the reciprocal conversation between Greek metaphysics and Christian theology was good and necessary in its time, as the Gospel must converse with any and every culture which it inhabits. Nor does he dispute in the end that this conversation must entail some reckoning with metaphysics. He only disputes some specific points of that synthesis (see further, §3.2.2: Excursus 1).

Nevertheless, Jenson's reading of the theological tradition still relies on overly simplistic narratives of how the Church Ancestors appropriated and baptized Greek philosophical concepts and their complicated variance of meaning in the tradition, forged in an exegetical crucible, for example precisely in

Further to the matter of relative overlap, see: Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 33-98.

something like Jenson's *bête noire*, impassibility.³⁸ Such a contrast between Hellenistic thought and Biblical thought, and the argument that deplores the metaphysical bondage of the authentically "biblical" worldview, is in any case entirely eviscerated by biblical scholarship on the interaction of the two cultures and thought-worlds throughout the Second Temple period, especially in the Wisdom and intertestamental literature, and the intermingling of them found in the New Testament itself. Ratzinger even advances a plausible, even if surprising, thesis that this cultural encounter was biblically anticipated and authenticated in an exegesis of Paul's vision of the Macedonian man in Acts 16.³⁹ That is not to say that particular points of the synthesis do not necessarily require further biblical purification and exegetical grounding. But as a metanarrative about a discrete conflict between Greek and Biblical thought, the strategy requires substantial reconsideration.

§6.2.4: *The Viability of Premodern Thought*—Lastly, there is the—largely now tacit and unargued—presupposition that, to be viable, modern theological thought must be categorically different from classical thought, "because of supposedly necessary features of post-Enlightenment rationality."⁴⁰ This predisposition has been subtly undermined by the movements toward postmodern thought, which discerns more avenues of continuity with premodern culture, though postmodernity does present its own distinct narrational challenges for Christian theology. Again, such a discontinuous view of intellectual cultures

³⁸ Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Benedict XVI, "Regensburg Address" (12 September 2006) [*Vatican Archives Online*].

⁴⁰ Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 387.

often depicts idealized constructs of discrete intellectual culture in confrontation. Ayres diagnosis it thusly, “narratives of the pre-modern are intrinsic to modern systematic because they are frequently interwoven with meta-narrative assumptions about the course of intellectual history...I will argue that the narratives of the fourth century deployed by modern systematic theologians are frequently interwoven with assumptions about how theology should be practiced and about how theology has developed that hold at arm’s length the real challenges that pro-Nicene theologies offer.”⁴¹ Even such a subtle and sophisticated thinker—and empathizer with classical theology—as Bernard Lonergan succumbed to this tendency when he spoke of an intellectual “transposition” that had to take place in the context of an overly idealized, artificially discrete, and exaggeratedly stark contrast between “classicist culture” and “empirical culture”/“historical mindedness,” between “deductive” and “inductive” theological reasoning.⁴² Jenson partially succumbs to this tendency in his overly monolithic story of intellectual and religious culture vis-à-vis “religion.” Jenson attempts to exegetically ground his story of religion as the perpetual pursuit of eternity as the escape from history in the biblical critique of idolatry and the biblical God’s identification with historical events, but it is clear that this plays into his trinitarian theology in an overly caricatured and artificial way. In the end, this must lead us to reconsider the presentation of his pneumatology in the context of his trinitarian narratives.

⁴¹ Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 386.

⁴² Bernard Lonergan, “Theology in its New Context” and “The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness” from *A Second Collection*, Collected Works, 19, William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

§6.2.5: *Is Jenson a Cinematic Modalist?*—The response to Jenson and Jenson’s narrative of the theological tradition—and those more broadly in the wake of post-Rahnerian trinitarian rule or post-Barthian historicist electionism—from the perspective of classical theological categories has been forceful. My point here for the moment, however, is not to adopt wholesale the claims of the counter-position (and their own sometimes *unaware* narratives of modern/postmodern thought and the ways in which the situation *has* changed so as to necessitate new ways to think about old problems). My point is rather, more circumspectly, to register that the narrational strategies that Jenson puts forward to advocate his particular pneumatological and trinitarian proposals do themselves need to be subject to scrutiny and qualification. As a result, my response—even if underwhelming and unfashionable—is also that a higher degree of convergence should be sought between the achievements of classical trinitarian pneumatology and the distinctive proposals that Jenson advocates, that I would like to retrieve from him.

To discern that relative sphere of overlap, I would like to engage in negotiation with one of those who have most severely critiqued Jenson from the counter-position of classical theology as a kind of test case. All of these concerns about the problems of the maximalist implementation of Rahner’s Rule for pro-Nicene theology and the modern historicist narrative about the viability of premodern thought come together in Francesca Murphy’s polemic. In a lively, perceptive and poignant study which brings a constellation of story theologies, linguistic theologies & contemporary social trinitarianism into confrontation with theological aesthetics, classical metaphysical realism & “trinitarian monotheism,”

Francesca Murphy takes Jenson for one of her primary targets of contemporary theology, in which “the method itself, slides into the place of content or subject matter,” and thereby preempts, and eviscerates our understanding of, theological discourse’s distinctive *content*.⁴³

Murphy reads Jenson as the most “over-the-top” of those theologians who collapse the method reinvigorated by Barth of attending to the contour of the biblical story into the actual content of theological claims, thus confusing *how* we know God simply with God’s reality *as such*. Jenson, she describes—creatively—as a “story Thomist.” *Story*, in the coherence with the narrative theological program descending from Barth and *Thomist*, in that “the content is the same set of questions as figure in grammatical Thomism...such as how we speak about God,”⁴⁴ reflecting the methodological preoccupations of the linguistic turn among Thomists like David Burrell and Fergus Kerr. Jenson, however, goes far beyond the narrative Barthians,⁴⁵ in his thoroughgoing “storification” of God’s Being, his strict identification of God’s Being as Story, which is not quite how Barth advocated God’s relationship to time or the doctrine of election.⁴⁶ Murphy then dynamically maps the distinction between the methodological and linguistic preoccupation and the corresponding ontological content with the difference between “cinema” (“movification”) and live drama. Cinema and drama emblemize two significantly different artistic representations, and thus

⁴³ In the subtly entitled, Francesca Murphy, *God is Not a Story: Realism Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

⁴⁴ Murphy, *God is Not a Story*, 21.

⁴⁵ George Hunsinger, “Robert Jenson’s Systematic Theology: A Review Essay,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55.2 (Jan 2002): 161-200.

⁴⁶ Christopher Wells, “Aquinas and Jenson on Thinking about the Trinity,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 84.2 (March 2002): 345-382.

correspond to whole different cultural modes of signification. Whereas cinema is the synthetic medium *par excellence*, in the construction of a whole from a series of still images that shifts the artistic focus onto the technique of technological projection, utilization and manipulation, live drama is the embodied performance that must be driven by the content of its enactment, for which the stage, props, techniques only highlight and gesture to the meaning. Jenson is quintessentially the former, Murphy suggests, while theological aesthetics maintains the realism of the latter: “Jenson assumes, with the grammatical Thomists, that the *meaning* of our language about God is a function of its use.”⁴⁷

This entails a “cinematic modalism,” for Murphy, because just as the “movie reel is a series of motionless pictures, or still photographs, waiting to be run off their projector,” so also “Jenson envisages God as ‘running himself off’ an internal projector in just this way.” Analogously, Jenson “is entangled in the ‘modalism’ he opposes” because his notion of God only comes to life when run off the projector of the historical unfolding of God’s Being. For Jenson, “God is one long ‘film-strip,’ potentially encapsulating a sequence of motionless pictures, awaiting empowerment or actualization as the same pictures made visible in historical movement...There is a trio of God-identity cards in the film, waiting to be unrolled in time.” The crux of Murphy’s critique is the role played by the chronological analogy (§4.1.2) in Jenson’s account of Divine Life. Jenson, says Murphy, substitutes “succession” for the classical “relation” as substantive, but the primary difference is that relations can be *directly* conceived as being

⁴⁷ Murphy, *God is Not a Story*, 19; “The principle, God is a story is set to work the moment one equates one’s method of knowing God—such as Scripture—with God as such” Murphy, *God is Not a Story*, 16-22.

“mutually constitutive *in simultaneity*.” On the other hand, “succession” implies a giving away and a taking from, just like, in the movie “the screen images are simultaneous, but, as they run off the projector, they have to give way in the face of the next, in order to produce their illusion of temporal change” → modalism.⁴⁸

There is something dazzling and enticingly daring about this creative reading from Murphy. It is clever, yet not altogether correct. It overlooks a number of aspects of Jenson’s theology. First, the genealogy is simply misleading. Jenson directly derives his concerns from post-Barthian, especially German, systematics and from Rahner’s programmatic statement, and not directly from either the story Barthians or the grammatical Thomists; that their accounts might be structurally overlapping is another question, but Murphy’s reading of the dependency is overly artificial—we could even say movieish. Secondly, Murphy has falsely contrasted narrative with realism, which might be appropriate for some thinkers, but especially since Jenson has come around on the question of metaphysics (Excursus 1), it is false simply to juxtapose the category of “story” with realism. In the case of Jenson, he is precisely attempting to show the narrative structure of the “real,” especially from the sense of history and meaning of human life. One can demur from his attempt to render the Divine Real as Story, without failing to recognize that the sense of history and the meaning of human life in its development—the world mediated by meaning—require something like “story” precisely to interpret them as real as the world of immediacy, or the world of sheerly physical forces and occurrences (but recall §2.4.3); it seems that Murphy has the latter in mind as paradigmatically

⁴⁸ Murphy, *God is Not a Story*, 264-266.

(exclusively?) “real” *simpliciter*, but that itself would be difficult to square with the doctrine of a Personal communion of love as the ground of reality.

Thirdly, it mischaracterizes what Jenson says about “time.” That is not to say that Jenson is correct in his own construal, but the designation of his trinitarian theology as “cinematic modalism,” while humorous, is in any case misleading. To say that God is “waiting” for his triune characters to get run off “in time” is to misunderstand what he means by the doctrine of election and God’s self-determination. That decision itself is the historical unfolding for creatures (including time) of who God is eternally for Himself in His decision. It cannot be modalistic,⁴⁹ for the Divine dramatic persons in history are who they are co-eternally in their decision. Time in this case, would not be some other projector running God’s personae off God’s filmstrip. Time itself, in Jenson’s theology, is God’s creature, not God’s partner. In this case, Hunsinger’s charge of “tritheism” for the weakness of the Divine unity theme in Jenson’s theology is at least relatively more plausible than the charge of “modalism.”

Lastly, Murphy’s point about the role that “succession” plays in Jenson’s trinitarian metaphysics is the most cogent. Nevertheless, Jenson does also integrate the doctrine of “relations” at many points, so that must be accounted for in any assessment. At the same time, one could make the same critique that she makes of the classical tradition’s description of the trinitarian “taxis” and the so-called “logical priority” entailed in “generation” (an initially temporal term?!) and “procession.” The question would be whether Jenson is using the chronological

⁴⁹ Timo Tavast, “Challenging the Modalism of the West: Jenson on the Trinity” *Pro Ecclesia* 19:4 (Sept 2010): 355-368.

analogy in a strictly univocal sense—succession as the creature experiences it—and my answer to that has already been no. One could further tropify Jenson’s usage to say simply that he is attempting to interpret the trinitarian taxis in a way more fully derived from what is seen in the disclosure of God in the economy. All that notwithstanding, I think what Murphy has done in her work is to memorably remind modern trinitarian theology for all its subsequent constructions of the crucial distinction between the creaturely means of knowing God and God’s own reality as such.⁵⁰ These come together in Revelation, but that does not mean they are strictly interchangeable.

§6.3: TRINITARIAN DETERMINATIONS

Having interrogated some of the prominent theologoumenal infrastructure of the 20th century trinitarian revival on which Jenson relies for his distinctive pneumatological proposals, I will conclude this chapter by further negotiating in the manner of dialectic which aspects of his program require some correction in relation to which aspects of his program I would like to adopt.

§6.3.1: *The Spirit’s Co-Necessity*—On the former, Scott Swain offers one of the most thorough, nuanced, sympathetic and sophisticated critiques of Jenson’s specific trinitarian theology so far. Through a patient and laborious

⁵⁰ Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, 1:11, more appreciative of and closer to Jenson, has just recently made the point exegetically, with more nuance, more searingly: “Programmatic for the whole is Jenson’s definition of a doctrine of God that conjoins divine identity, narrative, Trinity, philo-Judaism and anti-Hellenism. A powerful mixture! Part of its attraction, surely, is its strong counterintuitive movement: its defiant starting point in the doctrine of the Trinity moves it not away...but closer to the law, observance and piety of rabbinic Judaism...[however] The subject matter—the *Sache*—of the Old Testament is not ‘story’ or ‘narrative.’ These are not even the principle form of the subject matter, however important they be in some biblical books. Rather, the form or pattern of ancient Israel’s teaching is Torah; its subject matter is the One God” correspondingly.

reading of Jenson in the realm of post-Barthian trinitarian dogmatics, and despite his agreement with Jenson on the importance and integrity of many of the questions he asks, Swain ultimately decides against Jenson's answers. He argues that Jenson's extreme "evangelical historicism," the "fully historicized account of God's trinitarian being," in which the radical identification of God's own being with God's dramatic action for us as depicted in the Gospel, fails to "adequately preserves the proper evangelical relation between God's triune being and the events of the gospel." In the end, Swain concludes, Jenson's view that God *constitutes* Himself in the decision to be God with us in Jesus, and his dramatic identity vindicated in the events of exodus and resurrection, simply cannot account for "the pure gratuity of the relation between God and the divine acts of election, incarnation, and indwelling..." For that to be the case, "God's triune identity must be wholly actual...prior to the act wherein he gives himself to us and welcomes us into his trinitarian bliss. Any notion of divine self-realization seems to compromise the biblical portrait of divine self-giving in the covenant of grace."⁵¹

Exegetically, Swain contests the thoroughly "biblical" warrant of Jenson's revisions by interrogating how "this historicizing reading of the biblical narrative privileges eschatology over protology" (whereas both are crucial) and by interrogating how Jenson hypertrophically relies on the "divine acts of rescue and exaltation" (which corresponds to Jenson's view of the "eschatological trinity") in the Scriptures, while ignoring the similarly present "divine acts of condescending

⁵¹ Swain, *God of the Gospel*, 71, 232.

and self-giving”⁵² (which correspond to the classical processional model and trinitarian ontology). For Swain, having examined at length Jenson’s eschatological reconstrual of God’s triune being—as well as Bruce McCormack’s protological reconstrual where God’s primal decision precedes and grounds God’s triune being—“The categories of historicism in particular, such as ‘self-determination,’ ‘subjectivity,’ ‘event,’ and so forth, are in my judgment unable to account adequately for the identity of the one who is the author and end of history, the eternally and intrinsically replete Trinity, who graciously communicates the riches of his triune fellowship to us through the Son and the Spirit.”⁵³

Swain presents a cogent case, though in the end it is not clear whether his ressourcement of the classical ontology has fully integrated the eschatological dimension, or, exegetically, the divine acts of rescue and exaltation, fully back into his theological retrieval synthesis. Insofar as classical trinitarian theology has decentered Scriptural descriptions of divine exaltation and rescue—for fear of their potential Arian or subordinationist interpretation—while it has not sufficiently integrated the biblical eschatological orientation, I would say that Jenson has a decisive insight to offer. The response, however, should not simply swing to the other extreme and trade on false disjunctions. Insofar as Jenson has simply decentered Scriptural patterns of divine condescension and self-giving, and the biblical protological orientation, and neglected the significance of those aspects in his interpretation of the relationship between God’s Being for himself

⁵² Swain, *God of the Gospel*, 141.

⁵³ Swain, *God of the Gospel*, 234.

and God's decision to be God for us and with us in the events of the Gospel, Jenson's program has failed to provide a holistic and integrative biblical hermeneutic of the Triune God. If we disentangle Jenson's insights from the problematic affirmations of his program, however, there can be a clear advance. The Spirit's eternal unsurpassedness and the co-constitutive eternal relation of the Spirit directed to the Son and the Father interpret the Scriptural descriptions of divine rescue, exaltation and eschatological orientation, while the traditional processional model interprets divine condescension, self-giving and biblical protology.

To further illuminate the point, let me take a look more narrowly at Swain's critique of Jenson's pneumatology. Swain begins with an affirmation of the animating motivation underlying Jenson's pneumatological proposals: "We may appreciate Jenson's attempt to honor the Spirit's fully hypostatic being as a helpful corrective." However, he is not convinced of the conclusions that Jenson offers for this problem, for many of the reasons above: "this appears to be a case where the proposed cure is worse than the disease." The locus of the critique as regards the Spirit is both how the constitution of the Spirit's identity is bound to the historical life of God's people, and thereby not eternally replete in itself, and also the particular narrational singularities that Jenson associates with the Spirit's dramatic identity. At the point of the theology of the cross, the cry of dereliction that Jenson reads into the dramatic identity of God's self-constitution, in which God overcomes death and determines Himself as the one who vanquishes death, Jenson reads this as a dramatically potential rupture in the divine life, between

the Father and the Son, for which the Spirit is the resolution.⁵⁴ Though Swain finds this “possibility” more palatable than Moltmann’s *actual* divine rupture, still this account implies that the “Spirit’s role on this scheme is to rescue the Father and the Son *from* a relationship of mutual subjugation and alienation *for* a relationship of mutual acceptance and love.” Since by Jenson’s strict identification of the immanent and economic trinity he reads this liberation as the eternal role of the Spirit, Swain finds this radically misrepresenting the fullness, completeness and wholeness of the eternal Father-Son dyad, not to mention an alien and uncorrected importation of philosophical structures (Hegel’s master and slave model) into the consideration of the eternal Divine Being. So, against Jenson’s own rule that all necessary metaphysical warrants in theology be biblical, his view of the Spirit is precisely a case where, under the claim of being biblical, the fundamental warrant that decides the matter is captivity to contemporaneous philosophical thought: in this case historicist-idealist instead of Greek essentialism!

Swain himself prefers the augmentative model of Eugene Rogers, that of *witness*. To be judicious, we should recall, as Swain does not, that Jenson himself suggests witness as one of his preferred active models of the Spirit (§4.2). Nevertheless, Jenson does seem to tie the witness to some sort of “lack” in the Father-Son dyad. Rogers, by contrast, describes the benefits of the term witness: “A witness is irreducibly third, tied to the two, but giving its own testimony.” But a witness is also an inalienably personalist category, unlike the tradition’s “bond” (*vinculum*) and so brings out the hypostatic ethos of the Spirit more preferably.

⁵⁴ Jenson, “Identity, Jesus and Exegesis,” 56-58.

In Rogers' view, however, the Spirit witnesses not to any lack in the Father-Son relationship not by way of addition but by way of searching out, celebrating and confirming the fullness of what already is. This is described not as the "logic of productivity" (Jenson) but the "logic of superfluity" (Rogers).⁵⁵

Swain's critique hits on a crucial issue here. Jenson has emphasized the irreducible hypostatic distinctiveness of the Spirit seemingly at the expense of, and over against, the repleteness and perfection of the Father-Son relationship. There is, furthermore, much to commend in Rogers' articulation of the pneumatological theology of witness. We must be exceedingly careful in the language here, nevertheless. We must understand the tropification of "need" going on here. For on the other hand, to say that the Spirit belongs strictly to the realm of "superfluity," seems to entail the recurrent difficulty of the diminishment of the Spirit's eternal triune role, His eternal co-constitutive hypostatic Divine role, and so, correspondingly, the recognition of the Spirit's initiatory work in the salvific economy—the Spirit becomes in fact...*superfluous* for Christian life and thought. While critiquing Jenson's view of some sort of "need" in the Father-Son relationship, the view that the Spirit "adds" to their relationship does not escape the same calculus, if the nature of the theological language is not reckoned with. For Jenson, to say that the Father-Son dyad "needs" the liberation of the Spirit is more accurately to say—in my gloss—only that any constellation of two Divine Persons is not "complete" without the other

⁵⁵ Eugene F. Rogers, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 67, 71.

one, and only all together are they fully the Divine Triune Reality that they are.⁵⁶ Since the three together are co-eternally and equi-primordially the Divine Being, the consideration of any two without the consideration of the third is “not yet complete.” Now Jenson has employed a philosophical model here as the underlying logical warrant of this insight—though it is one that also has roots in the tradition, seemingly isomorphic to the account of Richard of St. Victor⁵⁷—nevertheless the issue still stands.

To say that the Spirit is the “liberation” of the Father and the Son is not to say that the Father and the Son sit around “deficient” until they happen to be

⁵⁶ Jenson, “Church as *Communio*” from *Catholicity of the Reformation*, 3: “The Triune hypostases, Father, Son and Spirit, *do not merely have fellowship one with another; they are real as and only as the poles of that fellowship...*In the great biblical scene in which many Fathers most distinctly perceived God as Trinity, the baptism of the Lord, the Father speaks love to the Son, the Son submits to the Father, and the Spirit appears as the hypostatic gift of their communication,” emphasis added.

⁵⁷ Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate: text critique avec introduction, notes et tables*, J. Ribaillier, ed., (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958): 1.4, 3.6-8, 11, argues that a duality in itself would be also insufficient for the ultimate love, “the fullness and perfection of all goodness.” And here he is at his most intellectually inventive, but also his most extended. Employing a kind of Anselmian warrant, that the love in God must surpass the greatest that we can possibly conceive, Richard inquires what love could “be so excellent that no better love can exist?” Will a dual love satisfy the most excellent conception? Richard does not think so. In a dual love, where one loves another as oneself, there is the movement from the original out towards another. Then in arrival upon the other, the movement is closed. But what if this movement can be continually opened again toward the outside, towards a circulation of the love, that is, towards a third partaker? Would that not be more excellent? Would that not add another dimension to the event of love? Indeed, for Richard, for love not to be so conceived would be a great defect. Love that is given and received is not as excellent as love that can then be shared. It is more excellent for the original two to find together a third to love, as an openness to participation. And so, “The inability then to permit a partaker of love is a sign of great weakness, but the ability to permit a partaker of love is a sign of great perfection.” The ultimate love is not only that which is given to another but is that which still more facilitates a mutual sharing of that same love. “Therefore”, Richard summarizes his argument, “there cannot be an excellent degree of charity...where a defect of will or ability excludes a partaker of love and a communion of excellent joy.” The two persons, of equal dignity (*condignum*) gravitate toward a third person to be mutually loved (*condilectum*). They “must possess him freely with equal concord.” “Therefore, you see how the perfection of charity requires a Trinity of persons, without which charity absolutely cannot subsist in the integrity of its own fullness.”

liberated. It is not to say that the Father and the Son are have some “need” which “needs” to be rectified, any more than to say that the Father eternally begets the Son is to imply that the Son “sits around” with a need of generation, waiting to be generated by another, considered with regard to the co-eternality and equi-primordiality of the Divine Persons. It is to say that the active participation of the Spirit, from the End of Divine Being, in the eternal self-constitution of the Divine Being, occurs together along with the begetting of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit as the eternal Divine Act that God is. The active participation of the Spirit presents an “other” to the dyad of the Father and the Son that only together constitutes the Divine Reality. This movement of self-constitution of the Spirit represents the hypostatic “freedom” or “liberation” as an absolute characteristic in God and of God. We can characterize this act as “freedom” based on the self-revelation of God to us in the economy, similarly to how we can characterize the Father-Son relationship as “begetting” on the basis of the economy without failure to recognizing the analogical interval in the language thus employed of Divine Being.⁵⁸

The decisive issue is only whether there is such a Spirit-Son taxis eternally, an active movement of ordering or self-constitution in God from the Spirit, where the classical trinitarian ontology and the processional model saw *only* the Father-Son-Spirit taxis and the active movement of ordering or self-constitution from the Father alone. The manifestly biblical Spirit-Son relations in the classical model were interpreted simply as referring to the economy. Now that we have explored the criticisms of Rahner’s Rule, we can recognize (contra Jenson) that

⁵⁸ For another counter to Swain’s critique here: Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics*, 95-97.

just because certain relations appear in the economy does not *necessarily* mean they are present *directly* in the immanent life of God in an unqualified way. In the ancestral period, the Spirit-Son relations were often employed along with an adoptionist christology or against a homoousian theology of the Son. Within the enduring achievement of the homoousian, however, might we consider the Spirit-Son taxis in a fuller way? Might it tell us something about the eternal life of God, specifically about the hypostatic role of the Spirit (with Jenson's insight)? To rephrase in different idiom: does the movement of exaltation, into which the Church and individual believers are incorporated and elevated in Grace, itself have a ground, a condition of possibility, in the eternal Divine Life, just as the Incarnation of the Son in self-abasement has its missional ground in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father? And might recognition of this illuminate the work of the Spirit in the contemporary Church and world relatively more fully? That is the contemporary question as properly posed.

§6.3.2: *God's Fullness of Being*—To return to Swain's emphasis on the fullness of the Divine Being, on God's replete identity "antecedent" to the Creation, nevertheless, Hans Urs von Balthasar provides one example of some of the more cautious dialectics involved in the appropriate relationship between God's eternal Divine Being and God's decision to be God for us and with us in the Gospel. Balthasar outlines the fundamental program as follows, "while, according to Christian faith, the economic Trinity assuredly appears as the interpretation of the immanent Trinity, *it may not be identified with it, for the latter grounds and supports the former*. Otherwise, the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve into the economic...God would be swallowed

up in the world process—a necessary stage, in this view, if he is fully to realize himself.”⁵⁹

Balthasar describes how it is necessary to understand God’s own fullness in order to understand God’s life with the world appropriately: “it is as Father, Son and Spirit that God is involved with the world, for its salvation...but it is *as God* that he is thus involved.” God’s authentic and integral involvement with the world is asymmetrical, not a partnership of mutual becoming: God “does not become ‘love’ by having the world as his ‘thou’ and his ‘partner’: in himself, in lofty transcendence far above the world, he ‘is love’ already. Only in this way, in complete freedom, can he reveal himself and give himself to be loved.” It is in this way that the world drama maintains its character as a *personal* event, and we can say in the end that properly God is personal, not impersonal: “This is the only way, therefore, in which theo-drama can be ultimately personal, not a natural event, something that does not undermine dramatic encounters between human beings but undergirds them and makes them...truly and authentically personal and significant.”⁶⁰

This fullness of God as God must be understood to be something that God has of Himself, antecedent to His sharing it with the world: “God in himself must be life, love, an eternal fullness of communion, who does not need the world in order to have another to love. Thus, in creating the world, he acts in utter freedom, binding himself freely—not out of compulsion—the work he has begun and will follow through to its conclusion. He can and will get involved with the

⁵⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:508, emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:509, emphasis added.

world but without becoming entangled in its confusion. The drama that takes place before him, which he is free to guide and in which he can intervene, is not his own ‘process’.” In this way, with the drama unfolding before God, *by* God’s decision, and not strictly *as* God’s decision, God “is able to become immanent in the world drama without surrendering his transcendence above and beyond it,” as likewise “He is *above* the play in that he is not trapped in it but *in* it insofar as he is fully involved in it.”⁶¹

Balthasar clarifies that just because the drama takes place before God does not mean that it is alien to God or unrelated to who God is: “This is not something purely external, as if this relationship *ad extra* did not really affect him: rather, the new relationship to worldly nature, which is hypostatically united to the Son, highlights one of *the infinite possibilities that lie in God’s eternal life*.” This is not a change in God’s own eternally replete Being but rather “the unchangeable God enters into a relationship with creaturely reality, and this relationship imparts a new look to his internal relations.” In this way, Balthasar describes, “what we have here is a realization of the mystery whereby God can simultaneously remain in himself and step forth from himself. And, in thus stepping forth from himself, he descends into the abyss of all that is anti-divine; God does nothing anti-divine—the sinner does—but he can experience it within his own reality. This is Christ’s descent into hell, into what God has utterly cast out of the world.”⁶² Balthasar thus offers a way to interpret the concerns about the very Being of God present in the events of the Gospel, without simply

⁶¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:529, 506, 514.

⁶² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:523, 530, emphasis added.

collapsing the fullness of Divine Being as such into the decision of God in salvation history.

§6.3.3: *The Spirit's Active Personal Witness*—How then, with this more stabilized view of God's eternally replete Being, does Balthasar interpret the Spirit-Son taxis that we see as one relation in the events of the Gospel? This gets to the heart of what Jenson potentially has to offer. Is there a way to understand that directed relation as constitutive of God's eternally replete Being, or is that relation only one of the relation of the Spirit to Jesus's humanity? Balthasar himself interprets this relation by what he calls the "trinitarian inversion." He first notes the active relation of the Spirit to the Son in the paradigmatic case of the Incarnation: "When the Apostle's Creed says *et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine*, it is giving a precise description of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit in the Incarnation, linking up directly with Luke 1:35, where two active verbs denote the operation of the 'Holy Spirit' or of the 'power of the Most High'...whereas the product of this operation is expressed by a passive participle." He continues: "In all these formulas expressing the common Christian faith, the Spirit is portrayed as active in the incarnation process, whereas the Son is conceived and born, is at others' disposal and submits to events...."⁶³

As Balthasar is quick to emphasize, however, this reception of the Son in his human mission vis-à-vis the Spirit is not simply "passive," but an active receptivity. Even in the powerful activity of the Spirit in overshadowing the Virgin, in driving the Son in his historical mission, "the Son is already obedient,

⁶³ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:183-184.

insofar as he entrusts himself to the activity of the Spirit” in a positive way. The obedience of the Son, therefore, in handing himself over to the Spirit’s work, is “no mere passivity but a form of action, which...demands of the subject more self-possession and initiative than the pursuance of self-imposed precepts and goals.”⁶⁴

Nevertheless, within the scope of the Son’s active and self-possessed obedience, the Spirit still appears in these relations, Balthasar exegetes, even as having the giving force of a “*mandatum*”:

Here the Spirit takes over the function of presenting the obedient Son with the Father’s will in the form of a *rule* that is unconditional and, in the case of the Son’s suffering, even appears rigid and pitiless...the Father’s *mandatum*...In the Passion, the Father’s loving countenance can disappear behind...the Trinity’s eternal, salvific plan laid before [the Son] by the Spirit, the witness of the mutual will of Father and Son...the Spirit, now embodied in the form of a rule, says to them both: This is what you have wanted from all eternity; this is what, from all eternity, we have determined!⁶⁵

The hypostatic objectivity of the Spirit appears here as forceful as a rule.

Balthasar, however, describes this as an “inversion” because it is the appearance in salvation history of the eternal passive spiration of the Spirit, which he even says “has to go into hiding” for the sake of the humanity of the Son in the events of the Passion. He raises this issue of whether or not this inversion “disrupts” the “order of hypostases in God assumed in Catholic theology?” As a response, Balthasar claims that the “infinite vitality of the relations between the divine Persons is so rich in aspects that one such aspect can precipitate the Son’s Incarnation, and the ‘inversion’...without requiring any change in the internal

⁶⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:186.

⁶⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:188.

divine order.” In the Incarnation, the Son “already has within him a docility vis-à-vis the Spirit...so that the Son can surrender himself to the guiding of the Spirit above him without any sense of heteronomy,” and also without any alteration of the Son’s secondary position in the eternal Divine taxis. Thus the “inversion” is “ultimately only the projection of the immanent Trinity onto the economic plane, whereby the Son’s correspondence to the Father is articulated as obedience.”⁶⁶

What if what Balthasar describes as an inversion in the fixity of the trinitarian taxis, however, represents not merely the order of sending, of generation and origination, but the order of witness, the order of liberation that eternally belongs to the Divine self-constitution from the Outcome? Balthasar goes through this elaborate account of the inversion in order to interpret the active relation of the Spirit to the Son in the Incarnation without disrupting the traditional trinitarian taxis. But perhaps this can be more elegantly interpreted with the recognition that the Spirit→Son relation is not merely economic, just as the obedience and sending of the Son in His mission is not merely economic, but corresponds to His “second” triune position as generated by the Father. This would not “disrupt” the traditional trinitarian taxis at all, for it merely recognizes that there are two modes of the Divine taxis: one of derivation of Being and one of anticipation of Outcome—one of God Alpha, one of God Omega, one of God as absolute source of His own Life and one of God as absolute destiny of His own Life.

Balthasar himself recognizes a “dual” aspect, a “twofold” face, of the Spirit’s hypostasis, the passive and the active, when he concludes that: “After all,

⁶⁶ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:190-191, also the return, 3:520-523; see his diagrams.

the Spirit has a twofold face from all eternity: he is breathed forth from the one love of Father and Son as the expression of their united freedom—he is, as it were, the objective form of their subjectivity; but, at the same time, he is the objective witness to their difference-in-unity or unity-in-difference.” It remains unclear in Balthasar, however, just precisely how this “objective witness”⁶⁷ of the Spirit is situated vis-à-vis the classical trinitarian taxis and the limitation of the Spirit→Son relation to that of the economic projection in inversion. It is precisely the distinctive position of the Spirit that Jenson suggests—not in historical self-constitution, but in eternally replete dynamism—which can account for the Spirit’s dual face. It can account for both the passive spiration of the Spirit in the order of origin but also the active eternal witness of the Spirit in the order of finality.

§6.3.4: *Return in the Spirit*—In addition to how I have suggested that a purified version of Jenson’s pneumatology can interpret the Spirit→Son taxis that we encounter in the biblical data, which Balthasar interprets in terms of the “trinitarian inversion,” I would also like to suggest another aspect of the Spirit’s economic profile that this model can interpret. It can also interpret what Sarah Coakley has excavated as the “Spirit-leading” model of salvific dynamism in the process of deification. That is, Jenson’s model of the Spirit’s eternal activity from the End of Divine Being shows the eternal possibility for creatures to be included in Divine Life. Certainly, in classical pneumatology the return of the Church in the Spirit *to* God was seen as simply included in the extension of the processional model and the Divine missions of sending, of which the Spirit represents the

⁶⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:187.

“furthest” extent of outreach. I would like to suggest, however, that it might be more holistic to interpret the extent of the Divine missions in sending (corresponding to the relations of origin in the Divine Life) as representing one movement, while the return of the Church and believers, experienced in the Spirit-leading encounter of salvation, represents a second movement: that of the relations of Outcome in the Divine Life in which the Spirit takes His hypostatic role as the Unsurpassed One.

All of this I offer as an interpretation of Sarah Coakley’s recent work on the Spirit-leading experience of the Spirit as another way to enter into trinitarian doctrine. Coakley primarily argues that the still tentatively conceived activity of the Spirit in the traditional models of procession requires augmentation, an augmentation that Jenson’s pneumatological model provides. Coakley’s remarkable work has surfaced a number of the lingering concerns about the distinctive role of the Spirit and the taxis of trinitarian relations. While she spurns many of the reductionist readings of the history of trinitarian doctrine, those that Ayres, Barnes, Marshal, Sanders et al., interrogate, nevertheless, immersed in a re-reading of the Church Ancestors, Coakley does seek to supplement the traditional focus with an exploration of the development of trinitarian doctrine as it relates to its reciprocal emergence from and shaping of lived faith in liturgy, prayer, spirituality and asceticism. As Coakley describes it, “[b]y repressing or marginalizing much of the early history of the doctrine of the Spirit (messy and erratic as it may seem), accounts of early trinitarianism that give sole attention to the status of the Son vis-à-vis the Father...miss much of the drama: at one and the same time the crucial prayer-based logic of emergent

trinitarianism is missed, and the related, and complicated entanglements with questions of human gender, power, and desire mutely disregarded.”⁶⁸ Coakley thus advances trinitarian orthodoxy “as a demanding, and ongoing, spiritual project, in which the language of the creeds is personally and progressively appropriated.”⁶⁹

Coakley herself wants to foreground the Spirit in the complex interrelations of belief, spiritual practice, and especially desire, particularly in the situation of the global crisis of sexuality in the Church. She suggests “that deep prayer in the Spirit (...Romans 8.27)...may be understood as intrinsically erotic in a primal sense.” The lived, erotic spirituality in the Spirit draws us toward union with God, and “*analogously*” is manifest in the “erotic propulsion towards union, even at the human level.” This is an analogical structure, Coakley wisely qualifies, that must be “rightly discerned and understood, given the extraordinary capacity for human self-deception in the arena of the erotic,” for the erotic magnetism of the Spirit, joined with that of the Son, is also one which “*checks* human desires.” In a progressively ascetic movement, as well as elevating movement, the desire in which the Spirit leads also represents the “chastening of the human lust to possess, abuse, and control” as is a “necessary prelude to the participatory transformation of all human, and often misdirected, longings.” All of this, Coakley offers as a contemporary theological retrieval of both an erotic but also

⁶⁸ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, 4, emphasis emended.

⁶⁹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, 5.

ascending and transcendent Christian Platonism in the context of our contemporary societal mania over sexuality.⁷⁰

With regard to radical practices of attention to the Spirit, in particular, Coakley draws her pneumatology from the liturgical, spiritual and exegetical works of the Church Ancestors, not just the formal dogmatic treatises. In doing so, she still queries whether or not, despite the theological rhetoric and achievement of the homoousios of the Spirit, the “temptation” remained, within the space of personal and spiritual appropriation of the dogmatic formulae, “to re-relegate the Spirit to an effective remaining subordination.” Because of the fixation of the trinitarian “ordering,” the problematic lingered for the Spirit “almost inevitably” to be understood as the “secondary communicator of an already privileged dyad of Father and Son.”⁷¹ Coakley further supports this reading by an exploration of the iconographic tradition with regard to the Spirit (Chapter 5) and through a phenomenological analysis of the emergence of the charismatic movement in her own Anglican Church (Chapter 4). With regard to her excavation of the Ancestors, she advances a “*Spirit-leading*” approach to the trinitarian life of God, which was underdeveloped in the tradition because of its association with sectarian and purist movements (Montanism)⁷² and because of the potentiality of deep pneumatological trinitarianism to lead to “an intensification of erotic power.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, 13-15, emphasis emended.

⁷¹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and Self*, 101.

⁷² Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁷³ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and Self*, 102.

Coakley seeks to develop a “prayer based” and spirituality based, which is a “Spirit-leading” model of the Trinity, especially derived from a “Romans 8 model” as inflected through the devotional, liturgical, spiritual and exegetical work of the Ancestors. In this model an experiential, phenomenological, and in this way logical, “priority” is given to the Spirit, within the broad sphere of a homoousian theology, in which the Spirit is not merely the “naming of the Father’s outreach” in salvation history and which represents an “experientially based pressure towards hypostatizing the Spirit.”⁷⁴ Therefore, this “alternative approach to the Trinity which gives strong priority to the Spirit in prayer, and which the modern textbooks have often obscured or ignored,” represents a trinitarian model of “ascent,” which attempts to describe, even if fragmentarily, the “simultaneous experience of Father, Son, and Spirit.” Rather than in a processional mode of origination (the classical taxis), however, this model attempts instead to understand the Trinity in “a reflexive divine incorporative act which makes Christian participative of divine Sonship...in which the Spirit is the point of entry in a movement of progressive ascent.”⁷⁵ This incorporative evocation of the Spirit represents the metarational, aesthetic, emotional, experiential dimension of experience that corresponds (but cannot be separated from) the experience of rational order of the Logos.

I take Coakley’s model as one exceptional example of the attempt to re-emphasize a Spirit oriented taxis. This model could well be interpreted alongside

⁷⁴ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and Self*, 112-113.

⁷⁵ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and Self*, 142, emphasis emended.

Jenson's⁷⁶ pneumatology of the Spirit's location and the Divine movement of freedom, particularly as the eternal movement that is the condition of possibility for the spiritual incorporation that Coakley describes. Coakley certainly has

⁷⁶ Coakley explicitly catalogues Jenson as one among those "eminent and influential systematicians of the twentieth century," but then critiques him as one of those who egregiously have omitted gender as a meaningful category of analysis and so invited certain critiques that have been launched at the enterprise of systematic theology as a whole: Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, 61 and Chapter 1. Coakley navigates these matters subtly and profoundly. The critique, however, is not strictly accurate regarding Jenson, as his account of the Works of God includes an entire chapter on "politics and sex" (*Systematic Theology*, 2:73-94), where he largely aligns himself with Barth's articulation of gender as an ordered but complementary biblical prototype of human community; Jenson: "Sexuality is the coincidence of sensuality and objective male-female differentiation...Sexuality is therefore the way in which our directedness to each other, the intrinsic commonality of human being, is built into the very objects as which we are there for one another. It is sexuality that rescues the communal character of human being from being a mere ideal or demand laid upon us and makes it a *fact* about us" (*Systematic Theology*, 2:89). Citing Barth, *CD*, 3.2.344, 349: "The woman is for man the eminent...co-human, and the man is this for the woman...In and with existence as human and as this specific human, each one is man or woman...This distinction and relation is of all human distinctions...the decisive one...for only it is structural." Jenson furthermore does employ gender as a significant part of his analysis of the nature of Divine language and in discussing the historical emergence of "religion." My riposte to Coakley would *not* be that she would find Jenson's description ultimately sufficient in its alignment of creaturely differentiation and communion with this gender difference as such. Coakley, by contrast, promotes an understanding of gender as "in via," a journey that "in this fallen world, one lives, in some sense, *between* twoness and its transfiguring interruption; so one is not...endlessly and ever subject to the debilitating falseness of fallen gender, fallen twoness" Coakley, *God, Sexuality & Self*, 54, 56, as well as one that makes desire more elemental than obsessions with either sexuality or gender. My riposte would be, however, only that such considerations are not omitted in Jenson, in fact, they are integral to his whole theological anthropology. While Jenson does not do more with gender or desire, in terms of the whole embodied context of theology that Coakley promotes, still I would actually venture that they would concur in Coakley's assessment that the discourse of "sexual identity" and "orientation," "when dislocated from a nexus of final spiritual and theological meanings, becomes curiously pedestaled and obsessional. Arguably, the current anxieties in this area can only be properly adjudicated in the context of a rich *theology* of desire more generally" Coakley, *God, Sexuality & Self*, 65. While their prescriptions would not be the same, it is precisely this diagnosis of these "pedestaled and obsessional" realities of creaturely location that leads Jenson to write, "of course, theology done by Germans will be differ from theology done by East Indians. But if any such difference is antecedently theorized—as racial theory or feminist theory or post-colonial theory or whatever—and this theory is then made the context within which Christian theology is construed [ie: instead of the gospel itself and the gospel's particular location with Jesus in Israel] the result will at very best be the theology of another religion—with which inter-religious dialogue might of course be appropriate" Jenson, "Theological Autobiography," 50.

integrated her account into the questions of gender, desire and spirituality in the contemporary scene and employed a more wide-ranging, integrative and synoptic method in her *théologie totale*. Nevertheless, I would argue that Coakley's "Romans 8" model could probably be better interfaced with and integrated into the classical processional (what she calls "linear") model in a way that is, despite best efforts, still not bound to some of the distorting modern summative narratives, and more fully recognizes the biblical warrant and propriety of the traditional taxis. This is something that Jenson's pneumatology offers where (notwithstanding, for the moment, his rejection of impassibility) his model requires that nothing of the dynamics of the classical model be neglected in an augmentative model of the Spirit.

The dynamics of Coakley's "Romans 8," "Spirit-leading" model of the Triune God still represents an "economic" pneumatological phenomenology, dealing as it does with the salvific experience of creatures. To say that the return of the creature to ascent and communion with God gives an active priority to the Spirit, however, suggests that an active movement of the Spirit in the Divine Life is the condition of the possibility for such a salvific movement to be included in God's dealings with the world. The Spirit's liberation of the Father and the Son for Communion with one another, therefore, is the eternal basis within the replete Life of God for the possibility that, once God gives the gift of creation and the sin of the creature ruptures that fellowship, creation can be redeemed and brought back into harmony with and in God, eschatologically the union of the Bride and the Bridegroom. The movement of the Spirit for the Freedom of the Divine Persons as the unsurpassed of Divine Life constitutes the immanent basis

for the return of the creature by Grace to eschatological fellowship with God in the economy of salvation.

§6.3.5: *The Intersubjective Possibility*—Having now discussed how Jenson’s model for the Spirit elegantly interprets both the Spirit→Son relation that we see in the economy and how it interprets the Spirit-leading phenomenology of salvation and the return movement of deification, I would like, lastly, to entertain one counter-proposal. Another way of conceptualizing the same active role of the Spirit, but within the traditional processional model, is what Dumitru Stăniloae has magnificently described as the eternal Divine hypostatic “intersubjectivity.” He argues that the traditional model of procession already accounts sufficiently for the personal activity of the Spirit:

Neither does the term ‘procession’ in reference to the Holy Spirit mark any passivity on the part of the Holy Spirit such as would make him [solely] an object of the Father...The Spirit is eternally in the movement of proceeding from the Father, just as the Son exists eternally in the movement of taking birth from the Father...*The procession of the Spirit from the Father is itself an act of pure intersubjectivity of Father and Spirit, without there being any confusion between them...All three in intersubjectivity experience the act of the Son’s generation and of the Spirit’s procession, but each from his own position.* Once again, this forms a community between the three hypostases.⁷⁷

Procession by mode of origination in the Divine Life is not limited to an active movement from the Father, for Stăniloae, but is rather a joint and mutually subjective act in which the Spirit actively participates in the reception of His procession just as the Father actively participates in its initiation.

⁷⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 6 vols., Ioan Ionita, et al., trans. (Brookline: Holy Cross Press, 1998-2013), 1: *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, 260, emphasis added.

Similarly to how he describes the generation of the Son, therefore, the Spirit participates actively in the dynamic of procession and is not simply “object” for the Father: “By begetting the Son eternally the Father does not thereby somehow make him an object of his own. That is why Christian teaching also ...[says] ‘the Son takes his birth from the Father’ in addition to ‘the Father begets the Son.’” The eternal begetting and taking birth of the Son is also an active movement from the person of the Son and “indicates that the Son too has the same character of being pure subject.” The order of Divine Persons is upheld in this intersubjectivity: “[t]he generation of the Son from the Father expresses only the unchanged position of the Father as giver and of the Son as receiver of existence, just as it also expresses the relation between them through the act of generation.” But it also belongs to the sphere of the subjectivity of both Divine Persons, “[b]oth live this act eternally as subjects, but they live it in common or within an intersubjectivity which does not confuse them, for each lives the act from the position that is his own.”⁷⁸ The Father and the Spirit each have a “position” that is their own, hypostatically. But they act mutually, “intersubjectively,” even in the “ordered” movement of procession that constitutes their relation of origination.

Stăniloae, moreover, speaks of the special role of the third hypostasis in ensuring the integral community, what he calls the “subjective-objective consistency” of God: this “is fully assured in God by the fact that he exists in three persons.” By themselves, one person “might be taken to be merely a process of intellection.” In an analysis of Richardian flavor, Stăniloae continues to suggest,

⁷⁸ Stăniloae, *Experience of God*, 1:261-262.

that even two persons by themselves, “immersed in their exclusive communion can have the impression that they have departed from reality.” Only a third person guarantees the subjective-objectivity consistency of the community that surpasses the enclosed subjectivity of the two: “For although a third person is also experienced as subject, nevertheless the fact that he is experienced by the two gives them the sense of their own objectivity...The third fulfills the role of ‘object’ or horizon, assuring the sense of objectivity for the two by the fact that the keeps the two from becoming confused within an indistinct unity because of the exclusiveness of their love, and exclusiveness which can flow from the conviction of each that nothing worthy of love exists outside the other.” A third person “of the same worth” as the other two accompanies them, reminds them, such that “neither of the two who love each other loses sight of the merit of loving that belongs to the third...” In this way, “God is an objective subjectivity, or a subjective objectivity. He transcends the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity...the person is the most intensive reality that is. God surpasses the subjectivity and objectivity familiar to us, for he is the one inasmuch as he is the other.”⁷⁹

By interpreting the relations of origination, the procession of the Spirit, intersubjectively, and by complementing this with the co-axiomatic nature of the Spirit as the subjective third guaranteeing the objectivity of the relationship between the first and second Divine person, Stăniloae has presented one remarkably plausible and compelling account of the fully personal activity of the Spirit in a way that assuages many of the contemporarily expressed doubts about

⁷⁹ Stăniloae, *Experience of God*, 1:268.

the classical Divine ontology with regard to the Spirit. Such a robust elaboration of intersubjectivity might just be protesting too much, however. Might this not burst outside of the bounds of what has been described as the classical movement of procession, as simply and merely a relation of origination? Might not the subjective relation of the Spirit to the other Divine persons signify another movement, an otherly directed movement, precisely the ones to which Jenson gives name as relations of outcome? Stăniloae profoundly articulates the notion that the Spirit does have his own eternal hypostatic “position,” from which He stands to intersubjectively and actively receive the movement of origination from the Father and from which He subjectively testifies as third to the mutual objectivity of the Father and the Son, without thereby being confused with them. But this “location” in Stăniloae, as in the tradition, never receives further specification as has clearly been done in the case of the Father (absolute origin) and the Son (intention of Divine movement). Does that location really “need” to be further specified? Is not “origination” sufficient for our understanding of the hypostatic differentiation in God’s One Being? For a full reconstruction of Divine transcendence also by the Person of the Spirit, for a synthesis of the protological and eschatological nature of Divine Being and for the condition of the possibility of our incorporation as creatures into the Divine Life by deification, I think it is time for it to be so.

§CODA

Jenson’s most distinctive proposals about the Holy Spirit derive from his maximalist identification between God’s eternal Divine Being and God’s decision to be God for us and with us in the events of salvation history. Through a

dialectical engagement, I have probed whether this historicist trend prominent in contemporary trinitarian theology sufficiently coheres with Nicene theology, adequately interprets the scope of biblical data on the relations of the Divine Persons and misleadingly relies on distorted narratives about the theological tradition. Insofar as that critique is accurate, Jenson's program requires purification. The eternal plenitude and sufficiency of God's Being has to be upheld. When thusly adapted and disentangled from some of his other more problematic theologoumena, as well as appropriately situated within the full affirmation of the Nicene homoousion, however, I do argue that certain novel aspects of Jenson's pneumatology deserve reception. The proposal of the distinct location of the Spirit, the complementary relations of outcome, and of the notions of the Spirit as freedom-liberation and unsurpassed can be calibrated in a similar way as the traditional notions of procession, unbegottenness and relations of origin. The achievement that recommends such an augmentation to the Church's pneumatological doctrine is the capacity to more holistically interpret the Spirit-Son relation in the economy, the Spirit-leading, eschatological return experience of the Spirit by believers and the distinct, eternal hypostatic irreducibility and character of the Holy Spirit, all of which emphases are live concerns in a contemporary global theology and Christian practice.

CHAPTER 7:
THE HORIZON OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

§INTRODUCTION

Implicit throughout the whole has been the question of the relation between Jenson's pneumatological proposals of "freedom" and "liberation," and the discourse that has most thoroughly thematized these categories in its theological reflection, liberation theology. Here I attempt to forge these connections more explicitly. The creaturely experience of liberation and the enacted praxis of liberation—whether hamartiological, agential or social—that anticipate the Kingdom of God in history do not merely have their basis in the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the world, but in the eternal Divine Life itself. The Divine Event of Liberation grounds the historical experience of liberation that creatures experience in the work of the Spirit, guaranteed by the Son and initiated by the Father. The Divine dynamic of self-constitution by which the Spirit eternally liberates the Father and the Son for their mutual communion as the telos of Divine Life is the archetypal and primal Liberation. This recognition generates a number of potential implications for contemporary world Christianity.

The third and final horizon against which I evaluate Jenson's pneumatology is that of liberation theology, which—mercifully for now—brings this dissertation to a close. As I have already canvassed (§4.4.3), this connection emerges from Jenson's own work, where he comments that his freedom model of Divine Life, whereby the Spirit acts as the Unsurpassed to present the End of Divine ways to the Father and the Son, interprets the biblical testimony of

“liberation.” By contrast, Jenson had claimed, the tradition’s exclusive reliance on relations of origin readily corresponds to a view of God as the Establisher, God as Stability, but not as compellingly God the Surpriser, God who overturns established patterns of sinful and oppressive history: the God of Gospel. The consideration of Divine Being solely by origin, solely as Alpha, but not thoroughly by outcome, not as Omega, according to Jenson means that God was never quite presented “as an overly plausible liberator” in His eternal character.¹ In Jenson’s own work, however, this connection is made cryptically and elusively. I propose to elaborate it.

In Chapter 5, I argued that while classical pneumatology made decisive achievements in the fixation of the trinitarian taxis in order to fully affirm the *homoousios* with regard to the Spirit, a full and complete articulation of the hypostatic distinctiveness of the eternal Spirit, transposed into transcendence from the suggestive biblical data and economic relations of the Spirit to the Son, was never wholly completed, as it was for the Father and the Son. In that respect, I hope to have cleared space to entertain some of Jenson’s more novel proposals, for the active role of the Spirit in creaturely liberation as having some “immanent” Divine significance. In Chapter 6, I have interrogated whether this transposition can be done simply and directly on the basis of a maximalist identification of the immanent and economic trinity, as suggested by certain receptions of Rahner’s program. With appropriate qualifications and nuances, nevertheless, I remain convinced that something of Jenson’s model has indeed been disclosed to us about the eternal Divine Life in the active relations of the Spirit in the economy,

¹ Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 142-143.

and these are not simply limited to being of economic consequence. This acknowledgment provides a framework for the relation of certain economic activities of the Spirit to an immanent Divine signification, when the epistemological limitations and analogical interval of such signification are properly recognized.

Lastly, then, I hope to show how this modified version of Jenson's pneumatological program regarding the immanent, eternal Spirit calibrates to the economic, continuing work of the Spirit in historical (integral) liberation and how the participation of the believer in the process of liberation, in the process of enacting the Kingdom, represents an economic process by which the creature is caught up in the eternal Divine Liberative movement. God liberates in history, because God the Spirit is paradigmatically Liberator in the eternal Divine Life. While these meanings of "liberation" are not univocal, just as the Divine meaning of generation is not univocal with its creaturely analogue, they nevertheless have sufficient analogical integrity to be meaningful when we accompany Christ and the Spirit in their historical work of liberation. The ultimate liberation, historically speaking, must be liberation from creaturely death, and so the possibility of eternal life—of our being incorporated into Divine Life, that is, of deification (of glorification)—has its condition of possibility in the Spirit's unsurpassedness, and the Spirit's dynamic of movement from the telos of Divine Life for ultimate communion.

In forging this connection, I hope to have discovered one potential foundation of overlap between classical and liberation theology more generally.² The broad tendency of the last generation of academic theology has been to play one off against the other. The tension between liberation and establishment, between the eschatological and the protological orientation, between essentialist ontology and narrative ontology, between faithfulness to the past and openness to the future, has structured a raucous—and sometimes acrimonious—confrontation between these vying theological emphases over the last few decades. Surely we can now come to see that both are true in their own respect, that both are good and necessary dimensions of human being and human flourishing—and they are so because they reflect human structures endowed by God. Surely both are based in the biblical testimony, and are not mutually exclusive. Surely the neglect of either by the other is an impoverishment. All this is the case, for surely God is both Alpha and Omega, and to confess both of the One, True God does not entail necessary internal contradiction. That is not to deny that mutual enrichment sometimes entails mutual purgation. The tendency of certain currents in liberation theology to untether themselves from their proper eschatological orientation and grounding, to overturn the asymmetrical structure of liberation, and to neglect the element of transfigured discontinuity between the earthly-historical and the heavenly-Kingdom body and society (1 Cor 15) leads some of them to the calculus of an enclosed horizon that undermines the radicality of the Gospel hope beyond the world and cannot fully reckon with the reality of death.

² As inspired by Roberto Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Towards a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009).

§7.1: THE DRIVING FORCE OF LIBERATION

One contemporary manifestation of the Kingdom, described by liberation theology in its context as the experience of liberation by the poor—their concrete experience of struggling for life, for sustenance, for agency, for recognition, for affirmation—can be interpreted as an economic work of the Spirit. Insofar as the historical process of liberation authentically represents the overturning of unjust structures, oppressive patterns of society and death-affirming practices of exploitation for the freedom, dignity, harmony and life of the Kingdom, this process is an endowment of the Spirit's future. The Spirit's activity in the world is thus the driving force behind the experience of liberation.

§7.1.1: *Experience of the Spirit in Historical Liberation*—Some of these dynamics have already been profoundly, if only partially, sketched and explored by Leonardo Boff in his moving *Trinity and Society*. Boff characterizes the Spirit there as the “driving force of integral liberation” in the world, and he makes a similar eschatological connection that Jenson makes in the economy: “the influence of the Spirit is above all creative, looking to the future.”³ For Boff, the doctrine of the Trinity in general is the foundation for liberative praxis in the world: “This understanding of the mystery of the Trinity is extremely rich in suggestion in the context of oppression and desire for liberation.” He further suggests that it is a particularly robust pneumatology that provides a decisive dimension to the liberative implications of this doctrine, for the Spirit represents “the difference, the openness, [the] communion” of Divine Reality. In the

³ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Paul Burns, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 192.

thirdness of the Spirit, Boff argues, the Divine reality “being three avoids solitude, overcomes separation and surpasses exclusion.” Because the Spirit fulfills this role in the Divine Life, He also works for these tasks in the world and among the People of God: “the Spirit is the principle *that creates difference and communion*” in history.⁴

Boff also derives his account of the Person of the Spirit from the Spirit’s work in the world, which has the shape of liberation. One aspect of the “mission” of the Spirit “is to *liberate* from the oppression brought into being by our sinful state...” This liberation wrought by the Spirit enables believers to “face new situations creatively,” to creatively re-appropriate what had gone before us. For this reason, the Spirit is especially for Boff the “*pater pauperum*,” the “father of the poor,” for the Spirit instills in the poor the creativity to confront demeaning and degrading situations, “giving them strength to resist, courage to rise up, creativity to find new ways.” The Spirit awakens and emboldens those who are “dependent” and “oppressed” for the task of historical liberation: “the expression in time of full salvation in God...[which] finds practical expression in participation by the many, at all levels of social life, in the advancement of human dignity, in creating the maximum of opportunity for everyone.”⁵ Thus, for Boff, the Spirit actualizes openness to the coming Kingdom of God wherever and insofar as historical agents who once might have been dependent or marginalized discover their own agency for transcendence and participate as community in the

⁴ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 6, 3, 194.

⁵ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 194, 13.

affirmation and recognition of dignity or in the relative increase of opportunity for human flourishing.

As also with Jenson, the eschatologically and creatively oriented work of the Spirit, in its distinctive character, has implications for possibility vis-à-vis the unfolding of historical continuity: “This implies a break with what had gone before, a crisis of the established modes, an opening out to what is not yet known, has not yet been tried. The Spirit sets humankind free from an obsession with its origins, its desire to return to the original paradise, access to which had been finally closed (Gen. 3:23). The Spirit moves us on toward the promised land, the destiny that has to be built and revealed in the future.” Boff associates this with the “hiddenness” and “self-effacement” of the Spirit, for the Spirit represents the unforeseen, often unanticipated, potential. This Spirit catalyzes people in “history with creative powers and allows them to become true agents, not mere repeaters of some external impulse.” The potential of the Spirit includes the “power” of imagination over and above the *status quo*, the “logic of imagination...against the power of established facts.” Most potently, Boff argues, “History contains law and order, institutions and traditions, authority and the weight of facts. But it also contains revolutions, the overthrow of one sort of order and its replacement by another; it contains the making of new things, breaks with tradition and setting-up of different frames of reference implying different forms of behaviour.”⁶ Thereby, Boff associates the Spirit with “revolutions” and “overturnings” of history, which certainly has biblical precedent, in the Exodus paradigm for example or in Judges. Yet he might have

⁶ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 192-193, 208.

been less categorical about this endorsement, given the ambiguous and pernicious nature of revolutions—and their often unintended ravages. Certainly knowledge of and givenness of facts are also essential for human thriving. Certainly law and order have their place in human flourishing. Certainly perpetual revolution would not be a humanly conducive situation (the extent, ambiguity and volatility of the Mexican Revolution would be a concrete Latin American case study here).⁷ Certainly man cannot live on upheaval alone!

It would also be prudent here to recur to our discussion of the tropification, or analogical interval, necessary in the relation of the immanent and economic trinity. There might be a potential temptation here *simply* to associate the Father or the Son with origination and stability (=pejorative) and the Spirit simply with newness and imagination (=desirable). But that would be a significant mistake. The Spirit is likewise—precisely as *Spiritus Creator*—the Spirit of the origin and the Spirit of authentic continuity, stability and institution, the objective Spirit, the Spirit of tradition.⁸ Just as the Father is jointly the Father of the New Creation the Father of the Kingdom, the Father of surprise, at the end together with the Spirit in their work. And yet, it is the Spirit, in particular, to whom is authentically appropriated the work of consummation and final innovation, precisely in His eternal character as the Unsurpassed, as the hypostatic Absolute Outcome and Improvisation of Divine Being. It is the Spirit, then, who endows the fundamental difference enclosed within the biblical trajectory from the

⁷ Desperately needed for the society in general, yet also ferociously destructive in many of its ravages and factions—to start: William H. Beezley and Michael C. Meyer, eds., *Oxford History of Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Part IV.

⁸ Most elegantly: Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 3:307-367 and much of the material in Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 4: *Spirit and Institution*.

Garden → City. The arc of the biblical narrative is not the cyclic, eternal return to the Garden, but the development entailed in the innovation from the Garden to the City. So it is a question here, as also with Jenson, whether the eschatological newness of arrival of the future has been kept in proper tension with the continuity of traditional unfolding of the origin. The City, after all, includes the Garden within it, and human life does not occur without stability and continuity.

Boff does, however, suggest some criteria for the authentic discernment of the Spirit amidst the tumult of possibility, the differentiation between misleading and salutary “spirits”:

when [the poor] are filled with creative imagination and plan utopias of the reconciled world in which all will have enough to eat and be able to profit from the bounty of nature, then we can say: the Spirit is at work there, being the catalyst in a conflictive situation. Such historical processes are pregnant with the Spirit. The same Spirit raises up charismatic leaders who sustain enthusiasm and rekindle dormant powers in everyone. Then the creative spirit bursts out in every segment of life, in the power of the Holy Spirit: in political leadership, in the inventiveness of science and the arts, in the originality shown by the people in dealing with problems of subsistence, in the tenderness they preserve in the midst of lethal struggles and fatal dramas.⁹

This account could be further integrated with the biblically paradigmatic catalogue of criteria for spiritual discernment, the “fruits of the Spirit” from Galatians 5. Yet, we can see, nevertheless, the authentic work of the Spirit wherever people are led to implement liberation in its historical manifestation that anticipates the Kingdom. Wherever the innovation and charisma of imagination precipitates authentic humanization in a Kingdom-form way, we can discern the work of the Spirit in historical liberation.

⁹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 208-209.

Boff has reprised and expanded some of these themes in his recent 2015 work, *Come, Holy Spirit (O Espírito Santo)*. Here he attempts to elaborate on the liberative work of the Spirit “in the cosmos, in humankind, in religions, in the churches, and in every human being, especially in the poor,” paying special attention to the context of evolutionary cosmology, in which “Spirit is the ability of all beings—even the most fundamental ones like Higgs bosons, hadrons, quarks, protons and atoms—to relate to one another, to exchange information, and to create the networks of interconnection that make possible the complex unity of the whole...[and] the increasing complexity of the universe [that] gives rise to consciousness, and to our perception of an evolutionary Omega point toward which we are moving,” and to the context of the current environmental crisis, in which “our hostility toward the earth and all its ecosystems...is poised to wipe out human life, destroy our civilization, and inflict terrible damage on the whole biosphere.”¹⁰

In this work Boff more clearly specifies, beyond general slogans, where he interprets the work of the Spirit, especially the intervention and improvisation of the Spirit to overcome impasses. The Spirit, he argues, while “everywhere in history” is particularly present in His hypostatic initiative in great “crisis” or “critical moments” in the “universe, for humanity, or for the life of the individual. For creation, Boff speaks of the “big bang” event and the discovery of the Higgs Boson particle as decisive loci of the Spirit’s initiative. In history, Boff identifies: the Second Vatican Council, the CELAM Conference at Medellín (1968), the

¹⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Come Holy Spirit: Inner Fire, Giver of Life, and Comforter of the Poor*, Margaret Wilde, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), vii, 57-58, 60, viii.

emergence of ecclesial base communities in Latin America, the rise of Catholic Charismatic movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the Arab Spring democratization, and, for him most decisively, the election of Pope Francis in 2013 as paradigmatic “inspiring breakthroughs made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit.” These specific events are examples of the Spirit’s continuing liberative work in history and creation, all of which correspond to what Boff sees as the broad characteristics of the Spirit, “of movement, action, process, appearance, story, and the irruption of something new and surprising.”¹¹

Boff has special concern in this work to foreground universal and cosmic pneumatology, describing the universe itself as the “Temple” and “field of action” of the Spirit (Chapter 10), the movement of the Spirit in universal history (Chapters 1-2) and delineating a universal personal experience of Spirit that he coalesces from descriptions of primal religions, Hebrew *ruach*, Greek *pneuma* and the Axé and Nagô phenomenon of the Yourba peoples (Chapter 3). In addition to those emphases, nevertheless, he still reckons with the traditionally more contoured theology of the Spirit in the context of New Testament holiness (Chapter 5), trinitarian doctrine (Chapters 6-7), the understanding of the Church (Chapter 11) and spirituality or life in the Spirit (Chapters 12-13). All of these contexts, Boff interprets as theatres for the Spirit’s “liberating mission.” At the same time, he qualifies, “the spirit of wickedness is still working against life and against everything than is holy and divine,” though this is a point he often fails to integrate into the other dimensions of his analysis. Primarily, Boff highlights, “the world is pregnant with the Spirit” wherever, “crumbling institutions are

¹¹ Boff, *Come Holy Spirit*, 1-32, viii.

suddenly renewed and begin to serve the communities that need them.” This would be his most intense encapsulation of the Spirit as the driving force of the work of liberation.¹²

Luis Benavides—to summon one more witness in this context—describes the importance of the work of the Spirit to the historical experience of liberation in some similar ways. Benavides does so, however, from the context of US Latinos, especially in an urban context. He catalogues the experience of the Spirit among Latinos in the US through the struggle for “survival, resistance, and liberation.” Drawing on the work of Paul Tillich in his *Systematics*,¹³ Benavides describes how the Spirit catalyzes among socially displaced persons, “self-integration” (negotiating between the individual affirmation and their broader societal participation), “self-creativity” (negotiating the integrity and non-abandonment of their own cultural meaning with viability in the cultural matrix of the dominant society), and “self-transcendence” (negotiating their freedom and self-determination in the context of reckoning with the possibilities available to them). Where personal activity and societal structures tend toward and facilitate increase of self-integration, self-creativity and self-transcendence, the “Spirit is at work today—as vivifier, liberator, and...judge—aiming to provide power and enable the Latino/a Christian to change him/herself and society at large. The Spirit provides the foundation for being in the world and is the divine help for liberation, resistance, and survival in the U.S. urban context.”¹⁴

¹² Boff, *Come Holy Spirit*, 199-200.

¹³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:Part IV.

¹⁴ Luis E. Benavides, “The Spirit” from Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre, eds., *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 25-31.

§7.1.2: Liberation & Traditional Trinitarian Theology—Drawing from this view of the Spirit’s work for liberation in the world, Boff also critiques certain emphases of the theological tradition. Especially, Boff thoroughly embraces the “social model of the trinity” and lambastes the traditional theology of processions and the Divine taxis. He is critical of the procession model and the description of derivation, trinitarian order and taxis, and he recirculates the old charge that “beginning” from one “essence” can only be impersonalist and subordinationist. He prefers the description of Divine unity strictly as that of *perichoresis* or communion. Because of the traditional model of processions, says Boff, “There is no indication of the Spirit’s original qualities as a Person.” So he also offers his own rendition of what Stăniloae called the “intersubjectivity” of Divine Persons in the movement of procession: “What theological tradition calls unbornness, begetting and procession is really a single, tri-une act of *mutual recognition* and *mutual revelation* in which each of the three Persons participates simultaneously.”¹⁵ For Boff, the eternal act of God is one of “mutual,” reciprocal affirmation of the three Divine Persons of one another.

Boff adopts the attack that others have made of the political dangers he sees inherent in a *mere monotheism*: “authoritarian theories can lead to acceptance of a rigid monotheism, just as theological vision of an a-trinitarian monotheism can serve as an ideological underpinning of power concentrated in one person...”¹⁶ He associates this with the belief in one, all-powerful God and Lord correlative to premodern patriarchal societies and to authoritarian political

¹⁵ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 202, 206, emphasis added.

¹⁶ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 20.

structures, as with the *caudillo* in Latin America. Trinitarian doctrine represents the antidote to this mere monotheism, Boff advances, but only one that is fully purified of any “monotheistic” vestiges. For this reason, Boff rejects not only the psychological analogy for the trinity, but also the Greek notion of the monarchy of the Father as sole source of the Divine Life and the putatively Latin notion of the Divine Essence as the starting point of trinitarian reflection. He further dispenses with the modern notion of God as Absolute Subject as the single locus of the Divine “I”—found in varying forms in Rahner and Barth—all of which options, for Boff, still reek of the lingering scent of monotheism, and therefore are insufficiently liberative doctrines of the trinity. To counter, Boff argues that we must begin our doctrine of God simply with the axiomatic, equi-primoridality in communion of the three Divine Persons. He calls this the “perichoresis-communion model.” The force of the communion aspect, he thinks, prevents this doctrine from tending towards tritheism, while fully affirming the communality of God, and therefore the necessary co-communality of human persons in society. While Boff continues to use the language of “processions,” “begetting,” etc., to distinguish the Divine Persons, he insists that these terms do not entail any “intra-divine production process, any causal dependence” in the Divine Life, which “avoids the danger of subordinationist hierarchization in God....”¹⁷

Unfortunately at this point, Boff is susceptible to many of the counter-critiques the Ayers, Coakley and Holmes (et al.) catalogued about superficial narratives of trinitarian theology (§5.2). Jenson, of course, is as well, in his complete and radical identification of the immanent and economic trinity.

¹⁷ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 146, 123-154.

However, what Jenson does provide is a more nuanced incorporation of the insights that Boff unearths about the liberative Spirit as the power for the future integrated into the traditional model of Divine processions and the traditional theology of the Divine taxis, which is biblically grounded. Instead of dismissing this aspect of the biblical witness, Jenson provides a new way to look at the co-activity and co-agency of the Spirit in the Divine Life that upholds the unbegottenness and the origin dimension of God's Reality.

Catherine LaCugna, despite many of the ethical sensibilities she discerns in common between Liberation and feminist trinitarian theology is even more forceful on this point. Boff's dismissal of the trinitarian taxis, she claims, takes him precisely away from what we see in the economy and then undercuts the methodological grounds for his reflection altogether: "This total and complete 'mutuality' of relationships, together with the denial of any procession of persons or any hypostatic distinctiveness, and, finally, the idea that divine life consists of a face-to-face revelation of each person to the other persons, outstrips anything we know from the economy of salvation." In other words, Boff proposes to begin trinitarian doctrine from the economy. But the economy clearly shows some "order" between the trinitarian persons, clearly and unambiguously from the Father to the Son and the Spirit, more ambiguously between the Son and the Spirit. To dispense altogether, then, with the taxis of Divine persons, LaCugna criticizes, is to do away entirely with the economy in favor of an abstracted metaphysics of communion: "The leveling of the persons into a residual substance shared equally and identically by all three...[becomes] a speculation on intratrinitarian relations so divorced from biblical testimony to the quite

distinctive role of each divine person, that it is really no more than a highly reified [the great anathema!] account of divine substance.” The result is precisely the opposition to what Boff originally intends, says LaCugna, “[t]his methodological move in the end undercuts Boff’s real concern which is to ground in God his vision of how social and political life ought to be structured.” LaCugna aligns this critique of Boff with her campaign more broadly against Latin scholastic trinitarian theology for its “essentialism” (in this case the essence is merely modulated as “communion,” she surmises), for attempting to delineate a vision of the immanent trinity not strictly related to the economic trinity, and for making “individual” the criterion of Divine personhood, even if this is so “dynamically” as “individual-in-relation.”¹⁸

What I would take from LaCugna’s counter-position here is the indispensability of an “ordered” relation between the Divine Persons, as this is given to us in the self-disclosure of God in the economy. It is precisely some “order” that is disclosed to us in the Divine missions in the economy that reveals the trinitarian differentiation of Divine Persons. Where I would concur with Boff is in two respects: (1) to forge the link between the work of the Spirit in economic liberation, the believer’s participation in such a work as done “in” the Spirit, and the eternal hypostatic character of the Spirit, as well as (2) the need for a relatively more robust articulation of the distinct personal agency of the Spirit in the eternal divine communion. I think, however, this can be done sufficiently, in a more nuanced negotiation vis-à-vis traditional trinitarian theology, without dispensing with the classical processional model and the ordered relations of the

¹⁸ LaCugna, *God with Us*, 277, 275-278, emphasis emended.

trinitarian taxis, beginning with the mono-arche of the Father, and relying on the axiomatization of the Divine Persons in perichoresis. The consideration of the Divine relations from the Persons of the Spirit as the Absolute telos opens up space for similar connections, but in a way that is better integrated with traditional trinitarian theology.¹⁹

§7.1.3: *The Living Spirit*—José Comblin, who has been called the “outstanding theologian” of the Spirit,²⁰ is another who associates a more explicit awareness of the Holy Spirit with the contemporary experience of the poor, with their irruption into history and their own self-awakening, self-affirmation and agency. Comblin interprets the renewed experience of God and movement for liberation in Latin America as “properly” an “experience of the Holy Spirit,” which “comes about principally in poor communities.” The movement for liberation among Latin America Christians he associates directly with a lavish experience of the Spirit in that community. “There is nothing surprising,” Comblin continues, “that experience of the Spirit regains its value and esteem in the churches precisely when they come to rediscover the meaning of the preferential option for the poor.” For awareness of the poor goes along with “understanding the Holy Spirit.” When the Church is comfortable, wealthy,

¹⁹ The particular way that Boff describes the pneumatization of Mary, Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 210-212, is also a highly problematic aspect of his program here, given the constant witness of the tradition that the Pentecostal analogue to the Incarnation does not belong to any one individual but to the Church as community and given the hazy biblical basis. Boff has “doubled-down” on this theology in his new book, describing the event of “overshadowing” as a pneumatization of Mary in direct parallel to the incarnation of the Son in Jesus, such that from this event onward, “the Holy Spirit formed a single reality with” Mary. In this, Boff seems to have created a *de facto* “quaternity” with the Father, Son-Jesus, Spirit-Mary: Boff, *Come Holy Spirit*, Chapter 9, 2, 65, 71.

²⁰ Boff, *Come Holy Spirit*, 109.

strong, the Church neglects and is led astray from its reliance on spirituality, on the Spirit. The Spirit is present in weakness and vulnerability and lowliness, such that the aspiration for “integral liberation of the peoples of the continent of Latin American is precisely an experience of the Holy Spirit.”²¹

Comblin goes on to catalogue the fresh experiences of the Spirit he discerns today. Comblin interprets the broad movement of monumental change of late modern society, and in particular, the change of the Second Vatican Council and the shift to the option for the poor, all as decisive “signs of the times” that the experience of the Holy Spirit is resurfacing in our day. This is a kairos moment, in his estimation: “For the church, this transformation is more radical than the transition from Israel to the Gentiles, more radical than the establishment of the institutional church under Constantine or the Protestant Reformation: the present transformation forces it to a more radical reappraisal of itself and challenges many more aspects of it than have been challenged hitherto.”²² The transformation that is going on today, an epochal one for the Church says Comblin, has both facilitated but also necessitated a recovery of the doctrine of the Spirit for a healthy theology. Comblin tethers this claim to a—by now obscenely predictable—lament on the need for pneumatology thanks to a “Western theology” that “virtually from its beginnings...lost all interest in the Holy Spirit” and championed a “christomonism,”²³ having lost the distinctive agency of the Spirit. But in this respect, he is also balanced in his criticism of the liberation theology that preceded him for adopting the same patterns of thought.

²¹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, xi, xiii-xiv.

²² Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 9-10.

²³ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, xi, 13-15.

Liberation theology, he suggested, had also unfurled its distinctive thought primarily in christological terms—up to that point in the 1990s—to the severe and debilitating neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; thereby a more holistic pneumatology of liberation was required.²⁴

Comblin further explicates various aspects of this transformation, and these challenges, and labors to interpret them under the NT experience of the Spirit. Most decisively, he argues for the coordination of an awareness of this transformation, the awakening of the agency of the poor and the movement of the Holy Spirit, as the intimate experience of the *Dios liberador*.²⁵ He describes these dramatically in the Latin American context as experiences of “action,” “freedom,” “speech,” “community” and “life” that overcome passivity, slavery, marginalization, silence, isolation and death.²⁶ The movement of the Spirit for action, freedom, speech, community and life, Comblin suggests, are occurring throughout the world, in the Church, in the shift between charism and institution, and in the believer, in connection with the work of Christ, as Comblin retrieves the vibrant Irenaean image of the “two hands” to describe this work. The Son works through the incarnation, through the concreteness and specificity of the individual. “The mission of the Holy Spirit, however,” advances Comblin, “is every bit as important as the mission of the Son. The Holy Spirit is not incarnated in one individual. It is not tied to any one person...The Holy Spirit is sent to all places at all times. It is present in the whole of humanity...The Holy

²⁴ José Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 462-463.

²⁵ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 464.

²⁶ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 19-31.

Spirit dwells in multiplicity, takes on diversity, creating a movement of communion and converges from within the immensity of human diversity.”²⁷

§7.1.4: Five Characteristics of the Living Spirit—What does the Spirit who is the *Dios liberador* do? The work of the Spirit, in this respect, is given as the freedom to manifest the eschatological Kingdom in the midst of oppressive history. There are five aspects describing the character of the Liberator Spirit that I will explore here:

1. Comblin describes this first as *action*. In Comblin’s assessment, the mass of the people of Latin America, for most of their colonial history, “have been subjected to an absolute passivity” (I’m not sure “absolute,” for absolute passivity would be death. But I think we take his point of being circumscribed to a “radical” incapacity to influence their own daily, social and historical lives). Therefore, the work of the Spirit in history in this dimension is to move to catalyze agency, to enable the personal awareness of and responsibility for oneself and for one’s community, its traditions, its inheritance and its future, its possibilities that belongs to the holistic communion of the Heavenly City before God. This happens, says Comblin, in the “most humble” ways, when there is “simple cooperation among neighbors, meeting for particular actions like petitioning the authorities, or simpler still, celebrations of the events of the community. The mere fact of taking the initiative and assuming collective responsibility constitutes a new life.”²⁸ This “new life” is, in the era of the Church, reminiscent of the biblical period of the Judges, when the Spirit blows and the historical

²⁷ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 140-142, 162.

²⁸ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 464.

agency of the community is revived once again. This agency, interpreted as an event of the Spirit, is the freedom for “mission,”²⁹ to participate in the Divine mission and so to discern one’s role in the theo-drama that has its finale in the Kingdom.

2. *Freedom*—Associated with the first aspect, but dealing more with exterior restraints, much of the experience of colonial Latin America for a large swath of its people, says Comblin, has been the experience of slavery (in the straightforward *de jure* sense) or in a political-economic domination and dependence that functions like a kind of slavery (in a *de facto* sense). With the experience of the Spirit, by contrast, comes the increasing movement toward freedom from slavery and from domination: “There is freedom when horizontal relationships appear among equals—when large numbers acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters and cooperate with one another, without any of them arrogating to themselves special privileges over the others. This freedom is the opportunity to be and to exist for oneself, to grow for oneself, not to be robbed of all one’s progress by a superior power that monopolizes all production.”³⁰

3. *Word*—The Spirit accompanies the Word, and catalyzes expression. Whereas for much of the colonial history of Latin American, the majority of the population has lived in ignorance, without having public voice, the Spirit moves them to testify. The people “begin to speak...begin to tell the truth, to say what is really happening, to recount actual, factual history.” The word of the “poor

²⁹ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 22.

³⁰ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 466.

communities” is not unambiguous, but in its basic sense it is “the self-assertion” of the community, of “their will to exist, and expression of their dignity.”³¹ Insofar as it is this affirmatory word, a true and beautiful word, such a speaking is an anticipation of the discourse of the Kingdom, of the eschatological, antiphonal harmony of the Kingdom that Jenson describes as the End that the Spirit gives.

4. *Community*—is obviously a thematic of the Spirit’s work that Jenson has covered significantly. In Latin America, the historical structures of passivity, inaudibility and slavery have promoted an isolation, fragmentation, deracination that mitigates and undermines authentic community, the destiny of the Kingdom, the Great Communion. In Latin American, the historical experience has often been of the predominant pattern that, “crams into the mines, the plantations, the outskirts of the teeming cities, the slum ghettos and rural slums, whole populations—millions of separated, isolated, rootless persons.” In response, the Spirit works to create “new ties and new solidarities” in such a situation. What emerges is the “Christian communities, and it comes on the scene as a miracle of God.” Reforged communities of persons occur as “a sensible sign of the Spirit in the world...The Spirit enables the poor to maintain their community by themselves, and yet to create bonds of communion with other communities.”³² And so, with the work of the Spirit, we see the stabilization and intensification of communion.

5. Lastly, *life*—The experience of Latin American has often been one of disproportionate, premature and savage suffering and death, which Gutiérrez has

³¹ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 467-468.

³² Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 469-470.

connected to a fundamental idolatry of gold; death and idolatry go together.³³ The Spirit is the one who gives life, ultimately eternal life, which is testament against the finality of death. The God of Life, says Comblin, “is the Holy Spirit.” Thus, in “their quest for life, Latin Americans thirst for the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit will give life to the dead bones, decisively in the eschatological sense after all have passed through death at one time or another. But even now, in history, the “Spirit produces new vitality in this people shattered by so many physical and moral miseries.”³⁴ It is this aspect of “life” as a characterization of the Spirit that I would like to highlight here, in order to further elaborate on the connection between the work of the Spirit in the world for liberation that has been canvassed and the hypostatic character of the Spirit in His eternal identity.

Comblin indicates the transition from this experience of the work of the Spirit in action, freedom, word, community, life to the Person of the Spirit, how the latter is disclosed in the former: “The mission of the Holy Spirit in creation shows its reality as a Person of the Holy Trinity.” In the eternal relations of the Divine Persons, Comblin explores the character this endows on the Spirit as “love,” “gift” and “life.” Life, he suggests, is particularly appropriate for Latin American theology, which “also tend[s] to be a proclamation of life,” though it does so relatively more in “prophetic” than “liturgical tones.” “By combining liturgy and doxology with prophecy,” however, he concludes, “we shall come to a resounding proclamation of the triumph of the Holy Spirit.” Comblin is actually quite tentative with this proposal, however, and what it entails for the Divine Life,

³³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor Jesus Christ*, Robert Barr, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), Part V.

³⁴ Comblin, “The Holy Spirit” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 471.

laudably attempting to respect the fact that here “we are entering into the secret of God, which is inaccessible to us.”³⁵ Nevertheless, Jenson’s more fully developed proposals about the eternal relations and movements of the Spirit in the Divine Life could be helpful here. They could especially show how the Spirit is particularly hypostatic “Life,” unquenchable life, insofar as the Spirit is the Unsurpassed Outcome and future of and in God. Thus a more sturdy connection is established between the liberative experience of the Spirit that Comblin catalogues and the proper characterization of the Spirit in the Divine Life.

§7.2: INTEGRAL LIBERATION

Connecting the experience of liberation as an economic work of the Spirit to the Spirit’s eternal person and the relations of the Spirit in the Divine Life more deeply grounds and further enlarges the meaning of the liberation as employed in liberation theology’s discourse. While keeping in mind the analogical interval between the economic and immanent referents of this term, the analogical integrity between the creaturely experience of liberation in the history of salvation and the Divine archetype of Liberation signifies the holistic reality of “integral liberation.”

§7.2.1: *Three Modes of Liberation*—To get at the meaning of liberation for which the Spirit is claimed to be the driving force, I will next look at the theologically semantic range of the term as elucidated by Gustavo Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez describes three “reciprocally interpenetrating levels of meaning”³⁶ to the phenomenon of “liberation,” a soteriological event that occurs as “something

³⁵ Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation*, 163, 177.

³⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15th anniversary ed., Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, eds. and trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 24.

comprehensive, an integral reality from which nothing is excluded, because only such an idea of it explains the work of him in whom all the promises are fulfilled.”³⁷ This is what has been called “integral liberation”:

(1) “First, there is liberation from social situations of oppression and marginalization that force many...*to live in conditions contrary to God’s will* for their life.” This we might call “socio-historical liberation” (though all liberation takes place in history, or finally in transfigured history: the New Jerusalem). Socio-historical liberation, according to Gutiérrez, refers to the process in history and in social relations of amelioration. Conditions that threaten to undermine the survival, safety, identity and equality of living persons must be transformed into situations that sustain the survival, development and relationships of human persons—life, and life abundantly.

(2) “But it is not enough that we be liberated from oppressive socio-economic structures; also needed is a *personal transformation* by which we live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude, and this is the second dimension....”³⁸ I will call this “agential liberation.” Since *every* human person needs finally to be personally transformed, with their holistic agency being brought into personal appropriation of God’s gift, “the process of liberation requires the *active participation of the oppressed*” and must reckon with internal conflicts among them. Personal liberation entails the active appropriation of persons of their situation in life and the peaceful negotiation of their surroundings with their internal identity. This is liberation for the freedom of the

³⁷ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 25.

³⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii, emphasis added.

human *spirit*, not just the human body, or the human in their material conditions and surroundings.³⁹

(3) “Finally,” analyzes Gutiérrez, “there is *liberation from sin*, which attacks *the deepest root of all servitude*; for sin is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings, and therefore cannot be eradicated except by the unmerited redemptive love of the Lord whom we receive by faith and in communion with one another.”⁴⁰ The whole threefold process of liberation, for Gutiérrez depends on the initiating, objective work of Christ: “The salvation of the whole man is centered upon Christ the Liberator.”⁴¹ In this, there is “spiritual liberation”: liberation from alienation from God, from others and from self and for the love of God, the love of neighbor and the appropriate love of self.

To describe the notion of liberation in another way, we can look at it more directly from the human side of the event: (1) “aspirations of oppressed peoples” which are at odds with established socio-economic interests; (2) “an understanding of history,” the gravitation toward true freedom and the authentic responsibility for destiny and (3) as theologically inclusive: “Christ is presented as the one who brings us liberation. Christ the Savior liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free...he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human fellowship.”⁴² Gutiérrez himself tends to keep the relationship of the eschatological Kingdom to the historical project of

³⁹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 67.

⁴⁰ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii, emphasis added.

⁴¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 83.

⁴² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 24-25.

participating in faithful discipleship in their proper structure: “Rather there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history”; “the salvific action of God underlies all human existence. The historical destiny of humanity must be placed definitively in the salvific horizon. Only thus will its true dimensions emerge and its deepest meaning be apparent.”⁴³ The eschatological horizon endows the work of God for liberation in human history, in which people participate, with its coherent ground and meaning: “The full significance of God’s action in history is understood only when it is put in its eschatological perspective; similarly, the revelation of the final meaning of history gives value to the present. The self-communication of God points toward the future, and at the same time this Promise and Good News reveal humanity to itself and widen the perspective of its historical commitment here and now.”⁴⁴

The relationship between these three meanings of liberation has been contested. Yet Gutiérrez argues how the first two meanings can be seen in their necessary interrelationship with the third and ultimate meaning: “...all struggle against exploitation and alienation, in a history which is fundamentally one, is an attempt to vanquish selfishness, the negation of love. This is the reason why any effort to build a just society is liberating...It is a salvific work, although it is not all of salvation. As a human work, it is not exempt from ambiguities...But this does not weaken its basic orientation or its objective result.” Socio-historical and agential liberation, then, even ambiguous, are intimately connected to spiritual liberation in their unified witness to the arrival of the Kingdom and in

⁴³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 86.

⁴⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 95.

their unfolding of the image of Christ, the concretization of the great commandments, the sanctification of the believer in the Spirit. “Moreover, we can say that the historical political liberating event is the growth of the Kingdom and is a salvific event but it is not the coming of the Kingdom, not all of salvation. It is the historical realization of the Kingdom and, therefore, it also proclaims its fullness. This is where the distinction lies. It is a distinction made from a dynamic viewpoint, which has nothing to do with the one which holds for the existence of two juxtaposed orders....”⁴⁵

§7.2.2: *The Eschatological Horizon*—The Vatican CDF response to liberation theology resounds with a number of these themes and affirms them. The document first upholds the role of liberation as a decisive theological theme. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation,” it states. The “powerful and almost irresistible aspiration that people have for liberation constitutes one of the principle ‘signs of the times’ which the Church has to examine and interpret in the light of the Gospel.” The yearning for liberation laudably affirms the “dignity of every human person,” the “vocation” of every people as children before God, the solidarity between persons in various social situations and the responsibility of those in more comfortable and stable social situations for those in more tenuous ones. The desire for liberation is, therefore, a desire that “finds a strong and fraternal echo in the heart and spirit of Christians” and a “theme which is fundamental to the Old and New Testaments,” and gravitates toward the “urgency of its practical realization.” The movement of liberation coheres with the mission of the Church to “awaken Christian

⁴⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 104.

consciences to a sense of justice, social responsibility, and solidarity with the poor and oppressed....”⁴⁶

Insofar as the thematic of liberation is a desire for freedom and for life, I think that this affirmation of the Vatican also coheres with what John Paul II has written on behalf of the magisterium about the Holy Spirit: that the Church “is responding to certain deep desires which she believes she can discern in people's hearts today: a fresh discovery of God in his transcendent reality as the infinite Spirit.” The fresh discovery of the Spirit corresponds to the Spirit's role of communicating most intimately the knowledge of God (and therefore of personal dignity, integrity and agency before God), to the Spirit's role in cultivating freedom (liberation) and as the source and giver of life to creation (the affirmation of life).⁴⁷ Indeed, Robert Imbelli has analyzed the trajectory of post-conciliar magisterial documents to say that the whole tradition typically invokes and “refers explicitly to the Holy Spirit as the ultimate theological justification for the church's engagement in social ministry.” The Church's whole social doctrine and action can be interpreted under the sign of the Spirit. Referring to John Paul II's, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, Imbelli further notes the deep resonance between the themes of liberation and pneumatology there: “[t]he encyclical starkly contrasts those signs of slavery and death in contemporary society with the sign

⁴⁶ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984), §Preface, I.1-3, III.1, III.4, V.1 (Vatican Archives Online:http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html).

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986), §2 (Vatican Archives Online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_18051986_dominum-et-vivificantem.html).

of the Spirit who gives life...and urges that...humankind place itself under the liberating lordship of the Spirit.”⁴⁸

On the other hand, however, the Vatican document also seeks to clarify the proper structure and basis of the theme of liberation. “Liberation is first and foremost,” it is to be reiterated, “liberation from the radical slavery of sin. Its end and its goal is the freedom of the children of God, which is the gift of grace. As a...consequence, it also calls for freedom from many different kinds of slavery in the cultural, economic, social and political spheres, all of which derive ultimately from sin, and so often prevent people from living in a manner befitting their dignity.”⁴⁹ The spiritual nature of humanity as *imago dei* and the fundamentally spiritual nature of all reality before God (Jn 4:24) as its origin and outcome provides the context in which the struggle for historical and material liberation is meaningful and will be vindicated in the Judgment and Justice of God. Gutiérrez himself clearly insisted on this point, thought it has not been so clear that his epigones have done so, some challenging that this emphasis is insufficiently radical and liberative from antipolitical abstractions.

The reduction of spiritual liberation to material liberation, however, only serves to undermine the meaningful coherence of liberation altogether: “To some it even seems that the necessary struggle for human justice and freedom in the economic and political sense constitute the whole essence of salvation. For them, the Gospel is reduced to a purely earthly gospel.” The result is that “there is a tendency to identify the kingdom of God and its growth with the human

⁴⁸ Imbelli, “Holy Spirit,” 488-489.

⁴⁹ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984), §Preface (Vatican Archives Online).

liberation movement, and to make history itself the subject of its own development....”⁵⁰ The Kingdom of God will finally occur, however, as Gift of the Spirit, as final Improvisation, as coming down to earth, such that the new heavens and the new earth, the Heavenly Jerusalem, while bearing the wounds of Jerusalem’s earthly struggles, will also be transfigured in a way that transcends its historical unfolding. The document also seeks to question the potentiality for totalizing perspectives, when one identifies oneself with the program of “the poor” so as to make oneself immune to criticism by the a priori dismissal of counter-positions extrinsic to one’s location and experience. The criticism of certain tendencies of the liberation thematic, it should be said lastly, is not an undermining of its primal insights nor an opportunity for indifference: “it should

⁵⁰ In response, some simply dismiss the question as entirely baseless: as with Roberto Oliveros, “History of the Theology of Liberation” from *Mysterium Liberationis*, 26-27, who claims that one needs little “in order to grasp the unfounded character of such assertions. If we observe the witness of their [the liberation theologians] lives and their functions in the church communities in which they work, we can only be astonished at such statements in the Instruction” (as if the *Instruction* ever speaks of impugning the concrete spiritual lives of any individual person?!), also Juan José Tamayo, “Reception of the Theology of Liberation” *Mysterium Liberationis*, 39-41; Clodovis Boff, “Epistemology and Method of the Theology of Liberation” *Mysterium Liberationis*, 59-62, by contrast, tries to navigate the matter as one of *emphasis*: the “primary, basic viewpoint of the theology of liberation...is the givenness of faith,” while “its secondary, particular viewpoint...is the experience of the oppressed” ... he further responds that while “soteriological liberation” “unequivocally maintains the primacy of value” while “ethico-political liberation” simply “holds the primacy of *urgency*” in their context. “Obviously the axiological primacy...belongs to evangelization and the soteriological dimension of liberation. Nevertheless, the primacy of historical *urgency* does not always coincide with the primacy of value. For a hungry people, the first concern will be bread...” In one sense, of course, Boff is exactly right. In another, bread alone in that sense will cease to suffice for all of us *at some point*. Perhaps a distinction between the “order of reality,” in which God as Spirit is absolutely fundamental and the “order of application” or of “understanding” in a given situation might be appropriate. Boff attempts to ground his shift to the primacy of value, unfortunately, in a highly implausible exegesis of Mark 6:30-44 and 1 Cor 15:46 (especially the 1 Cor passage, in its context, implies the precise opposite of his point). Matt 25:35-40 would have been a more appropriate exegetical locus. But also consider by contrast: 1 Cor 15:50!, Matt 4:4, John 6, John 6:63, Ephesians 6:12, 2 Cor 3:6, Rev 21:4.

not at all serve as an excuse for those who maintain the attitude of neutrality and indifference in the face of the tragic and pressing problems of human misery and injustice.”⁵¹ I would like to suggest that Jenson’s model of pneumatology, the eternal pneumatology of relations of outcome and the movements of liberation can help to keep these various dimensions of liberation in proper order and eschatological perspective.

§7.2.3: Divine Liberation (or integrally integral liberation)—Perhaps a fourth level of meaning and significance of “liberation” can provide some common ground. Liberation theology has traditionally proceeded, understandably, by grounding itself in the Divine work in the world. Though there are other ways to biblically and existentially characterize the Divine work of salvation, liberation is a major, crucial and prominent one. The prominent biblical theme of liberation, and the option for the poor, are taken to be characteristic of the economic trinity. This characterization has often been inflected christologically, Christ the One who is the Liberator and the Mediator of Liberation. Of course, the event of liberation insofar as it is a Divine work, is truly a co-work of all three Divine Persons, and so can also be associated with the Father and with the Spirit: *opera dei ad extra indivisa sunt*.

⁵¹ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984), §Preface, VI.4, VIII.3, X.1-16; the issue of alleged “Marxism” was a distraction and mistake of emphasis. Of course, Marxism, like any other philosophical system, is problematic from the perspective of Christian theology in a number of respects. Insofar as any avowed theologians were actually thoroughgoing Marxists, that would be a problem. But the critical engagement with and appropriation of certain Marxist insights or tools should not be excluded, similar to any philosophical program—to a greater or lesser extent—say Aristotelianism or Platonism: as the Gospel indeed enters into critical conversation with any and every antecedent culture in which it finds itself, including intellectual cultures; see the judicious response in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Set You Free: Confrontations*, Matthew J. O’Connell, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 11.

What Jenson's pneumatological model facilitates, however, is a further deepening of the ground of this theology. Liberation is not merely a work of God in the world, but, analogically, describes one aspect of who God is. Gutiérrez profoundly understood this basis, though unfortunately the insight has not always been adopted by his inheritors. In his discussion of the "living" reality of God, to which is coordinated the work of liberation, Gutiérrez exegetes the Exodus paradigm to specify the contrast of life and death, liberation and oppression, "[o]ppression in any of its forms means death. This was the experience of the Jewish people in Egypt, a country that became a symbol of deprivation and exploitation as well as of sin, which is the ultimate cause of injustice. Set over against this experience was the experience of the exodus." This view of God as fundamentally the "living God" mutually implicates situations in the world: "The lack of the necessities for living a human life is contrary to the will of the God whom Jesus reveals to us. A profession of faith in that God implies a rejection of this inhuman situation; conversely, this situation gives content and urgency to the proclamation of the God of life." Dealing with the socio-ethical implications of the belief in God's Nature as "living," however, Gutiérrez specifies the revelational structure of this affirmation, contrary to its misunderstanding. Anything said truly of God is said first paradigmatically of God, and only then, analogically, of creatures. God reveals Himself scripturally as who He is in His work. It is not a view of some work that determines who God is. Thus, Gutiérrez reminds us, "God is revealed in the works of God." The proper ground must be understood. It is not, he avers therefore, that God is Life and Liberator primarily *because* He gives life and liberates. But God liberates and

gives life because of His fundamental Nature, because He is the Reality of Life and Liberation: “*God liberates because God is the God of life.*”⁵²

Jenson’s model suggests why God does not just give life, and consequently liberates, but *is* Life and Liberator hypostatically. The fourth meaning of liberation, and the ground of the other three, is the proper Divine meaning, with the appropriate analogical intervals here necessarily being recognized. The event of Liberation is first and foremost the Divine Act whereby the movement of Divine self-constitution from the Divine Outcome in the Person of the Spirit establishes the eternal communion of Divine Persons who are paradigmatic Life. In God, of course, this Liberation is not a negative overcoming, as it is in creaturely experience, but only a way to signify the positive accomplishment of what God is in His own eternally replete life, and just so the condition of the possibility for God’s work in creation and human history. This meaning is fundamentally “spiritual,” in that God as absolute paradigmatic reality, as Ultimate Holy Love, is *spirit*. Yet this *also* entails something for human, creaturely existence, which was not originally intended for, not destined for, hunger and suffering, misery and oppression, but for Life, and Life Abundantly.⁵³ Certainly, all this must still be kept in eschatological perspective and against a transcendental horizon, for salvation is not yet actualized fully, only anticipatorily, and we yet await its fulfillment. But it is to say, also, that anyone who is “spiritual,” in this life, who “lives by the Spirit” and “keeps in step with the

⁵² Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, Matthew J. O’Connell, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), xi, xv, xviii, 3.

⁵³ John 10:10

Spirit”⁵⁴ will be a participant in the historical work for liberation, as it is the same Spirit who is Liberation in and for God.

§7.2.4: Spirituality of Liberation—The spirituality of liberation is where all these themes come together. All the dimensions of liberation—socio-historical, agential, spiritual, Divine—are here manifest. The eschatological horizon is kept in perspective, with the recognition of the fundamental “gratuitousness” of God’s love and action. In prayer, lived worship and contemplative action, the unfolding work of the Spirit to free creaturely realities from the limitations and oppressions for the reality of the Kingdom of God (the economic Spirit) is recognized to be a movement that has its own basis in the liberative movement of the Spirit in the Divine Life from the Absolute Outcome of Divine Being (the immanent Spirit). When we participate in this work and this movement for liberation in the Spirit, which is the process of our own conversion, sanctification and eschatological anticipation—spirituality—we witness and embody this truth: love of God and love of neighbor come together. Living thus spiritually, in the Spirit, even if and when we do not know what to say or how to act, the Spirit “intercedes” for us “with groans too deep for words” and directs us “according to God’s will.”⁵⁵

Gutiérrez unearthed this theme of “gratuity” early on in his theology, and together with the emphasis on praxis it has upheld the proper eschatological order of his theology. He remarks that, “Since the very first days of the theology of liberation, the question of spirituality...has been of deep concern.”⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ Galatians 5:25

⁵⁵ Romans 8:26-27.

⁵⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells: the Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), 1.

connection between liberative praxis and spirituality is not incidental, but rooted in their common concern for concrete, lived faith. As Roberto Goizueta has shown, the same common commitment undergirds a convergence between theological aesthetics and liberation theology.⁵⁷ Gutiérrez continues, “The importance assigned to this experience in the theology of liberation is in keeping with the purpose of that theology, which is to develop a reflection that is concerned with and based on practice in the light of faith.”⁵⁸

The cultivation of spirituality begins with *conversion*, conversion to the Lord in a decisive way and the reception of His Spirit within us: “A conversion is the starting point of every spiritual journey.” Conversion entails both a “break with the life lived up to that point,” a repentance, a rejection of the selfish horizon, the neglect of the love of neighbor and the conditions under which we operated beforehand, and it entails that “one decides to set out on a new path,” to embrace a new horizon of values and responsibilities. “Without this second aspect the break would lack the focus that a fixed horizon provides and would ultimately be deprived of meaning....” Conversion is “a prerequisite for entering the kingdom...” but also a continual process of appropriation and realization in this life: “Because of this second aspect a conversion is not something that is done once and for all. It entails a development, even a painful one, that is not without uncertainties, doubts and temptations to turn back on the road that has been travelled.” Yet precisely because of its radicality, the change of direction, the transformation of the mind, in conversion, the experience of conversion endows a stubbornness

⁵⁷ Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion*, 1-24.

⁵⁸ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 1.

born of hope that is the great endowment of the Spirit from the End of things: “Spirituality as an all-embracing attitude is precisely a force that bestows constancy and prevents our being (Eph. 4:14)...This stubbornness...has its source in hope.”⁵⁹

Conversion in the biblical idiom is from “flesh” and to “spirit.” In exegeting the implications for Paul’s contrast between σαρξ and πνευμα, Gutiérrez argues that the emphasis on the Spirit and the spiritual life (Divine liberation) is not opposed to that of material concerns (socio-historical liberation), in virtue of the fact that the Spirit is the Spirit of life, whose ultimate work of freedom is the resurrection of the body for eternal communion with God. To gratify the desires of the “flesh” is to operate in the domain that “rejects God and God’s will for our lives...To walk according to the flesh...is to reject the presence of the Lord. It is to turn the flesh into the norm of behavior; this acceptance of a norm is necessarily translated into *works* or concrete forms of behavior.” To be spiritual is to embrace the presence of the Lord even now, to embody the values of the Lord in our lives and to live according to them. Thus, “[l]ife according to the Spirit is therefore not an existence at the level of the soul and in opposition to or apart from the body; it is an existence *in accord with life*, love, peace, and justice (the great values of the reign of God) and *against death*.”⁶⁰

It is precisely because spirituality and a rejection of “flesh” is actually a rejection of death and an affirmation of true life that material considerations of liberation are integrally involved in spirituality, with its Divine horizon of

⁵⁹ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 95, 105.

⁶⁰ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 59, 71.

liberation. Contemplation and action co-determine one another in any authentic spirituality. Gutiérrez describes why the material must be considered: “In our world, there has been a breakthrough of the material because the vast majority are in urgent need of bread, medicine, housing, and so on. The physical in question is located at the level of the basic necessities of the human person. It is not ‘*my* body’ but the ‘body of the poor person’—the weak and languishing body of the poor—that has made the material a part of a spiritual outlook.” Since the arrival of eschatological salvation as given by the Spirit is Life, and life abundantly, walking according to the Spirit now will affirm life and its material necessities. Thus, “A concern for the material needs of the poor is an element in our spirituality. The sincerity of our conversion to the Lord is to be judged by the action to which this concern leads us.”⁶¹

The proper analogical intervals in the terms of life and liberation here, and so the paradigmatic Divine Liberation and the order of the eschatological horizon, are kept in view with an affirmation, even in the material aspects of liberation, of “gratuity.” “On the other hand,” Gutiérrez avers, “biblical testimony is clear that the encounter with God *results from divine initiative* that creates an impact of gratitude, which should permeate the entire Christian life. How do we live these two dimensions?”⁶² Grace undergirds everything in the spiritual life, even its necessarily material implications. Love is paramount: “We have been made by love and for love. Only by loving, then, can we fulfill ourselves as persons; that is how we respond to the initiative taken by God’s love. God’s love for us is

⁶¹ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 102-103.

⁶² Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 107.

gratuitous; we do not merit it. It is a gift we receive before we exist, or to be more accurate, a gift in view of which we have been created. Election to adoptive filiation comes first.”⁶³ Precisely because spirituality has the shape of gratuity, because it is a relationship of love, it will exceed any metric of calculation imposed upon it. The spiritual life, therefore, will always have the risk of being seen as “useless activity,” as wasted time, because it is not fundamentally concerned with “production” even when it is the case that “an experience of a gratuitousness...[often] creates new forms of communication.” Sometimes, then, spirituality can be leveraged against material liberation by those dedicated to the latter, because spirituality is not always increasing things on a strictly economic or developmental scale. Gutiérrez, however, holds the two together, for the basic reason that “we have to come to understand that a true and full encounter with our neighbor requires that we first experience the gratuitousness of God’s love.”⁶⁴ When we consider the eternal, gratuitous nature of God’s love not only for us, but in Himself as He is eternally, then this affirmation is the eschatological horizon of Divine liberation for the integral meaning of socio-historical liberation.

Gutiérrez responded to the problem of the relation of material work and spiritual gratuity in the presentation of his work for dissertation, *The Truth Will Set You Free*. He did so there in the terms of the question of “pelagianism,” when the various modes of liberation are considered all together in the scope of salvation. In relation to the emphasis on praxis and the interrelation of the active work for liberation and the contemplative receptivity to Grace, the question is

⁶³ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 110.

⁶⁴ Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 111-112.

raised about whether human actions here are not seen, consequently, as *necessary to salvation*. Gutiérrez responds by identifying two necessary dimensions in tension: “in the Bible as a whole, two approaches are taken to the mystery of God: gratuitousness and resultant obligation. The saving love of God is a gift, but its acceptance entails a commitment to one’s neighbor. Christian life is located between the gratuitous gift and the obligation.” Furthermore, “the history of Christian thought shows that passivity or quietism is not only not a real acknowledgment of the gratuitous love of God, but even denies or at least deforms it.”⁶⁵ Both must be seen in their mutual *implication*, though there is an asymmetry between the two in that Grace is always the prior initiative and fundamental act of God; that is the meaning of the *order of liberation* with the paradigmatic case of Divine Liberation as fundamental. Gutiérrez, therefore, insists on “gratuity” as a central concept to his theology and on a complete repudiation of pelagianism as such. “Nevertheless, the complexity of the subject is traditional and is not felt solely in the setting of liberation theology. The fundamentals to be preserved are clear: the action of God *and* the action of human beings.”

Jon Sobrino has described the same thematic of the spirituality of liberation or the “*vitality of faith*” as “political holiness.” While Sobrino continues to insist on the centrality for liberation of historical enfleshed action of the practice of the service to the poor in the midst of the community of the poor, even the practice of liberation cannot, “exclude other dimensions of human existence, such as religious experience, vital attitude—in a word, spirit,” as

⁶⁵ Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Set you Free*, 35-36.

human existence is lived before God. It is a question for Sobrino whether he caters to the instrumentalizing view of spirituality for historical ends, as opposed to their mutual determination, however, drawing explicitly from “integral liberation,” Sobrino recognizes that “the political is not everything, neither in the liberation project itself nor in the means thereto.” So “in order to open liberation to its fullness...or to give it efficacy to the political struggle itself—spirit is indispensable.”⁶⁶ Even in the context of historico-social liberation, the human person has to be engaged in their full scope, *imago dei*, such that their heart and spirit are involved in the process of liberation.

An authentic spirituality of liberation, for Sobrino, will embody certain characteristics. As a presupposition, says Sobrino, true spirituality must include “honesty about the real,” a full “yes to life” that refuses to overlook, neglect, marginalize or circumvent anything that *is*, anything that *happens*, not only the good but also the ugliness, oppression, exploitation, insofar as those occur in the world. As a result, spirituality will include a “fidelity to the real,” a faithful presence to what is, the great example of which is the cross of Christ, in which Jesus is faithful witness to the reality, gravity and ugliness of sin even unto his own death. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, furthermore, an authentic spirituality will be imbued with hope, hope as an openness to the “more than real,” hope that what is currently broken in the world does not have to remain so indefinitely, does not have to be submitted to absolutely, does not have to be seen as inevitable. Connecting this faithful hope to an exegesis of the beatitudes,

⁶⁶ Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*. Robert Barr, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 1, 25, 29.

Sobrino then describes the shape of a spirituality of liberation as developing the attitude of “poverty (in spirit),” the “ex-centricity of love,” “thirsting for righteousness,” being “pure in heart,” or not imposing one’s own ideas, interests or predilections on the “practice of liberation,” being “merciful,” even to the point of forgiveness, having “no desire to close off [even] adversaries’ future absolutely and irrevocably,” and being “peacemaker.”⁶⁷ All of these facets of a cultivated spirituality converge in the radical possibility of openness—without ever justifying such—even to persecution for “the sake of righteousness.” That is, the spirituality of liberation will have the martyrial shape and will testify to the legacy of the martyrs—and that will be its own political action in holiness.⁶⁸ The option for the poor is the context in which martyrdom can be resilient, for the poor are those who know in their bones, “who believe that in weakness there is strength [that] poverty is the locus of the spirit.” Even as the poor “struggle with an unjust and wretched poverty,” they see there is a “humanizing element in that poverty,” precisely in its cultivation of the Spirit. For “poverty is the opposite of wealth and power”—of clinging to “the flesh”—and so can be that witness to the End in the context of the “dehumanization of rampant consumerism,” which is the contemporarily mightiest manifestation of worldliness and opponent of spirituality.⁶⁹

In the final analysis, therefore, a holistic liberative spirituality is animated by the recognition of the fundamental gratuity and love of God. Thereby, it

⁶⁷ Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 14-15, 18-19, 30-42; Matthew 5:1-11.

⁶⁸ James Daryn Henry, “Witness to the End: David Bentley Hart and Jon Sobrino on the Aesthetics of Martyrdom” unpublished manuscript: Boston College, 2012.

⁶⁹ Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 8, 37.

corresponds to what Jenson has outlined as an eternal movement of liberation in God's own Life. By living in the Spirit, the spirituality of liberation testifies to the End that the Spirit both brings to the world and is in Himself. At the same time, such a spirituality actively participates in the walk with the Spirit here and now. Such a spirituality actively participates in conforming to the Kingdom, in living the beatitudes, in cultivating the fruit of the Spirit and in the unfolding of sanctification. In this way, such a spirituality also participates in the Spirit's work as the driving force of liberation in the world, corresponding to the first two levels of meaning of liberation that have been outlined. God's gratuitous movement toward us has its condition of possibility in the relations of origin in the Divine Life and in the mission of the Son and Spirit in the world. Our response to and incorporation into God through the Kingdom occurs through our experience of the Spirit, which has its condition of possibility in the relations of outcome that Jenson has articulated in the Divine Life and in the liberation of the Son, and us together with the Son, by the Spirit for the Father as the final End of all things.

§CODA

Jenson's use of the thematics of freedom and liberation to interpret both the character of the Spirit's work in the world and the eternal hypostatic identity and relations of the Spirit in the Divine Life raises the question of the person of the Spirit at the interface of the discourse and practice of liberation theology. Liberation theology has described in vivid and differentiated ways how the Spirit drives the creaturely experience of liberation and the enacted praxis of liberation. Insofar as this experience and enactment of liberation in the world anticipates

the Kingdom, the Spirit moves through the various facets of integral liberation: the socio-historical, agential and soteriological-spiritual liberation. Jenson himself alluded to how his unique view of the Spirit not only presented God as a plausible Establisher, but also as a plausible Liberator. While certain aspects of Jenson's program had to be interrogated and negotiated—and while the proper analogical interval in the terms of liberation have to be kept in mind—my properly calibrated appropriation of the liberation model of the Spirit's eternal movement to interpret the Spirit-Son taxis and the Spirit-leading experiences of liberation in the world further extends this analysis and elaborates on this connection. As a result, I have argued that liberation does not merely have its basis in the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the world, but in the eternal Divine Life itself. The primal Liberation is the Divine Liberation. The Divine movement of Liberation in the self-constitution of Divine Being from its Outcome, from the Spirit as the Unsurpassed one in the Divine Life, grounds the historical experience of liberation and gives that experience its fundamental meaning. Living in the Spirit, practicing an authentic spirituality of liberation, we as believers are caught up in this very movement as we participate in the coming of Kingdom through our return to God. This interpretation provides a basis for some theological convergence between the programs of liberation theology and traditional, classical trinitarian theology.

FINALE:

What has potentially been accomplished after a long, winding journey in this dissertation? My hope is that I have primarily done two things. First, in an enterprise of “interpretation,” I have offered a synthesis of Jenson’s theology of the Holy Spirit under the rubric of “freedom.” Part I shows how this unifying—though nonreductive—theme of freedom emerges from an analysis of the Spirit’s work in the world. Part II argues how this view of the Spirit’s work informs our view of the Spirit’s eternal hypostatic ethos as triune person. While interweaving many other far-reaching ecumenical and systematic implications of Jenson’s pneumatology, I have sought especially to demonstrate that Jenson’s thought deserves consideration among the other great 20th century pneumatologists for the ways in which his unique proposals enlarge the tradition on the Spirit while also remaining in significant continuity with it.

I have, secondly, inaugurated a process—as of yet unfinished—of the evaluation and reception of Jenson’s distinctive pneumatological proposals by way of dialectical encounter with the horizons of ancestral pneumatology, modern trinitarian theology and liberation theological discourse and praxis. This task is what occupied me in Part III. There I concluded that insofar as Jenson’s pneumatology is entangled with a radical, totalizing understanding of the identification of the immanent and economic Spirit, with distorting narratives about the pro-Nicene theology & the classical theological tradition, and with exegetically hypertrophic preference for certain biblical passages of divine rescue and exaltation, while decentering passages of divine eternity, condescension and self-giving, some of his theological judgments require interrogation and re-

calibration. Accounting for such corrections, however, I suggest that Jenson's complementary model of the divine movement of liberation and his augmentative notion of the Spirit's distinctive eternal location as the Unsurpassed One at the Future End and Goal of Divine Life merit retrieval. The notion of the Spirit's Unsurpassedness, His inexhaustible *improvisatio* and *profunditas* interprets the Spirit→Son relation of the biblical data, the Spirit-leading experience of the trinity in the economy of salvation and the return movement of the Church in Grace to the Kingdom. Such an interpretation elegantly integrates contemporary global theology and experience of the Spirit with classical theology and doctrine.

God's eternally replete triune being blazes, protologically, antecedent to the origin of all things. God is the Alpha. God's eternally replete triune being blazes, eschatologically, surpassing all things, after all things. God is the Omega. Classical theology articulated consummately how the former was the case, but it was more vexed and unconvincing about the latter. God is the God He is both at the origin and at the end. At the origin, God does not need us to be the God that He is, even we might say to be "our" God. God could have been the same with or without us. The act of lavishness by which He creates and endows us with being, by which He gives creaturely space-time for us to inhabit, for our lives to be meaningful, was a wholly free act that manifests eternal loving abundance.

At the end of all things, however—eschatologically—*we* are there with God in unending life. Of course, our eternal life with God is categorically on a different plane than God's own Eternality. Thus we also cannot say that this state of things is qualitatively "different" from the Origin where God was absolutely, for this would assume that Divine Being and creaturely being are on

the same ontological scale, according to which such calculus could be done. Theology still has to reckon, however, with the reality that God absolutely at the origin in His eternal plenitude and God at the eschaton with us, the Saints involved in His Life, there with Him, does imply some kind of difference. The very meaning of the integrity of creaturely being and creaturely experience is that it can possibly live eternally with God, even though this was not necessary.

The span of this “difference” is what classical trinitarian theology always had difficulty quite fully grasping. This was due, in the final analysis, to its *unfinished* doctrine of the Spirit. A full doctrine of the Spirit—the reconstruction of divine transcendence by the Spirit—has to do with the relation of Alpha and Omega in God, and yet how God does not “change” in Himself. It is the Spirit, hypostatically, who is the condition of the possibility of this difference within God’s own Eternal Life. That is what it means to call the Spirit Freedom or Liberation in the immanent Triune Life: that this possibility is one that the Spirit presents to the Father and the Son, in eternal communion with them, as witness to their mutual love and fellowship, as the possibility for the openness of that fellowship to creatures. The procession of the Divine Life from the Unoriginate Father to the Son and the Spirit is the condition of the possibility of the establishment of creaturely being, the condition of the possibility of creation. The freedom of the Divine Life from the Unsurpassed Spirit, who witnesses to the Son and liberates Him for the Father, is the condition of the possibility of consummation, which includes us with God. The eternal character of the Spirit is disclosed to us, experienced in us and practiced by us in the derivative work of freedom and liberation that unfolds in creaturely space and time.

SOURCES

I: Works of Robert Jenson

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Haggai 2:5

וחזק כל-עם הארץ נאם-יהוה ועשו
כי-אני אתכם נאם יהוה צבאות :
את-הדבר אשר-כרתי אתכם סכתאצב ממצרים
ורוחי עמדת תוככםב אל-תיראו :

“Be courageous, all you people of the Land,
declares YHWH,
and struggle,
for I am with you,
declares YHWH of Hosts,
because of the Word which I forged in Covenant with you,
when you came up out of the land of Egypt.
Now my Spirit abides with you always; so fear not!”