

**OPEN THEISM AND PENTECOSTALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF THE GODHEAD, SOTERIOLOGY, ESCHATOLOGY AND
PROVIDENCE**



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ABSTRACT

Despite Open Theism's claims for a robust 'Social' Trinitarianism, there exists significant inconsistencies in how it is portrayed and subsequently applied within its wider theology. This sympathetic, yet critical, evaluation arises from the Pneumatological lacuna which exists not only in the conception of God as Trinity, but the subsequent treatment of divine providence, soteriology and eschatology. In overcoming this significant lacuna, the thesis adopts Francis Clooney's comparative methodology as a means of initiating a comparative dialogue with Pentecostalism, to glean important insights concerning its Pneumatology. By engaging in the comparative dialogue between the two communities, the novel insights regarding the Spirit are then incorporated into a provisional and experimental model of Open Theism entitled *Realizing Eschatology*. This understanding of Open Theism emphasizes the Holy Spirit's ongoing work within a broader Trinitarian framework and suggests how the co-creation of reality between God and humanity possesses a significant Pneumatological component.

DEDICATION

To Pops and Janie,

Words cannot express my gratitude!

All the good things which have come to me over the years of knowing you have grown from your love, belief, generosity and commitment. I love you both dearly.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EDF: Exhaustive Definite Foreknowledge'

FWT: Free-Will Theism

SFK: Simple Foreknowledge

Abbreviation below are title of articles and books with authors' surname

BSNP: (Sanders)

CFT: The Case for Freewill Theism (Basinger)

CMF: Creation Made Free (Oord)

DFFWT: Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism (Rice)

DGHF: Does God Have a future (Sanders)

DPOG: Divine Providence and the Openness of God (Sanders)

FOL: Flame of Love (Pinnock)

GAW: God At War (Boyd)

GFMF: God's Foreknowledge and Man's FreeWill (Rice)

GLHC: God Limits His Control (Boyd)

GLHK: God Limits His Knowledge (Pinnock)

GOU: God in an Open Universe (Hasker)

GTK: God, Time and Knowledge (Hasker)

GWR: The God Who Risks (Sanders)

MMM: Most Moved Mover (Pinnock)

NOL: The Nature of Love (Oord)

OTV: The Open-Theism View (Boyd)

PEOG: Providence, Evil and the Openness of God (Hasker)

PFW: Predestination and Free Will (Basinger)

PP: A Philosophical Perspective (Hasker)

SFAAG: Searching for an Adequate God (Cobb & Pinnock)

SG: The Suffering of God (Fretheim)

SPE: Satan and the Problem of Evil (Boyd)

ST: Systematic Theology (Pinnock)

TGE: The Triumph of God Over Evil (Hasker)

INTRODUCTION

1. Open Theism

Open Theism as it is currently conceived, owes much of its conception to the first edition of Richard Rice's book, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Freewill*, which was published in the mid 1980's.¹ After the publication of Rice's short monograph, the ensuing decade witnessed further developments in the theological and philosophical support for Open Theism. Yet, it was with the arrival of *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, co-authored by Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker and David Basinger, which brought Open Theism to a broader theological audience.² However, in acknowledging that *The Openness of God* represented a new era for Open theology, it is clear that its central tenets had already begun to reflect and influence the exploration of theological themes present in the wider academy. Primary among these was the growing dissatisfaction with many of the facets of Classical Theism, which led to the renewed questioning of how God ought to be conceived.³ Open Theology can certainly be placed within this theological milieu, as central to its thought is the re-reading of God in line with His essential loving and relational nature. Although there is little need to delineate the major aspects of Open Theism here, as the purpose of Chapter 1 is to describe the major theological and philosophical tenets of the theology, it is helpful to have a working definition of what Open Theism is and what it essentially purports, in defining the aims and purposes of

¹ R. Rice, *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Freewill* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985).

² C. H. Pinnock & R. Rice & J. Sanders & W. Hasker & D. Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994).

³ J. Sanders, 'Historical Considerations', in Pinnock *et al*, *Openness*, pp. 59-100, esp. 96-8.

the thesis. In providing this, we turn to the oft quoted ‘Preface’ in *The Openness of God*:

God, in grace, grants humans significant freedom to cooperate with or work against God’s will for their lives, and he enters into dynamic, give-and-take relationships with us. The Christian life involves a genuine interaction between God and human beings. We respond to God’s gracious initiatives and God responds to our responses...and on it goes. God takes risks in this give-and-take relationship, yet he is endlessly resourceful and competent in working toward his ultimate goals. Sometimes God alone decides how to accomplish these goals. On other occasions, God works with human decisions, adapting his own plans to fit the changing situation. God does not control everything that happens. Rather he is open to receiving input from his creatures. In loving dialogue, God invites us to participate with him to bring the future into being...This view resonates deeply with the traditional Christian devotional life. Biblical personalism is widespread among believers, for it allows for a real relationship with God. When we address God in prayer we commonly believe that we are entering into a genuine dialogue and that the future is not settled. Yet traditional theology has had a difficult time allowing for such a dialogue. We need a theology that is biblically faithful and intellectually consistent, and that reinforces, rather than makes problematic, our relational experience with God.⁴

2. Aim, Objectives and Motivation of the Thesis

Despite the relative novelty of Open Theism, within its short existence it has garnered a growing influence within certain academic and ecclesial quarters. With each passing year, novel insights are developed which help to further establish the maturing theology. Yet, in spite of its rapid growth, there is also a need to reflect upon that expansion, and consider how the theology is subsequently developing. Open Theism has never been without its detractors, as its history is one which has courted much controversy and discussion.⁵ While many of the criticisms have been generated from outside the community,

⁴ ‘Preface’, Pinnock *et al*, *Openness*, pp. 7-8. See also, www.opentheism.info/open-theism, accessed 31/08/13.

⁵ For an overview of the criticisms of Open Theism which are pertinent to the issues raised within the thesis, see, J. Piper & J. Taylor & P. K. Helseth (eds.), *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003). Please see the articles in this book, C. O. Brand, ‘Genetic Defects or Accidental Similarities? Orthodoxy and Open Theism and their Connections to Western Philosophical Traditions’, pp. 43-73. M. R. Talbot, ‘True Freedom: The Liberty that Scripture Portrays as Worth Having’, pp. 77-105. W. C. Davies, ‘Why Open Theism is Flourishing Now’, pp. 111-45. S. J. Wellum, ‘The Inerrancy of Scripture’, pp. 237-74. W. Grudem, ‘Why, When and for What Reason Should We Draw New Boundaries’, pp. 339-70. B. A. Ware, ‘The Gospel of Christ’, pp. 309-336. J. Piper, ‘Grounds for Dismay: The

there is also a need for those within the Open community to assess and evaluate its own theology and direction. It is within this context that the present work is situated and the subsequent aim, objectives and motivation are defined. By utilising the internal narratives currently used to define the community and its theology, the thesis seeks to contribute to the development of Open theology by raising significant questions which have hitherto been overlooked. In this regard, it is hoped that the following work reflects both the concerns and commitments of the wider Open community, but, in a critical manner which will ultimately strengthen and contribute to the future growth of Open Theism.

By acknowledging the communal nature of the project provides significant insights into the motivation behind the writing, and offers a context into which the aim of the thesis can be more fully comprehended. As Clooney rightly notes (and there is recourse to develop this more fully below), the turn in contemporary theology under the influence of Postmodernism,

Error and Injury of Open Theism', pp. 371-84. J. Taylor, 'A Bibliography on Open Theism', pp. 385-400. See also, D. Wilson (ed.), *Bound Only Once: The Failure of Open Theism* (Moscow: Canon, 2001). Please see the articles within the previous book, D. M. Jones, 'Metaphor in Exile', pp. 31-51. B. R. Merkle, 'Liberals in Drag', pp. 67-81. J. MacArthur, 'Open Theism's Attack on the Atonement', pp. 95-108. J. K. Ascol, 'Pastoral Implications of Open Theism', pp. 173-90. J. F. Nixon, 'Open Idolatry', pp. 205-17. A. B. Caneday, 'God in the Image and Likeness of Adam-Clark Pinnock's Use of Scripture in His Argument 'God Limit's His Knowledge'', *Journal of Biblical Apologetics*, No. 1, 2001, pp. 20-7. W. C. Davis, 'Does God Know the Future? A Closer Look at the Contemporary Evangelical Debate', *Modern Reformation*, 8:5, 1999, pp. 20-5. J. M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001). N. L. Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man? The New Open View of God-Neotheism's Dangerous Drift* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997). N. L. Geisler & H. W. House, *The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001). M. S. Horton, 'A Vulnerable God Apart from Christ? Open Theism's Challenge to the Classical Doctrine of God', *Modern Reformation*, 10:3, 2001, pp. 30-8. D. S. Huffman & E. L. Johnson, *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002). B. A. Ware, 'Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries Theologically: Is Open Theism Evangelical?', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 45: 2, 2002, pp. 193-212. S. J. Wellum, 'The Openness of God: A Critical Assessment', *Reformation and Revival*, 10:3, 2001, pp. 137-60. R. K. M. Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996). B. A. Ware, *Their God Is Too Small: Open Theism and the Undermining of Confidence in God* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003). B. A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: A Critique of Open Theism* (Leicester: Apollos, 2001). T. Gray & C. Sinkinson, (eds.), *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000). K. J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2002). R. Picirilli, 'Foreknowledge, Freedom, and the Future', *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 43: 2, 2000, pp. 259-71. R. Picirilli, 'An Arminian Response to John Sander's *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44: 3, 2001, pp. 467-91. G. Murphy, *Consuming Glory: A Classical Defence of Divine-Human Relationality Against Open Theism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

has once again opened up the notion of *fides quaerens intellectum* as a credible pursuit within academic theology.⁶ As such, the believing subject has been freed to pursue faith questions, which under previous epistemic and intellectual paradigms, may not have been as welcomingly received. Consequently, returning to, and speaking from, a position of faith, provides fresh insights into how theology *can* be conducted (while readily granting that this is not the only way that theology can be constructed). This subsequently allows for a critical reflection upon one's own theological and ecclesial tradition, as the insights arising from within the faith community reflect the genuine issues relating to, and directly impacting, the shared community. Thus, the primary motivation for the current work is to critically evaluate how the shared community expresses its theology and faith commitments, and offer those insights to the broader theological community for consideration and correction.

Having now stated the communal and tradition-shaped nature of the project, we are better situated to define the specific aim of the thesis and explicate the objectives through which this will be attained. As we shall note below, the dominant Trinitarian model within Open Theism is 'Social' Trinitarianism. While this is entirely compatible with the aims and goals of Open theology, and is affirmed within the current work, the central aim of the thesis lies not within the conception of 'Social' Trinitarianism *per se*, but how Open Theist authors have inconsistently described and applied the understanding of the 'Social' model within their wider theology. Therefore, the thesis critiques the way that the Trinitarian God has been defined and used by Open Theists, and goes on to suggest that the Holy Spirit is a missing and vital element in the Open Theist's account, and offers critical and constructive proposals as a

⁶ F. X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2010), pp. 9, 11 and 36.

remedy to this unfortunate Pneumatological lacuna.⁷ In addition to how the Godhead is conceived and expressed, the notions of divine providence, soteriology and eschatology each express facets of the Pneumatological lacuna, which inadvertently leads to a degree of Christocentrism within Open theology. The one obvious exception to this is Clark Pinnock, who has written and developed a systematic theology of the Holy Spirit. However, as we shall also note below, even Pinnock's Pneumatology capitulates, in part, to a subordinationism. Consequently, there are two significant issues which arise from the underdeveloped Pneumatology within Open Theism. First, is the question of theological consistency between advocating the 'Social' model of the Trinity and the omission of the Spirit within its wider theology. If the significant aspect of 'Social' Trinitarianism is grounded within the relational notion of divine *Persons*, then all but ignoring one of the Persons of the Trinity cannot remain unchallenged. Secondly, if, as Open Theists maintain, God is responsive within the world co-creating the present and future alongside humanity, then Open Theism has a responsibility of accounting for the Spirit, as She currently manifests God's immanent activity within the world. *The Spirit's presence within the created order is God with us now*, therefore requiring that any notion of God's present economy necessarily demands Pneumatological consideration and explanation.

By outlining the Pneumatological lacuna which currently exists within Open Theist literature provides the framework for the objectives of the thesis. These, therefore, consist firstly of a producing a detailed evaluation of the Open Theist understanding of God, particularly the use of the 'Social' Trinity in the writings of Pinnock, Hasker and Sanders. Thomas Oord's work is also included, and while he does not utilise the 'Social' Trinity in the

⁷ Throughout the thesis, when the Spirit is referred to in the third person, the designation 'She' will be applied. Although it is recognised that the Spirit transcends gender, there remains a need to incorporate gender inclusive language into the Godhead and reflect both feminine and masculine aspects of God.

same way as the previous authors, questions relating to Pneumatology also apply to his writings. Having once explicated each of the authors understanding of the Godhead, our attention turns to how each of these authors have developed their respective notions of divine providence, soteriology and eschatology. In light of the Pneumatological critique which underpins the evaluation of the Trinity, the critical evaluation of these doctrines will, once more, focus primarily, though not exclusively, upon the absence of the Spirit. However, the objectives of the thesis are not restricted to an evaluation of Open Theism alone. The purpose of establishing the criticisms is to lay the foundation for further constructive work which redresses the weaknesses within the Open Theist Pneumatology. This will be constructed through the use of Francis Clooney's comparative methodology, which draws from Pentecostalism as a dialogue partner. Clooney's method allows for a comparison between two traditions, so that the insights which are derived from the 'other', can be used as an inspiration for theological reflection within the 'home tradition'. Consequently, there is a need to outline the ways in which Pentecostalism, with its unique perspective regarding the Spirit, can assist in developing the present Open Theist understanding. By completing the comparative work in this fashion, helps to establish the aim of the thesis. This will be attained through producing a provisional model of Open Theism, entitled *realizing eschatology*, which seeks to develop the central tenets of Open Theism, but inclusive of a robust Pneumatology, which strengthens the Trinitarian claims outlined above.

3. Pentecostalism

Due to the fact that Pentecostalism has been selected as the dialogue partner within the comparative work, there is a need to broadly define the contours of the tradition, so as to situate it within the current work. As many commentators in the field have recently observed,

defining Pentecostalism is no simple matter.⁸ The major difficulty in defining the movement arises from the fact that Pentecostalism is now well established as a global phenomenon with many varying and diverse forms. In just over a century, the Pentecostal movement has established a presence in most countries around the world with numbers totalling around five hundred million.⁹ This indicates that not only is Pentecostalism the fastest growing Christian group in the world today, but that it is also the second largest Christian body after Roman Catholicism and accounts for approximately a quarter of all Christians.¹⁰ Due to such rapid expansion and the diverse forms of Pentecostal practice, identifying what unifies all of these groups has proven elusive. Earlier Western definitions of Pentecostalism tended to equate the origin and growth of the movement with that of ‘Classical’ Pentecostalism which traces its development through the historical events of the Azusa Street Mission and its accompanying theology of the Baptism in the Spirit.¹¹ In this respect, there has been an Americo/Western-centric reading of its growth and development which ignores the indigenous growth of the movement in other parts of the world and imposes a theological agenda which is not unanimously shared.¹² In addition to the difficulties which have arisen in defining Pentecostalism in terms of its historical development, historiography, theology and spiritual

⁸ W. Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 8. C. M. Robeck, Jr. & A. Yong, ‘Global Pentecostalism: An Introduction to an Introduction’, in C. M. Robeck Jr. & A. Yong (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1-10, esp. 1. M. J. McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: From North American Origins to Global Permutations,” *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, pp. 31-51, esp. 32.

⁹ D. B. Barrett & T. M. Johnson, ‘Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2003’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 27:1, pp. 25, as quoted in, A. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2004, pp. 1.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 1.

¹¹ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 33-57.

¹² See, O. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2008. G. Oblau, “Pentecostal by Default? Contemporary Christianity in China,” in A. Anderson & E. Tang, (eds.), *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, revised ed. (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), pp. 333-353. A. Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press), 2007). A. Anderson, “Revising Pentecostal History in Global Perspective,” in *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 118-40. H. Yung, ‘Pentecostalism and the Asian Church’, in, *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 30-45.

formation, contemporary studies conducted within the social sciences, often completed by non-Pentecostals, have also contributed significant non-historical and non-theological criteria and descriptors which aid in understanding the movement.¹³ Consequently, there is a need to define Pentecostalism in a manner which is sensitive to the inclusion of all its diverse members, reflective of the ‘south-ward’ turn of Christianity and adequately expresses its vibrant spirituality.¹⁴

Given the complexity of issues involved in establishing an adequate definition of Pentecostalism, Vondey summarises four of the most influential ways in which Pentecostalism is defined within academic literature. While space restrictions prohibit a full and detailed discussions regarding the definitions of Pentecostalism, Vondey’s taxonomy provides a helpful entry into the proposed definitions: (1) A broad inclusive category that includes a focus upon the work of the Holy Spirit on both theological and phenomenological grounds, which seeks to establish patterns of similarity within Churches across the globe. The work of Walter Hollenweger and Allan Anderson exemplifies this position, (2) the need to speak of Pentecostalism in terms of a plurality, so that it is more appropriate to speak of ‘Pentecostalisms’ rather than ‘Pentecostalism’. This approach is favoured by C. M. Robeck Jr., among others, and has the feature of

¹³ In the field of sociology, see, B. F. Gutierrez & D. A. Smith (eds.), *In the Power of the Spirit: The Pentecostal Challenge to Historical Churches in Latin America* (Drexel Hill, PA: AIPRAL and CELEP in Cooperation with Skipjack Press, 1996). S. Hunt & M. Hamilton & T. Walker (eds.), *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1997). In economics, see, R. A. Chestnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America’s New Religious Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). D. Freeman (ed.), *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). In the field of politics, see, E. L. Cleary & H. Stewart-Gambino (eds.), *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996). P. Freston, *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Finally, in the field of anthropology, see, K. Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994). B. Boudewijnse & A. Droogers & F. Kamsteeg (eds.), *More than Opium: An Anthropological Approach to Latin America and Caribbean Pentecostal Praxis* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

¹⁴ For an analysis of the manner in which the centre of Christianity is steadily progressing southward, see P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). P. Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

interpreting Pentecostalism ‘mono-culturally’ from an American cultural and historical perspective¹⁵, (3) distinguishing clearly between Pentecostal and Charismatic groups (mainline Churches which experienced a similar movement of the Spirit as that of early Pentecostals), and (4) Amos Yong’s classification of P/pentecostalism which seeks to draw a distinction between ‘Classical’ and other forms of Pentecostalism while equally validating both.¹⁶

While each of the definitions within Vondey’s taxonomy provide helpful insights, it is the notion proposed by Allan Anderson which I believe is most useful. This definition seeks to be the inclusive of the Spirit’s manifold activity within all churches, and thus, reflective of the global movement, which grants a voice to the oft overlooked churches within the Global South. Anderson acknowledges that Hollenweger’s seminal and pioneering research into Pentecostalism offers a good starting point for defining the movement as it adopts a global perspective. Identifying that Pentecostalism consists of three distinct forms, ‘Classical’ Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Renewal movement and Pentecostal-like independent churches in the Majority World, Hollenweger readily acknowledges the global scope of Pentecostalism and seeks to incorporate disparate expressions of the movement.¹⁷ However, Anderson notes that by restricting the definition to these three categories, Hollenweger is guilty of a reductionism which he seeks to correct.¹⁸ Arguing that such a narrow description ignores various churches around the globe, Anderson argues that rather, the term Pentecostal should be, ‘appropriate for describing globally all churches and movements that emphasize

¹⁵ See, C. M. Robeck Jr., ‘Making Sense of Pentecostalism in a Global Context’, Unpublished Paper, 28th Annual Meeting of the Society of Pentecostal Studies, Springfield, MI, 1999, p. 18.

¹⁶ Vondey, *Beyond*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁷ W. J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 1. This work follows on from Hollenweger’s earlier important study into Pentecostalism in which he identifies essential characteristics of Pentecostalism which include an innate black spirituality, oral liturgies and traditions, holistic salvation, democratic ecclesial structures, an ecumenical openness and an experiential focus of worship. See, W. J. Hollenweger (trans. R. A. Wilson), *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

¹⁸ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 13.

the gifts of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and on theological grounds – although not without qualification’.¹⁹ Consequently, there is a need to appreciate all cultural forms and expressions in which the Pentecostal faith can be found which moves beyond the restrictive Western emphasis on writing and doctrinal formation, as these are not shared values around the world.²⁰ In addition to this significant point which highlights the ‘multifaceted variety’ of Pentecostalism, Anderson also clarifies various common features within the movement.²¹ These include the belief of the immanence of God within the service through the presence of the Holy Spirit, an expectation that this will lead to a miraculous intervention of God through the use of the spiritual gifts, the encouragement of a congregational participation in the service (especially in prayers, worship and dancing), a spontaneity in the worship which is both receptive and responsive to God’s call and a free structure of services which is largely predicated upon an oral liturgy.²² As Anderson notes, this definition of Pentecostalism is an ‘all-embracing way to include the Charismatic movement and new Pentecostal or ‘Neo-Pentecostal’ churches of many different descriptions’.²³ However, he also acknowledges that at times, there is a need to distinguish between the various forms of Pentecostalism depending up the nature of the study being undertaken (Classical, Charismatic, autochthonous Prophetic churches in the Majority World and neo-Charismatic Independent churches).²⁴

¹⁹ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 13-4. For criticisms of the phenomenological definition of Pentecostalism, see, G. B. McGee, ‘Pentecostal Missiology: Moving Beyond Triumphalism to Face the Issues’, *Pneuma*, 16:2, 1994, pp. 275-81, esp. 276-7. S. Chan, ‘Whither Pentecostalism?’, in Anderson and Tang (eds.), *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 467-80, esp. 467-71.

²⁰ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 10.

²¹ Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 1 and 9.

²² Anderson, *Introduction*, pp. 9. In addition to these common features, Vondey also notes that recent definitions of Pentecostalism should also consider what is central to the general Pentecostal sensitivities, Vondey, *Beyond*, pp. 9.

²³ Anderson, *introduction*, pp. 1.

²⁴ Anderson, *introduction*, pp. 1. This notion is echoed by Robeck and Yong in their observation that there is a growing trend among the Pentecostal groups to use adjectives in a deliberate attempt to distinguish themselves from other groups (Neo-Pentecostal, Charismatic, Word of Faith, Finished Work and Oneness), Robeck and Yong, *Introduction*, pp. 2.

4. Methodology – Comparative Theology

It was suggested above, that the best way to proceed methodologically in the project is to adopt a comparative framework as a means of developing the theology of Open Theism in light of Pentecostalism. However, in turning to comparative theology, we are immediately faced with the question of how to proceed due to the plethora of available options.²⁵ In its various forms, comparative theology has existed from as early as the fifteenth century.²⁶ Despite comparative theology's distinguished lineage, its current use within the academy has gained significant impetus through the important works of David Tracy, Francis Clooney, Keith Ward, James Fredericks, David Burrell and Robert Neville. Although not primarily a comparative theologian, David Tracy's entry in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* is widely acknowledged as a significant moment in the contemporary conception of comparative studies.²⁷ Tracy argues that theology has become widely recognised as one discipline within the broader multi-disciplinary field of 'religious studies'. Consequently, given the prevalent nature and understanding of religious pluralism within religious studies, all contemporary theology requires a comparative dimension, as the interaction between religions must be

²⁵ Robert Neville suggests five possible models for comparative theology; (1) the 'social scientific' model which examines how theological ideas arise and compares them from that perspective, (2) 'historical comparative theology' which traces the historical development of certain theological ideas both within a given tradition and across religious borders, (3) the arrival of comparative ideas from prior metaphysical schemes, (4) a specific Christian theology which ventures into the theology of the 'other' to provide stimulus to re-read and re-evaluate one's home tradition, and (5) the work of Raimon Panikkar (see R. Panikkar [ed. and trans.], *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari: An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999). R. Panikkar, *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). R. C. Neville, *Ritual and Deference: Extending Chinese Philosophy in a Comparative Context* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

²⁶ For an overview of the historical developments within comparative theology see, Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, pp. 24-40. F. X. Clooney, 'Comparative Theology', in J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, pp. 653-69, esp. 654-9.

²⁷ D. Tracy, 'Comparative Theology', in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol. 14 (New York: MacMillan, 1987), pp. 446-55.

considered at the start of any theological investigation.²⁸ Therefore, Tracy asserts that comparative theology can be legitimately practised in two ways; the first views the discipline within the history of religions, and compares the relative development of theologies within the different traditions, and the second, a more focussed ‘theological enterprise’, which seeks to offer comparative insights arising solely from the theological issues facing the communities.²⁹

Tracy is not alone in stating that theology, and particularly comparative theology, is a necessary pluralistic, public and inter-religious discipline. Ward, Burrell and Neville all argue, to varying degrees, for the pluralistic emphasis within comparative theology, incorporating this into the very core of their *methodological* procedures.³⁰ However, in recognising this strong consensus within comparative studies, we are struck with two inter-related issues which impact the current study. The first of these relates to whether theology *must* be practised pluralistically within an inter-religious trajectory, and, secondly, what the implications are for the present study which seeks to compare two Christian traditions, and

²⁸ D. Tracy, *Comparative Theology*, pp. 446.

²⁹ D. Tracy, *Comparative Theology*, pp. 446. Tracy identifies four significant movements within the practice of comparative theology which brings its study to fruition; (1) the need to identify and re-interpret the central religious symbols within the contemporary religious setting, (2) offer new theological interpretations and foundations for both specific traditions and the wider understanding of religious pluralism, (3) address the pressing questions of religious pluralism on theological grounds within the current milieu, and (4) review and critique one’s home tradition by utilising the hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval. Here, Tracy continues to develop many of the themes which were suggested in his earlier work (D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London, SCM Press, 1981). D. Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

³⁰ K. Ward, *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in World Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 37-8. K. Ward, *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 339 and 346-7. (see also K. Ward, *Religion and Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). K. Ward, *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). K. Ward, *Concepts of God: Images of the Divine in Five Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998). [Previously published as, K. Ward, *Images of Eternity* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1987).] for how this is worked out in practise). D. B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. ix, 2 and 14-18. D. B. Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993, pp. 1-6) D. B. Burrell & B. McGinn (eds.), *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). R. C. Neville, *Behind the Masks of God: An Essay Toward Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 2 and 34-5. R. C. Neville & W. J. Wildman, ‘On Comparing Religious Ideas’, in R. C. Neville (ed.), *The Human Condition: A Volume in the Comparative Religions Ideas Project* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 9-20, esp. 11 and 14.

not two religions. In turning first to the question of whether or not theology must be developed within an inter-religious context, it is acknowledged that there are alternative theological approaches which do not rely on the above pluralistic presuppositions, and develop alternative criteria for constructing Christian theology. Among these, is what Graham, Walton and Ward have termed ‘Canonical Narrative Theology’.³¹ In providing a brief outline for this theological approach, they claim that the significance for the theologian is that the Christian faith represents God’s own self-narrated story, told primarily through the life and death of Jesus. Consequently, the words and actions of Jesus are taken as the framework not only for reading the Bible, but the subsequent events of human history, of which Christian believers must find ways of living within.³² In this manner, ‘Canonical Narrative Theology’ does not seek to construct rigid rules of methodological procedure governing theological reflection, “[r]ather it invites the Christian to develop a *habitus*, or way of life, through which the story of Jesus continues to be told in the life of the story-shaped community of the church”.³³ In this regard, the advent of Christian theology is concerned primarily with its own self-contained narrative, and develops independently from the concerns of the pluralistic context.

By appreciating that there are viable theological alternatives which do not require a necessary capitulation to the pluralistic vision espoused above, allows for the development of

³¹ E. Graham & H. Walton & F. Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), pp. 78-108.

³² Graham *et al*, *Theological Reflection*, pp. 78.

³³ Graham *et al*, *Theological Reflection*, pp. 78. Graham, Walton and Ward highlight the work of Karl Barth and Postliberalism as contemporary expressions of ‘Canonical Narrative Theology’. See, K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. From 6th ed. by E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010). and G. A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984). For an excellent critique of the Postliberal method which retains the central conviction of ‘Canonical Narrative Theology’, that prioritises the Christ narrative as the lead hermeneutical *loci*, see, A. E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 14-34. A. E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 136-61.

a theology which is concerned with its own internal narrative and identity. Consequently, we can take the insights from the ‘Canonical Narrative’ approach and lay the foundation for the current work, confident that a theology which speaks from and to its own ecclesial context has a recognised validity. With this foundation in place, we turn to the second of our considerations regarding the nature of inter-Christian dialogue. The comparative methods mentioned above have situated and conducted theological study within a specific inter-religious context, and subsequently, integrated this into the very nature of the study itself. It is therefore impossible to separate the comparative methods from the object of study. However, this conception of comparative methodology can be challenged by legitimately redefining the purpose and parameters of the given study. By substituting the central convictions of religious pluralism with those of ‘Canonical Narrative Theology’, we arrive at a different place to conduct our comparative work from. Subsequently, the concerns which are rightly acknowledged within the inter-religious context and impact the methodological procedures, do not have the same bearing on discussions within different theological contexts. There is no *a priori* or necessary compulsion to conduct comparative work from just one theological/ideological position despite the suggestions to the contrary. In this regard, comparative work is not dependent upon a given ideological stance for its efficacy and utility.

Therefore, comparative study can be freed from certain restraints and allowed a freedom to draw together any, and all, criteria. This then includes a specific inter-Christian dialogue, with its own controlling theological purpose. Being as the ‘Canonical Narrative’ approach has produced and continues to produce, exciting and novel insights into Christian theology (Barth, Postliberalism and Radical Orthodoxy to name but three), there can be little preventing it functioning as an experiment in comparative theology. Consequently, one of the viable purposes of a comparative study can rightly manifest internal Christian discussions

concerning the nature of how the biblical God is comprehended and how this subsequently impacts the Church and world. The comparative work can serve as a stimulus for both denominational reflection and ecumenical encounter, as new insights can be prompted by the use of a detailed comparative work.³⁴ However, in rejecting the pluralistic comparative methods discussed above within the present work, we are still faced with the question of *how* the comparison is to be conducted. To this end, we turn to the important insights of Francis X. Clooney.

5. Francis X. Clooney

Francis Clooney stands very much at the fore of contemporary comparative theology. His work in drawing together Roman Catholic and Hindu theologies has developed a unique approach and marked him out as a leading and innovative scholar in the field. In addition to the many theological insights which he has drawn throughout his comparative work, he also stands as one of the foremost thinkers of the comparative method. In continuation with the authors previously considered, Clooney shares the conviction that theology must possess an inherently inter-religious character, as this accurately reflects the contemporary religious situation.³⁵ However, his *methodological* work does not rely to the same extent on the *inter-religious* presuppositions which were previously noted and can therefore be extrapolated from the pluralistic context into the ‘Canonical Narrative’ one advocated for above. This contrast is most readily noted when one compares Clooney’s work with that of Ward and Neville. Both Neville and Ward begin their respective theological investigations with questions which relate

³⁴ It is hoped that this contribution can assist, in part, to moving beyond the ‘hesitancy’ and ‘loss of confidence’ which has beset the contemporary ecumenical movement, P. Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 39.

³⁵ F. X. Clooney, ‘Comparative Theology: A Review of Recent Books (1989-1995)’, *Theological Studies*, 56: 5, 1995, pp. 521-550, esp. 534. F. X. Clooney, ‘Comparative Theology’, in J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 653-669, esp. 654 and 660.

directly to the truth claims of other religions, which subsequently directs them into a specific line of methodological inquiry.³⁶ In this respect, Clooney's methodological approach allows for the adoption of the inter-Christian, ecumenical and 'Canonical Narrative' theological approach argued for above.

It is recognised that by taking this step, there is an avoidance of some of the theoretical and methodological presuppositions of comparative theology, especially in its relation to 'religious studies', 'theology of religions', the inherent value and veracity of other religions and how 'theologising' is an inherent religious affair. While these are valid discussions, particularly how comparative theology defines itself in relation to these questions, the immediate implications of these questions exceed the current scope of the work and cannot be pursued here.³⁷ Rather, there is a need to focus upon the purpose and praxis of comparison, the hermeneutical procedures involved and how constructive theology can arise from Clooney's model whilst facilitating the 'Canonical Narrative' work undertaken here.

In a move exemplified in much of contemporary theology, Clooney's comparative theology embraces the notion of *fides quaerens intellectum* as a means of understanding the

³⁶ Ward, *Religion and Revelation*, pp. 3-49 and Neville, *Behind the Masks*, pp. 34-5.

³⁷ For detailed discussion for how comparative theology relates to, and positions itself against, broader aspects of the inter-religious dialogue, see, F. X. Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 3-4. F. X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: A Review of Recent Books*, pp. 521-3. F. X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2010), pp. 3-23. Clooney, *Comparative Theology* (Oxford Handbook), pp. 665-6. See also, J. L. Fredericks, 'A Universal Religious Experience? Comparative Theology as an Alternative to Theology of Religions', *Horizons*, 22:1, 1995, pp. 67-87. J. L. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 98-9. J. L. Fredericks, 'Introduction', in F. X. Clooney (ed.), *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. ix-xix, esp. pp. xiv-xv. K. B. Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology', in Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology*, pp. 21-42. H. Nicholson, 'The Reunification of Theology and Comparison in the New Comparative Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 77:3, 2009, pp. 609-46. H. Nicholson, 'The New Comparative Theology and the Problem of Theological Hegemonism', in Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology*, pp. 43-62. R. B. Locklin & H. Nicholson, 'The Return of Comparative Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 78:2, 2010, pp. 477-514.

practise and purpose of theology.³⁸ Broadly defining comparative theology as a complex dialectical process, that traverses between one's 'home tradition' and the tradition of the 'other', the aim is to unveil new theological truths and insights which can lead to an appreciation of the 'other' and a re-evaluation of the 'home' tradition.³⁹ This results in an engagement with a wide range of religious topics possessing a high degree of intellectual rigour, but which are applied 'within the constraints of a commitment to a religious community'.⁴⁰ Consequently, comparative theology possesses an inherently confessional dimension, as the faith of the author becomes 'a necessary and explicit factor' in the theological construction.⁴¹ The comparative theologian is rooted in a given tradition and works from that as a source, motivation and catalyst for further theological reflection.⁴² From this privileged position, the author is drawn *into* the work, "as comparison turns out to be an event *within* the comparativist, who changes in the course of his or her effort to appropriate another tradition".⁴³ This results in a blurring of lines between the 'personal', 'academic' and the 'confessional', but Clooney argues that this is not only unavoidable, but highly desirable in an age in which theology is seeking to redefine itself.⁴⁴ In this respect, Laksana engages the issues facing theology within the postmodern condition, and argues that the metaphor of 'pilgrimage' is best suited for the theological journey/procedure undertaken by the

³⁸ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 9, 11 and 36. Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 8. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: A Review of Recent Books*, pp. 521. Clooney, *Comparative Theology* (Oxford Handbook), pp. 658-9 and 662. See also, Fredericks, *Introduction*, pp. xiii.

³⁹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 6-7 and 191. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 9, 11 and 14-5. Clooney, *Comparative Theology* (Oxford Handbook), p. 659. J. Cobb Jr. advocates a comparative method similar to Clooney's approach, see, J. B. Cobb Jr., *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 47.

⁴⁰ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 9.

⁴¹ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 14. Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 8.

⁴² F. X. Clooney, *Beyond Compare: St. Francis de Sales and Sri Vedanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), pp. xi.

⁴³ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: A Review of Recent Books*, pp. 529 and 533.

⁴⁴ Clooney, *Beyond Compare*, pp. xi.

comparativist and the context in which the study is undertaken.⁴⁵

In stating that one's beliefs and commitments to a given faith community are desirable and necessary in shaping the comparative dialogue, there is also a need to recognise the obligations and responsibilities in approaching the 'other' and how one should remain faithful to the 'home' tradition. In addressing this question, Clooney states that comparative theology should develop as an 'including theology', which seeks neither to subsume nor consume the tradition of the 'other' by respecting the 'other' with a careful, detailed reading of its 'Classic' texts and highlighting the theological differences and conceptual frameworks they possess.⁴⁶ A central facet of this involves recognising that comparative study is autobiographically grounded, and will necessarily involve the interplay of personal biases. This does not negate the impact of the given biases (as such a thing is impossible), but it does draw the comparativist to an awareness of possible weaknesses in her work and provides direction for how the work could possibly progress.⁴⁷

In acknowledging that comparative theology can proceed from any number of religious or theological phenomena, such as poetry, songs, liturgy or praxis, Clooney argues that the most fruitful means of comparison is that between texts.⁴⁸ Clooney privileges texts as they cannot be reduced to mere 'instances of information' which can be conveniently consumed.⁴⁹ Rather, texts are 'inscribed' with truth, which defines and expresses the accumulated wisdom of a tradition's worldview and which can only be accessed through a

⁴⁵ A. B. Laksana, 'Comparative Theology: Between Identity and Alterity', in Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology*, pp. 1-20, esp. 3 and 10-1. See also, F. X. Clooney, 'Response', in Clooney, *The New Comparative Theology*, pp. 191-200, esp. 193.

⁴⁶ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 158, Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 16 and 60. F. X. Clooney, *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 1-3.

⁴⁷ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Reasoning*, pp. 64.

⁴⁸ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 57 and 67. Clooney, *Beyond Compare*, pp. 5.

⁴⁹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 157.

careful and patient reading of the interplay between text and context.⁵⁰ In this regard, texts need be respected as something other than a static commodity of data. In a turn to postmodern hermeneutics, texts are viewed in a state of flux which defy inert readings, which subsequently uncovers their innate ability to change both the reader and the present context.⁵¹

In constructing this view, Clooney draws upon particular reading and interpretative strategies to explain how change occurs and what implications this holds for the *religious* readings of texts. Although space restraints prohibit a detailed evaluation of the major hermeneutical influences upon Clooney, a brief description will be offered to provide an overview of Clooney's hermeneutical direction. A central motivation for Clooney is the Derridean concept of *différance*, in which he states, "we learn in the persistent, unsettled, and unsettling double reading to tease out the presences and absences our two texts impose upon each other".⁵² Here, we are again drawn to the importance of the reader as an active participant in the theological process, as she cannot remain a detached participant, but drawn into and led by the promptings of the text, wherever it should lead. This idea is developed further by Clooney when he incorporates Paul Griffiths' notion of the *homo lector*.⁵³ In seeking to answer the question of what it means 'to be' in the age of text and how religious readings should nurture this, Griffiths argues that a theological worldview and *habitus* should both inform and be shaped by textual readings.⁵⁴ There is a need to respect the text through

⁵⁰ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 157-8 and 188.

⁵¹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 157.

⁵² Clooney, *Beyond Compare*, pp. 27. Fredericks develops this point further when he critiques Modernity's attempt to impose a universal homogeneity through grand narratives which stifled insights possessed within particularities. In the postmodern turn, there has been a growing appreciation of the benefits of difference, and how this is shaped by various contextual factors and impacts the interpretative process. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 101-2.

⁵³ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 58. See also, P. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵⁴ With the inclusion of a textual reading informing and shaping a theological *habitus* there are strong parallels here to the Canonical-Narrative theology laid out above.

careful reading, and expose oneself to a vulnerability and self-criticism as the novelty and truth of the text challenges and subtly changes one's worldviews and conceptions. However, the new readings and contexts which are opened up from the text should not negate the need to anchor oneself from the historical trajectory of 'old learning'. Here Clooney utilises the insights from Pierre Hadot, who argues that there is a need to defer to the wisdom which is inherited and perpetuated within classic texts.⁵⁵ Hadot additionally argues that traditions safeguard the reading of texts through generational teaching and how the inherited truths should be interpreted in ever new contexts. Finally, Clooney draws from the 'conversationalist' model of reading, as found in Gadamer and Tracy. In this approach, texts are appropriated by learning from the 'other', which is neither the same nor completely different from one's self. By appreciating the difference which exists in the other, a conservation arises between the two 'horizons' of the text and reader. The many surprising twist and turns of reading ultimately leads to a new appreciation of self, text and context, as differences are overcome by the merging of the respective horizons.⁵⁶

The hermeneutical foundation for comparative theology subsequently results in a praxis-driven procedure instead of a comprehensive theoretical system which governs the comparisons.⁵⁷ With dialogue between the two traditions constituting such a central feature, the *act* of conversation raises theological questions, rather than having them imposed from a previous theoretical system. Therefore, the *conversation* leads the theological inquiry, which raises issues of difference and similarity and will also bring to light new topics of

⁵⁵ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 59. See also, P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁵⁶ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 168-71. See also, H. G. Gadamer (trans. J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall), *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004). Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, pp. 20 and 93. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 108-9.

⁵⁷ Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 26-7.

discussion.⁵⁸ Hence, comparative theology possesses an inherently contextual dimension, as the *loci* of the ‘home’ and ‘other’ tradition will impact *how* the study is undertaken and develops an ongoing awareness of the changing contexts which the comparativist finds herself.⁵⁹ New meanings and insights will occur as she exposes herself to the encounter with the ‘other’, stimulating the need for further reflection.⁶⁰ Reflecting upon the interplay between text and context, Clooney summarises the complex hermeneutical procedure when he explains that, “it becomes an infinitely extended process, in which the texts in question become evermore specified as their context is more broadly articulated, as each discovery is complicated and further questions continually raised”.⁶¹

Throughout all of this, there is also the need to conduct the contextualised conversation in a spirit of ‘love’, as domineering and violent exchanges close people off and stunt learning.⁶² By adopting such an approach, comparative theology can also avoid the hegemony of one tradition dominating the ‘other’ by respecting the differences, uniqueness and horizon of the ‘other’ through dialogue. There is consequently an ongoing need to reflect upon the praxis, especially as one moves continually between both traditions. This keeps in check many of the subtle biases which are in play and prevents the domination of one tradition over the other, which has been a recurring criticism against comparative theology.⁶³

Alongside the safeguards concerning the praxis within comparative theology, there is

⁵⁸ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 171. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 108-9.

⁵⁹ Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 109-10.

⁶⁰ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 155.

⁶¹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 167.

⁶² Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 104.

⁶³ Many of the articles in Clooney’s *The New Comparative Theology* tackle the question of hegemony: Kiblinger, *Relating Theology*, pp.21-42. Nicholson, *The New Comparative Theology*, pp. 43-62. D. A. Clairmont, *On Hegemonies Within: Franciscan Missions and Buddhist Kings in Comparative Theological Contexts*, pp. 63-88. D. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Comparative Theology and the Status of Judaism: Hegemony and Reversals*, pp. 89-108. M. Voss Roberts, *Gendering Comparative Theology*, pp. 109-128.

also a need to remain self-critical in respects to one's own tradition and an openness to the 'other'. Comparative theologians stress the need to nurture a strong degree of *vulnerability* when approaching the 'other' and allowing it to speak. Only by opening oneself to the wisdom and truth possessed by the 'other', and allowing that to critique and change our current understanding, can we hope to learn and subsequently re-read our own traditions.⁶⁴ Fredericks summarises this position well when he espouses the benefits of embracing the required vulnerability in approaching the 'other' while remaining faithful to one's 'home' tradition. Utilising the notions of *tremendum* and *facinans*, he comments upon when a powerful new idea "intrudes into my Christian worldview as a disturbing and destabilizing force. Herein lies the *tremendum*. At the same time, [a new idea] presents itself as a real possibility for understanding the world and my Christian convictions about the world in new ways. Therein lies the *facinans*".⁶⁵

Articulating a reading strategy which meets the requirements laid out above is no easy task. In responding to this difficulty, Clooney argues that religious readings should adopt the practice of *commentary* as its primary means of engaging texts. Defining commentary as a 'close reading bounded by respect for the text and respect for the tradition', Clooney argues that this is the 'quintessential' reading strategy for religious communities and comparativists.⁶⁶ Returning to the idea that texts are inscribed with truths, the comparative theologian must be willing to submit oneself to the 'otherness and novelty' not only in the text, but also its textual history/transmission. Modern sensitivities regarding the views expressed in the texts must, for the time being, be set aside, if a clear and careful reading is to follow and a fidelity to the text

⁶⁴ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 6-4, esp. 5. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 59. Clooney, *Comparative Theology* (Oxford Handbook), pp. 661. See also, Neville & Wildman, *On Comparing*, pp. 10, Fredericks, *Introduction*, pp. xii-xiii.

⁶⁵ Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 97.

⁶⁶ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 60-1.

upheld.⁶⁷ With learning arising from the complex dialectic and in line with the logic of the texts, any wisdom gleaned will only emerge slowly as the relationship between text and context unfolds.

In summarising the reading and textual quota of the thesis there will be a broad acceptance of the method as laid out by Clooney with some additional insights, particularly from Fredericks. The importance of respecting the varying textual horizons and the differing contextual settings in which they arose will be paramount in constructing the comparative work. This necessarily requires a large amount of descriptive work so that both Open Theism and Pentecostalism are presented as accurately as possible. This is completed in chapters 1-4, as chapter 1 outlines the broad theological doctrines of Open Theism and details its central theological tenets. Chapters 2 and 3 will build from the insights of the theological overview and explain in more depth the specific understandings of the Godhead, providence, salvation and eschatology within the Open community. This requires a detailed reading, highlighting the central thoughts of the authors and how each specifies the interplay between the topics under consideration. However, in a shift somewhat different from the comparative theology of Clooney, chapters 2 and 3 will end with a theological evaluation of the various ideas. The reason for this is that the current work will attempt to offer a survey of the differing theological positions within Open Theism. The evaluation will allow for questions and critiques to arise concerning the particular understandings within the community and offer a new context within which the 'Canonical Narrative' reading of the Godhead and the response from Pentecostalism can be placed. This is then followed by a close commentary reading of the Pentecostal texts in Chapter 4, to gain a fuller understanding of the Pentecostal perspective.

⁶⁷ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 61.

In returning to the overview of Clooney's method, the remainder of this section will examine how one progresses from a careful commentary reading into the comparative work and how this results in a revisionist and constructive theology. Reading is a central component of comparative theology as the comparison can only follow once the *acts* of reading have been completed and the broad horizons of difference and similarity are established.⁶⁸ It is within this created space through the reading that the comparativist can reflect upon how the horizons can possibly interact. This must be accompanied by a willingness to learn from the other, even when faced with ideas and notions which they fundamentally disagree with.⁶⁹ This is where the 'conversational' model of Gadamer and Tracy becomes especially helpful, as the comparative theologian again reads and re-reads the material, drawing all aspects of the thought into dialogue and refining the inscribed truths contained within the texts.

Neville and Wildman provide a helpful insight in clarifying how the reading process functions within the comparative aspect of the method. At the start of any comparison a *vague category* is formed which allows for the topic(s) under investigation to be compared in the 'same respect'. The designation 'vague' is utilised so that broad notions can co-exist alongside one another even if they appear initially contradictory.⁷⁰ The range of views within a given topic constitutes the content of the vague category from both the 'home' and 'other' tradition. It is important at this stage that a degree of neutrality is strived for, so that the understanding of the 'home' tradition does not subsume and dominate the comparative process.⁷¹ To counter this tendency, there is a need to ground the contrasting views within the

⁶⁸ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 58.

⁶⁹ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 63.

⁷⁰ Neville & Wildman, *On Comparing*, pp. 14.

⁷¹ Neville & Wildman, *On Comparing*, pp. 14.

vague category to their historical rootedness of the specific tradition and express it ‘in its own way’. This ensures that important details, or ‘specifications’, are included and allows a proper representative portrayal throughout the comparison.⁷² Consequently, through the dialectical process of moving between the vague categories and the various specifications of the two traditions, clarity arises regarding the similarities and differences between the two. ‘Thus, the language expressing the vague category gets enriched and filled in so as to register the distinctions in the various specifications’.⁷³

Once the comparativist has arrived at this moment within her work, the constructive element can then begin. Here it is important to recognise the scope and purpose of comparative theology and what expectations the comparativist should pertain to within the discipline. Comparative theologians tend to shy away from grand theories of religion and over-arching understandings of theology when concluding their work.⁷⁴ Although wider theological discussions play a part in contextualising aspects of the theological dialogue, the theoretical framework and the conclusions which are drawn arise from the specific topic under investigation.⁷⁵ This is a particularly appealing aspect to contemporary theology within the late Modern/Postmodern turn, which privileges the local over the universal.⁷⁶ Fredericks summarises this aspect succinctly when he states that, “this theology proceeds by means of very limited acts of interpretation rooted in the praxis of dialogue”.⁷⁷

In this respect, comparative theologians prefer to see their work as small scale

⁷² Neville & Wildman, *On Comparing*, pp. 15.

⁷³ Neville & Wildman, *On Comparing*, pp. 15.

⁷⁴ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 3 and 8-9. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 68. See also, Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 27.

⁷⁵ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 9.

⁷⁶ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 68.

⁷⁷ Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 27.

‘experiments’ from which tentative conclusions arise.⁷⁸ The conclusions’ provisional character stems from an acknowledgement of the inherent restrictions within the method. First, the ‘conversational’ model which is widely adopted within comparative theology appreciates that discussions are rarely resolved as neither dialogue partner possesses all the answers but has something valuable to contribute. Additionally, any dialogue creates new contexts into which further conversations can, and should, take place, requiring constant reflection upon the conclusions.⁷⁹ Secondly, there is the awareness that those conducting the dialogue are prone to mistakes and misinterpretations and that the changes the comparativist undergoes during the reading and interpretative process will bring a degree of uncertainty concerning the texts.⁸⁰ Thirdly, there is a modest understanding that comparative theology only represents one dimension, or facet, of religious truth.⁸¹ The theological ‘truth’ manifested in comparative study is that of ‘complex literary events’ which derive from a given written context which have been subject to various arrangements and judgements. While the formalisation of these claims is possible, there remains the contextual and textual features which govern its understanding which can and do change with every reading.⁸²

Once the textual, dialectical and comparative work has been completed through the ‘pilgrimage’, there is a return to the ‘home’ tradition to apply the insights in a revisionist and constructive manner. The goal here is not to usurp the central doctrinal tenets of the ‘home’ community, as the comparative method will rarely reveal new truths in this regard. Rather, the possibility arises to read the insights of the ‘other’ *into* the home theology, providing new

⁷⁸ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 57.

⁷⁹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 167. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians*, pp. 108.

⁸⁰ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 193.

⁸¹ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 192 and 196.

⁸² Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 192.

insights into established beliefs.⁸³ Consequently, the purpose of this method is to refine nuances and distinctions within the current thought ‘in order to restate them more effectively’.⁸⁴

6. Criteria for Author Selection

The Open Theists who have been selected to represent the theological community are Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, William Hasker and Thomas Oord. While this selection does omit important names including Richard Rice, Greg Boyd and David Basinger among others, their inclusion derives from a combination of both the significance which they have contributed to the growth of Open Theism and the depth they have discussed the themes within the thesis (Trinity, providence, soteriology and eschatology). In keeping with the general thrust of the thesis, there are three primary considerations which will be applied when deciding upon the Pentecostal dialogue partners. First, in keeping with the method, there is a need to restrict the number of dialogue partners, so that the comparative work can retain its focus of a detailed and descriptive comparison. Too many dialogue partners can pull the thesis in a number of directions which could ultimately compromise the focus which the comparison aims to elucidate. Secondly, being as the discussion seeks to draw from a specifically Pentecostal perspective, there is a requirement that the theologians self-identify as Pentecostal. This unfortunately eliminates some authors who have contributed significant insights into the themes within the thesis, but who are not Pentecostals.⁸⁵ The third and final

⁸³ Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning*, pp. 112.

⁸⁴ Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, pp. 9.

⁸⁵ Significant among these thinkers are Ralph Del Colle and Myk Habets in relation to their respective work on the Trinity, Spirit-Christology and salvation within a systematic/constructive context. See R. Del Colle, ‘Spirit-Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 1:3, 1993, pp. 91-112. R. Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). R. Del Colle, ‘Oneness and Trinity: A Preliminary Proposal for Dialogue with Oneness Pentecostalism’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 5:10, 1997, pp. 85-110. R. Del Colle, ‘Schleiermacher and Spirit Christology: Unexplored Horizons of the Christian Faith’, *International*

criterion draws from the ‘Canonical-Narrative’ component of the thesis outlined above. One of the ways this will function, is to assess how Pentecostals have drawn from, and subsequently been shaped by, their readings (and re-readings) of the biblical narrative. Here, the importance of the selection is how the biblical narrative informs the theological construction. There are obvious overlaps here with George Lindbeck’s Postliberalism and this is intentional.⁸⁶ Therefore, in keeping with the narrative thrust of the thesis, the theologians who will be selected are those who also adopt a broad ‘Canonical-Narrative’ dimension within their work, though they may not describe or identify their own work in this specific manner.⁸⁷

Journal of Systematic Theology, 1:3, 1999, pp. 286-307. R. Del Colle, ‘Aesthetics and Pathos in the Vision of God: A Catholic—Pentecostal Encounter’, *Pneuma*, 26.1, 2004, pp. 99-117. R. Del Colle, ‘The Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person’, *Theological Studies*, 62:2, 2001, pp. 322-40. R. Del Colle, ‘Postmodernism and the Pentecostal-Charismatic experience’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 8:17, 2000, pp. 97-116. R. Del Colle, ‘Whither Pentecostal Theology? Why a Catholic is Interested’, *Pneuma*, 31.1, 200, pp. 35-46. R. Del Colle, ‘Trinity and Temporality: A Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspective’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 4:8, 2001, pp. 99-113. M. Habets, ‘Veni Cinderella Spiritus’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 10: 1, 2001, pp. 65-80. M. Habets, ‘Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 11:2, 2003, pp. 199-235. M. Habets, ‘Reforming *Theosis*’, in S. Finlan & V. Khalamov (eds.), *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2006), pp. 146-67. M. Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009). M. Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010). J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology: God, and the World and Redemption*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988). J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology: Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Christian Living*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology: The Church, the Kingdom, and Last Things*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996).

⁸⁶ G. A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

⁸⁷ It is for this reason that Amos Yong and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen have not been selected for the present work. While each have contributed important insights into the understanding of Pentecostalism, both authors adopt a degree of pluralism within their writings. See, A. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). A. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). A. Yong, *The Dialogical Spirit: Christian Reason and Theological Method in the Third Millennium* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014). A. Yong, *Spirit of love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012). A. Yong, ‘Christian and Buddhist Perspectives on Neuropsychology and the Human Person: *Pneuma* and *Pratityasamutpada*’, *Zygon*, 40:1, 2005, pp. 143-65. A. Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007). V. Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus Ubi Vult Spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)*. Vol. 42. Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998. V. Kärkkäinen (ed. A. Yong), *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002). V. Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). V. Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation: A Constructive Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). V. Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity: A Constructive Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). V. Kärkkäinen, *Spirit and Creation: A Constructive Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

For these reasons, the authors which have been selected to represent the Pentecostal perspective are Frank Macchia and Steven Studebaker. However, in making this selection, it should not imply that these are the only available or viable choices. As Pentecostalism has continued to mature within its theological thinking, there are a number of quality resources which could have been drawn from when discussing the notions of the Trinity, divine providence, soteriology and eschatology.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Other significant Pentecostal texts which were considered for inclusion include, M. Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1937, revised 1981 (25th Printing 2010)). E. S. Williams, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols. (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1953). F. Arrington, *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 3 Vols. (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1993-4). R. H. Gause, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* (Cleveland: CPT Press, Revised and Expanded Edition 2009, First Edition, 1980). J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 3 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Academie Books/Zondervan, 1988-92). W. P. Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013). D. W. Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel. The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). P. Althouse, *Spirit of the last days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann* (London: T & T Clark, 2003). P. Althouse & R Waddell (eds.), *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010). H. O. Bryant, *Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition: From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2014). A. K. Gabriel, *The Lord is the Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Divine Attributes* (Eugene: Pickwick publishers, 2011). G. D. Fee, 'Paul and the Trinity: The Experience of Christ and the Spirit for Paul's understanding of God', in S. T. Davis & D. Kendall & G. O'Collins (eds.), *The Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 49-72.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROMISE OF OPEN THEISM

Before any work can begin in dialogically drawing together Open Theist and Pentecostal thought, it is important first to establish the broad theological parameters within which the current work will operate. Therefore, the purpose of this initial chapter is to introduce and describe the central tenets of Open Theism. By explaining what Open Theism purports will not only present an opportunity to affirm and explain some of its fundamental ideas, but will also establish a theological context which the later analysis is grounded in.

1.1 Critique of ‘Classical Theism’

This sub-section is not intended as an overview of Classical Theism *per se*, but endeavours to represent how proponents of Open Theism have portrayed and criticised certain aspects within Classical Theism in the development of Open Theism.⁸⁹ In short, Classical Theism consists of a ‘cluster of theological doctrines’ supporting its own inner logic which forms a closely inter-related ‘package of divine attributes’ through which God is comprehended.⁹⁰ Within this ‘traditional package’ are included the attributes of autonomy,

⁸⁹ It needs to be stated here that the designation ‘Classical Theism’ is a broad generic term, incorporating varying doctrines of ‘God’ which have been developed under the ‘Biblical-Classical Synthesis’ within differing traditions (Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 13-4. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), pp. 77.). For a defence of Classical Theism by authors who are critical of Open Theism, see, G. Bray, *The Doctrine of God: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993). G. Bray, *The Personal God: Is the Classical Understanding of God Tenable?* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998). P. Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). P. Helm, *The Providence of God: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994). For Helm’s critiques of Open theism see, ‘Classical Calvinist Doctrine of God’, pp. 5-52 and ‘Responses to John Sanders’, pp. 241-6 in B. A. Ware (ed.), *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: 4 Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008). P. Helm, ‘The Augustinian-Calvinist View’, pp. 161-89 and ‘An Augustinian-Calvinist Response’, pp. 61-4, in J. K. Beilby & P. R. Eddy (eds.), *Divine Knowledge: Four Views* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

⁹⁰ W. Hasker, *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), pp. 26. Pinnock, *MMM*, p. 65, 77, 106 and. 120. J. Sanders, ‘Divine Providence and the Openness of

self-sufficiency, immutability, timelessness, impassibility, omniscience, omnipotence,⁹¹ utter transcendence and sovereignty, and have served as the dominant way which the Church has understood and interpreted its doctrines concerning God.⁹² Despite the familiarity of such concepts, Open Theists have stressed the Hellenic origins for these theological categories which developed into the ‘Biblical-Classical Synthesis’; a merger of the Bible and Hellenistic philosophy.⁹³ Drawing from dominant philosophical and theological themes which existed in the Hellenistic world (especially influences from Neo-Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic thought which highly valued immutability and impassibility), Jewish and Christian thinkers (especially Philo⁹⁴) sought to correlate Greek philosophy with their reading of the Bible.⁹⁵ As

God’, in Ware, *Perspectives*, pp. 196-240, esp. 201. J. Sanders, ‘God as Personal’, in C. H. Pinnock (ed), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), pp. 165-80, esp. 170-2.

⁹¹ The idea of omnipotence is widely understood to include the notion that God cannot perform the logically impossible or bring about affairs which are impossible. As such, God cannot create a married bachelor or create a world in which two contradictory affairs can exist simultaneously e.g., in a world where someone dies at the age of two and also marries at the age of twenty-two. D. Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), pp. 23-4. See also T. V. Morris, *Our Idea of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991), pp. 66.

⁹² Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 14-23. J. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), pp. 153. C. A. Hall & J. Sanders, *Does God Have a future? A Debate on Divine Providence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 65-6. Hasker, *The Triumph of God*, pp. 26-7. C. H. Pinnock, ‘Between Classical and Process Theology’, in R. Nash (ed.), *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker House Books, 1987), pp. 309-327, esp. 313.

⁹³ Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 23. Pinnock, *Most Moved*, pp. 65-8. C. H. Pinnock, ‘God Limits His Knowledge’, in D. & R. Basinger (eds.), *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), pp. 143-62, esp. pp. 158. Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, pp. 141-2, J. Sanders, ‘Historical Considerations’, in Pinnock *et al*, *The Openness of God*, pp. 59-100, esp. 61-72. W. Hasker, ‘A Philosophical Perspective’, in Pinnock *et al*, *The Openness of God*, pp. 126-54, esp. 127. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* pp. 66 and 120-1. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 172. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 65-6. See also, H. P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 1. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1975).

⁹⁴ Although a ‘leading figure in forging the biblical-classical synthesis’ (Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, pp. 69), Philo never completely capitulated to Greek philosophy in his interpretation of the bible, though his interpretation of Ex. 3:14 is indicative of his position. Philo modifies the LXX reading from *ho ōn* to *to on*, which undermines the Semitic personal reading by supplanting the Hellenistic category of necessary existence (See, W. Kasper (trans. M. O’Connell), *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 147-52.). For further reading on the importance of Philo in forging the biblical-classical synthesis, and how the ‘package’ of Classical attributes influenced his reading, especially the ideas of immutability and impassibility, see, H. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Vols. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 446-56. J. C. McLelland, *God the Anonymous: A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology*, Patristic Monographs 4 (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1976), pp. 44. Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, pp. 68-72.

⁹⁵ For an overview of ‘Classical’ attributes which existed in Greek philosophy before Plato and how they were developed, see, J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 273. Also, due to the complexities involved in establishing what Plato meant by the term ‘God’, see,

a result of the synthesis, Sanders argues that “God was more of a metaphysical abstraction than a personal being.”⁹⁶

As we shall note in more detail below, the main obstacle for Open Theists in relation to Classical theology is God’s perceived inability to form reciprocal and responsive loving relationships due to His immutability and impassibility. These divine attributes were prominent in Hellenic thought and were subsequently incorporated into Christianity via the ‘Biblical-Classical Synthesis’ and later became significant features within Christian theology.⁹⁷ Despite the inevitability of early Christian thinkers drawing from their intellectual milieu and criticising many facets of Greek philosophy, Pinnock argues that some of their writings were in fact, ‘misguided’.⁹⁸ This is most evident in the doctrines concerning God’s attributes. In the formation of their doctrines, the Early Fathers adopted ontological categories to describe God, which relied heavily on a Hellenistic epistemology and concepts. Ignatius,⁹⁹

J. P. Rowan, ‘Platonic and Christian Theism’, in S. A. Matczak (ed.), *God in Contemporary Thought: A Philosophical Perspective* (New York: Learned Publications, 1977), pp. 385-413. For Plato’s thoughts pertaining to ‘god’ and the ‘good’ and the notion of a ‘Perfect Being’ see, Plato (trans. D. Lee), *The Republic*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 67-8 and 71-4. Plato (trans. M. Joyce), *Symposium or The Drinking Party* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1935), pp. 15 and 46. Plato (trans. D. J. Zeyl), *Timaeus* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 26-30. Plato (trans. J. C. B. Gosling), *Philebus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 11-3. For Aristotle’s use of ‘Classical’ categories, see, Aristotle (trans. A. Madigan), *Metaphysics: Book B AND Book K 1-2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 12-3. Aristotle, (trans. R. Waterfield), *Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 163 and 185-231. For an overview on Stoic determinism, see, D. Frede, ‘Stoic Determinism’ in B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 179-205.

⁹⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 142. See also, Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 66. The Pentecostal scholar Samuel Solivan makes a very similar point, though he is not writing from an ‘Open’ perspective, S. Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward a Hispanic Pentecostal Theology*, JPTSUP, 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 47-8.

⁹⁷ R. E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), pp. 54. D. G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), pp. 205. R. A. Norris, *God and the World in Early Christian Theology: A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen* (London: Adam and Charles Black), 1966. Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, pp. 59-60. Hasker, *A Philosophical Perspective*, pp. 127.

⁹⁸ Pinnock, *MMM*, p. 66. See also Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 170-1. J. Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971). Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, pp. 59 and 72.

⁹⁹ Ignatius, *Epistle to Polycarp* 3:2. Ignatius, *Epistle to Ephesians* 7:2. Ignatius, *St. Ignatius of Antioch: The Epistles* (Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2012).

Justin Martyr,¹⁰⁰ Tertullian¹⁰¹ and Irenaeus¹⁰² each incorporated ‘Classical’ aspects into their work.¹⁰³ In what later became ‘axiomatic’ for Western scholastic theology, Augustine’s absorption of Neo-Platonic ideas led to pronouncements of a Deity who was defined largely through categories of immutability and transcendence.¹⁰⁴ Describing immutability as the absolute unchanging will and knowledge of the divine, God became the paragon of Classical attributes within the ‘Perfect Being’ theology of Augustine’s later writings.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Aquinas later perpetuated the Classical attributes with his reliance on Aristotelian thought, establishing a paradigmatic norm for Scholastic theology.¹⁰⁶ The opening of his *Summa*

¹⁰⁰ Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 13, 20 and 61 and *Second Apology* 6 and 13. However, Justin argues for libertarian freedom against a strong determinism, *First Apology* 28, 43 and 43-5, L. W. Barnard, *The First and Second Apologies*, No. 56 (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997).

¹⁰¹ Although Tertullian affirms the basic ‘Classic’ attributes (*Against Hermogenes* 12 [Savage: Lighthouse Publishing, 2015]), he was also the lead figure in rejecting many aspects of the Greek synthesis. Tertullian speaks of God’s suffering (*On the Flesh of Christ* 5 [Savage: Lighthouse Publishing, 2015]) and accepts that God changed His mind in the Jonah account (*Against Marcion* 2:24 [Beloved Publishing, 2014]). However, Norris points out the resultant tensions which this caused in his writings, Norris, *God and the World*, pp. 112. See also, R. B. Edwards, ‘The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God’, *Religious Studies* 14: 3, 1978, pp. 305-13.

¹⁰² Whilst promoting the ideas of libertarian free will and God’s interaction with the world, Irenaeus strongly supported the ‘Classical’ attributes of God, *Against Heresies* 1:12:2, 2:12:2, 2:12:1, 2:13:3-4, 2:28:4, 3:8:3, 3:16:6 and 4:11:2 (Beloved Publishing, 2015).

¹⁰³ It does need to be stressed that during the Patristic period there was little consensus as to the meaning of the ontological categories, especially immutability and impassibility. However, there is no negation of God responding to humanity, nor His inability to experience some form of divine emotion. See, Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, pp. 146. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?* pp. 65. See also, P. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassable God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 15-6 and 48.

¹⁰⁴ C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 87 and 101. R. T. Wallis, *Neo-Platonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), pp. 160-78. J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vols. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 296. E. Portalie (trans. R. J. Bastian), *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), pp. 128.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *The Enchiridion* chapters 24-8 and 96 (Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2012), *City of God*, 8:6, 9:5, 11:21 and 22:2 (Augustine [trans. H. Bettenson], *Concerning the City of God Against Pagans* [with new introduction by G. R. Evans], (London: Penguin, 2003). Augustine, [ed. S. Pine-Coffin], *Confessions*, 7:9, 7:11, 11:10 and 18, 12:15 and 13:16 (London: Penguin, 1961). Augustine, [trans. A.W. Haddan], *On the Trinity*, 1:1:3, 5:2:3 and 4:5:6 (Fig Publishers, 2013). See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 149-53. Hasker, *A Philosophical Perspective*, pp. 131-2. E. Brunner, *Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), pp. 239. N. Wolterstorff, ‘Suffering Love’, in T. V. Morris, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 210.

¹⁰⁶ Pinnock, *MMM*, p. 70. S. R. Holmes, ‘The Attributes of God’, in J. Webster & K. Tanner & I. Torrance, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, pp. 54-71, esp. 61-2.

Theologiae begins with a register of classically influenced attributes.¹⁰⁷ In addition to the Orthodox and Catholic thinkers who drew from Classical influences, the stalwarts of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin, also drew from the same notions.¹⁰⁸ Due to the impact of Reformed thought on conservative Evangelicalism,¹⁰⁹ Open Theists affirm that Classical Theism ‘continues to have considerable indirect influence through the theological tradition.’¹¹⁰

Having once established the scope and influence of Classical Theism, Open Theists turn to the theological difficulties which arise from it.¹¹¹ Pinnock summarises his objection by stating that, “a package of divine attributes has been constructed which leans in the direction of immobility and hyper-transcendence, particularly because of the influence of the Hellenistic category of unchangeableness.”¹¹² Open Theists agree that this results in a theological distortion concerning the doctrine of God, as it stresses a divine inertia as opposed to the historical dynamism which is evidenced in the biblical account.¹¹³ As a consequence, a

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1:1-26 (Aquinas [translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province], *Summa Theologica*, Kindle Edition, 2010). See also Sanders, *GWR*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁸ M. Luther (trans. J. I. Packer & O. R. Johnston), *The Bondage of the Will* (Tappan: Revell, 1957), pp. 80. J. Calvin, [trans. H. Beveridge], *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:2:2, 1:13:2, 1:18:3 and 3:2:6 (Seattle: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2011). However, Sanders does contrast these attributes with Calvin applying biblical terms to God (*Institutes*, 1:10:12, as quoted in Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, p. 89) and God’s dynamic relationship within the Trinity and His responsiveness in regards to humanity and prayer (*Institutes*, 3:20:11-6, quoted in Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 89. For a comparison of the contrasting differences between Open Theism and Classical Theism see, H. W. House, *Charts on Open Theism and Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ C. H. Pinnock, ‘From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology’, in C. H. Pinnock (ed.), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), pp. 15-30, esp. 16-17. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 78. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 101 and 162.

¹¹⁰ Hasker, *A Philosophical Perspective*, pp. 127. Hasker, *The Triumph of God*, pp. 26.

¹¹¹ For other critiques of ‘Classical’ Theism see, W. Pannenberg, ‘The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology’, in *Basic Questions in Theology II* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 119-83. Wolterstorff, *Suffering Love*, pp. 205-6. K. J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2002), pp. 71-95. H. Küng, *Does God Exist?* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 184-8. J. MacQuarrie, *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism* (London: SCM Press, 1984), pp. 88-103.

¹¹² Pinnock, *MMM*, pp.65. See also, Sanders, *Historical Perspective*, pp. 60. Pinnock, ‘Systematic Theology’, in Pinnock *et al*, *The Openness of God*, pp. 101-25, esp. 101 and 106. Pinnock, *Between Classical*, pp. 314. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 173.

¹¹³ Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 21-3. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 66-8 and 72. Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, pp. 59 and 85. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 101, 106, 117-9. Pinnock, *Between Classical*,

dissonance arises between the formal theology within a given tradition and it's the beliefs expressed through its piety (including hymnody) which anticipates God to act in a responsive manner to human request and prayers.¹¹⁴ In light of the theological implications associated with God's immutability and impassability (see below), Open Theists question how aspects of God's loving nature, petitionary prayer, human freedom and suffering, divine guidance and theodicy can be coherently and adequately accounted for within a framework of Classical Theism.¹¹⁵ Therefore, there is a need to move beyond classically influenced doctrines of God, to one that is more biblically faithful, which primarily expresses God's love and relationality.¹¹⁶

As Hasker rightly notes, Classical Theism is no 'straw man', and is, in fact, susceptible to critiques due to its Hellenistic roots and the influence it still holds.¹¹⁷ The

pp. 313-4. See also T. E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 1-12.

¹¹⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 162. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future?*, pp. 11 and 64.

¹¹⁵ D. Basinger, 'Practical Implications', in Pinnock *et al*, *The Openness of God*, pp. 155-76. Pinnock, *MMM*, 153-86. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 261-88. Boyd, *God of the Possible*, pp. 89-112. K. J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards A Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pp. 87-9.

¹¹⁶ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 65, 70, 75, 79, 106 and 109. C. H. Pinnock, 'God Limits His Knowledge', in D. Basinger & R. Basinger (eds.), *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1986), pp. 143-62, esp. 153-5. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 101.

¹¹⁷ Hasker, *The Triumph of God*, pp. 26. However, this observation begins to falter when one considers how Open Theists have represented 'Classical' Theism, and if a 'straw man' has, in fact, been constructed. Although I am in very broad agreement with other 'Open' Theists that not every aspect of 'Classical' Theism coheres with the biblical portrait of God, and that there is a need to move beyond 'Classical' Theism and the hermeneutical lenses it creates, questions must be raised concerning how Open Theists have *portrayed* 'Classical' Theism. Pinnock warns of the dangers of caricaturing aspects of 'Classical' Theism (Pinnock, *Beyond Classical*, p. 316), though at times it seems as though the warning has not been heeded. The major difficulty arises when the critiques centre on or around the issue of immutability. Whilst there have been strong correlations drawn between God and immutability throughout Christianity's history, how this is decisively demonstrated by Open Theists and the conclusions they draw on the strength of this require further examination. Within 'Open' literature, there is a strong tendency to equate immutability to God's 'Static Perfection' and inertia, resulting in God's hyper-transcendence and distance (see above). However, there is the concurrent acknowledgement that immutability has been widely discussed within the Church, producing a plethora of meanings, not all negating God's expressions of love and relationship (Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 140-1 and 146). This causes an inevitable tension. On this point 'Open' Theists cannot have it both ways. Either, immutability inhibits relational theology and should be rightly critiqued, or, in light of the acknowledgement that immutability has carried with it a number of meanings, there needs to be a fuller examination of what specific role immutability plays in the construction of 'Classical' Theism, and the exact nature in plays in the *specific* writings of various

difficulties which arise from the Classical understanding of God are manifold when viewed from the perspectives of love and relational theology, which Open Theists claim are controlling metaphors within the Bible (see below). How can God be impassable and immutable whilst simultaneously dynamic and lovingly responsive to the lives of His creatures? This, and other questions like it, have triggered the theological search for a more biblically faithful and existentially robust model of God which resulted in the basic premises of Open Theism. More than any other motif, God needs to be understood through the medium of love, and it is to this which we now turn.

1.2 The Metaphysic of Love

Open Theism posits, and *primarily* defines itself as, a ‘theo-logic’ and ‘theology’ of love.¹¹⁸ This is reflected by the majority of Open authors who emphasise love as a central feature in their work and specify it as a lead criterion in constructing theology.¹¹⁹ In addition to the rejection of the hegemony of power and control implicit within Classical Theism and the many biblical references underscoring the centrality of love, Open theists point to the Trinity in support of the idea that love should be a controlling theological motif.¹²⁰ Drawing heavily from Eastern Orthodox theology and ‘Social’ models of the Trinity, Open theology focuses upon the ‘Divine community’, whose inner life is characterised by the mutual

individuals and/ or traditions (on this point I concur with Bray that appeals to writers such as Charnock will simply not support their argument, Bray, *The Personal God*, pp. 3-4).

¹¹⁸ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 82, 131 and 179. T. J. Oord, ‘An Open Theology Doctrine of Creation and Solution to the Problem of Evil’, in T. J. Oord (ed), *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), pp. 28-52, esp. 28.

¹¹⁹ Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 28. T. J. Oord, *The Nature of Love: A Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), pp. 2.

¹²⁰ Key references which Open Theists appeal to in asserting the primacy of love include Ex 4:22, Deut 1:31, Is 49:15 and 53:6, Hos Ch. 3, Jer 2:2, Lk 6: 27-35, Jn 1:29; 3: 16 and 17:19-21, Rom 5:8; 5:18; 8:32 and 12:17-21, 1 Cor. 13, 2 Cor 5:14-5, Eph 1:1-9, 3:9 and 5:1-2, Col 2:9, 1 Tim 2:2-6 and 4:10, 1 Pet 2:20-3, 2 Pet 3:9 and 1 Jn 4:8-16 and 2:2.

indwelling of *perichoretic* love, illustrating how ‘God exists in a dynamic of love.’¹²¹ United by a shared divinity and purpose, and related through an interpersonal reciprocity and mutuality, love comes to be understood as more than a mere ‘attribute’ of God, but that which most fully expresses His essence and being (1 Jn 4:8).¹²² When read this way, love exists as the ‘fundamental ontological principle’ grounding all which exists, and as Brown explains, “to understand reality is to understand that this is the way things are essentially and therefore fundamentally, because this is the way God is essentially and fundamentally.”¹²³ This is further reinforced when the divine motivation *and* goal for creation are coalesced into the desire to draw humanity into the *perichoretic* community (Jn 17:19-26).¹²⁴

Rice suggests that the understanding of the divine *perichoretic* love should be further developed within the context of the sending and mission of the Son, imprinting the notion of love with a distinctly Christological and *agapic* character (1 Jn 4:9-16, Jn 3:16, Rom 5:8 and 8:32).¹²⁵ However, defining love within this context (or indeed any) has often proved difficult,

¹²¹ C. H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), pp. 29-30. See also, Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 83 and 124. D. Brown, ‘The Love of an Open God’, in S. E. Porter & A. R. Cross (eds), *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 59-72, esp. 62 and 65-6. Archer, *The Gospel*, pp. 84. Boyd, *Repenting*, pp. 26. Sanders, ‘Divine Providence and the Openness of God’ in Ware, *Perspectives*, pp. 237.

¹²² Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 30. Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 28. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 81. Pinnock, *From Augustine to Arminius*, pp. 19. Brown, *The Love*, pp. 62. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 28. R. Rice, ‘Biblical Support for a New Perspective’, in Pinnock *et al*, *The Openness of God*, pp. 11-58, esp. 18-19. Oord, *The Nature of Love*, pp. 21. G. A. Boyd, ‘Unbounded Love and the Openness of the Future: An Exploration and Critique of Pinnock’s Theological Pilgrimage’, in Porter & Cross, *Semper*, pp. 38-58, esp. 39. F. Guy, ‘The Universality of God’s Love’, in Pinnock, *The Grace of God*, pp. 31-49, esp. 34-5.

¹²³ Brown, *The Love*, pp. 63-5. Boyd, *Repenting*, pp. 27. For an articulated theology of love which encompasses many significant aspects of the Christian life including ecclesiology, judgment and belief see, C. H. Pinnock & R. C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994). For further discussions relating to how love operates as an (ontological) principle in judgment and forgiveness see Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 82-3. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 70. R. Rice, ‘The Final Form of Love: The Science of Forgiveness and the Openness of God’, in Oord, *Creation*, pp. 195-218. See also, M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 298. When he states, ‘God’s eschatological anger is the obverse of the impotence of God’s love in the face of the self-immunization of evil doers caught in the self-generating mechanism of evil.’

¹²⁴ Pinnock, *Flame*, pp. 30. Pinnock, *Most Moved*, pp. 81, 111, 126 and 179. Boyd, *Repenting*, pp. 27. Sanders, *Divine Providence*, pp. 237.

¹²⁵ Rice, *Biblical Support*, pp. 18-9.

inadequate and imprecise. Oord contends that a contributing factor for this is the lack of an ‘internally consistent witness to love’s meaning’ within the Bible, adding that biblical authors ascribed different meanings to *agapē*.¹²⁶ Whilst building from certain helpful insights of Nygren’s classic study, Open theists have sought to provide a more robust working definition of love to facilitate their theology.¹²⁷ Notions which resonate with *agapic* inferences of the ‘self-giving’, ‘sacrificial’ and ‘other-orientated’ love of God directed to the ‘lesser’, abound in Open literature, though these are also modified in light of wider notions of divine love.¹²⁸ Subsequently, Oord’s description of love moves beyond mere *agapic* expressions of love (therefore by-passing the difficulties associated with Nygren’s work), offering a more rounded definition and which also incorporates aspects of *eros* and *philia*. Therefore, ‘to love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to God and others, to promote overall wellbeing’.¹²⁹

As Sanders states, the *watershed issue* within Open Theism is if ‘God is ever affected by and responds to what we do.’¹³⁰ Open Theism strongly advocates God’s desire to be responsive to, and, involved within, the experiences of his creation through love.¹³¹ However, such love involves *risk*. Brown argues that although God cannot know risk within the love of

¹²⁶ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 12-5.

¹²⁷ A. Nygren (trans. P. S. Watson), *Agape and Eros* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957). For an appreciation of Nygren’s work see Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 28-9 and for an appreciative critique see Brown, *The Love*, pp. 63-4 and a critique, Oord, *NOL*, pp. 33-56.

¹²⁸ J. Sanders, ‘Divine Providence and the Openness of God’, in, B. A. Ware (ed.), *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: 4 Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008), pp. 196-240, esp. 233. Boyd, *God Limits*, pp. 186. Brown, *The Love*, pp. 63. Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 28. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 36.

¹²⁹ Oord, *The Nature*, pp. 17. In constructing this broad definition, Oord includes specific descriptions of *agapē* (‘acting intentionally, in response to others, to promote well being in response to that which produces ill-being’ p. 56 [italics in the original]), *eros* (‘acting intentionally in response to God and others, to promote overall well-being by affirming and/or seeking to enhance value’ p. 83 [italics in the original] and *philia* (acting intentionally, in response to God and others, to promote over-all well being by seeking to establish deeper levels of cooperative friendship. *Philia* co-labors for good’ p. 115). See also Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 34-5.

¹³⁰ www.opentheism.info, accessed 19/04/13.

¹³¹ Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 29. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 70.

the triune community, any interaction with creation in love, must necessarily involve risk.¹³² Underpinning this assumption is the belief that love requires freedom; freedom to be chosen, freedom to act independently from all and any coercion, and freedom, if so desired, to spurn and reject it.¹³³ Love *cannot* be love when it is forced or coerced.¹³⁴ But implicit within this assertion is precisely where the divine love becomes precarious and vulnerable. By not forcing or subjugating his love on humanity, God accepts that His love may not be reciprocated, involving the possibility of rejection, something hitherto unknown in God.¹³⁵ Hence, the ‘actualization of the divine will and the effectiveness of the atonement can be limited by humanity,’ with the result that God becomes vulnerable before the choices of humanity in offering His love.¹³⁶ God is faced with the reality, that due to His love, He does not get all He wants in every situation.¹³⁷ In reaching out in love, God suffered, and continues to suffer at the hands of his creation as they continually abuse His loving call, causing grief, pain and rejection to enter ‘into the very heart of God.’¹³⁸ Despite the humiliation God often experiences in loving his creation, He perpetually calls His people back to love. Sanders supplies biblical support for this model of humiliated love by appealing to divine acts of

¹³² Brown, *The Love*, pp. 65. See also Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 47-8. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 132. L. R. Martin, ‘God at Risk: Divine Vulnerability in Judges 10:6-16’ in *Old Testament Essays* 18, pp. 722-40. W. H. Vanstone, *The Risk of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 46-54 and 66-8. For the importance Vanstone’s theory of love in the formation of theology closely related to Open Theism see J. Polkinghorne (ed.), *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), pp. x.

¹³³ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 132. G. A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 52-3 and 85. Guy, ‘The Universality of God’s Love’, pp. 42. Boyd, *God Limits*, pp. 190.

¹³⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 75. Guy, ‘The Universality of God’s Love’, pp. 42. However, Oord points out the inconsistencies in Pinnock’s writings regarding the nature of persuasive and coercive love in relation to God’s power. At times it seems that Pinnock supports only a notion of persuasion (*MMM*, pp. 136 and 183), and at others, suggests a more coercive component is involved in God’s love (*Systematic Theology*, pp. 109 and *MMM*, pp. 146-148). Leading Oord to conclude that, ‘Pinnock’s theology is inconsistent on this crucial issue. If love acts persuasively by granting freedom and yet God sometimes coerces, God does not love consistently.’ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 97.

¹³⁵ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 132 and Boyd, *Satan*, pp. 118.

¹³⁶ Guy, ‘The Universality of God’s Love’, pp. 40. See also, Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge*, pp. 29-30. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 176.

¹³⁷ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 133.

¹³⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 48 and 70-1. T. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), pp. 389.

loving reconciliation as noted in Hosea 3 and the crucifixion accounts among others.¹³⁹

The final aspect for consideration within this section is the internal debate within Open Theism regarding God's love *vis-à-vis* its contingent or necessary nature. In language reminiscent of Jüngel, Pinnock claims that, 'His love is more than necessary'.¹⁴⁰ Yet, at other times, he adopts terms such as 'choice', 'grace', 'freedom', 'voluntary' and 'gift' as means of expressing the contingent relationship and love between God and creation.¹⁴¹ The constant motif for Pinnock when defining love, is the notion of the shared 'overflowing' love within the Trinity, which is given in *grace* to draw others into the *perichoretic* dance.¹⁴² However, there is little offered by Pinnock in explaining how the necessary and contingent aspects of God love function alongside one another, especially in the context of the divine dance. Oord stresses this difficulty and argues it has disastrous consequences for theodicy (see below). But, in a move which relocates the discussion within the context of creation, he argues that the only way to guarantee divine love for humanity is to explain it solely in terms of necessity *and* the necessity of creation. Troubled that a God who expresses love contingently 'could just as easily hate us' because the '[n]ecessary love in Trinity does not guarantee God's love for creation', Oord proposes that integral to God's essence is creation, and that God always has, and continues to, create as an expression of his necessary love.¹⁴³ By drawing creation and divine love together, Oord argues that within the divine nature there is a necessity for God to love creation and offer complete freedom, negating any idea that 'God could and may easily decide to stop loving creation.'¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 176. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 70.

¹⁴⁰ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 126. See E. Jüngel (trans. D. L. Gruder), *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983).

¹⁴¹ Pinnock *Systematic Theology*, pp 109. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 125, 136 and 144.

¹⁴² Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 125-6.

¹⁴³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 110-4, esp. 112.

¹⁴⁴ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 111.

Despite the difficulties of Pinnock's inconsistent comments tied with his failure to fully delineate his statement that love is 'more than necessary', and Oord's perplexing comments that God could possibly 'hate' humanity, one certainty remains. Open Theism is a theology which prioritises *love* as a central and controlling principle, *and that any attempt to separate Open Theism or any of its internal doctrines from its theology of love will only result in a distortion of its central aims and purposes.*

1.3 The Created Order and Libertarian Freedom

The previous sub-section stressed the centrality of love within the formation and understanding of Open Theism. The current section builds upon this by exploring the particular conditions which make love possible and available. This requires, in part, surveying how Open Theists interpret the created order, and how the notion of 'freedom' is integral to, and vital within it. In contradistinction to Process Theology's Whiteheadian metaphysic, Open Theists seek to develop their creational theories utilising biblical motifs and concepts.¹⁴⁵ This should not however negate Open Theists contributions in scientific and evolutionary dialogues. Open Theists widely accept creation as an unfolding evolutionary process, but

¹⁴⁵ It is acknowledged that there are differing interpretations within 'Process' Theology concerning creation, though a full delineation of these lies beyond the scope of the current thesis. However, there exists a core set of ideas which guide its understanding on this issue and which are helpful for the current discussion. Central concepts within 'Process' thought include the notion that God and matter eternally co-existent, a rejection of *creatio ex nihilo* and the expression of God's power which is inherent within this, an acceptance of 'Old Earth' and 'Big Bang' theories supported by various scientific and evolutionary theories, creation understood as the mastery over chaos and the establishment of order, love and relationality serving as the motivation for all creational activity which can only be expressed through persuasion, an eternal notion of 'becoming' and richer actualizations (for God and all creatures), the perpetual divine creativity of ever bringing forth new creations out of what He had previously created and creation never obtaining a status of completion but eternally discovering new possibilities for growth. See, A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: McMillan, 1978), pp. 20-1 and 344-8. J. B. Cobb, Jr. & D. R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 65., J. B. Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969). W. E. Stokes, 'A Whiteheadian Reflection on God's Relation to the World', pp. 137-52, esp. 150-1. J. B. Cobb, Jr., 'The World and God', pp. 153-171, esp. 166-8. D. D. Williams, 'God and Man', pp. 173-87, esp. 180-2, each featured in E. H. Cousins (ed.), *Process Theology: Basic Writings* (New York: Newman Press, 1971).

endeavour to interpret it utilising biblical frameworks. Such interpretations include the diverse notions of *creatio continua*, serendipitous creativity and demonic warfare.¹⁴⁶

Although there is no universal agreement amongst Open Theists regarding creation, the views expressed by Pinnock and Polkinghorne represent a near consensus in Open thought. Both authors affirm *creatio ex nihilo* as the fundamental principle in explaining creation, though each acknowledges the importance of the continuing evolutionary processes.¹⁴⁷ Both support the notion that *creatio ex nihilo* allows for a clear ontological distinction between God and the created order. However, this retains a strong relational quality, as God *contingently* creates as an expression of his ‘overflowing’ love and freedom, though God can intervene in earthly affairs ‘if need be’.¹⁴⁸ This distances the Open position

¹⁴⁶ A detailed examination of how Open Theists have engaged with scientific and evolutionary theories falls beyond the purposes of the thesis and the knowledge of the author. However, for literature on this topic see, Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, esp. Polkinghorne, ‘Kenotic Creation and Divine Action’, in Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, pp. 90-106, esp. 95. K. S. Winslow, ‘The Earth is Not a Planet’, pp. 13-27. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 28-52. C. H. Pinnock, ‘Evangelical Theology after Darwin’, pp. 103-10. C. A. Boyd, ‘The Goodness of Creation and the Openness of God’, pp. 111-24. G. A. Boyd, ‘Evolution as Cosmic Warfare: A Biblical Perspective on Satan and “Natural Evil”’, pp. 125-45. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 57 and 64-70. Boyd, *Satan*, pp. 216, 247 and 318. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 36-7.

¹⁴⁷ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 52, 56-7, 60 and 65-74. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 109 and 113. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 145. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 109 and 113. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 145. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 146. (Pinnock acknowledges that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* cannot be established from Genesis 1 alone, pointing to Rom. 4:17 and Heb. 11:3 for further support. See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 39. P. Copan & W. L. Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). For discussion concerning the unbiblical nature *creatio ex nihilo* see, Oord, *The Nature*, pp. 102-4. J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. xx-xxi, 3 and 17-8. C. Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 4. J. Polkinghorne, ‘Kenotic Creation and Divine Action’, in Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, pp. 90-106, esp. 94-5. See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 39-41. W. Hasker, ‘An Adequate God’, in Cobb & Pinnock, *Searching*, pp. 215-45, esp. 219.

¹⁴⁸ Pinnock best expresses this sentiment when he states:

The world is created in distinction from the Father, to be able to relate and respond freely to God. It is a distinct though dependent reality, made for relationship, and a world in which the Son can become incarnate, both as the fulfilment of God’s desire to disclose himself and as redemptive sacrifice (if required). God’s nature is an order of living relations in which, though there is no need to create, there is the possibility of creating a world to which God would relate through Son and Spirit. (Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 56.)

See also, Oord, ‘Introduction to Part One’, in Oord, *Creation Made Free*, pp. 11. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 109 and 111. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 51, 55-7, 60 and 67. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 109. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 40-1 and 177-8. Boyd, *Satan*, pp. 51 and 243. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 145. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 92 and 125-126. Hasker, *Adequate God*, pp. 219-221.

from Process thought by denying the necessity of creation and God's subsequent dependence upon an unfolding world.¹⁴⁹ Also, both Pinnock and Polkinghorne situate creation within a broader *kenotic* (divine self-emptying) context, offering insights into God's nature and the divine-human relationship.¹⁵⁰ Polkinghorne acknowledges that utilising *kenosis* within a creational context moves beyond its original Christological function in Phil. 2, but by doing so, allows new relational claims to be asserted.¹⁵¹ *Kenosis* not only demonstrates God's dispositional humility in creating room for others to exist, but also exhibits his voluntary willingness to 'self-limit' aspects of his power and knowledge and experience temporal realities.¹⁵² Polkinghorne describes these as the *kenosis of omnipotence, simple eternity and omniscience*.¹⁵³ Thomas Oord offers an alternate interpretation of *kenotic* creation, which rejects the notion of the self-limiting nature of God, and this is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2.

Having described some of the central theological motifs which Open Theists utilise to understand creation, what remains is to demonstrate how this framework specifically relates

¹⁴⁹ 'Process' theologians respond by criticising *creatio ex nihilo* as failing to adequately account for the nature of God's power and promulgating the problem of evil. Oord agrees with the general Process critique by insisting that not only was *creatio ex nihilo* developed within an anti-Gnostic polemic which highly influenced its present character (Oord, *NOL*, pp. 105. See also G. May [trans. A. S. Worrall], *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation Out of Nothing in Early Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 40, as cited in Oord, *NOL*, pp. 105), but that such a concept of creation must necessarily include God's unlimited and coercive power, and that the existence of such a power should be used to prevent any evil act. Consequently, "the God who creates *ex nihilo* is culpable for failing to control creatures or creaturely events entirely and/or failing to create instantaneously from nothing that which could prevent genuine evil." (Oord, *NOL*, pp. 107, also pp. 101-7) See also, Oord, *Open Theology*, pp. 41-2. D. R. Griffin, *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 137. N. Murphy & G. F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: 1996), pp. 230 and 247.

¹⁵⁰ Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Creation*, pp. 92-106. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 56. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 93. Pinnock, *Evangelical Theology*, pp. 105-7.

¹⁵¹ Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Theology*, pp. 92. See also, Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 56.

¹⁵² It should be recognised that not all Open Theists acknowledge the 'voluntary' nature of God's self-limitation. For a critique of this position, and an argument for an 'essential' *kenosis* which is drawn from necessary aspects of God's nature. See Oord, *NOL*, pp. 117-57. Oord, *Open Theology*, pp. 49-52. I. G. Barbour, 'God's Power: A Process View', in Polkinghorne, *WOL*, pp. 1-20, esp. 12-3.

¹⁵³ Polkinghorne, *Kenotic Theology*, pp. 102-6. See also, Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 42. Pinnock, *Evangelical Theology*, pp. 105. Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 72-3. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 43 and 45.

to the notion of reciprocal love. This brings us back to the above discussion concerning the *perichoretic* nature of the Trinity, as this provides the *motive* for creation from an Open perspective. As Pinnock explains, “God creates out of his own abundant interpersonal love – it is an expression of his generosity.”¹⁵⁴ Therefore, any creative act is not only an expression of overflowing love, but underpins his salvific purposes (Rom. 8:19), as creation is called to ‘echo’ the *perichoretic* ontology and join the loving *koinonia*.¹⁵⁵ The Trinitarian character aids in understanding the unfolding creational processes, especially from a Pneumatological, *kenotic* and evolutionary perspective. Pinnock argues that evolution describes how God ‘went about his work’, as it demonstrates both the Spirit’s integral work and God’s openness to share life and power with all created partners.¹⁵⁶ The Spirit has often been overlooked in creation theology, but Pinnock ascribes the Spirit a central role, especially as the ‘life-giver’, which infuses *all* life (Gen. 1:2, Gen. 2:7 and Jn. 6:63).¹⁵⁷ Modern science has helped to understand the Spirit’s participation in the creative process; by guiding the indeterminate, random and uncertain processes on quantum and atomic levels upwards, the Spirit and creation co-create within open structures that are free from completely determining and

¹⁵⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 55.

¹⁵⁵ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 50-63. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 125-6. See also Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 39-41. Boyd, *Satan*, pp. 51 and 243.

¹⁵⁶ Pinnock, *Evangelical Theology*, pp. 104 and 107.

¹⁵⁷ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 50. This statement of Pinnock resembles the panentheistic position which is growing in influence not only in Open Theology, but wider theological thought. Panentheism is a midway position between pantheism and Classical theology that purports that ‘the world is (in some sense) inside of God even though God is more than the world.’ (P. Clayton, ‘The Case for Christian Panentheism’, in *Dialog* 37, Summer 1998, pp. 201-8, esp. 201.) However, it would not be accurate to describe Pinnock’s position as panentheistic. See also, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism/> (accessed 12/05/13), A. Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). P. Clayton, ‘God and World’, in K. Vanhoozer (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 203-18. E. A. Towne, ‘The Variety of Pantheisms’, in *Zygon*, 40: 3, Sept. 2005, pp. 779-86. P. Clayton, ‘Pantheisms East and West’, in *Sophia* 49: 2, pp. 183-91. J. Moltmann (trans. M. Kohl), *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 13-7 and 86-93. P. Clayton & A. Peacocke (eds.), *In Whom We Live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004). For specific engagement between Panentheists and Open Theists see, P. Clayton, ‘Kenotic Trinitarian Panentheism’, in *Dialog* 44: 3, Fall 2005, pp. 250-5. A. Case-Winters, ‘Rethinking Divine Presence and Activity in World Process’, in Oord, *CMF*, pp. 69-87, esp. 73-81.

determined forces.¹⁵⁸ The Spirit therefore shares in the *kenotic* character of creation, as God relinquishes total control by allowing creation an open future to continually respond to the Spirit, who draws all of creation towards its final eschatological completion (1 Cor. 15:44).¹⁵⁹

The same non-determinative processes are mirrored for humanity, though with more complexity. Just as nature responds to the Spirit within open structures towards its eschatological fulfilment, so must humanity. Pinnock, Rice and Sanders each demonstrate how this is reflected in the Eden accounts in the opening chapters of Genesis. By delegating aspects of creation to humanity (Gen. 1:28 and 2:19-20), God surrenders complete and meticulous control by sharing power with humanity, so that, 'the future was left open to any number of courses that the creatures, man in particular, should select'.¹⁶⁰ But God's desire to share power was not intended as an end in itself, but the means for establishing genuine relationships with humanity.¹⁶¹ This however, required a reciprocal response from humanity, and within the open structures of the created order, humanity was 'endowed' with such potential.¹⁶² Open Theists vigorously defend the notion that genuine love and relationships can only exist when they are placed within a context of contrary choice, when they can be freely accepted, rejected or refused, leading to an affirmation of *libertarian freedom*.¹⁶³

Debates regarding libertarian freedom possess a rich theological and philosophical

¹⁵⁸ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 131. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 64-75. See also, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, pp. 198-214.

¹⁵⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 58. See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 177-8.

¹⁶⁰ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 35-7, esp. 37. See also Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 41-5. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 33. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 41-2, 44-5 and 92-3.

¹⁶¹ Fretheim speaks of the divine-human 'dual agency.' Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 72-3.

¹⁶² Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 41 and 129. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 45-6 and 177-8. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 38.

¹⁶³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 236-8. Boyd, *Satan*, pp. 55. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 148. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 38. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 45, 115 and 126. W. Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 64. D. Basinger, 'Middle Knowledge and Classical Christian Thought', in *Religious Studies* 22, 1986, pp. 416.

heritage, which include, and exceed, the present discussion.¹⁶⁴ These debates have formed part of the theological backdrop within Reformed-Arminian disputes, which Sanders identifies as central to whether God can ever be conditioned by humanity, which is *the* central issue in Open Theism.¹⁶⁵ David Basinger defines libertarian freedom as when an agent, ‘has it in her power to choose to perform A or choose not to perform A. *Both A and not A could actually occur*; which *will* actually occur has *not yet been determined*.’¹⁶⁶ The significant aspect within this definition of freedom is that whilst it acknowledges a variety of very strong internal and external factors which impact decisions (including genetics, socialisation, culture etc.), none of these factors, nor a combination of them, causally *determine* the outcome of a given decision.¹⁶⁷ As Boyd pointedly states, agents ultimately ‘determine themselves’.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ W. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 64. W. Hasker, ‘Foreknowledge and Necessity’, *Faith and Philosophy* 2: 2, 1985, pp. 121-57.

¹⁶⁵ Sanders argues that wider Reformed/Arminian disputes including the ‘two wills’ of God, permission for sin, foreordination/foreknowledge and specific sovereignty are all subsumed under the specific dispute of whether God can be conditioned by humanity or not. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 230-3. *Contra*, P. Helm, *The Providence of God: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), pp.132. G. C. Berkouwer (trans. L. B. Smedes), *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 137-41. J. Piper, ‘Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God’s Desire for All to be Saved, in T. Schreiner and B. Ware (eds.), *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), pp. 123-4.

¹⁶⁶ Basinger, *Middle Knowledge*, pp. 416 (italics in the original).

¹⁶⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 235-6. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 56 and 65. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 148. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136-7. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 56-7. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 127. See also, R. H. Kane, *The Significance of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). T. O’Connor, ‘Agent-Causal Theories of Freedom’, pp. 309-27. R. Clarke, ‘Alternatives for Libertarians’, pp. 329-48. T. Pink, ‘Freedom and Action without Causation: Noncausal Theories of Freedom and Purposive Agency’, pp. 349-65., L. W. Ekstorn, ‘Free Will is Not a Mystery’, pp. 366-80. D. Pereboom, ‘Living without Freewill: The Case for Hard Incompatibilism’, pp. 407-424, esp. 409-13. Each chapter above is in R. H. Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). P. Van Inwagen, ‘The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism’, *Philosophical Studies* 25, 1975, pp. 185-99. T. O’Connor, ‘Indeterminism and Free Agency: Three Recent Views’, *Philosophy and Phenomenology Research* 53: 3, 1993, pp. 499-526. C. Ginet, *On Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁸ Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 56. See also Pinnock, pp. 127. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 20. This stands in contrast to ‘Compatibilism’, which argues that the notions of freedom and determinism are in fact, ‘compatible’ and can be synthesised. Just as there is no single uniformed definition for libertarian freedom, nor is there for ‘Compatibilistic’ models (Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 27-33. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 57), though Hasker provides this working definition, ‘An agent is free with respect to a given action at a given time if at that time it is true it is true that the agent can perform the action if she decides to perform and she can refrain from the action if she decides not to perform it.’ (Hasker, *PP*, pp. 137) For a strong range of theological, scientific and philosophical supports of Compatibilism see, J. Edwards (ed. P. Ramsey), *Freedom of the Will* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997). J. Feinberg, ‘God Ordains All Things’, in Basinger & Basinger, *PFW*, pp. 19-43. A. J. Ayer, ‘Freedom and Necessity’, in *Philosophical Essays* (London: MacMillan, 1954). H. Frankfurt, ‘The Problem of Free Action’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15: 2, 1978, pp. 157-62. G. Strawson, *Freedom and Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University

However, as Open Theists stress, the fact that humanity possesses such freedom, combined with the notion that they create definite realities through their choices has tremendous implications for the providential care which God expresses.¹⁶⁹ But before any explication can be offered of an Open view regarding providence, two further aspects must first be examined. These concern the nature of God's knowledge and his interaction with time, both of which impact how providence is understood.

1.4 Temporality and the Future

The manner by which God experiences time, and if He can be said to experience it at all, has a tremendous bearing upon how He relates to humanity.¹⁷⁰ This issue, which has perennially arisen since Augustine's attempt to understand the relationship between God and time, can be couched in terms of whether God is 'timelessly eternal' or 'temporally everlasting'.¹⁷¹ Although space negates a full explication of current theories regarding time, it is important to introduce two contrasting theories (A-theory and B-theory), and explain where Open Theists position themselves in relation to the two theories and how they justify this choice.¹⁷²

Press, 1986). R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). R. Double, *The Non-Reality of Freewill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁶⁹ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 20-2, esp. 20-1. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 60. Pinnock, *God Limits*, pp. 148. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 33. See 1.2.6 below for an explanation of the 'Open' theology of providence.

¹⁷⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 200 and 202. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 53. N. Wolterstorff, 'Unqualified Divine Temporality', in G. E. Ganssle (ed.), *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2001), pp. 187-213, esp. 188. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 105. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 47-8.

¹⁷¹ Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 96. Simply stated, the phrase 'timelessly eternal' understands God as 'outside' of time. He, in some sense, looks down upon all of time and history as a single entity or 'block'. The notion of the 'eternal Now' is closely tied to this concept. In contrast, the notion that God is 'temporally eternal' advocates that God experiences time within a sequence of events in a concomitant way that the created order does. However, He does not experience the rigors of time in the same way as created beings do being as he is 'everlasting'.

For an overview and critique of Augustine's theory of time see, Oord, *NOL*, pp. 76-80. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 200.

¹⁷² The terms A-theory and B-theory were first introduced by J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927).

Ganssle states that whether or not the ‘now’ exists independently of an experience represents one of the key distinctions between the two theories.¹⁷³ Those who answer ‘yes’ to this question hold to a ‘tensed’ or ‘process’ theory of time (A-theory), compared to those who answer ‘no’, who adopt a ‘stasis’ theory (B-theory).¹⁷⁴ Wolterstorff states that what is crucial to the B-theory, is that there is no distinctive ‘ontological status’ for events which occur.¹⁷⁵ By this, he means that the notions *past*, *present* and *future* only have a point of reference/significance due to the (subjective) experience of an agent from a particular standpoint.¹⁷⁶ Time is viewed as an entire ‘block’, onto which it is only possible to plot the relationship between events in terms of ‘before, simultaneous with and after.’¹⁷⁷ As such, no event ever ceases to exist in time as “of no event is it the case that at a certain time it has the ontological status of occurring and then at a later time the different ontological status of having occurred.”¹⁷⁸ Time can only exist relative to other reference points.

However, proponents of the A-theory object to this description, citing that the fundamental flaw within this view omits the ontological reality of the ‘now’.¹⁷⁹ They also assert that the terms *before*, *simultaneous with* and *after* as the only means of expressing the relationship between temporal events are inadequate as they ignore the differing ontological status between those events.¹⁸⁰ There is a very real ontic difference distinction between the *past*, *present* and *future*, in which the present is ascribed a ‘privileged’ and ‘basic’ temporal location.¹⁸¹ When an event *occurs*, it *occurs* in the present.¹⁸² This temporal location is a very

¹⁷³ G. E. Ganssle, ‘Introduction’, in Ganssle, *God and Time*, pp. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14.

¹⁷⁵ Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 197.

¹⁷⁶ Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 197.

¹⁷⁷ Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 201.

¹⁷⁸ Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 197. See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 201.

¹⁷⁹ Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14.

¹⁸⁰ Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14-5. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196.

¹⁸¹ Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196.

¹⁸² Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196.

different state to an event which has *occurred* and one which will *occur*.¹⁸³ An event in the past which has ceased occurring and no longer exists, whilst events in the future are yet to exist. Therefore, the present exists in a different ontological manner.¹⁸⁴

Open Theists assert that in keeping with aspects of the Classical heritage, many Christian traditions have adopted variations of divine timelessness (B-theory).¹⁸⁵ The Classical notions of divine immutability and impassibility have reinforced and promulgated this understanding of time, though the idea has faced stern opposition in recent years.¹⁸⁶ This should not negate the strong defences for divine timelessness, as strong philosophical, theological and scientific reasoning supports this understanding.¹⁸⁷ However, Open Theists posit that despite strong arguments, the basic representation of God falters, as it does not portray the biblical understanding of time and strays from genuine love and relationality.¹⁸⁸ If God were timeless, this impacts how he relates to humanity within historical processes, as a timeless being cannot, by definition, be historical and enter into temporal developments and relationships.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196.

¹⁸⁴ Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 200-1. Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 14.

¹⁸⁵ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 53. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 201-2. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 142. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121.

¹⁸⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 203. See also, J. R. Lucas, *The Future: An Essay on God, Temporality and Truth* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989). W. L. Craig, 'Omniscience, Tensed Facts and Divine Eternity', *Faith and Philosophy* 17: 2, April 2000, pp. 225-41. W. L. Craig, 'Timelessness & Omnitemporality', in Ganssle, *God and Time*, pp. 129-160. A. G. Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). N. Wolterstorff, 'God Everlasting', in C. Olerbeke & L. B. Smedes (eds.), *God and the Good: Essays in Honor of Henry Stob* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

¹⁸⁷ Not least, Einstein's theory of relativity (Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 139). See also P. Helm, *Eternal God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988). P. Helm, 'Divine Timeless Eternity', in Ganssle, *God and Time*, pp. 28-60. N. Kretzman & E. Stump, 'Eternity', *Journal of Philosophy* 78: 8, 1981, pp. 429-58. P. Helm, 'Timelessness and Foreknowledge', *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. 84, Jan. 1975, pp. 516-27. D. B. Burrell, 'God's Eternity', *Faith and Philosophy* I, 1984, pp. 389-406. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 144-71.

¹⁸⁸ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 97. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 140. See also, A. G. Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁹ Wolterstorff summarises the difficulties of the 'timelessness' of God when he states: If God were eternal, he could not be aware, concerning any temporal event, whether it was occurring, nor aware that it will be occurring, nor could he remember that it had occurred, nor could he plan to bring it about. But all of such actions are presupposed by and are essential to, the biblical presentation of God as a redeeming God. Hence, God is represented by the biblical writers as fundamentally in time. (Wolterstorff, *God Everlasting*, pp. 200)

Consequently, Open Theists subscribe to a dynamic and tensed theory of time (even for God, who is understood as ‘a temporal agent’), using theological, rather than philosophical justifications.¹⁹⁰ In accordance with the A-theory, there are ontic differences in the manner by which God experiences time and sequential events. The past, present and the future are ontologically real and temporally distinguished for God.¹⁹¹ God has a ‘history’ (not only manifested in the incarnation), in which He interacts with temporal beings, in a temporal way. The terms ‘before’ and ‘after’ apply to God, as He makes plans and executes them, responds to human affairs, alters His intended actions, asks questions, regrets, anticipates, grieves and repents.¹⁹² In addition, a strong pastoral element arises, by which God experiences the ‘now’ simultaneously with humanity. Because God experiences ‘every “now”’ of time rather than in the “eternal now”, He is able to relate to humanity in the changing contexts of any given relationship.¹⁹³

One final aspect in need of explication is what implications this holds for God in relation to the *future*. As we noted above, the A-theory holds that the ‘future’ is yet to exist, and this ontological reality, according to Open Theists, also holds true for God. There is a broad agreement amongst Open Theists with Brümmer who asserts that God knows reality as it *is*, and not as it is not, therefore God only knows the future as possibilities, and not

See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 200 and 202-3. Ganssle, *Introduction*, pp. 15. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 188-9 and 202-6. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 185. Wolterstorff, *God Everlasting*, pp. 182, 200 and 203. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 97.

¹⁹⁰ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 96. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 200, 202 and 204. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 55. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 196-7 and 203-8. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 185. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 100, 105 and 142. Sanders, *BSNP*, pp. 36. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 47, 51, 53 and 96-7. For additional critiques of the divine ‘timelessness’, see Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 203. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 188-93 and 206-7.

¹⁹¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 202. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 188 and pp. 206-7. Sanders, *BSNP*, pp. 36-7. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 96-7.

¹⁹² Gen. 2:19, 6:6, 22:1-12, Ex Ch. 3-4, 16:4, Ch. 32, Num. 14:11, Deut. 8:2, 13:3, Judg. 3:4, 1 Sam. 13:13, 15:11-35, 1 Kings 22:20, 2 Chr. 32:31, Isa. 46:9-11 and Hos. 8:5. See, Sanders, *BSNP*, pp. 36-7. Wolterstorff, *Unqualified*, pp. 188. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 101-2 and 105.

¹⁹³ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 128. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 202.

actualities.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, there is ‘no thing’ to know concerning the future.¹⁹⁵ This should not however imply that God is completely ignorant in relation to the future (a common misrepresentation of Open Theism), nor over-awed in the face of the open future. However, to explore this more fully, it is necessary to understand how Open Theists interpret the nature of God’s knowledge, particularly in relation to his knowledge pertaining to the future.

1.5 The Nature of God’s Knowledge¹⁹⁶

Before we can explore the ‘Open’ interpretation of God’s knowledge and prescience, it is necessary to look in more depth at God’s relationship to the future from within this perspective. As we noted in the previous section, God and creation are ‘open’ in *some* respects to the future, which some Openness proponents describe as being ‘partly settled and partly unsettled’.¹⁹⁷ In contrast to models of divine timelessness which equate to a complete fixity of all future events, Open Theists maintain that only *certain* aspects of the future are settled, while other aspects remain indefinite and yet to be determined due to the input from free human decisions.¹⁹⁸ Open Theists *do not* ascribe to the idea that all of the future is ‘wildly unpredictable’ nor ‘wide open’ in the sense that absolutely anything will/could occur in the future.¹⁹⁹ While it is asserted that future free decisions do not exist until they are

¹⁹⁴ V. Brümmer, *What Are We Doing when We Pray: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: SCM, 1984), pp. 44.

¹⁹⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 166 and 201.

¹⁹⁶ This is one of the key areas which ‘Open’ Theists most readily disagree internally about. This is due largely to the value of ‘propositional’ truths relating to the future and the extent to which God can know them. The current section largely portrays (and endorses) the views expressed by William Hasker and John Sanders. For alternate theories of God’s knowledge see, A. R. Rhoda, ‘Generic Open Theism and Some Varieties Thereof’, *Religious Studies*, 44:2, 2008, pp. 225-34. A. R. Rhoda & G. A. Boyd & T. G. Belt, *Open Theism, Omniscience, and the Nature of the Future*, <http://www.alanrhoda.net/papers/opentheism.pdf>, accessed 29/07/2013.

¹⁹⁷ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 137 and 47. Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 53. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15, 84 and 208, Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 101 and 120-3.

¹⁹⁸ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 53-5. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 105. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121-2. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 47-8 and 51. Boyd, *GP*, pp. 53-86.

¹⁹⁹ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 57.

actualised, and as such cannot be considered definite in the same manner by which the past is (see above), this does not exclude the future from being ‘partially definite’, or constrained by various factors.²⁰⁰ As Rice maintains, “all that our open view of reality requires is that the future be indefinite to the extent that the world contains genuine freedom.”²⁰¹ Certain aspects of the future will unfold along lines which are consistent with past and present decisions/occurrences which lie within the limitations which restrict human decisions.²⁰² In addition, God will implement aspects of His overall purposes for creation, supplying another level of certainty within a partially settled future.²⁰³ Therefore, the overall picture arises that the future is not *all* settled due to the creational intentions of God.²⁰⁴ He allowed for human decisions to form and shape, *in part*, how this world would be, which means that “God’s future thus resembles ours in that it is both definite and indefinite.”²⁰⁵

This brings us into one of the more controversial aspects within the Open Theist model, the discussion regarding God’s omniscience. Although there has been widespread agreement throughout the Christian tradition that God is omniscient, this has often been accompanied by discussions regarding what exactly God *can* and *does* know, and what precisely constitutes his omniscience.²⁰⁶ Many strands within the Classical tradition have affirmed that God possesses ‘exhaustive definite foreknowledge’ (EDF), which simply stated, purports that God’s omniscience incorporates a complete knowledge of *all* future events in

²⁰⁰ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 55. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 91.

²⁰¹ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 55.

²⁰² Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 55 and 57. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 47-9 and 52. G. A. Boyd, ‘The Open-Theism View’, in J. K. Beilby & P. R. Eddy, *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

²⁰³ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 56 and 58. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121.

²⁰⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 206.

²⁰⁵ Rice, *GFMF*, pp. 55.

²⁰⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15, 165-6 and 205. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 101. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 39. R. Rice, ‘Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism’, in Pinnock, *GGWM*, pp. 121-39. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136.

meticulous detail.²⁰⁷ Although the explanations of how this operates vary, including God's foreordained sovereign decrees in Calvinism and 'simple foreknowledge' within Arminian traditions, the net result is the same: that God knows the future precisely.²⁰⁸ However, Open Theists find the concept of EDF biblically, theologically and philosophically problematic, and thus subsequently reject it.

Although space negates a thorough critique of EDF, it is important to note two important criticisms which Open Theists posit against this understanding of God's foreknowledge.²⁰⁹ The first is that ultimately, EDF, in all of its theological manifestations, does not escape the charge of determinism, and the second, it is difficult to consistently maintain biblically. As noted in 1.2.2, one of the fundamental difficulties which Open Theists have with any form of Christian determinism is the implications it holds for genuine relationships to flourish between God and humanity. As such, there is little need to point out the obvious criticisms which Open Theists direct towards Christian traditions which affirm such determinism and their understanding of EDF due to the importance they attribute to relationality. However, it is worth noting how Open Theists differ from other traditions within 'Free-Will' Theism who adhere to EDF, especially when it is understood in terms of 'Simple Foreknowledge' (SFK) which affirms libertarian freewill.²¹⁰ The main purpose of SFK is to

²⁰⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 77-8 and 165. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 100, Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121. Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 57. Rice, *DFFWT*, pp. 122.

²⁰⁸ 'Simple Foreknowledge' is the notion, common within traditions influenced by Arminian thought, that God does not foreordain the future, but that he 'looks ahead' to see how the future has unfolded. It was originally asserted to explain how God can 'predestine' certain people, whilst maintaining a belief in free will. For variations of this understanding see, N. Geisler, 'God Knows All Things' and B. Reichenbach, 'God Limits His Power', both in Basinger and Basinger, *PFW*, pp. 63-84 and 101-24 respectively and D. Hunt, 'The Simple Foreknowledge View', in Beilby & Eddy, *Divine Foreknowledge*, pp. 65-103.

²⁰⁹ For a full critique of EDF in its various forms see, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15, 72-4, 77-81, 138-9, and 209-12. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp 100-1. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 121-2. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 147-50. Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 57. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 88-90. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 53-74. Rice, *DFFWT*, pp. 128.

²¹⁰ 'Free-Will' Theism is the branch of Christian Theism which supports the notion of free-will, particularly in matters relating to soteriology. Various traditions are subsumed under this term, including Eastern Orthodoxy, Anabaptists, Arminians, Wesleyan-Holiness Churches, Methodists, Pentecostals and certain wings of the Roman Catholic Church. See, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13-4, 197-9, 218-20 and 283-90. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 21-37.

resolve the tension between God's knowledge of the future and human freewill. It is asserted that by understanding human actions as the *cause* of divine knowledge, God is not only absolved from determining such actions, but He can also 'look ahead' upon all future actions and elect his chosen people in terms of their own choices and provide providential control.²¹¹

Despite assertions that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are compatible within SFK, Open theologians dispute such claims.²¹² Hasker argues that there exists a strong logical necessity between divine foreknowledge and determinism, which negates genuine freedom.²¹³ In his example of Clarence who is partial to cheese omelettes, Hasker posits the following argument:

- (C1) It is now true that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (Premise)
- (C2) It is impossible that God should at any time believe what is false, or fail to believe any true proposition such that his knowing that proposition at that time is logically possible. (Premise: divine omniscience)
- (C3) God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet tomorrow. (Assumption for indirect proof)
- (C4) If God has always believed a certain thing, it is not in anyone's power to bring it about that God has not always believed that thing. (Premise: the unalterability of the past)
- (C5) Therefore, it is not in Clarence's power to bring it about that God has not always believed that he would have a cheese omelet for breakfast. (From 3,4)
- (C6) It is not possible for it to be true both that God has always believed that Clarence would have a cheese omelet for breakfast, and that he does not in fact have one. (From 2)
- (C7) Therefore, it is not in Clarence's power to refrain from having a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From 5,6) So Clarence's eating the omelet tomorrow is not an act of free choice.
- (C8) Clarence will act freely when he eats the omelet for breakfast tomorrow (Premise)

²¹¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 165. However, Hunt argues that the *manner* by which God knows the future cannot be considered the important factor in the debate, only that God can be said to possess 'complete and infallible knowledge of the future', without exception or modification. Such a view, according to Hunt can be established biblically, deduced from 'Perfect Being' theology, is necessary for providence and a majority view within most church traditions. Hunt, *Simple*, pp. 65-9.

²¹² A. Yong, 'Divine Omniscience and Future Contingents: Weighing the Presuppositional Issues in the Contemporary Debate', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 26:3, 2002, pp. 240-64.

²¹³ Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 64-74 and *PP*, pp. 148. See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 210. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 100. Basinger, *CFT*, pp 39-56. For an overview of this debate see, N. Pike, 'A Latter-Day Look at the Foreknowledge Problem', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 33: 3, 1993, pp. 129-64.

(C9) Therefore, it is not the case that God has always believed that Clarence will have a cheese omelet for breakfast tomorrow. (From 3-8, indirect proof)²¹⁴

As Hasker concludes, EDF (including SFK) and human freedom are not easily reconcilable.²¹⁵ From this argument, it is only possible to affirm either, that God has foreknowledge and thus the future is determined, or, explain how it is that God cannot know all future contingents. Open Theists have opted for the second of these. Consequently, Open Theists redefine omniscience to mean that “*at any time God knows all propositions such that God’s knowing them at that time is logically possible.*”²¹⁶ Drawing from the philosophical discussions regarding God’s omnipotence that He cannot perform the logically impossible (enter stage left the well-worn classic examples of married bachelors and square circles!), Open Theists apply the same logic to omniscience, arguing that God can only know that which is *logically possible* to know.²¹⁷ As we saw in the preceding section, the future is an ‘entity’ which only enters reality when it is actualised. Until the moment of actualisation, the future only exists in potential, thus is not a definite that God can know with absolute certainty, as it is not existent in reality.²¹⁸ In this way, God retains his omniscience, as He knows all things that occur and can be possibly known (including all propositional truths), but time plays a significant role in *when* God can logically know them.²¹⁹

Despite the controversial nature of this claim, Open Theists argue that there is biblical evidence supporting this understanding of God’s knowledge. At the fore of the exegetical

²¹⁴ Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 73-4. See also, Hasker, *PP*, pp. 148.

²¹⁵ See also, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 211-2. T. V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), pp. 89.

²¹⁶ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136 (Italics in the original).

²¹⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15, 166, 206 and 208. Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 58. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 100. Pinnock, *ST*, pp.121. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 23 and 36. Boyd, *OTV*, pp. 14. Rice, *DFFWT*, pp. 128. See also W. N. Clarke, *God Knowable and Unknowable* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1973), pp. 65. R. Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), pp. 172-8.

²¹⁸ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 205.

²¹⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 165-6 and 205-6. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp.100. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 91-2.

work examining God's limited knowledge of the future in the Old Testament, stands the work of Terrence Fretheim, which is most clearly expounded in *The Suffering of God*.²²⁰ In this seminal work, Fretheim states that the OT rarely speaks of divine foreknowledge.²²¹ He argues that contrary to the notion of EDF in the OT, there are in fact four types of divine speech which clearly demonstrate that God has limited knowledge of the future. Each of these categories challenge the notion that God knows the future *exhaustively*, and suggest that, at least in part, the future is open, and not completely fixed.²²² Any affirmation of EDF would render these speech models superfluous in the flow of the narratives, as God would have no need to utilise them if He knows the future. He would have simply known the future and would have responded differently. The first of these models is the use of the divine 'perhaps'.²²³ This is tied to God's uncertainty about what He may do in the future and how people will respond to prophetic words (Ex. 32:30, Ezek. 12:1-3, Amos 5:15, Jer. 26:2-3, 36:3 and 51:8 and Is. 47:12). The second purports to the divine 'if', when the future is conditional upon present decisions (Jer. 7:5, 22:4-5 and 26:4-6).²²⁴ Divine consultations constitute the third category.²²⁵ God considers human input before deciding upon His actions, demonstrating that human responses contribute to the future of both God and Israel (Gen. 18:7-25, Ex. 32:7-14, Num. 14:11-20 and 16:20-7, 1 Sam. 15 and Amos 7:1-6). The final model considers the range and purposes of divine questions (Hos. 6:4 and 11:8, Jer. 2:31, 5:7-

²²⁰ For other notable works of Fretheim relating to divine foreknowledge, see, 'Divine Foreknowledge, Divine Constancy and the Rejection of Saul's Kingship', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47:4, 1985, pp. 595-602. "I Was Only a Little Angry": Divine Violence in the Prophets." *Interpretation*, 58:4, 2004, pp. 365-75. 'The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk', *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 10:1, 1988, pp. 47-70. 'The Repentance of God: A Study of Jeremiah 18:7-10', *Hebrew Annual Review* 11, 1987, pp. 81-92. 'Suffering God and Sovereign God in Exodus: A Collision of Images', *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 11:2, 1989, pp. 31-56.

²²¹ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 45.

²²² Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 57.

²²³ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 45-7.

²²⁴ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 47-9.

²²⁵ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 49-53.

9, 8:5, 9:7-9 and 30:6 and Is. 5:4 and 50:2).²²⁶ Fretheim argues that divine questions exceed mere ‘rhetorical’ devices, and allow people to contribute, in real ways, to the answer, which shapes their own future with God (e.g., Is. 40:21-31).²²⁷ In light of how God deliberates about how the future will or could be in these passages, implies that it is not definite in the mind of God. Therefore, any talk of God’s omniscience including the future must ‘be limited’, and must be ‘constantly informed by the divine will to save.’²²⁸

In addition to Fretheim’s examples, Open Theists have posited further biblical examples of divine speech and actions, which if read alongside EDF, become problematic. The thrust of the examples resembles those of Fretheim, in that, if God possesses EDF, and knows the content of reality of all future events, then why does He act as though He is ignorant of such knowledge. If God knows in advance everything which *will* happen, then nothing can ever come as a surprise to him, as the content of all actions will be known from all eternity.²²⁹ Divine repentance epitomises this challenge to EDF within the OT. If God knows the future and what *will* happen exhaustively, then why does He categorically state that He *will* act a certain way when He knows that that event will never actually occur (Ex. 32, Num. 11:1-2, 14:12-20 and 16:20-35, Deut. 9:13-4, Judg. 10:13-5, Jon. 3:4 and 4:2, 1 Sam. 2:30, 2 Sam. 24:17-25, 1 Kings 21:27-9, 2 Kings 13:3-5 and 20:1-7 and 2 Chron. 12:5-8).²³⁰ God is portrayed as free to change His mind through the progression of time in response to human actions. This suggests an openness in God’s future which is not tied to His foreknowledge of a fixed future as He *spontaneously* responds to human actions by *changing*

²²⁶ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 53-57.

²²⁷ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 55-6.

²²⁸ Fretheim, *SG*, pp. 57.

²²⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 83-4. Boyd, *OVT*, pp. 23.

²³⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 76 and 81. See also Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 122. Boyd, *OVT*, pp. 23. L. J. Kuyper, ‘The Suffering and the Repentance of God’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 22:3, 1969, pp. 257-77.

his mind and intended courses of action. Sanders summarises this point when he states, “God, using his wisdom in conjunction with input from humans, freely decides when he shall carry out the prediction and when he will alter it.”²³¹ Other examples of divine speech and action which imply an uncertainty about the future include; God tests people to discover their responses (Gen. 22, Ex. 15:25 and 33:5, Deut 8:2 and 13:1-3, Judg. 3:4 and 2 Chron. 32:31), divine expressions of frustration and regret (Gen 6:6, 1 Sam. 15:10 and 15:35, Jer. 32:35 and Ezek. 22:30-1), God confronts the unexpected (Is. 5:2-4, Jer. 7:31, 19:5 and 32:35), prophecies which either do not come to pass, or, do not happen as predicted (Gen. 27:27-40 and 37:6-9, 2 Kings 20:1 and Ezek 26) and conditional divine speech (Ezek. 12:3, Jer. 26:3 and Mt. 26:39).²³²

Having argued at some length for the biblical, theological and philosophical support for the limitations of God’s knowledge in regards to the future, it is now time to explicate what Open Theists assert about God’s knowledge, and what He knows concerning the future. By drawing together the main features from the current and previous subsections in respects to divine temporality, Open Theists adhere to an understanding of God’s knowledge which Sanders has coined *dynamic omniscience*.²³³ Given the kind of world which God elected to create, one enriched with human free choice and temporal movement, there were things God could not know at the outset of creation.²³⁴ Foremost among these were the future free decisions of humanity. Sanders develops this by stating that the future has not yet been actualised (thus not existent in reality and therefore unknowable), and that, ‘God cannot know

²³¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 76.

²³² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 80-1 and 207. J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003), pp. 136-7. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 122. Boyd, *OVT*, pp. 23-32.

²³³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15. This understanding of God’s knowledge has also been referred to as ‘Presentism’, see Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 39.

²³⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15 and 166.

as definite what we will do unless he destroys the very freedom he granted us.’²³⁵

Consequently, God’s knowledge of the world is omniscient in that He knows all there is to know in reality *as it is*, but this cannot include future free choices.²³⁶ The past and present are therefore known exhaustively, but God’s knowledge develops as time passes and new experiences enter the divine consciousness. As history unfolds, with humanity and God creating the future together in covenantal partnership, God learns and adapts to the changing situations which arises from human decisions (e.g., Gen. 22).²³⁷ This is what makes it a *dynamic* theory of omniscience; God knows all there is logically possible to know, but his knowledge (at least in relation to human acts and decisions) is temporally conditioned.

This should in no way imply that God is totally ignorant to *all* future events. Because God is supremely aware of all current and past actions, along with knowing each person intimately, He is able to anticipate the future to high degrees of accuracy.²³⁸ Such knowledge of the past and present allows Him a much more accurate reading of how present situations will actually resolve. In addition, as stated above, the world is not unpredictably or ‘wildly’ free, in that the world will run along certain lines which have already been placed in motion, of which God is aware. Also, this should in no way negate the idea that God has very specific purposes for humanity, and seeks in ever changing ways to implement them. God is ‘omniscient’ and perpetually resourceful in desiring to save all humanity, and within this mission, there are certain acts which God will implement, supplying another level of assurance in future events.²³⁹ However, this begins to encroach upon the notion of providence, which is the next topic under consideration, and to which we now turn our attention.

²³⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 166.

²³⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15 and 166. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 101.

²³⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15.

²³⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 138-9 and 208-9. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 100.

²³⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 15.

1.6 Divine Providence and Risk

In this sub-heading, we will examine the Open view of providence by exploring its link to the notion of divine *risk*. However, before we can proceed, it is important to establish how the concepts of providence and risk have been explained within the broader church tradition and where Open theology positions itself within that trajectory. In the previous section we briefly introduced the branch of theism which has come to be labelled ‘Free-Will’ Theism (FWT). The aim here is to explore FWT more thoroughly, and explain what it entails, and how Open theologians modify some of the central tenets embedded within it.

Among the distinctive theological characteristics within FWT are the varying models of providence which are filtered through the motif of divine ‘risk-taking’ which are proffered in response to God granting free-will at creation.²⁴⁰ Although there is no unanimous agreement to explain how God takes risks and how He meets the challenges of those risks, there is a certain ‘family resemblance’ among all the traditions which affirm libertarian freedom.²⁴¹ Key features contained within the ‘risk’ model of providence include; (1) that humans do not always do as God would have them do because of their moral freedom, which necessitates that God relinquishes meticulous control, (2) God did not ordain evil to enter the world, though it is permitted, (3) through free-will, God granted a heightened sense of moral responsibility to humanity which determines how certain aspects will unfold within the world, with the subsequent result that God does not always gets the results He desires, (4) God’s plans for the world are heavily dependent upon humanity’s cooperation with them, (5) God responds to prayers, (6) salvation becomes conditional upon the response of the penitent who is required to cooperate with resistible grace, and (7) although God remains in control of

²⁴⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13-4 and 197. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 33-6.

²⁴¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13.

creation by establishing both the beginning and the eschatological end, the outworking between these two points is not fixed, requiring God to be resourceful, flexible and ‘omnicompetent’ in bringing his desired ends to fruition.²⁴² Sanders summarises divine risk when he states, ‘this means that God took the risk in creating such beings that we might choose to use our freedom to love or we might use it to sin.’²⁴³

In a development of this, Sanders states that ‘free-will’ interpretations of providence not only boast a long and rich heritage within the Christian tradition, but they also pre-date Western Classical models which have been largely influenced by Augustine.²⁴⁴ Many of the Early Church Fathers, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anabaptists, Arminians, Holiness-Wesleyans, Methodists and Pentecostals have each affirmed the broad ideas above in constructing doctrines of providence.²⁴⁵ By broadly dividing the Christian tradition into FWT and Classical Theism, Sanders elicits the major distinctions between the two camps in respects to their doctrines of providence. There is a recognised degree of overlap between the two groups, with both factions acknowledging that God is loving, wise, morally perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, self-sustaining and the creator and sustainer of the universe. Nevertheless, Sanders asserts that the manner in which these notions are interpreted, especially when they are read alongside specific doctrines of God, result in divergent understandings of providence.²⁴⁶ FWT deliberately avoids ‘static’ definitions of God in favour of dynamic portrayals which are more conducive to the ‘risk’ model of providence and salvation outlined above. Consequently, within FWT there is a stress placed upon (1) a rejection of God as pure actuality as He is responsive, especially to prayer, (2) an acknowledgement that although

²⁴² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13 and 198. Basinger, *CFT*, pp. 21-2, 33 and 36. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 162-3.

²⁴³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13.

²⁴⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 13 and 197.

²⁴⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 197.

²⁴⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 197.

God's nature cannot change, he should not be considered strictly immutable as He is affected by the world and is emotionally moved by human needs, (3) God's omniscience is established, in part, from knowing the free actions of people and not foreknown through predetermined or foreordained eternal decrees, and (4) God adopts a 'general' rather than 'meticulous' approach to providential care, electing not to tightly control every aspect of human affairs. This allows self determining humans to act freely and face the consequences of their actions without being overly constrained or restricted by the divine. This subsequently means that God does not intervene directly in all events, but operates within broad parameters and with humanity to establish His will.²⁴⁷

In addition to the distinctions drawn by Sanders, Basinger also contrasts the views of Classical Theism and FWT, highlighting further the implications this holds for the doctrine of providence. He focuses upon the two specific issues: the nature of divine foreknowledge and what limitations/obligations, if any, God works within when He intervenes in earthly affairs.²⁴⁸ According to Basinger, one of the key characteristics within Classical Theism entails God's *ability* to bring about His desires unilaterally, which many within FWT adhere to.²⁴⁹ However, a major difference arises in *how*, *when* and *to what extent* God works in a unilateral manner.²⁵⁰ This discussion brings us back to the nature of human freedom, and the differences that exist between Compatibilists and those who advocate libertarian freedom. In contrast to Compatibilists, who assert that God manifests His will through the volition of free agents (as long as He operates within the parameters of their own desires which are not restrained from doing what they want or compelled to do what they do not want to do), 'Free-

²⁴⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 197.

²⁴⁸ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 21-5.

²⁴⁹ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 24.

²⁵⁰ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 32.

Will' Theists reject this as a clear contradiction.²⁵¹ If God is the architect who brings everything to His desired ends, then any human action, however reconfigured, is not a free choice where an alternative option is possible. Ultimately, there is little difference between 'hard' divine determinism and the 'soft' determinism of Compatibilism, as humanity is not free to choose in any other manner.

Although many within the 'Free-Will' tradition affirm that God indeed possesses the *ability* and *power* to control all earthly affairs (*contra* 'Process' Theology), to do so consistently would impact upon the freedom He granted at creation.²⁵² The freedom which God allowed encapsulates the most fundamental aspects of human life. It is this moral freedom which allows humans to distinguish between not only 'good' and 'evil', but enables humanity to choose what relationship to share with God based upon these moral criteria.²⁵³ God, if he so wishes, possesses the power not only to stop moral evils from happening, but can also stop the evil desires which people harbour and the consequences which arise from such decisions. There are in fact times when God operates in this way.²⁵⁴ However, FWT argues that as a 'general rule' God opts not to intervene consistently in such matters as this would conflict with His overall purposes.²⁵⁵ To deny the world the very freedom it was given and render void the consequences of moral actions runs counter to the world God chose to create.²⁵⁶ Consequently, '*God does not exercise unilateral control over many important*

²⁵¹ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 33.

²⁵² Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 33-5. For a critique of divine power in 'Process' thought, see, D. Basinger, *Divine Power in Process Theism: A Philosophical Critique* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 29-39.

²⁵³ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 33.

²⁵⁴ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 34.

²⁵⁵ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 36. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 162-3. See also, R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), Ch. 10-11. Thomas Oord opposes this view of providence. See below for a detailed discussion of Oord's model of *Essential Kenosis*.

²⁵⁶ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 34. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 205.

*aspects of what occurs in our earthly realm.*²⁵⁷ Although God *does not* control much of what occurs, this should not imply that He *cannot* control all events.²⁵⁸ Instead, God's providential workings should be interpreted through the lens of 'self-limitation' and risk, as God respects human freedom which can potentially lead to relationship, but with no assurance that He will attain all the goals He hopes for.²⁵⁹

However, when regarding a topic such as providence, it is difficult to speak in general terms. This is especially the case if one desires to contrast the central ideas of FWT with those of Classical Theism to derive at a clear understanding of God and how He operates. The major obstacle in attempting such a task is that, to a large extent, models developed within FWT have been, and continue to be, structured within a Classical framework, even when they may have been significantly modified to account for the idea of risk. The use of SFK in Arminianism is an example of this.²⁶⁰ Therefore, while a broad overview of FWT is useful heuristically in establishing boundary markers, it is limited when accounting for the differences which exist within specific providential understandings. As such, the remainder of this sub-section is dedicated to explicating some of the distinctive features within the Open view of providence.

The first aspect to acknowledge within an Open view of providence is the broad agreement that it holds with wider traditions within FWT.²⁶¹ Due to the Open affirmation of

²⁵⁷ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 36. (Italics in the original).

²⁵⁸ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 36. See also, Basinger, *Divine Power*, pp. 69-84. D. Basinger and R. Basinger, 'Theodicy: A Comparative Analysis', in Porter & Cross, *SR*, pp. 144-59, esp. 148. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 196.

²⁵⁹ Basinger, *CFW*, pp. 36. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 151. However, not all 'Open' Theists endorse the notion of 'divine self-limitation'. Oord argues that such a concept raises additional complications for providence, as the God who *can* do more to care for this world, *should* do more because of His necessary love. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 92-101 and 123-4.

²⁶⁰ See D. Hunt, 'The Simple-Foreknowledge View', in, J. K. Beilby & P. R. Eddy (eds.), *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, pp. 65-103.

²⁶¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 16

libertarian freedom, much of what is asserted above, regarding human freedom which results in a ‘risk’ model of providence, is accepted.²⁶² In many respects, this forms the framework from which Open Theists develop their broader providential understandings. This consequently establishes one of the ‘watershed issues’ within Open Theism, that God practices ‘general’ rather than ‘meticulous’ providence (the other ‘watershed issue’ is that God is affected by humanity).²⁶³ God does not ‘micromanage’ every aspect within the world, but works with and responds to humanity in bringing about his *overall* goals, even if such a decision results in pain and grief for both the divine and humanity.²⁶⁴ ‘Meticulous’ divine control is rejected within Open Theism in favour of a view which understands God as ‘omniresourceful’ in adapting his purposes to *actual* events as they arise within the world.²⁶⁵ This model of providence also grants prayer a significant role, especially when understood alongside dynamic omniscience.²⁶⁶ Contrasted against SFK which possesses limited providential value, as it is logically impossible for God to look ahead and then intervene contrary to what He has seen despite the prayers of supplicants, Open Theism supports a stronger providential model by highlighting the efficacy of prayer.²⁶⁷ Prayer becomes an expression of *partnership* between God and humanity which can change the future, as God can freely respond to petitions within an open future (James 4:2 and Mt. 7:7).²⁶⁸

²⁶² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 175-6, 214 and 232. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 204.

²⁶³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 14-6 and 194-200 and 205. G. A. Boyd, ‘God Limits His Control’, in S.N. Sundry & D.W. Jowers, (eds.), *Four Views on Divine Providence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), pp. 183-223, esp. 191. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 53.

²⁶⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 14. For a defence of ‘meticulous’ providence by which God determines and controls every event in detail see, P. Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 104.

²⁶⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 182.

²⁶⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 216. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 203-5 and 232. For other references regarding the importance of prayer see, Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 152. Archer, *GR*, pp. 87-9. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 171-5.

²⁶⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 209-16. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 203-6 and 230. Basinger, *CFW*, 123-34. D. Basinger, ‘Simple Foreknowledge and Providential Control’, *Faith and Philosophy*, 10:3, 1993, pp. 421-7. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 57-8.

²⁶⁸ Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 152. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 203 and 231.

Secondly, there is the denial that God's 'goodness' is of a radically different order from that of humanity's.²⁶⁹ There is a strong rejection of any notion that God's 'goodness' so utterly transcends human comprehensibility that it becomes an unfathomable mystery. This subsequently enables Open Theists to spurn any assertion that God intentionally uses 'evil' within and for His own purposes or for some greater good.²⁷⁰ Evil in all its forms is an affront to God, and was never intended to be part of his creative purposes.²⁷¹ Hence, no Open theodicy or theology of providence can legitimise evil or allow for it to be justified or 'fade into insignificance'.²⁷²

Finally, and most importantly, is the Christological emphasis within the understanding of providence. Hasker poses the question of what God does about evil and how he confronts disorder and suffering in the world.²⁷³ His response is that God has resolved to redeem the world, which culminates in the life, person, ministry, death, resurrection of Jesus.²⁷⁴ In the Open understanding of providence, the Christ event embodies *how* God's plan will unfold in a relational manner, and why God tolerates evil in its present form, even if this will not reach fruition until the *eschaton*.²⁷⁵ Boyd further develops this Christological theme by identifying four key criteria: (1) God is involved in 'spiritual warfare' against the powers of Satan and demons (who themselves possess free-will), and Jesus' ministry directly opposes these principalities and ultimately defeats them.²⁷⁶ (2) God relies on *both* power and wisdom

²⁶⁹ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 28.

²⁷⁰ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 28, 171-98 and 204. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 231. Rice, *GFMM*, pp. 51. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 176.

²⁷¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 213. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 44. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 232.

²⁷² Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 36.

²⁷³ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 207.

²⁷⁴ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 209-13. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 232.

²⁷⁵ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 212-3.

²⁷⁶ This notion is a central theme in Boyd's work, see G. A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 287-90. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 15-7 and 29-49. Boyd, *GLHC*, pp. 184-6. He defines the 'warfare' motif by explaining that, "This worldview is that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate or unfortunate, aspects of life are to be

in bringing about his victory. In His confrontation with demons, Jesus displayed ‘power encounters’ against His foes, but this was also accompanied by the wisdom of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18-31. See also Jn. 8:7).²⁷⁷ (3) God relies on ‘other-orientated love’.²⁷⁸ Jesus personified this throughout His ministry, especially welcoming sinners into table-fellowship, encouraging the broadest acceptance possible into the divine community. (4) God’s victory can never be achieved by causing evil, but by bringing good out of evil (Rom. 8:28, NIV).²⁷⁹ However, it should be noted that Open Theists themselves recognise that the promise they once placed in their providential understanding and theologies of theodicy may have been a little premature. The fact that evil persists in spite of a God who is powerful enough to conquer it, raises further difficult questions which require more thought.²⁸⁰

This concludes the broad overview of the central tenets of Open Theism. As was mentioned above, the aim here was to introduce the distinctive features within the position, without necessarily becoming embroiled within the technical differences which exist between various proponents. Although some attempt has been made to highlight some of the distinguishing features among its leading thinkers, some of the specific differences which arise between them will be explicated more precisely below.

interpreted largely as the result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and against us.” (Boyd, *GAW*, pp. 13.) See also, Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 177. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 210.

²⁷⁷ Boyd, *GAW*, pp 171-293. Boyd, *SPE*, pp. 35-7, 120-3, 251-2 and 262. Boyd, *GLHC*, pp. 185-6. See also Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 182.

²⁷⁸ Boyd, *GLHC*, pp. 186-7.

²⁷⁹ Boyd, *GLHC*, pp. 187. See also, Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 217.

²⁸⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 96-9. Hall and Sanders, *DGHF*, pp. 40. J. S. Hocking, *Freedom Unlimited: Liberty, Autonomy, and Response-ability in the Open Theism of Clark Pinnock* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), pp. 77-8.

CHAPTER 2

OPEN THEIST CONCEPTIONS OF THE GODHEAD

The purpose of the present chapter and the next is to explore in more detail some of the themes which were raised in Chapter One and develop them further in line with the method laid out in the Introduction. The previous chapter served, in part, to establish the broader theological context of Open Theism and provide, in part, a textual context from which this and the following chapter will develop. Therefore, the current chapter will explore the various ways in which Open Theists have portrayed the Godhead and the proceeding chapter will consider how the Godhead impacts the categories of salvation, providence and eschatology. As was noted above, Open Theism has developed along various theological and philosophical lines, each bringing with them their own distinct insights into the person of God and unique contexts in which this is to be understood. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will follow Clooney's necessary reading strategy of *commentary*: the close reading of texts within their own given community. This first stage of Clooney's comparative method will be undertaken to establish what each author says in relation to the Godhead and what differences exist between them. By establishing a clear reading strategy not only clarifies what the community is saying, but also allows for the identification of the various novelties within each author's writings. Consequently, this initiates the process of generating new questions and contexts for assessing and evaluating the ideas within Open Theism. By following the 'close reading' as advocated by Clooney, we are able to assess where the Open tradition currently situates itself *vis-à-vis* various theological concepts and doctrines. This is of paramount importance for identifying where the later conversation with Pentecostalism can speak into the Open community's theological context and provide new insights for development and growth. Furthermore, in line with the adaptations to the method set out

above, there is a particular focus upon the ‘Canonical-Narrative’ presupposition which centres upon the biblical narrative of the Godhead. However, the reading of the Godhead is not (nor cannot be) restricted to the biblical witness alone within this section, as the comparative method requires an accurate portrayal of the interplay between text(s) and community context, which must fairly reflect the actual present state of the community. As we shall note, Open Theists draw from a wide range of biblical, philosophical and traditional sources in constructing their portrayal of the Godhead. Once the commentary component of the chapter is concluded, there will be an assessment of the various conceptions of the Godhead involving a critical evaluation of the differing viewpoints. This in turn provides the broad parameters for the establishment of the theological and textual context which will serve as one of the major conversational components within the thesis’ development.

2.1 Clark Pinnock: Spirit-Christology and Relationality

2.1.1 The Difficulties of Classical Theism

Clark Pinnock encapsulates how the doctrine of God should be constructed when he states:

On the basis of revelation we strive for a biblically and conceptually sound understanding of God and of the package of divine properties that contribute to a coherent understanding. Each attribute needs to be explained coherently and the attributes together shown to be compatible with one another and with the vision of God as a whole.²⁸¹

Such a definition, which requires the understanding of God to be both biblically faithful and conceptually coherent, has the necessary consequence of negating the Classical doctrine of God for Pinnock. Despite the overall coherence of the ‘package’ of divine attributes within Classical theism, he argues that there was an excess of Hellenistic philosophical categories

²⁸¹ Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 101.

which were uncritically assimilated into early Christian thought and which ultimately conflicted with the biblical and relational portrayal of God.²⁸² Due to the Neo-Platonism of Augustine and the Aristotelian influence upon Thomist metaphysics (which have both exerted tremendous influence over the ensuing Christian tradition in the West), Pinnock asserts that depictions of God were subsequently driven by Classical philosophical notions (primarily timelessness, impassibility and immutability) rather than relational themes inherent in the Bible.²⁸³ Alongside a particular hermeneutic, the Classical model has resulted in an understanding of a deterministic Deity who implements a ‘blueprint’ model of reality, which reduces the divine-human relationality to something ‘mechanistic and sub-personal’ as little or no space is granted for genuine human contributions.²⁸⁴

Rather than interpreting the nature of God and the divine attributes through a Classical lens, Pinnock argues that such an approach should be rejected, as it necessarily restricts a full appreciation of God’s loving nature.²⁸⁵ Instead, there is a need to faithfully recognise and acknowledge how God’s nature is presented throughout the biblical witness and construct one’s theology from that initial starting point. In contrast to an inert deity which Pinnock characterises as a ‘metaphysical iceberg’, he argues that God should be acknowledged as possessing a ‘changeable faithfulness’, which asserts that although God does not change in his *nature*, He experiences the world in a highly responsive manner.

²⁸² Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 65-111, esp. 85-6 and 116. C. H. Pinnock, ‘Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History’, in C. H. Pinnock (ed.), *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1975), pp. 95-109, esp. 97. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 105-6.

²⁸³ C. H. Pinnock, ‘Between Classical and Process Theism’, in R. Nash (ed.), *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 313-27, esp. 313-4. C. H. Pinnock, ‘Introduction’, in J. B. Cobb & C. H. Pinnock (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. ix-xiv, ix. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 106. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 155. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 85. C. H. Pinnock, ‘From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology’, in C. H. Pinnock (ed.), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), pp. 15-30, esp. 24. Pinnock, *Divine Relationality*, pp. 18.

²⁸⁴ Pinnock, *Responsible Freedom*, pp. 97.

²⁸⁵ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 85.

Therefore, ‘*who God is* does not change but *what God experiences* changes’.²⁸⁶

2.1.2 Social Trinitarianism

The essential manner in which Pinnock argues that God is unchanging is His Trinitarian nature, which necessarily exists from ‘everlasting to everlasting’.²⁸⁷ For Pinnock, there is nothing more essential or fundamental to an orthodox Christian understanding of God than the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁸⁸ One of the key criticisms which Pinnock offers against Classical Theism is the manner in which it has been conceived independently from a robust Trinitarian framework.²⁸⁹ The abstraction of God in line with a pre-existent Hellenistic metaphysic has eclipsed the personal nature of the members within the Trinity and minimised the role that each consequently plays in the creational/salvific drama. Therefore, in contrast to the Classical understanding of God and ‘modal’ expressions of the Trinity (which can often negate the relational dimension of the divine), Pinnock advocates the fundamental ‘Social’ notion of the Trinity to highlight the personal, loving and relational aspect of God within His dealings with creation.²⁹⁰

By adopting ‘Social Trinitarianism’ as a means of comprehending the fundamental nature of God, Pinnock identifies an essential loving and relational conception of the divine which he asserts is not only more biblical, but also overcomes the problematic portrayal of God within Classical thought. Pinnock asserts that one of the fundamental tenets of ‘Social Trinitarianism’ is the acknowledgement that each member of the Trinity is a distinct ‘subject’

²⁸⁶ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 85. (italics in original). See also, Pinnock, *Between Classical*, pp. 322. Pinnock, *Divine Relationality*, pp. 19.

²⁸⁷ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 86. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 21-48.

²⁸⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 22. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 28.

²⁸⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 31.

²⁹⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 35 and 40-1. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 45. C. H. Pinnock. ‘The Holy Spirit as a Distinct Person in the Godhead’, in M. W. Wilson (ed.), *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

complete with their ‘own experiences’, but is also ‘united by a common divinity’, which avoids accusations of ‘Tri-Theism’. In this respect, ‘intersubjectivity’ subsequently becomes a key component within Trinitarian understanding, as ‘each of the persons of the Trinity is aware of its identity while relating with the others and sharing divine consciousness’.²⁹¹ Using this insight as a key motif in comprehending life within the Trinity, Pinnock builds upon this notion by highlighting the inherent relational ontology of God’s being, which can be expressed as a ‘loving relationality’.²⁹² The Trinitarian ontology is essential to understanding who God is, as His nature is one of *perichoretic* indwelling and mutuality which is characterised by love between the members.²⁹³ This is no more clearly exemplified than in Pinnock’s rendering of ‘Spirit-Christology’.²⁹⁴

2.1.3 Spirit-Christology

Pinnock states that the dominant Christological model in Church history has been that of the *Logos*, which has not only been used to establish the claim of Christ’s full divinity but also essential in defending the Church’s position against such heresies as ‘adoptionism’ and Arianism.²⁹⁵ However, despite the important insights which *Logos* Christology offers the Church, Pinnock argues that this dominant motif should not stand as the primary controlling Christological lens as it lacks a necessary Pneumatological component, which his reading of Spirit-Christology attempts to redress.²⁹⁶ By emphasising the manner in which the Spirit was active in every aspect of Jesus’ life and ministry from his conception and baptism through to death and resurrection (Mt. 12:28, Lk. 4:18, Jn. 3:34 and Acts 10:38), we note in Jesus an

²⁹¹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 35-6.

²⁹² Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 21.

²⁹³ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 22-3, 31, 33, 35-6, 44 and 154. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108 and 112. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 30 and 45. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 28, 30, 80-1 and 85-6.

²⁹⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 79-111.

²⁹⁵ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 80-1 and 91-2.

²⁹⁶ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 79.

intimate and reciprocal life in the Spirit.²⁹⁷ By arguing such, Pinnock is able to draw together both *Logos* and Spirit Christologies when he states, ‘it was the anointing by the Spirit that made Jesus ‘Christ’, not the hypostatic union, and it was the anointing that made him effective in history as the absolute savior, Jesus was ontologically Son of God from the moment of conception, but he became Christ by the power of the Spirit’.²⁹⁸ Into this reading of Spirit-Christology, Pinnock additionally affirms an understanding of *kenotic* Christology, but one which possesses a necessary Pneumatological interpretation as he states, ‘The Son’s self-emptying meant that Jesus was compelled to rely on the Spirit. In a sense, self-emptying comes naturally to God. Creation was a kind of self-emptying when God made room for creatures. Self-emptying is characteristic of God, who is self-giving love itself. Spirit is important for understanding the kenosis’.²⁹⁹ In line with broader *kenotic* Christology, but keen to stress the dependence of Christ on the Spirit, especially in regarding the anointed nature of Jesus’ Christhood, Pinnock states that, ‘[i]n becoming dependent, the Son surrendered the independent use of his divine attributes in the incarnation’.³⁰⁰

2.1.4 The Self-Limiting Narrative of the Trinity

The reciprocal, self-emptying and loving ontology which characterises the divine life in Trinity becomes central when we next consider the manner in which Pinnock understands how God opens himself to humanity in both affective and experiential ways. As noted above, the Classical attributes of immutability, timelessness and impassibility have led Pinnock to conclude that God has mostly been interpreted along static lines within the majority of Church

²⁹⁷ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 81-2, 85 and 92-3.

²⁹⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 80-1.

²⁹⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 88.

³⁰⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 85. Pinnock also states, ‘The Son came in veiled glory, emptied of divine prerogatives, dependent on the power of the Spirit’, *FOL*, pp. 100.

traditions. However, Pinnock states that this stands at odds with the creational and salvific drama as it unfolds within the Bible. In establishing the purposes and goals for creation, God had a number of options open to him. God could have created a deterministic world as advocated within Augustinian/Calvinistic/Reformed theologies, but rather He chose a system more akin to his essential nature - love.³⁰¹ God desired a created order which reflected his inner-essence, therefore, the primary goal for creation was to share his mutual and reciprocal love with humanity.³⁰² In contrast to Process metaphysics, Pinnock asserts that the world was neither co-existent with God, nor is He dependent upon it. Rather, God experiences 'self-sufficiency' within his Trinitarian being and chooses to create the world as an over-flow of his love.³⁰³

From this choice springs the decision for God to limit His own power in reaching out and meeting with humanity. As sovereign God, there are no necessary metaphysical or theological obligations placed upon Him.³⁰⁴ However, in his commitment to reciprocal and responsive relationships, God has become voluntarily 'self-limited' by relinquishing aspects of his control to give creatures the freedom to accept or reject his loving call.³⁰⁵ This involves

³⁰¹ Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 144-5. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 92-3.

³⁰² Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 81, 83, 92-3, 125-6. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 23, 41 and 58. Pinnock, *Responsible Freedom*, pp. 97. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 30. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 144-5.

³⁰³ Pinnock acknowledges his indebtedness to aspects of Process thought in the construction of his Open model. Recognising that aspects such as the importance of love, the dynamism of God, the need to understand evolution within the created order, the critique of 'Classical' Theism, the need to affirm libertarian freedom, the need to understand God as a relational being who is emotionally moved by the events within the world and a need to recognise the immanence of God are all essential correctives needed within Christian theology. However, Pinnock is also critical of the manner in which Process theologians present various doctrines of God including the denial of *creatio ex nihilo*, the lack of a theology of transcendence, the dependence of God upon the world, the manner in which God is restricted to only persuasive power and how Process theologians have imposed a Whiteheadian metaphysic upon the Bible (Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 28, 83 and 140-50. Pinnock, *Introduction*, pp. x. Pinnock, *Between Classical*, pp. 313-27. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 46. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108-9).

³⁰⁴ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 136.

³⁰⁵ Pinnock, *Between Classical*, pp. 317. Pinnock, *Introduction*, pp. xi. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 113. Pinnock, *From Augustine*, pp. 21. Pinnock, *Divine Relationality*, pp. 19. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 147, 149-51. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 93, 129-30 and 135-6.

God opening Himself emotionally to the world which has caused Him grief and pain as well as joy (although God's grief differs from humanity's in that He is never subsumed or overcome by it).³⁰⁶ There is also the need to construct a world in which choices for relationships are genuine, which, in turn, requires a freedom to commit to such relationships. Consequently, there is an openness to the future, as God cannot pre-determine people's choices by knowing in advance what they would choose. Therefore, the manner by which humanity experiences the future and temporal realities are those experienced by God; a set of possibilities which are waiting to be actualised.³⁰⁷ Hence, God's power, control and sovereignty need to be understood within the context of love, relationality, power-sharing and freedom and not narrowly defined or restricted to models of theology which express all-controlling decrees of divine determinism.³⁰⁸

2.1.5 Summary

In summarising Pinnock's specific contribution to Open Theism, we note that in distinction to the other authors under consideration in this chapter, there is a stronger emphasis upon an ecumenical dialogue and a construction of his views which relies more heavily from the language and conceptions of systematic/constructive theology. This is not particularly surprising given the shape of Pinnock's overall theological trajectory, but it does help to emphasise the specific differences which he highlights. The engagement that Pinnock makes in reference to both his Trinitarian and Christological theology reflect his concerns of developing theological ideas from biblical sources in dialogue with a wide variety of dialogue

³⁰⁶ Pinnock, *Introduction*, pp. x. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 104. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 81-2, 88 and 91-2.

³⁰⁷ Pinnock argues that, 'Philosophically speaking, if choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively foreknown... as it would seriously undermine the reality of our decisions if they were known in advance', Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 123. See also, Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 147-51. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 47-51.

³⁰⁸ Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 113-4. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 145-6. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 51-3, 93-6 and 135-6.

partners. The depth with which he engages the nature of the Trinity and Christology, especially the role of the Spirit within these categories, indicates something particular about how Open Theism ought to be comprehended. The inclusion of the Spirit constitutes a theological distinctive within Pinnock's work, as, compared to the other authors under consideration, he is the only author to develop the role of the Spirit within Open thought, which in turn brings something novel to the relational concept of God.

2.2. John Sanders: God as the Divine Risk-Taker

2.2.1 Critique of Classical Theism

One of the key criticisms levelled by Open Theists against the majority 'Classical' tradition has been how God, possessing classical attributes, can be genuinely responsive towards creation if they are applied consistently and holistically. A major point of contention for Sanders is how the traditional divine characteristics (primarily impassibility, immutability and timelessness) can account for the strong relational motif within the Bible, which includes God's experiential-emotive character and the risk-model of providence.³⁰⁹ Sanders argues that the discordant descriptions of God arose because of the 'Classical-Biblical synthesis', which witnessed the dual development of Christian thought from both biblical and Hellenistic philosophical sources.³¹⁰ The adoption of Greek philosophy as an epistemological foundation was largely inevitable, due to the intellectual and cultural milieu in which the Early Fathers wrote. Thinkers such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus and Tertullian each adopted and adapted facets of classical thought which provided invaluable impetus for the

³⁰⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 140.

³¹⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 140-72. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 165-7. Sanders, *HC*, pp. 59-100, esp. 59-60 and 100. J. Sander, 'Reducing God to Human Proportions', in Porter & Cross, *Semper*, pp. 111-26, esp. 116-8 and 120-5. See also, H. P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971). G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1975).

construction of early Christian theology.³¹¹ Despite the differing ways in which the Fathers drew from earlier philosophy and modified some of the concepts, there remained a constant tension between the relational/historical portrayal of God within the Bible and the immutable/impassable conceptions associated with God inherent within philosophical thought.³¹² This tension reached its climax in Augustine, who under the influence of Neo-Platonic thought, subsumed relational categories under Hellenistic concepts, especially immutability.³¹³ Consequently, because of Augustine's 'axiomatic' influence upon Western Christianity, there has been constant hermeneutical and theological support for the 'Classical' doctrine of God, which has had a tremendous bearing upon the interpretation of love and divine relationality.³¹⁴

2.2.2 Conceptual Metaphors

In an attempt to redress this imbalance, Sanders argues that a correct reading of divine love and relationship should rightfully stand at the fore of Christianity.³¹⁵ In addition to aspects of the Christian tradition which have contributed important insights concerning God's

³¹¹ Sanders, *HC*, pp. 72-6. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 140-1.

³¹² In *GWR*, Sanders acknowledges that his earlier work on the Early Fathers caricatured and generalised the manner in which divine categories, especially impassibility, were presented. In responding to P. Gavriluk's work on the Patristic Fathers (*The Suffering of the Impassable God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).). Sanders acknowledges that the divine categories, have possessed a range of meanings and interpretations within the Church Tradition at different times, and cannot be reduced to one given meaning (*GWR*, pp. 140-1, 146 and 315). See also, Hall and Sanders, *Does God Have a Future*, pp. 118-9. J. Sanders, 'The Early Church Fathers on Hellenism and Impassibility', <http://opentheism.info/information/early-church-fathers-hellenism-impassibility/> (accessed 18/08/14).

³¹³ Sanders, *HC*, pp. 80-5, esp. 80 and 85. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 170-1. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 149-50.

³¹⁴ Sanders, *HC*, pp. 86-96. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 149-53. For further support on the 'axiomatic' influence of Augustine on Western Christianity and the 'Classical' synthesis in his writings, see, J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 296. C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

³¹⁵ Sanders acknowledges that other theologians present love as being vital to understanding God, but has difficulty with how love is defined, especially when it is impaired by 'Classical' terms. See Sanders critique of Louis Berkof's definition of love (L. Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 71. Sanders, *HC*, pp. 96).

relational being,³¹⁶ there is the need to return to biblical sources which speak of God's character and which are not dependent upon a hermeneutic shaped by a Classical metaphysic.³¹⁷ The import of the hermeneutical issue becomes evident when differing reading strategies are employed within the Openness debate in determining what can and cannot be said about God (particularly the use of anthropomorphisms and metaphors). Responding to his critics, Sanders states that the difference among theologians concerning how biblical authors use and apply both anthropomorphisms and metaphors significantly impacts how accurately we can 'map' God's nature.³¹⁸ Critical of the manner in which metaphors have often been reduced to over-simplified 'literal-figurative' descriptors and how anthropomorphic language has largely been relegated to mere 'lispings' (especially in the Reformed tradition), Sanders states that instead, such language should be accepted as 'reality depicting'.³¹⁹ This is not a call to a simple biblical literalism, but rather an appreciation of how biblical authors often manifest meaning through 'conceptual metaphors' – metaphors which 'have complex structures that regulate the very way we understand some aspect of our experience'.³²⁰ This has the effect that 'the portraits of God in Scripture are *conceptual metaphors* which enable us to conceptualize...our experience of God in terms of concrete

³¹⁶ The Cappadocian Fathers developed their Trinitarian theology along social/relational lines by defining the divine essence in terms of a related personhood and their soteriology through the relatedness of the Trinity to creation. Sanders, *HC*, pp. 78. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 147-9.

³¹⁷ Sanders, like many Open Theists, adopts a modified version of the 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral' as the methodological framework for constructing/evaluating theology. Consequently, the Bible is the principle authority, against which tradition, conceptual intelligibility and experiential criteria are measured (Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 30-3). For the importance of 'tradition' within the theological method, see also, J. Sanders, 'Responses to Paul Helm "Classical Calvinist Doctrine of God": Response by John Sanders', in Ware, *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God*, pp. 58-70, esp. 59.

³¹⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 18-30. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 223-4.

³¹⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 18, 22-3 and 30. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future*, pp. 55-60.

³²⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 20. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 224. For more on 'conceptual metaphor', see also, G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). G. Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', in A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 202-51. Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

events or objects', which enables us to derive certain conceptions of God.³²¹ In appreciating the varied *non-literal*, yet essentially descriptive medium of language within the biblical text,³²² Sanders states that what is required is a deeper appreciation of how and what conceptual metaphors reveal, how they are used within various traditions, and ultimately, how they form a coherent and accumulative understanding of God from within the entire biblical witness.³²³ As was noted above, the 'watershed' issue for Sanders in Christian theology is whether or not God can be affected by and responsive to humanity and subsequently, what this says about God's nature.³²⁴ In appropriating a biblical reading around this issue, it is possible, using historical and metaphorical hermeneutics, to construct a picture of God which challenges the Classical depiction by introducing and emphasising the divine characteristics of openness, relationality, vulnerability and risk.³²⁵

2.2.3 Social Trinitarianism

For Sanders, God's essential ontology cannot be separated from how He relates to the world, which draws a parallel with Rahner's famous axiom concerning the economic and immanent Trinity, as 'God with us (*quoad nos*) is who God is (*in se*)'.³²⁶ Therefore, there is a strong inner-coherence between the 'Social Trinity', incarnation and divine acts within the biblical account which define the nature of the Godhead (hence the significance of applying conceptual metaphors within biblical readings). In Sanders' writings, this complex overlapping nexus draws us into the very essence of understanding who God is, albeit, in a partial

³²¹ Sanders, *DPOG*, p. 224.

³²² Sanders rejects the simple manner in which the term 'literal' has often been employed, as it fails to take seriously the manner in which much language and epistemology is formed through metaphors, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 22-3. See also, J. Sanders 'Theological Muscle-Flexing: How Human Embodiment Shapes Discourse about God', in Oord, *Creation Made Free*, pp. 219-36, esp. 219-27 and 232-6.

³²³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 26-7 and 30.

³²⁴ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 200.

³²⁵ Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 168-9.

³²⁶ Sanders, *Reducing God*, pp. 119.

way.³²⁷ At the very heart of the Godhead stands the essential Trinitarian ontology. The Cappadocian notion of the inherent relatedness within the Trinity reveals that Father, Son and Holy Spirit have been everlastingly united through *perichoretic* love, fellowship and communion. Thus, when considering the nature of the Godhead, what should constantly stand at the fore is that '[r]elationality is an *essential* aspect of God'.³²⁸ The relational component of Sanders' theology is not solely dependent upon a theology of retrieval by appealing to the Cappadocians, as the biblical appeal to the Incarnation also offers important insights into the God's being.³²⁹ When asserting that, 'the God who comes to us in Jesus is the real God', it follows that 'we must take the divine disclosure in Jesus as the way God is unless we have good reasons for doing otherwise'.³³⁰ In Jesus, we note that the table fellowship with sinners, His association with the poor and women and His willingness to suffer through undertaking death are all manifestations of divine love.³³¹ Through all the hardships of rejection, rapprochements and death suffered by Jesus, we clearly note that, '[t]he kenosis of the Son is in harmony with the character of God'.³³²

2.2.4 Divine Love as Risk

The picture of God that Sanders' builds around the notion of the Trinity and incarnation resonates with depictions of God from the OT. Again, the central feature of God's activity throughout the OT in his dealings with Israel is that of *love*.³³³ This is a love which opens God up to suffering and risk, as 'God sovereignly makes himself vulnerable because he

³²⁷ Sanders, *Reducing God*, pp. 119.

³²⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 177.

³²⁹ For an overview of theologies of 'Retrieval' see, J. Webster, 'Theologies of Retrieval', in Webster & Tanner & Torrance, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, pp. 583-99.

³³⁰ Sanders, *Reducing God*, pp. 119.

³³¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 177-82.

³³² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 180.

³³³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 70.

cares for his creatures and gets involved with them'.³³⁴ In a love that is directed toward the best interest of the beloved, important familial metaphors are applied to demonstrate the extent and depth of God's love (Ex. 4:22, Deut. 1:31, Is. 49:15, Jer. 2:2 and Hos. 3 and 4). This love is exemplified in the book of Hosea when God is portrayed as the humiliated husband of an unfaithful wife. Despite the anguish experienced through his wife turning to prostitution, God as the faithful and loving husband, foregoes retribution and shame to seek the restoration with his beloved.³³⁵ This act of God reveals the true heart and essence of the divine. Therefore, through a combination of varied biblical readings (utilising a range of conceptual metaphors and God's interactions with Israel including the life of Jesus), alongside the development of Church teachings concerning the Trinity and incarnation, we begin to view God in a wholly different manner from the abstract Hellenistic categories as laid out above. There is willingness in God to allow human freedom and decisions to not only impact the Trinitarian life, but also to respond to those situations in love and, at times, humiliation. For Sanders, this is the divine essence which leads to the doctrine of the openness of God, as through love and the creation of, and, commitment to, human freedom, God invites humanity to co-create reality with him and share within the Trinitarian reality.³³⁶

2.2.5 Summary

In drawing together the distinctive aspects of Sanders model of Open Theism we note that the themes of risk, vulnerability and love stand very much at the fore. Although these are shared among each of the authors considered elsewhere in this chapter, the stress which Sanders places on these themes marks them out as a particular distinctive within his writings.

³³⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp.70.

³³⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp.70.

³³⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 177-8.

Sanders goes to lengths to demonstrate the vulnerable nature of God's love which culminates in the risk undertaken by God in establishing a loving ontology which encompasses all of creation. Sanders' development of conceptual metaphors within the biblical narrative, which accurately depict reality, further reinforces the vulnerability which God experiences, as through such language we are drawn into a new awareness of God's life and being. Hence, the link which Sanders draws between God's loving nature and how He subsequently operates within the world presents a clear and consistent message of the inherent dangers of the divine love project, but also its ultimate goal.

2.3 William Hasker: A Philosophical Perspective

As was noted throughout Chapter One, William Hasker has supplied much philosophical support for the Open view of God, and should be rightly acknowledged as a lead proponent in developing Open thought. The philosophical context in which he writes shapes both the structure and content of his writing, which differs somewhat from the theological perspectives of Pinnock and Sanders which have been the focus of the chapter thus far. Therefore, the tone and emphasis shifts somewhat in Hasker's writing, as his focus as a philosopher is not the same as a biblical critic or constructive theologian, but rather to, 'focus primarily on clarifying the meanings of the respective positions, and on determining their logical implications'³³⁷. What is important to note however, is that in his discussions concerning God's nature, Hasker follows the Open Theist desire to remain biblically grounded in his reading, understanding and support of the Godhead. In light of this, we will work through Hasker's categories of divine openness to the Trinity, so as to move from the generalities of God's open nature towards a more specific understanding of the Triune

³³⁷ Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 125.

Godhead.

2.3.1 Process and Open Theism

In much Open thought there is a persistent tension between both Classical and Process theology and this is evident in Hasker's portrayal of who God is. Hasker strongly denies the Classical understandings of omniscience, impassibility and timelessness, which he argues leads to a removed, distant and dispassionate God when applied *consistently*.³³⁸ Hasker is equally critical of the Process understanding of God, although he concedes that there are areas of overlap between Process and Open thought.³³⁹ Just as the Classical construal of the Godhead can lead to a belief in, and worship of, a static and distant being, Hasker's concern of the Process depiction of God can lead to an understanding in which God is drastically restricted in acting in the world. Consequently, he argues that there are three important correctives which are needed to the Process view. The first of these is that 'God Creates', which demonstrates not only God's everlasting nature but also the 'one-sided ontological dependence of the universe on God' which is required in the efficaciousness for salvation (Is. 45:18).³⁴⁰ Secondly, through God's personal agency, including the work of the Holy Spirit, we perceive that 'God Acts'.³⁴¹ By means of communicating 'insights and understanding' to his people either through responses to prayer or divine manifestations of 'signs and wonders' (which can manifest in a variety of ways), God ensures the development and growth of

³³⁸ W. Hasker, 'An Adequate God', in Cobb & Pinnock, *SFAAG*, pp. 215-45. Hasker, *PP*, pp 128-133. W. Hasker, *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 97-100 and 106. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 205-6. and Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 144-85.

³³⁹ Among the similarities between Open and Process theology Hasker mentions that God is a relational being who is emotively affected by the actions of his creatures and that humans possess libertarian freedom, Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 216-8.

³⁴⁰ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 218-228. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 207-8.

³⁴¹ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 228-41.

spiritual maturity.³⁴² Finally, Hasker argues that ‘God Communicates’ through ways which are ‘specific and definite’. The ‘specific’ dimension ensures that a particular person/group is communicated to at a specific time and place, and that there is a ‘definite’ message in that instance (*i.e.* Paul’s conversion - Acts 9).³⁴³

By arriving at a midway point between Classical and Process theology, Hasker asserts that God is both emotively related to, and active within, the world.³⁴⁴ When this understanding is combined with God’s decision to make human actions meaningful in the co-creation of reality with libertarian freedom, we arrive at a juncture in Hasker’s thinking which encapsulates many of the central tenets of Open Theism. We are, therefore, confronted with a deity whose actions derive from love and who purposefully allows meaningful interaction to arise from the fact that He is open to His creatures, His creation and His own future.³⁴⁵ However, *contra* Process thought, God is not restricted metaphysically within the world to mere persuasion³⁴⁶. Although persuasion is His preferred means of communication and action, God can and does act coercively within the world in line with His purposes, which can include manifestations of power as witnessed to in the biblical account.³⁴⁷ However, it is not God’s manifestations of power which speaks most of who God is, nor what he is like,

³⁴² Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 228-30. It is worth noting that Hasker defends ‘signs and wonders’ arguing that scientific and philosophical arguments for the impossibility of these is ‘an Enlightenment myth we need to rid ourselves of’. Rather, science is a discipline which accounts for how natural entities relate and interact with other natural entities, therefore, ‘it cannot speak to the issue of what happens when a supernatural power (such as God) intervenes in the natural order’ (pp. 230).

³⁴³ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 242.

³⁴⁴ Hasker states that in relation to the emotive nature of God, ‘We need not deny that there is in these descriptions a measure of anthropomorphism; nevertheless, free-will theism will take them as an essentially truthful rendition of the inner life of God’ (Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 134). See also, Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 97, 106, and 159 and *TGE*, pp. 205-6.

³⁴⁵ Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 97.

³⁴⁶ See, D. R. Griffin, ‘Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to Classical Free Will Theism’, in Cobb & Pinnock, *SFAAG*, pp. 1-38, esp. 14-7 and 27-32. C. Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

³⁴⁷ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 41. Hasker, ‘In Response to David Ray Griffin’, in Cobb & Pinnock, *SFAAG*, pp. 39-52, esp. 40-1.

according to Hasker. For this, one must understand the nature of love as described in 1 Jn 4:8-9, of which he writes, ‘God’s love for human beings is not presented as a self-evident fact but as a stunning revelation, inseparable from the revelation in Jesus Christ’.³⁴⁸

2.3.2 Establishing a Social Trinitarianism

Here we begin to see the substantive character and content of God’s person emerge, as Hasker develops his view of the Openness of God alongside a very specific understanding of the Trinity. The Trinity is a central feature of Hasker’s portrayal of the divine, as he remarks that, ‘[f]or Christians, the full and final answer to the question, “What is God?” can only be, “God is the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”’³⁴⁹ In conceding that the NT does not possess a fully articulated doctrine of the Trinity, Hasker argues that the understanding of the Trinity arises from a combination and development of Church teaching and tradition, NT passages, but most importantly, from the revelation in Jesus.³⁵⁰ As he notes, Jesus is the ‘departure’ for any theology of the Trinity, as the relationship expressed in the Gospels between the Father and the Son is grounded within a filial relationship within a Trinitarian framework.³⁵¹ In the expansion of Hasker’s Trinitarian thinking, he asserts that an awareness of first century Jewish monotheism is important for the growth of Christological and Trinitarian thought. This raises the subsequent question of how monotheism ought to be understood and for this he draws support from T. McCall.³⁵² Hasker agrees with McCall that Christian monotheism ought to be understood and situated within the original context of ‘Second Temple’ Judaism, and not drawn aside by later Islamic and Jewish interpretations of

³⁴⁸ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 172. See also, W. Hasker, *Metaphysics & The Tri-Personal God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 7.

³⁴⁹ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 258.

³⁵⁰ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 7-8.

³⁵¹ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 7. Hasker, *Response*, pp. 51. W. Hasker, ‘Tri-Unity’, *Journal of Religion*, 50:1, 1970, pp. 1-32.

³⁵² T. McCall, *Which Trinity, Whose Monotheism?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

monotheism, which were, to an extent, shaped by Christian notions of the Trinity and Incarnation.³⁵³ However, this understanding only raises the further question of how Christian monotheism developed from Jewish Second Temple monotheism into the worship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hasker notes that for Jews in the Second Temple period, they could only and exclusively worship Yahweh, as to do otherwise would be to commit the gravest of sins.³⁵⁴ Yet, in following Hurtado, Hasker accepts that there existed at this time the veneration of great Jewish heroes, such as, Abraham, Moses and Enoch, which Hasker argues is ‘important for our understanding of the origins of Christianity’, as this may have allowed the first Christians to come to terms with their worship of Jesus.³⁵⁵ This is in accord with the High Christology found in the Pauline writings, especially the *ho kyrios*, which was normally reserved for God, being applied to Jesus (Rom. 10:13, 1 Cor. 1:31, 8:4-5 and 10:26 and 2 Cor. 10:17) and the early hymn included in Phil. 2:6-11. All of which helps to account for an early understanding of the high Christology as expressed by the early Church.³⁵⁶ However, Hasker is keenly aware that this raises the difficult question of how the Trinity is constituted. The question still remains in what manner do the members of the Trinity share in the same divinity and how has the Church grappled with such a concept. In response, Hasker argues that a return to ‘Pro-Nicene’ theologians of the fourth and fifth century, especially the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine, is essential in setting the parameters for acceptable parameters in Trinitarian theology.³⁵⁷ Hasker notes the difficulties of applying a general or unified view of the Trinity from this time, as little or no unity existed, especially in relation to the terms such

³⁵³ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 177-8. McCall, *Which Trinity*, pp. 86

³⁵⁴ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 178.

³⁵⁵ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 178-9. L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 51.

³⁵⁶ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 178-82.

³⁵⁷ Hasker borrows the term ‘Pro-Nicene’ from L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

as *ousia*, *physis*, *substantia* or *essentia*. The same is true of the term *homoousion*, which rather than being clearly defined theologically, was adopted as a means of excluding Arian theology.³⁵⁸ Rather, Hasker, again following Ayer, prefers to speak of general criteria which applies to the ‘Pro-Nicene’ Trinitarians, although the specifics between them differed somewhat. The three main Trinitarian criteria for the ‘Pro-Nicenes’, are (1) ‘A clear version of the person and nature distinction, entailing the principle that whatever is predicated of the divine nature is predicated of the three persons equally and understood to be one’, (2) ‘clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son occurs within the unitary and incomprehensible divine being’, and, (3) ‘clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably’.³⁵⁹

2.3.3 Defining Social Trinitarianism

There are also some philosophical, theological and hermeneutical difficulties for Hasker in returning to the ‘Pro-Nicene’ Trinitarians alongside the semantic ambiguities regarding the Trinity, as the world-views of these authors are substantially different from our own. Hence, there is a need to supplement their thinking with philosophical concepts of our day which can help us develop the work which they began.³⁶⁰ Yet, this does not negate their central contribution, which for Hasker supports the notion of a ‘Social Trinitarianism’.³⁶¹ Influential upon Hasker’s model of the ‘Social Trinity’ are Carl Mosser and Cornelius Plantinga who stress not only the personhood of each member of the Trinity, but also the

³⁵⁸Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 50.

³⁵⁹Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 15.

³⁶⁰ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 16-7 and 168-9.

³⁶¹ Hasker states of ‘Social Trinitarianism’, ‘In part, the movement can be seen as a reaction against the widespread claims that the ancient terms *hypostasis* and *persona* are not properly seen as equivalent to ‘person’ as we understand the notion today’ (Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 18).

shared, mutual and *perichoretic* relationship between each of the members.³⁶² Though this understanding allows for ‘Persons’ within the Trinity (which requires distinct centres of love, knowledge, will and action) and accounts for the ‘threeness’ within the Triune God, there still remains the issue of how Christianity constitutes a monotheism.³⁶³ Here Hasker turns from the traditional language of *homoousion* and *ousia* and argues that the contemporary philosophical notion of a ‘trope’ (‘an instance of a property... is not sharable, at least not in the way in which universals are shareable’) better explains how God can share one unified essence.³⁶⁴ This then retains both the essential divine unity, ‘community of Persons’ and the monotheistic assertions within ‘Social Trinitarianism’.³⁶⁵

2.3.4 Summary

When considering the distinctive position of William Hasker in his contribution to Open thought, there is little surprise that its overall shape is one of a philosophical construction. Hasker has been instrumental (though not alone) in furnishing Open Theism with the much needed philosophical support in its emerging position between both Classical and Process Theism. As such, his work takes seriously the polemical and rhetorical requirements of engaging these viewpoints and unearthing in both that which should be affirmed and critiqued. This necessarily includes a high level of philosophical sophistication as is evident in

³⁶² Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 20-5 and 257. Hasker draws heavily from Plantinga’s work, by often repeating and applying Plantinga’s Social Trinitarian criteria, that, ‘The theory must have Father, Son and Spirit as distinct centers of knowledge, will, love, and action’. C. Plantinga Jr., ‘Social Trinity and Tritheism’, in R. J. Feenstra & C. Plantinga (eds.), *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 21-47, esp. 22. See also, C. Mosser, ‘Fully Social Trinitarianism’, in T. McCall & M. C. Rea (eds.), *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 131-50, esp. 133-4.

³⁶³ Leftow raises the oft repeated adage that the difficulty with Social Trinitarianism is that it is open to accusations of both ‘Tri-Theism’ and that it cannot constitute a strict monotheism, B. Leftow, ‘Anti Social Trinitarianism’, in, McCall & Rea, *Philosophical*, pp. 52-88. For a development of this discussion see, W. Hasker, ‘Objections to Social Trinitarianism’, *Religious Studies* 46: 1, 2010, pp. 421-39. B. Leftow, ‘Two Trinities: Reply to Hasker’, *Religious Studies* 46: 4, 2010, pp. 441-7.

³⁶⁴ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 51-2, 226 and 250.

³⁶⁵ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 196.

his dialogues with both Process theologians and his debates surrounding the Trinity. However, Hasker is not content to situate his writings solely in the sphere of abstract thought. He emphasises the need to engage biblically within his corpus, and in the case of his work concerning the Trinity and Christology, he expresses a willingness to extend his philosophical narrative into historical and theological discussions to provide a wider context. Consequently, we are provided with an engaging and philosophically robust body of work and one which contributes significantly to the growth of Open Theism.

2.4 Thomas J. Oord: Essential *Kenosis*

2.4.1 A Process Metaphysic, Not a Process Theology

In contrast to the previous authors in this chapter who have each critiqued and rejected the major tenets of Process theology and its supporting philosophical metaphysic, the next theologian under consideration, Thomas Oord, embraces many facets of Process thought within his work. Oord adopts and develops strong Process themes within his writings and utilises a variety of Process sources and authors to develop his understanding of theology in general and Open theology in particular. For Oord, Process metaphysics provide helpful solutions and insights for many of the challenges and questions which face theology today. Topics such as the relationship between science and religion, how love should be defined and applied within theology, creation, how God interacts with the world and the problem of evil can each make important gains by drawing from particular notions within Process theology and philosophy.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁶ B. P. Stone & T. J. Oord (eds.), *Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001). T. J. Oord, 'Agape, Altruism, and Well-Being: Full-Orbed Love for the Science and Religion Love Dialogue', *Contemporary Philosophy: Philosophic Research, Analyses and Resolution*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 and 2, 2002, pp. 39-44. T. J. Oord, 'The Love Racket: Defining Love and *Agape* for the Love-and-Science Research Program', *Zygon*, 40:4, 2005, pp. 919-38. T. J. Oord, 'Process Answers to Love Questions', in T. J. Oord (ed.), *The Many Facets of Love: Philosophical Explorations* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 20-30. T. J. Oord, 'Championing Divine

2.4.2 The Centrality of the Uncontrolling Love of God

In addition to the Process metaphysic which frame important aspects of Oord's writings, there is one dominant theme which stands at the very core of his work and operates as a hermeneutical key for how all other theological topics are subsequently defined; love. Oord endorses the assertion made in Chapter 1, that God's essential and necessary nature *is* love (1 Jn. 4:18 and Jn 3:16) and therefore is required to 'take theology's center stage'.³⁶⁷ However, as Oord states, defining love is no simple matter. Although he argues that constructing an adequate definition of love for theology should derive from a 'biblically orientated perspective', difficulties arise from this as the Bible does not provide a singular definition of love. The meanings applied to the various Greek 'love' words (*agape*, *philia* and *eros*) have often been interpreted in wide-ranging, incompatible and contradictory ways and even when the same 'love' word is used within the Bible, different biblical authors apply variant meanings.³⁶⁸ Subsequently, Oord argues that when constructing a meaning for love from biblical sources, what is required is a definition which arises from and is consistent with, 'the broad witness to love especially the witness to love in Jesus Christ and the love expressed by the church'.³⁶⁹ In addition to the biblical material pertaining to love, Oord argues that due to the inherent difficulties of defining love, what is also necessary is that theologians are informed by the insights from love studies in wider disciplines, such as biological and social

Love and Solving the Problem of Evil', in Oord, *The Many Facets of Love*, pp. 59-65. T. J. Oord, 'An Open Theology Doctrine of Creation and Solution to the Problem of Evil', in T. J. Oord (ed.), *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), pp. 28-52. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 127-9. T. J. Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), pp. 19, 22, 151-61, 163, 181-2 and 193-6.

³⁶⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 1-4. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189 and 206. Oord, *Championing Divine Love*, pp. 61. Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 162.

³⁶⁸ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 9-15. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 35-6. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 28. Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 24-5. Oord, *The Love Racket*, pp. 919-38. Oord is particularly critical of the manner by which Anders Nygren has defined love (especially *agape*) and the lasting influence this has held within theological circles, Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 24-5. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 33-56, esp. 39-56.

³⁶⁹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17.

sciences, cosmology and philosophy.³⁷⁰ The resulting inter-disciplinary study leads Oord to the definition that, ‘to love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to God and others, to promote overall well-being’.³⁷¹ In developing such an understanding, Oord argues that this definition holds a number of advantages over other models. Primarily, it allows for and sustains differing expressions of love (*agape*, *philia* and *eros*), each with their own specific characteristics which contribute to love’s wider meaning, without prioritising one dominant term which subsumes all others.³⁷² This in turn allows for a much broader and richer understanding of how God loves. God is no longer restricted to love in one particular way (as Nygren asserts through his interpretation of *agape*), but rather manifests his love through multiple expressions within a ‘full-orbed love’ to which all of creation are called to co-exist in and co-operate with.³⁷³

2.4.3 Essential Kenosis

By combining the assertion that God is love with the definition of love outlined above, Oord develops a model of God entitled *Essential Kenosis* which charts how the divine love manifests within the personhood of God and serves as the primary nature. Within this model, Oord not only defines the nature and personhood of God in terms of love, but also develops the major themes of creation, providence and the problem of evil from this perspective. As the title suggests, Oord develops *Essential Kenosis* from Philippians 2 which

³⁷⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 65-172.

³⁷¹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17. See also, Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 15.

³⁷² Oord argues that each term of love contributes to the wider understanding, whilst expressing something distinct, essential and unique. *Agape* is defined as, ‘acting intentionally, in response to God and others, to promote overall well-being in response to that which produces ill being’ (*NOL*, pp. 56), *eros* as, ‘acting intentionally, in response to God and others, to promote overall well-being by affirming and/or seeking to enhance value’ (*NOL*, pp. 83) and *philia* which is ‘acting intentionally, in response to God and others, to promote overall well-being by seeking to establish deeper levels of cooperative friendship. *Philia* co-labors for good’ (*NOL*, pp. 115). See also, Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 32-52.

³⁷³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 52 and 121. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189-200.

relates to the notion of divine ‘self-giving’, which, ‘tells us something profound about Jesus as the loving God-human’, and consequently, the Godhead.³⁷⁴ Oord observes that the doctrine of *kenosis* has become increasingly influential in theology not only as a Christological category, but as a means of comprehending God more broadly.³⁷⁵ When read in this light, Oord wishes to highlight the ‘persuasive and vulnerable’ aspect of God’s power and love, which draws him to the conclusion that, ‘[t]his interpretation seems more fruitful overall than discussions about what might be communicated between Christ’s two natures, although I think such discussions have their place. My interpretation also helps us consider God’s essential power, in light of God’s loving nature and orientation toward loving creation. Consequently, I refer to kenosis to talk not so much about how God became incarnate as to understand God’s nature in light of incarnate love’.³⁷⁶

2.4.4 *Kenosis as Necessary Love*

In addition to the resurgence of kenotic theology in Christology and constructive theology more generally, Oord highlights the manner in which it has also become a significant motif within the science/religion domain. Throughout his engagement with the sciences, Oord acknowledges his indebtedness to John Polkinghorne, Nancy Murphy and George Ellis. These three authors have not only impacted Oord’s conception regarding the relationship between science and religion and how the two mutually correlate, but also, how *kenosis* operates as an important motif within the construction of scientific theology.³⁷⁷ However, where Oord

³⁷⁴ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 118 and 122.

³⁷⁵ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, pp. 155-6. See also, Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, pp. 6-8. C. S. Evans, ‘Introduction’, in C. S. Evans (ed.), *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, pp. 1-24. R. J. Feenstra, ‘A Kenotic Christological Method for Understanding the Divine Attributes’, in Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, pp. 139-64.

³⁷⁶ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, pp. 156.

³⁷⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 122-30. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 139-55, 189-90, and 203-12. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 34 and 49-50. Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 27. T. J. Oord (ed.), *The Polkinghorne Reader: Science, Faith and the Search for Meaning* (London: SPCK, 2010). See also, J. C. Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*:

significantly differs from Polkinghorne, Murphy and Ellis is how the *kenotic* self-giving manifests itself. According to Polkinghorne and other theologians including Pinnock and Moltmann, God's *kenotic* 'self-giving' is regulated through a divine 'voluntary self-limitation', which Oord argues results in a position that God's love for the world arises from a choice, rather than integral to His nature which cannot not be manifested, and also that evil subsequently arose as a consequence from that divine decision as He allowed it to occur.³⁷⁸ These aspects are fundamentally problematic for Oord as it neither guarantees God's love for the world as it is based upon an arbitrary decision which could theoretically be reversed, and also, that God is culpable for not preventing evil as He can become 'un-self-limited' and intervene to prevent evil (the repercussions of which are spelled out below in chapter 3).³⁷⁹ Neither of the consequences of voluntary self-limitation are acceptable for Oord, who posits that they essentially contradict the loving nature of God. Rather, God's loving nature is something which needs to be understood as 'necessary' and 'essential' to God's very being, meaning that 'Essential Kenosis theology affirms *involuntary* divine self-limitation'.³⁸⁰

In developing the notion of God's *involuntary* self-limitation, Oord states that in line with 1 John 4:18, God is limited by virtue of his own loving nature.³⁸¹ This subsequently holds the significant emphasis that 'God cannot not love'.³⁸² Therefore, God's very being is defined by, and needs explicating in terms of love. Oord is careful to state that there are no

Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). J. Polkinghorne, 'Kenotic Creation and Divine Action', in J. Polkinghorne (ed.), *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2001), pp. 90-106. N. Murphy & G. F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). G. F. R. Ellis, 'Kenosis as a Unifying Theme for Life and Cosmology', in Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, pp. 107-26.

³⁷⁸ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 123-4. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 203-5. Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 157-9.

³⁷⁹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 124. Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 27. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 49-50.

³⁸⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 125 (italics in the original). Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189.

³⁸¹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 125. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50.

³⁸² Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50. Oord, *Championing Divine Love*, pp. 61.

external factors which limits God's being/essence, arguing instead that love is an internal ontology which places limitations upon how God relates within the created order.³⁸³ This aspect of God's being is demonstrated within *kenotic* theology, as Oord argues that *kenosis* involves a necessary and constant expression of self-giving love, as 'God gives, self-empties, and inspires, in the sense reflected in the Philippians passage'.³⁸⁴ God is by nature a self-giving and loving being who 'could no more fail to give than fail to exist'.³⁸⁵

2.4.5 The Implications of God's Necessary Love

Such an assertion carries with it significant implications. The first of which is that God's nature is 'fixed' and can never alter from that of love.³⁸⁶ God has eternally promoted overall well-being within a 'full-orbed love' and is subsequently unable to withdraw love or fail to provide the conditions and freedom required for love to exist and flourish.³⁸⁷ Following from this, is the assertion that God, on account of His loving ontology, is necessarily and essentially related to all that exists.³⁸⁸ In contrast to some Process assertions that God is contingent upon a created order,³⁸⁹ Oord affirms God's necessary existence separate from a created order (thus affirming divine aseity which is absent in much Process thought), but supports the metaphysical structures of Whitehead and Hartshorne of the essential relatedness of all things.³⁹⁰ By adopting Whitehead's notion of 'internal' and 'external' relations which

³⁸³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 125. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50.

³⁸⁴ Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50.

³⁸⁵ Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50.

³⁸⁶ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 192.

³⁸⁷ Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 50.

³⁸⁸ T. J. Oord, 'Love as a Methodological and Metaphysical Source for Science and Theology', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45:1, 2010, pp. 81-107. Oord, *Championing Divine Love*, pp. 61.

³⁸⁹ See, D. R. Griffin, 'Creation Out of Nothing, Creation Out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil', in S. T. Davis (ed.), *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 101-19, esp. 114.

³⁹⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 108. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 208. Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 25-6. See also, A.N. Whitehead (corrected edition by D. R. Griffin & D. W. Sherburne), *Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), pp. 22, 50 and 59. C. Hartshorne, 'Whitehead's Idea of God', in P. A. Schlipp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, 2nd ed. (New York: Tudor, 1951), pp. 527.

express the influential impact of all organisms in ‘becoming’, Oord agrees with Hartshorne regarding the ‘social nature of reality’ which depends upon mutual inter-relatedness.³⁹¹ In this respect, God is not separate from the causal and relational nexus which reality comprises, ensuring God’s presence and love to all creatures at all times.³⁹² One of the significant factors which Oord develops from this, which has a bearing upon his providential thinking below, is that God is essentially and necessarily related to all of creation, and not just necessarily related within the Trinity, as some theologians have proposed.³⁹³ The notion of divine relatedness is further supported and developed by Oord’s model of panentheism which he terms *theocentricism*.³⁹⁴ Due to the nature of divine love and relatedness, God, as Spirit (Joel 2:28 and Acts 17:28), is omnipresent, ensuring that ‘nothing exists that is not graced by the presence of deity’.³⁹⁵ Consequently, God as ‘omni-immanent’ can and should be readily affirmed, though the assertion of God’s ‘omni-immanence’ must be rejected, as the distinction between creator and created must be maintained through a robust understanding of divine transcendence.³⁹⁶

2.4.6 Divine Love as Persuasion

In stating that God is necessarily related to the created order in love, Oord emphasises that God is free to love in a number of ways depending upon the given context. There can be

³⁹¹ Oord, *Process Answers*, pp. 26.

³⁹² Oord builds this assertion from Whitehead’s comment that, ‘God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification’ (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 343). Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 193. The idea of divine relatedness stands at the heart of the developments within ‘Relational Theology’, which challenges many of the assumptions of ‘Classical Theism’ and theologies which promote notions of dominance and oppression in favour of using divine love and relationship as primary motifs to describe God. T. J. Oord, ‘What is Relational Theology’, in B. Montgomery & T. J. Oord & K. Winslow, *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction* (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 2012), pp. 1-4.

³⁹³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 131-2.

³⁹⁴ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 193.

³⁹⁵ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 192. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 118 and 146.

³⁹⁶ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 192.

no external pressures applied to God which can cause Him to change His essential nature, but the innate relationality of God will always respond in love to promote overall well-being in line with His own internal nature, whether that be an expression of *agape*, *philia* or *eros*.³⁹⁷ In a distinctly Process turn, Oord defines the nature of divine love within the language of persuasion and coercion which is common within Process-Relational discourses.³⁹⁸ Due to the fact that God's love provides freedom and agency, 'God cannot act coercively'.³⁹⁹ Oord defines coercion as the ability to entirely control another and act as the sufficient cause within a complex of causation.⁴⁰⁰ Oord rejects any notion of coercion within divine activity, as the perpetually self-giving God stands at odds with the any form of coercion. Rather, God's love is understood as 'all persuasive, optimally sensitive, and perfectly influential'.⁴⁰¹ Through the divine omni-presence within *theocosmocentrism*, God is continually present calling creation through persuasion to respond in love (prevenient grace), which in turn, holds important implications for the nature of divine power, which Oord argues must be understood in terms of divine love, and not *vice versa*.⁴⁰² God's power is not a forceful coercion, subsuming all under his will, but a persuasive call which builds up and encourages a reciprocal response in love.

2.4.7 Biblical Support for Essential Kenosis

In contrast to the majority of Process theologians, which Oord has often been incorrectly labelled under, Oord utilises both biblical material and traditional Christian language and concepts to express and develop his thinking. Oord acknowledges the

³⁹⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 139-40. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 190.

³⁹⁸ T. J. Oord, 'A Process Wesleyan Theodicy: Freedom, Embodiment and the Almighty God', in Stone & Oord, *Thy Nature*, pp. 193-216.

³⁹⁹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 127.

⁴⁰⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 127.

⁴⁰¹ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 193.

⁴⁰² Oord, *NOL*, pp. 127-9.

importance of the Bible as ‘the supreme love witness of and for the Christian community’ in constructing an adequate theology of love and God.⁴⁰³ The Johannine corpus is central to this project, as not only does it speak of God’s love, but also how Jesus is central to this notion as the ‘divine self-disclosure’. Although Oord admits that there is always an ambiguity present when speaking of Jesus as the ‘divine-human’, Jn. 1:1, despite its many interpretations, tells us something of the relationship within the Godhead. Jesus is ‘Emmanuel’, God with us, whose central work is to reconcile the world to God through love (2 Cor. 5:19). This is most evident in the crucifixion which demonstrates the extent of God’s love and how it is shaped by creaturely interaction with the divine.⁴⁰⁴ In addition to the Christological clarification, Oord also adopts Trinitarian and Pneumatological language in expressing God’s loving activity and nature. We previously noted that Oord accepts that intratrinitarian love is part of God’s essential and necessary nature as this reflects the biblical witness, and this is a helpful model for understanding how certain aspects of love should be followed in the created realm.⁴⁰⁵ This is further supported by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is ever present within the world promoting love and well-being.⁴⁰⁶

2.4.8 Summary

In outlining the theological and philosophical distinctive aspects of Oord’s work, we note that in stark contrast to the former authors surveyed in this chapter, Oord is more willing to engage directly with Process ideas and develop them within an Open Theist context. In fact, it is arguable that Oord operates within a Process metaphysic without fully capitulating to a full version of Process Theology. In drawing together love as theology’s key theme

⁴⁰³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 119.

⁴⁰⁴ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 117-8.

⁴⁰⁵ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 131-2.

⁴⁰⁶ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17 and 145.

alongside the insights he develops within his *Essential Kenosis* model, we witness large areas of overlap between Oord's assertions and those propagated within Process theology.

However, it is inaccurate to describe Oord as a Process Theist as he seeks to bring Process notions into dialogue with the biblical narrative in expressing more fully, and more importantly, consistently, what it means for God to be a God of love.

2.5 Criticisms and Considerations

Having now surveyed the theological contours of the Godhead by Pinnock, Sanders, Hasker and Oord, what remains is to evaluate their contributions in preparation for the discussion of providence, salvation and eschatology in the following chapter and the wider conversation with Pentecostalism later. In doing this, there is a need to return to the methodological procedure laid out in the 'Introduction' to clarify why criticisms within a given tradition are required and also to articulate how the material can be organised and subsequently utilised. As we noted above, comparative theology consists of a complex dialectical process in which the theologian traverses between her home tradition and that of the 'other' to glean new insights which helps to (re-)evaluate the assertions and beliefs of her given community and which provides opportunities for novel constructive insights where needed. Being situated within a tradition inevitably entails a given context for understanding but also provides the catalyst for critical reflection upon the textual readings within that given context. The contributions from Clooney, Fredericks and Griffiths highlight the need for self-critical reflection as this opens oneself to the vulnerabilities within one's current reading, which allows the space for the 'other' within the dialectical process. Therefore, this section will offer a critical evaluation of the thoughts and contributions offered by our four authors, whilst simultaneously embracing Clooney and Hadot's assertion that texts possess an inherent

wisdom and worldview which are ‘inscribed’ with truth.

In what follows, the criticisms will be divided into two distinct categories: those applied to Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker and the second group directed towards Thomas Oord. The reason for this is that there is a large overlap between the former three authors whose work constitutes a broad agreement (as noted in *The Openness of God*), while we note in Oord a shift in emphasis which needs to be considered separately. At certain places in his thought, Oord actively seeks to distance himself from the former authors, and the causes for this distinction need to be considered independently. Admittedly, there are criticisms which are equally applicable to all the respective authors, but the decisive turn which Oord wishes to direct Open and Relational theology requires separate consideration.

2.5.1 The Criteria for Criticism

Nonetheless, before we proceed, it is important to establish how the criticisms are to be identified and what critical criteria will be utilised to establish them.⁴⁰⁷ Identifying these will provide a consistent and focussed appraisal of the material, both in this chapter and the next, which will help, among other things, to concentrate the reading material for later use. The criticisms will arise from three inter-related questions, each intended to clarify important aspects of the author’s work, theological motivation and thoughts, which will provide insights into where possible correctives can be applied within the later comparative component. The first of these questions is aimed at identifying what problems have led to the authors’ inquiries. This involves setting their writings within a given theological context and defining the particular theological difficulties which have prompted their given responses.⁴⁰⁸ This leads

⁴⁰⁷ In what follows, I am grateful to Professor Nicholas Adams for his insights and advice.

⁴⁰⁸ Identifying some of this material will necessarily refer back to Chapter 1 so as to avoid repeating much of the discussion laid out there.

to the second line of enquiry which identifies the questions which the respective authors have asked in relation to the problems they have highlighted. In addition to this, there is the important exploration into the questions which the authors omitted from their writings, which is important in identifying certain lacunae in their thinking which provide the possibility for further development. It is acknowledged, however, that scholars cannot raise all relevant questions in relation to their own lines of investigation, but this addition helps to explore the topics under consideration from new and varied perspectives, and which can provide important insights and impetuses for directing new theological research. The third set of questions revolve around how the authors have answered their initial enquiries. This will consider to what extent their responses have answered the problem, if their given answers provide a satisfactory solution, and what new problems arise as a consequence of their answers. Inherent within asking these questions is the acknowledgement that local answers within theology are not always applicable or extendable to all of theology. Hence, there is a need to recognise that what may work well in one given theological context may not necessarily work well in a broader theological context. It is also important to note that the aim of this section is *not* to answer the questions and criticisms which arise from this section of the thesis. Any answers which will be offered in response to the criticisms can only be formed once the full comparative method is completed and applied, which necessarily requires the reading from the Pentecostal tradition.

2.5.2 Criticisms of Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker

Beginning with the initial question outlined above, it is important to pinpoint which problems Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker identify that has led to their specific lines of enquiry. Given that the broad theological context is the establishment and development of Open

Theism, there is little need to repeat the material outlined in the previous chapter which proposes a picture of God which is both a criticism of, and a response to, the portrayal of God within Classical and Process Theism. Accepting this as a given context, with the questions which come naturally with that position (especially regarding what Open Theism is and how it is established within its own coherent structure), the identification here will instead focus upon the subsequent questions they raise in *developing* the Open position.

2.5.2.1 Social Trinitarianism

The first point to note is the desire from all three authors to remain biblically faithful in describing God. Each draw from biblical sources to depict a vision of God which is loving, responsive and open in His dealings with creation. This is important for the overall Open view of God (1.2.2) and lays important parameters for developing how God is to be comprehended. Central within this depiction is the picture of the Trinity, and one which reflects the relational concerns of the authors – Social Trinitarianism. The importance of Social Trinitarianism is raised by all three authors as a means of identifying God primarily as a personal, social and relational being which contrasts to the static image of God portrayed in Classical Theism. Positing this as the primary conception allows all other aspects of God’s divine nature to flow. In both Pinnock and Hasker’s approach to the subject of Trinity we note that their contributions tackle the subject, in part, separate from their discussions immediately relating to Open Theism. We note in Pinnock’s theology of the Holy Spirit – *The Flame of Love* – important contributions to his Trinitarian thinking, and although this is not written from a specific Open standpoint, there are strong Openness themes which run throughout and inform it. Likewise, many of Hasker’s conclusions regarding the Trinity are produced independently from his developments to Open Theism, though still remaining compatible with it. Therefore,

all three of the authors considered here raise the issue of the Trinity to address how a conception of the divine can be comprised within a personal and relational understanding of God.

Having established the broad parameters which have led to the authors enquiries regarding the Trinity, we shall now move onto the specific questions they ask and identify which questions they have omitted. The central drive among the three authors here tends towards establishing a strong link between God *in esse* and God's outworking of His love. Hasker, more so than Pinnock and Sanders, raises important questions about how the Trinity ought to be approached within contemporary philosophical theology and asks which parameters should be established in describing and developing the Trinity in modern parlance. Adopting important insights from Lewis Ayres, Hasker situates his discussion in relation to the important foundations set by the fourth century Pro-Nicene Trinitarian theologians, which, he argues, firmly places any subsequent discussion within orthodox boundaries.⁴⁰⁹ By following this line, Hasker is able to explore not only the nature of the Trinity but what benefits contemporary analytical theology can offer to the discussion. Significant in his thought is the favourable conclusion for 'Social Trinitarianism' especially in the 'trope' of divinity which is shared among all three members of the Trinity. This answer creates a context in which each of the members of the Trinity can be approached as 'persons' in their own right, though still sharing in the same divinity. With the addition of the relational concept of *perichoresis* which Hasker applies to the divine (a concept also utilised by Pinnock and Sanders), as well as all three authors drawing from Church tradition in support of the Social aspect of God, questions surrounding the relational conception of God as Trinity seem well founded.

⁴⁰⁹ See, L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theologians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

2.5.2.2 *The Trinity and Christology*

With the grounding in Social Trinitarianism serving as a framework for further discussions about the Godhead, the development of the ‘persons’ within the Trinity flows naturally from this perspective. The ‘personal’ dimension of the Trinity is reinforced when Hasker states that Jesus is the ‘departure’ for any doctrine of the Trinity and Pinnock concurs when he claims that the understanding of the Trinity ‘is historically grounded in the history of Jesus’.⁴¹⁰ In this regard, the questions which are initially proposed concerning the Trinity are sought in personal terms relating directly to Jesus. By doing such, there is a consistency between the relational understanding of the Trinity and how this is developed in direct relationship to the persons within the Godhead. This aspect is further supported by a burgeoning Christology, as each author asks pertinent and relevant questions of how Christ is to be understood within Open Theism. Although this is yet in development, and it should be remembered that Open theology is barely two decades old so not all its theology should be expected to be fully refined, there is nonetheless an emerging Christological understanding which can be later developed. Within the Christological foundation, we note a fidelity to biblical sources, the need to situate Jesus within his first century context and a Spirit-Christology which is in dialogue with other Christological models (namely *Logos* and *kenosis*). In this respect, we see that the question of Christology is a central concern to the three authors, as each asks how Christ is to adequately function within their wider theology. However, the developing Christology evident within Hasker, Sanders and Pinnock is not without its criticisms, even at this early stage. The first issue relates to how the various Christological models simultaneously coexist within the given Open narrative. This is

⁴¹⁰ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 7. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 29. Sanders reinforces this conception by adding that the divine self-disclosure in Jesus demonstrates what God is like, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 177-82.

evidenced in Pinnock's development of a *Logos*-, Spirit- and *kenotic*-Christology. With little detailed discussion about the actual nature of *kenosis* from Pinnock, especially when compared to his delineation of Spirit and *Logos* Christology, the question remains how *kenotic* Christology can or should be tied into the wider Open Christological perspective. There is a potential difficulty in uniting *kenotic* and *Logos* Christological models without careful and detailed explanations of how this can, or should, be achieved given the tension which has existed historically between these Christological models. Only in passing do both Pinnock and Sanders signify the possible benefits of *kenosis* but do little in resolving the difficult situation of balancing both a *Logos* and *kenotic* understanding of Jesus.

2.5.2.3 Pneumatological Lacuna

The second issue to raise in relation to the Christology is that due to the large absence of Pneumatology evident within the work of Hasker and Sanders, and the implicit subordination of the Spirit in Pinnock (see below), the Christological focus borders upon a Christocentrism. As we noted above, allowance should be granted to the Open community for not yet fully developing all of its central theology, as time must be given for ideas to mature and criticisms to be raised which can bring about deeper reflections. However, there is no concomitant development of the Holy Spirit at this stage in Open thought as there is with its Christology. Turning our attention first to Hasker and Sanders, the lack of a Pneumatology emphasises the Christocentrism present in their work, even if this is unintended. Both have highlighted Jesus as the 'departure' for knowing God, and, while not wishing to detract from the significant Christological import contained within these statements, left in its current form lacking a Pneumatology, such an understanding has the consequence of placing Jesus as the primary hermeneutical lens within the Godhead. This has the unfortunate consequence for

Pneumatology that it must pass through the Christological hermeneutic to make a contribution to Trinitarian thought. The diminished role of the Spirit is evidenced throughout both of their works, as in Sanders' *The God Who Risks*, there are only two pages dedicated to explaining the role and person of the Spirit (of which only two paragraphs make direct reference to the Spirit), compared to the previous twenty-four pages referring to Jesus and six pages examining the Church.⁴¹¹ Additionally, Sanders' application of 'conceptual metaphors' is pregnant with possibilities for discussing the Spirit, though this is never attempted. With the Spirit often depicted in metaphorical terms within the Bible, such as, wind, breath, dove, wind, fire and *Paraclete*, the methodology proposed by Sanders is ripe for Pneumatological discussions, but this never materialises. Likewise, Hasker runs a risk of inadvertently de-personalising the Spirit through the language he utilises to describe the Spirit. When he refers to the Spirit as the 'energizing power' that makes new life in Christ possible, it is possible to see how, from one perspective, the Spirit has been subsumed to the full personhood of Christ.⁴¹² Not only is the function of the Spirit subjugated under that of Christ's, but the reference to Her as a 'power', lacks a personal and relational description, restricting Her to a non-personal definition which is not corrected elsewhere in his writing.⁴¹³

2.5.2.4 The Subsuming of the Spirit

Moving from Hasker and Sanders' omission of Pneumatology, we turn to Pinnock's Pneumatological considerations, which, rather than omitting the Spirit, possesses an implicit subordination of the Spirit to the Son. There is a clear intention in Pinnock's Spirit-Christology to highlight the centrality of the Spirit both in the Trinitarian life and Her own

⁴¹¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 123.

⁴¹² Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 183.

⁴¹³ This is not to deny that the Spirit operates as a power, but without a wider Pneumatological context into which such language can be situated, then the language applied to the Spirit can become problematic.

mission. While this is indeed a laudable sentiment, Steven Studebaker has demonstrated a number of difficulties arising from Pinnock's work which run contrary to his ultimate goal. Despite Pinnock's aim to free the Spirit into a full personal and economic understanding, Studebaker asserts that the means by which Pinnock attempts to do this ultimately reduces the Spirit and Her work as a '*super additum*' to the person and work of Christ.⁴¹⁴ Studebaker argues that this difficulty arises from Pinnock's basic assumption that the Spirit's primary function is that of 'anointing' within the Christ event.⁴¹⁵ This overlooks, according to Studebaker, the more fundamental issue of Christ's ontological status which was assumed within the incarnation. By prioritising the anointing component of the Spirit's work, it ignores how the Spirit was involved in the moment of incarnation, thus the Spirit is again subsumed to a measure of Christ's function and not central within the Trinitarian ontology. As, Studebaker notes, 'his use of anointing and his understanding of it in terms of empowerment as the primary symbol of the Spirit's work neglects the more fundamental role of the Spirit in facilitating the union of the divine Son with the humanity of Jesus'.⁴¹⁶

2.5.2.5 Implications of the Pneumatological Lacuna

In turning to the last of the questions we posed above concerning how well the authors have answered their initial theological questions, we must note that the Pneumatological lacuna which exists in Open writings undermines aspects of the Godhead to date. The upshot of the strong Christocentrism and lack of a full Pneumatology holds two significant implications for Open Theism as defined by Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker. First, the emphasis on the Social Trinitarianism which is a central key to all the authors'

⁴¹⁴ S. M. Studebaker, 'Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology', *Pneuma*, 28:1, 2006, pp. 5-20, esp. 10.

⁴¹⁵ Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 10.

⁴¹⁶ Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 10.

understanding of the Godhead, stresses the ‘personhood’ of each member. With such a focus, and the need for a consistent rendering of the Trinity, it should surely be expected that each member is given ample and adequate exposure. With the lack of Pneumatology, especially in Hasker and Sanders, one of the divine persons is overlooked with the result that an imbalance exists in how the Trinity is conceived theoretically and how it is then explained economically. As we shall see next chapter, this has far reaching implications of how the Spirit operates within their given theologies. Secondly, there is the issue regarding how God operates within the world according to Open Theism. As we have noted throughout, the Open view of God stresses and seeks to develop God’s reciprocal nature in the world. This then begs the question of how Godself is mediated. It is clear from the NT that the Spirit is the means by which God operates and engages with world in this current age (Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2 and Jn. 16:5-15). Therefore, by omitting and minimalizing the person and role of the Spirit difficult questions are left open concerning how God communes with the world, which is an imperative concept in Open thought. There is an element in which the Spirit becomes anonymous, as the Spirit’s person and mission is constructed solely through a Christological lens. This means that the Spirit effectively becomes a function within the economy of the Godhead, rather than a person within her own right in the immanent Trinity. In the end, we are left with the impression that Open Theism has yet to fully engage with Pneumatology and make it a central pillar within the construction of its theology.

2.5.3 Criticisms of Thomas Oord

In the outline of Oord’s work above, it is evident that there are some significant differences in his presentation and understanding of Open Theism as compared to that of Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker. Admittedly, the differing insights provided by Oord offer

exciting avenues for development and the different conceptual framework from which he operates offers a novel perspective from which to view and evaluate Open and Relational theology. Consequently, these must be considered when assessing the contributions made by Oord, which distinguish him somewhat from the focus of the criticisms directed towards the previous authors. Returning to the first question outlined above (identifying the problems which led to various lines of enquiry), we note that the particular focus for Oord centres around the need of consistently understanding God as constituting love, from which, all other facets of the divine flow in an appropriately corresponding manner. We noted that Oord is critical of claims about the loving nature of God when they do not correspond to the divine nature in a congruent manner. This was especially evident in his treatment of the notion that God ‘self-limits’ his love and power which Oord argues is equivalent of God wilfully allowing evil. It is within this context of answering how we understand the nature of divine love and what implications this holds for theology and philosophy that we turn to the specific questions which Oord asks in relation to this.

2.5.3.1 Hermeneutics

Oord raises many intriguing and challenging questions in establishing his model of *Essential Kenosis* and first we will examine the questions he asks and omits concerning his hermeneutic and theological model. Oord is clear that the Bible is an important source in obtaining a picture of the divine, especially as this is where he justifies the notion that God is love. However, this raises a number of issues. Although we need to appreciate that Oord is undertaking a task in philosophical theology and not biblical theology *per se*, his use of the Bible needs further examination. Nowhere in his body of work is there a clear hermeneutic which states how he uses the Bible or how material can be derived from it. This is significant

for a number of reasons. First, in relation to his model of a ‘full-orbed love’, there is a very clear understanding from Oord about what this means, and which is drawn, in part, from reflecting on the biblical text and engaging the Greek terms of *agape*, *eros* and *philia*. From this we see that Oord utilises biblical material as a significant source. But the difficulty arises when the other aspects of the Bible call into question Oord’s model of ‘full-orbed’ love and begs the question of how Oord organises and applies biblical material.

Oord understands divine love as eternally promoting over-all well-being. Despite his use of biblical texts to support this, there is a neglect of other biblical passages which question this assertion in its entirety, leading to difficult conclusions about his hermeneutical method and definition of love. Oord fails to ask questions of the NT which challenge his understanding of love and how he can use some aspects of the NT and not others. In support of this view, we turn to the Pentecostal NT scholar John Christopher Thomas who asserts, ‘[g]enerally speaking, the New Testament writers show little of the reluctance many modern students of the New Testament exhibit in assigning to God an active role in the affliction of individuals with disease and/or death’.⁴¹⁷ Thomas states that God uses infirmity and death in a number of ways including pedagogical devices, punishment, spreading the Gospel and sanctification.⁴¹⁸ From this insight, we are brought to two specific questions. The first is why these verses which refer to God using death and illness, and similar ones to them, are absent in Oord’s writing, and how does he account hermeneutically for their omission? If Oord wants to use the Bible as an authoritative source, especially as his central claim is that God is love, then how can he use some verses authoritatively and then ignore other verses which

⁴¹⁷ J. C. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 297.

⁴¹⁸ The verses which Thomas cites include Lk. 1:20 and 64, Jn. 5:14, Acts 5:9-11, 9:8-9, 12:19-23, 13:6-12, 1 Cor. 1:27-34 and Gal. 4:13-5, Thomas, *The Devil*, pp. 298-300.

conflict with his model. Simply put, why is 1 John 4 more authoritative than Acts 5? The difficulty here is that by omitting a hermeneutical justification, Oord appears to apply a selective ‘proof-texting’ hermeneutic. There is little justification offered for why the passages he ignores are omitted or on what grounds he believes that these can be legitimately excluded. Secondly, the question regarding the verses which indicate that God is prepared to use death and illness and how this consequently impacts Oord’s definition of divine love, must also be asked. If, as Oord asserts, the Bible should be used to establish the nature of divine love, then why does Oord’s *Essential Kenosis* model not account for God’s activities in these verses. We are left with the impression that in constructing his model, Oord has tended to use only the biblical material which supports his model of love but has jettisoned those difficult passages which do not conform to this conception. The question of God utilising death and infirmity as a divine means, albeit rarely, and how this relates to Oord’s description of divine love as a ‘non-coercive’ promotion of overall well-being, is somewhat at odds and receives no attention from Oord in how to explain them coherently as aspects of the biblical narrative.

2.5.3.2 The Trinity, Christology and Kenosis

Continuing the theme of Oord’s use of the Bible, we also need to ask questions regarding how he uses the text to construct an understanding of the persons within the Trinity and how they feature within the biblical narrative. As noted above, we commented that Oord does utilise Trinitarian language and makes reference to the Father, Son and Spirit, which is derived from the biblical text. However, in an echo of the criticisms levelled against Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker, these are left underdeveloped. Despite the focus of Oord’s model revolving around *kenosis*, there is a distinct lack of Christological reflection and development in his writing. Oord openly admits that in mirroring a move in contemporary theology, the

concept of *kenosis* moves beyond Christological debates and *reveals* something of God's nature.⁴¹⁹ In accepting that this can be a valid theological move, it also seems prudent that any discussion of *kenosis* is first predicated upon a Christological foundation and read alongside other Christological models in dialogue, which is minimal in Oord's work. Oord wants to move from the *kenotic* Christological motif into the eternal nature of God so as to establish the divine nature. Yet, despite the potential validity this holds, if the move is to be made, then further Christological exploration is required to establish which restrictions and caveats need to be transposed from the Christological into the divine nature and how other Christological models modify, correct and enhance a more fully rounded understanding of Christology. While I affirm Oord's assertion that *kenosis* indicates something eternal within the Godhead, I would also posit that this should be grounded in a dialogue between differing Christologies. This then allows for any specifics within *kenotic* Christology to be fully contextualised and balanced and then applied back into the nature of the Godhead. In this way the important parameters and boundaries which the notion of *kenosis* inherently holds can be properly situated.

The difficulty of the position of *kenosis* is further compounded when we consider that there is no distinct Christology within Oord's body of work. Granted, Jesus is present in Oord's writings, but this is not systematized in a way that allows the reader an insight into who Jesus is *vis-à-vis* His eternal nature as purported through Christian tradition. The discussion which Oord offers regarding *kenosis* is significant as far as it goes, yet it does not develop into a full Christological model that fully accounts for the narrated drama of what precedes and follows the *kenotic* moment. Where the *kenosis* fits into the broader Christological narrative of pre-existence, the history of Israel, death, resurrection, ascension

⁴¹⁹ Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 155.

and bestowal of the Spirit, is muted when it comes to *who* the Christ person is and what specific implications this holds for what He achieved. This is where we see a limit in the reliance on *kenosis* from Oord. He is undoubtedly correct in asserting that not only is the *kenosis* passage notoriously difficult to interpret and that it offers important insights into the nature of God, but Oord's rendering of *kenosis* as the central key to understanding God becomes somewhat abstracted and detached from the historical moorings of the biblical narrative. The central events of Christ's ministry, including death, resurrection, ascension and granting of the Holy Spirit are relatively muted throughout Oord's writings. This has the consequence of glossing over significant Christological developments which are needed to offer important understandings of who Christ is and what this can legitimately offer to the notion of divine love. Therefore, in conclusion of the questions Oord asks in relation to *kenosis* there is an insufficiency in both what it tells us about the Christ event and how this can be subsequently applied back into the divine nature as it is too restricted in its scope.

2.5.3.3 Essential Kenosis and the Holy Spirit

Turning from the Son to the Spirit, we again must pose questions about how Oord presents the person of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with the question of what has led to Oord's enquiry about the Spirit, we note that the focus for Oord is that the role of the Spirit (or at least God as Spirit) is to affirm his position of the non-coercive God who is limited in the ways in which He can prevent genuine evil. In stating this, Oord emphasises the point that God's incorporeal nature prevents direct action in the same way that a corporeal being can.⁴²⁰ Rather, Oord asserts, in line with Jn. 4:24, that God is Spirit, and is thus limited to acting upon people through non-sensory means.⁴²¹ Such a perception of God does answer two significant

⁴²⁰ Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 176-9.

⁴²¹ See also, T. J. Oord, 'The Divine Spirit as Causal and Personal', *Zygon*, 48:2, 2013, pp. 466-77.

questions for Oord. First, that God cannot in any sense be responsible for evil actions in the world, and secondly, that through constituting ‘Spirit’, God is present to all of creation working to bring His perfect love. While both of these observations are to be lauded, a significant question regarding Pneumatology must also accompany them. Oord’s treatment of ‘God as Spirit’ sits well within his *Essential Kenosis* model, but there is a need to ask how he uses the term *pneuma* and how this relates to wider theology.⁴²² In searching for an adequate analogy for how God operates as Spirit, Oord states that the Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* do offer some helpful, but limited, analogies for comprehending the Spirit of God. However, there is a neglect from Oord of how the wider NT uses *pneuma* as means of designating the ‘Holy Spirit’, especially as the Third Person of the Trinity. We commented above that Oord does utilise Trinitarian language and does make reference to the ‘Holy Spirit’. But, within his largest expositional work regarding God and the Spirit, there is a clear omission of the person of the Spirit as the Third Article. Rather, Oord subsumes the language regarding the Spirit *into* the broader notion of ‘God’ with no direct link or reference to the ‘Holy Spirit’. In this respect, just as there was in the work of Hasker and Sanders, the person of the Spirit is largely glossed over, with no real personhood, economy or appropriation allocated to Her.

2.5.3.4 The Persuasive and Non-Coercive Love of God

In conclusion to the analysis of Oord’s work, two final considerations are necessary when determining how satisfactorily Oord answers the questions he poses concerning the non-coercive love of God and how this ties into the notion of persuasion. The first of these relates to the complex relationship between Process theology and traditional Christian concepts in Oord’s writing and the second is how this then influences his work as a

⁴²² Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 178.

consequence. Throughout Oord's writings, there is an unmistakable Process influence which colours many of the conclusions and ideas which are presented. John Cobb Jr. and David Griffin, among other prominent Process theologians, often assist in providing answers to the questions which Oord raises, which give his work a distinct Process accent. Yet, despite this, there are also clear distinctions at certain points between Oord's *Essential Kenosis* model and the wider assertions of Process theology. Returning to Hasker's criticisms of Process theology above, he asserts that for a Christian theology to rightfully reflect the proper understanding of God, there must be an inclusion that God 'creates', 'acts' and 'communicates'. While these appear in a modified manner, each of Hasker's corrections are present within Oord's writings distancing Oord from Process thought *per se*. This is particularly evident in Oord's affirmation of divine aseity which constitutes a significant departure from Process theology as traditionally understood. Additionally, Oord's Christology, as underdeveloped as it is, also constitutes a disparity with established Process conceptions regarding Jesus. In referring to Jesus as the 'divine human', Oord presents clear daylight between his assertions and those portrayed by Process Theists. Process theologians have often centred their Christological focus around a distinction between the *Logos* and Jesus, although Jesus does, through an ongoing commitment to the primordial intentions of God, become the incarnate Christ.⁴²³ Therefore, any simple designation of Oord's work with that of Process theology misses the subtle and nuanced distinctions which Oord is attempting to establish within his *Essential Kenosis* model. Having said this, however, some reflections are needed to evaluate in what ways Process thought has influenced Oord's conclusions and how justified they are.

As we noted in the introductory chapter, the origins of Open Theism developed

⁴²³ For an overview of Process Christology see, J. B. Cobb, Jr. & D. R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 95-110, esp. 98-106. C. R. Mesle & J. B. Cobb, Jr., *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*, pp. 104-9.

within an Evangelical context which sought, in part, to challenge the determinism inherent within the Reformed tradition. As such, the authors, aimed at situating their developments squarely within an orthodox setting whilst challenging varying Classical notions. While Oord has not rejected this, and indeed embraced its fundamental assertion, the question must be asked if the Process influence in Oord's writings conflicts with, or even outright contradicts, the orthodox moorings which other Open Theists seek to retain. There are present in Oord's writings large overlaps with Process ideas. The notions that love constitutes the central concept within theology (though this is not exclusive to Process theology), the debates surrounding the persuasive/coercive nature of divine power and love, the rejection of the self-limitation of God, the inter-relatedness of all things, the limited nature of God and the rejection of *creatio ex nihilo* (see below) each closely resonate with prominent Process themes. Such are these similarities and the reliance of Oord on such ideas that it is arguable to assume that Oord adopts a modified Process metaphysic into which he interprets his understanding of Christianity. In this respect, the understanding of Christianity is refined through various Process fundamental conceptions.

Adopting persuasion as the means of divine power requires that the accompanying theological/philosophical system, especially its understanding of God, must be suitably compatible if a theological and philosophical coherence is to be maintained. We evidently witness this in Oord's *Essential Kenosis* and little doubt can be expressed in accepting that Oord is both consistent and coherent in his portrayal of divine power, the nature of God and how this subsequently impacts the question of theodicy. However, while accepting the need for a system to be coherent is important, coherence cannot be the only criteria for establishing Christian theology as Oord is attempting to do. Fidelity to the biblical narrative should, in line with the overall aims of Open Theism, also constitute as a means of deriving how God

operates within the world. The lack of discussion concerning the criticisms of persuasive power is evident in Oord's writings and an ambiguity remains in establishing how persuasive power is to be specifically understood. What is not clear is whether Oord accepts that all non-coercive power constitutes persuasion, or, if there is a closer acceptance of the Process notion of persuasion. This is a significant point. I would heartedly agree with Oord if the former were the case, as it would be possible then to integrate biblical expressions of power into his model. However, if Oord wishes to adopt a more overt Process concept of persuasive power, then this is more difficult to establish on biblical grounds.

The particular crux of this discussion lies in how coercion is defined. Oord argues that coercion means that God acts in such a way as to totally determine the outcome of a situation. Yet this does not clarify how persuasion is to be understood. What is not clear is if Oord's descriptions of 'non-coercive power' and 'persuasion' (as understood within Process terms) are synonymous with one another, though this is strongly hinted at. However, this dichotomous approach restricts other modes of divine power from being explored which are eclipsed by the persuasion/coercion construct. An example from Acts 2, a favourite chapter for Pentecostals, will help to illustrate this point. In the second chapter of Acts, the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples in a mighty and powerful way. In vv. 2-4 the Spirit's arrival is likened to a mighty wind accompanied with 'tongues of fire' which rests upon the disciples enabling them to speak in other tongues. Such a description does not immediately correlate with either the genteel persuasive power associated with Process theology and suggested throughout Oord's work, nor a sense of coercion which Oord wants to avoid. In fact, the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit resonates closer to Frankenberg's notion of 'enabling power'. The disciples are enabled to speak in tongues as *the Spirit enabled them* (v. 4), but nowhere throughout Chapter 2 is there the impression that this was done against their

volition. Instead, the disciples embraced and co-operated with such enabling. This is noteworthy as such a manifestation of divine power does not obviously correspond with how Oord defines power, whether it be persuasive or coercive. It appears that the only possible way that such an understanding of divine power from Acts 2 can possibly situate within *Essential Kenosis* is if the divine power is defined as ‘non-coercive’, which is altogether too limiting and narrow to define the events of Pentecost.

2.5.4 Summary of Criticisms

In sum, we can begin to etch out some significant issues relating to Oord’s *Essential Kenosis* as it relates to answering the big questions he asks in relation to God’s love and His subsequent power and how this impacts the problem of evil. The main difficulty is that despite the differences which exist in Oord’s thought to that of wider Process theology, there does remain on Oord’s part a strong reliance on a Process metaphysic which serves as an epistemological foundation for any subsequent development of his ideas. This is unquestionably ‘Christianized’, but there is a strong dimension in which Oord’s major ideas are passed through this primary interpretative lens, which leaves an indelible mark on his concluding reflections. Moving into the sphere of speculation, this may answer in part, the issues above relating to hermeneutics, Christology and Pneumatology. It seems reasonable that with such an epistemological framework in place, aspects of God’s power as described throughout the Bible which indicate God’s seemingly unilateral act (such as inflicting death or illness) and Jesus’ and the Spirit’s delineation have also been read through the broader metaphysic and modified accordingly. This may answer, in part, why such modifications have been made to their traditional understanding and account for the diminished roles they play in Oord’s overall scheme. On more sure footing, such an understanding of Oord’s work also

accounts for the strong *theocentricism* present in his work, as this mirrors, in many respects, the notion of the divine within Process theology. Therefore, while Oord's *Essential Kenosis* model answers consistently the problem of evil within its own theological and philosophical framework, serious questions are raised about how comfortably it can sit within a more traditional understanding of Christianity in regards to how God is comprehended. However, the question cannot yet be fully answered in how successful Oord is with his model in resolving the problems which he posed regarding love and power, as we must wait until the explorations in the following chapter to note how such a view of God impacts the interpretations of providence, salvation and eschatology.

2.6 Creating a Context

The purpose of this chapter has been to raise important insights into how the conception of God is conceived by Open Theists. In doing this, we have surveyed the relevant passages of each of the authors and explicated how they construct their understanding of God. The purpose here is to take their readings, along with the criticisms which were raised alongside them, and create a context into which the future comparative work can progress. Recapping the method which runs through the thesis, the specific purpose here is to discover ways that the dialogue with Pentecostalism can speak into and expand the present understanding of Open Theist thought concerning God. Each tradition carries with it certain beliefs and conceptions regarding God, but present within them is also an inherent level of limitation which the tradition also carries with it. God is not restricted to one tradition or interpretation, and consequently, dialogue is needed to expand our present horizons to incorporate new glimpses of the divine and offer novel insights into how God can be comprehended.

With this in mind, we can begin to forge a context into which novel ideas from Pentecostalism can speak. From the onset it is imperative to affirm much of what has been previously presented, so that a continuation in Open thought can develop. In this respect, the central tenets of Open Theism of the primacy of God's love and His essential loving and relational ontology are strongly affirmed from both the biblical account and the implications of the 'Social' Trinity outlined above. There is also a need to reinforce the caution regarding aspects of Classical Theism which inhibit the responsive and relational perception of God. However, into this idea, is the desire to emphasise strongly the co-creative element between God and humanity. While this has been stressed, particularly by Hasker and Oord, in moving forward, it will be heralded as a prime theological motif, as the openness of the future combined with God's on-going loving activity shapes our present reality. This is undoubtedly a central key in understanding the purposes and goals of Open Theism. However, in stating a claim for the promotion of the co-creation of reality with the divine, we need to take seriously the criticisms which were levelled against the four authors above. This is particularly evident in how the Trinity has been conceived, especially in the alarming lacuna of Pneumatology.

In some respects, the absence of a strong doctrine of the Holy Spirit is baffling within a system of the openness of God which stresses a robust 'Social' Trinitarianism and God's continual loving interaction in the world. The doctrine of the 'Social' Trinity is grounded within the notion of personal beings with their own *loci* of experiences despite sharing an instance of divinity. But presently within the majority of Open thought, there is a startling omission of one of its members. In addition to this oversight, is the accompanying question that if God is operative in this world now, how can God be seen as being active in any other manner than through the person and presence of the Spirit? Any future discussion regarding of the nature of God, needs to, at the very least, take seriously Pneumatology and

seek ways to incorporate it into its wider thought. Notwithstanding the importance of Pneumatology within any future Open discussion, it must be stressed that this has to be constructed within a robust Trinitarian structure, so not as to cause an imbalance in redressing the issue. In rectifying the Pneumatological lacuna, there is also the need to amend the Christocentrism which was outlined above. Any further developments of the Trinity, must hold in balance how the Son and Spirit co-operate and function together, without one necessarily subsuming the other. Opportunities for this development are currently present within the surveyed works as Hasker particularly has demonstrated how contemporary discussions regarding the Trinity can draw from novel insights. His use of Ayer, Mosser and Plantinga provide new openings for explorations into the inner life of God, moving forward in biblical concepts and traditional language yet also retaining their fundamental essence. This is further echoed by Sanders and Pinnock, who considering the constitution of an Open Christology, are willing to ecumenically draw from a number of Christological models in reaching new insights. Therefore, the precedent is set within Open Theism to seek new dialogue partners in expanding the awareness of who God is. This does, though, lead us to our final consideration. In wanting to seek new insights from within the broader Church and its rich tradition, limits must be set on the bounds of what can be legitimately incorporated into Open thought if its aim is to remain biblically faithful and consistent to the Church's orthodoxy. Therefore, in light of this, due to the objections which have been raised throughout this work thus far, any engagement of Process ideas, or those adhering to a Process metaphysic, will be subject to a cautious scepticism due to the differences which exist between the respective traditions.

CHAPTER 3

OPEN THEIST READINGS OF PROVIDENCE, SALVATION AND ESCHATOLOGY

The current chapter builds from the previous one by exploring the ways in which God relates to the world through his providential care, which culminates in the various understandings of salvation and eschatology offered by Open Theists. By doing this, there is a continuation from Chapter 2 of relating who God is to how He operates in the world. As was seen above, Open Theists have presented differing perspectives regarding who God is, and this chapter develops that foundation by highlighting the ways in which God works within the world in a manner which is consistent with His nature. The purpose here is to evaluate specifically *how* and *why* God works within the world and what possible theological problems arise from these understandings. Again, as in the previous chapter, Clooney's method will be adopted by first presenting a *commentary* of the various textual readings from within the Open community. This will be followed by a critical analysis of the various readings, which culminate in a textual and community context for the later discussion with Pentecostalism. By the end of the chapter, we will have formed a body of literature regarding the nature of God, how He expresses His providential care, the expression of salvation and eschatological fulfilment, which will later serve as the basis for the comparative study.

3.1 Clark Pinnock: The Ecumenical Turn to Eastern Orthodoxy

In Chapter Two we noted how Pinnock developed his Open view of God within a Trinitarian framework. At the core of his writing was the mutual and reciprocal love characterised by the *perichoretic* relationship, which was developed to explain his understanding of the 'Social Trinity' and his interpretation of Spirit-Christology. The present

section seeks to expand his Trinitarian thinking by explaining how it directly relates to the notions of providence, salvation and eschatology. In his systematic work, Pinnock asserts how theology should be developed from a Trinitarian foundation, as the Trinitarian ontology expresses who God is and how He relates to the world.⁴²⁴

3.1.1 Recapitulation

In a distinct and ecumenical turn towards Eastern Orthodox Trinitarianism (most notably Irenaeus and the Cappadocian Fathers),⁴²⁵ Pinnock expounds upon the being of God to explain the purpose and work of Christ.⁴²⁶ Drawing from Irenaeus' analogy of the 'two hands of God' (*Against Heresies* 4:20:1), Pinnock argues that the creative and redemptive work of God is a work of *both Jesus and the Spirit*.⁴²⁷ Central within this divine work is the redemptive and atoning work of recapitulation.⁴²⁸ To overcome the distance between God and humanity, Jesus had to fulfil the original destiny of humanity by becoming the 'last Adam'.⁴²⁹ By becoming completely human (though maintaining his *hypostatic* union), Jesus needed to take the 'participatory' journey on humanity's behalf to live the perfect sinless life as our representative. As Humanity's representative, Jesus was subjected to all earthly weaknesses, yet still maintained a life of devotion and obedience to God, which was made possible by a

⁴²⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 22 and 31.

⁴²⁵ Pinnock is critical of the manner in which Augustine conceived and developed the doctrine of the Trinity, which has been foundational for Western thought regarding the topic. In 'a bad move for trinitarian reflection', Augustine's 'psychological analogy' fails to fully express the innate relationality within the Trinity. Additionally, the description of the God as a single mind and the Persons of the Trinity constituting aspects of it not only undermines the notion of distinct persons within the 'Social' model, but also opens the possibility of a 'modalistic' interpretations of the Trinity, even if Augustine himself did not intend it to do so. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 33. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108.

⁴²⁶ Here Pinnock also draws support from Karl Rahner's famous axiom about the economic and immanent Trinity (K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), pp. 136). Pinnock agrees with Rahner that the economy of salvation 'corresponds to God as he is in his inner being', without exhausting all of the immanent Trinity. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 32.

⁴²⁷ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 58 and 82.

⁴²⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 79-111 and 151-4. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 29, 37, 99-100, 102 and 106. Pinnock, *From Augustine*, pp. 23. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 138.

⁴²⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 81.

strong dependence upon the Spirit.⁴³⁰ Jesus' life was characterised by a union with the Spirit, as the Spirit was present at Jesus' conception, the medium of anointing at his baptism (which also demonstrated the solidarity between the divine and humanity), the resource for resisting temptations and performing miracles, provided encouragement in Gethsemane and was the power through which he was raised.⁴³¹ Consequently, Pinnock argues that the Spirit dependence of Christ becomes paradigmatic for his followers.⁴³²

3.1.2 *Theosis*

In addition to the strong Pneumatological aspect which Pinnock highlights within the Christ event, the representative journey of recapitulation had as its final goal a very specific objective. In contrast to overly legal theories of the atonement which have dominated Western theology (both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism), Pinnock argues that the significance of recapitulation lies in what it subsequently offers to the believer – union with God.⁴³³ This does not negate the need for forensic categories within the atonement, as it is a multi-faceted concept which requires forgiveness and justification, but the atonement offers much more than just a righteous standing before God.⁴³⁴ Salvation is a drama which is as equally Pneumatological as it is Christological, which requires it to be understood in 'relational, affective terms', as the Spirit facilitates an intimate union with God.⁴³⁵ There is still the important aspect of God's wrath and Jesus being 'God-forsaken' within this model (Mk. 15:39), but this should not lead to the conclusion that the atonement is primarily or solely an

⁴³⁰ Heb. 2:14-18, 4:14-6, 5:7-10, 6:19-20 and 12:2. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 88-93. See also, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5:14.

⁴³¹ Lk. 1:35, Lk. 3:21-2, Rom. 1:4 and 8:11. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp.81-2, 85-6, and 88-98.

⁴³² Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 95.

⁴³³ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 149-83. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 46. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 36.

⁴³⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 107, 149-51 and 155-6. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 100-2.

⁴³⁵ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 149.

act of anger.⁴³⁶ As the human representative, Christ stood in the place of all humanity, and just as Christ's representation includes all of the old 'Adamic' humanity, so the benefits of his death - the judgement from sin and death - are subsequently applied to all (2 Cor 5:14).⁴³⁷ The Trinitarian nature of God's dealing with sin speaks of a divine solidarity within the Godhead just as Christ's representative and participatory journey also exhibits a strong degree of unification with humanity, requiring that the 'theodrama' be interpreted as an act of love.⁴³⁸ Pinnock urges salvific understandings in the West to recover a notion of *theosis* – a participation in the divine nature – so that Christians can fulfil their original relational purpose of being immersed in the divine life.⁴³⁹ In line with Eastern Orthodox teaching, the *theotic* union keeps the ontological distinction between the Creator and creature, but enables humanity to participate in the divine by awakening to the truth and reality of love (2 Pet. 1:4 and Jn. 17:22-3).⁴⁴⁰ Through Christ's participatory journey, in which the two natures of Christ met, humanity was restored and can approach the fullness of God as adopted children through the Spirit, and participate in the *perichoretic* dance.⁴⁴¹ In baptism, humanity is joined to Christ's participatory journey through the power of the Spirit, and as believers, share in his death and resurrection and experience forgiveness.⁴⁴² Salvation as an eschatological anticipation begins in the present age, as the Spirit begins her work by transforming humanity through the inauguration of the union with God (Rom. 6), which will reach its completion at the *eschaton*.⁴⁴³ The Church's mission remains an extension of Christ's anointing within the

⁴³⁶ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 108.

⁴³⁷ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 108.

⁴³⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 108.

⁴³⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 150-2, Pinnock, *ST*, p. 108, Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 45-6, C. H. Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View; in D. L. Okholm and T. R. Phillips (eds.), *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995, pp. 95-123, esp. pp. 116 and 119 and Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 28, 31, 81, 88 and 126-9.

⁴⁴⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 151 and 157.

⁴⁴¹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 154.

⁴⁴² Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 162.

⁴⁴³ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 154-7.

present, introducing a strong notion of inaugurated eschatology into Pinnock's thought, as the Spirit constantly seeks ways to bring union and love. The Church should seek to combine a sacramental spirituality and praxis, which, in part, mediates the divine union with the charismatic gifts, including the miraculous, which witnesses to God's in-breaking Kingdom in the present age.⁴⁴⁴

3.1.3 The 'Logic of Love' Theodicy

For Pinnock, God's providential care and redemptive work are intimately connected and irreducible. What God had originally intended at creation is still the purpose and goal for humanity. Due to the relational purposes, God constructed a world in which this was possible. However, one of the essential features of relationships and love is that they can be rejected. Yet, without this possibility, notions of reciprocal and mutual love, which stands at the core of Pinnock's understanding and definition of love, would not, nor could not, be called genuine love.⁴⁴⁵ Consequently, Pinnock argues for a 'logic of love' theodicy; (1) God created the world for the purpose of relationship, (2) this requires the freedom of contrary choice – libertarian freedom, (3) this freedom, which entails the possibility of love, involves also the possibility of rejection, (4) this explains the actuality of evil, as creatures, including heavenly bodies, have rejected God's love, (5) God has not abandoned the world and continues to work through love, and (6) God does not protect us from every evil, as this would contradict the initial purposes of creation and free will, but is present in and through His Spirit redeeming the world.⁴⁴⁶ There is the acknowledgement, therefore, that because of the created purposes genuine evil exists from both human and demonic powers, as God is not the only source of

⁴⁴⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 90 and 113-131.

⁴⁴⁵ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 113-51, esp. 126-9. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 148.

⁴⁴⁶ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 31 and 131-2. See also, Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 144-6.

power in the world.⁴⁴⁷ There is subsequently an unavoidable ‘risk’ of such evils, as by opening the world for humans to become ‘co-workers with God’ in co-creating the present and future, not all would go as God would want.⁴⁴⁸ Yet, his Spirit is working throughout the world, especially within the church, though not exclusively, in bringing about the world’s final completion of new creation and union with God.⁴⁴⁹ Tied into this concept, is also the assertion by Pinnock, that despite the importance of love which grants freedom, God is not restricted to the mere use of persuasion, as advocated by Process Theists. Pinnock maintains that, at times, God manifests Himself ‘in special ways’, which includes certain instances of controlling the natural order to bring about His overall intentions and purposes for creation. Pinnock makes the distinction between God’s general providential care for the world and specific instances of when God interjects in the world, through events such as the resurrection and miracles, to bring about His purposes. In this way, there is a combination of the preferred means of persuasion alongside a stronger form of divine determinism.⁴⁵⁰ Without this central narrative, God’s providence and love, nor Pinnock’s reading of free-will and soteriology, can be properly understood.

3.1.4 Summary

In the summary of Pinnock’s conception of the Godhead in the previous chapter, we identified the basic ecumenical, dialogical, biblical and systematic feature present within his writings. This grounding for his theology continues within the present examination of his work considering soteriology, providence and eschatology. The inclusion of Eastern Orthodox

⁴⁴⁷ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 132-3.

⁴⁴⁸ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 132. Pinnock, *GLHK*, pp. 144-5. Pinnock, *From Augustine*, pp. 20.

⁴⁴⁹ For Pinnock’s engagement with other religions and how they can constitute as a ‘preparatory’ role before the fullness of Christ’s salvific work, see, Pinnock, *An Inclusivist View*, pp. 95-123. Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 185-214. C. H. Pinnock, *A Wideness of God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

⁴⁵⁰ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 146-8.

theology with *theosis*, recapitulation and the *perichoretic* nature of the Trinity indicates the willingness of Pinnock to investigate broad theological traditions to construct his theological vision. This aspect is unique within the authors considered within the present work, as a distinctive feature of Pinnock's writing is to engage broader traditions to define the working of God. Into this, is also a development of Pneumatology which is a central feature within how Pinnock defines the working of God within the world. Among the present authors, Pinnock is the most willing to identify the person and role of the Spirit and to attribute to Her the distinctive features of how God operates through salvation, providence and eschatology. This again constitutes a distinctive feature of Pinnock's writings, as none of the other authors considered here engage in any depth with Pneumatological concepts.

3.2 John Sanders: The Christological Response to Risk

As noted previously, Sanders tightly weaves together the character and acts of God, deriving his picture of the divine from varied narratives and metaphors within the Bible alongside the considerations of the 'Social Trinity' and incarnation. The interplay between the divine character and how this subsequently manifests is of particular interest for Sanders especially in the understanding of providence.⁴⁵¹ God's providential care cannot be separated from, or inconsistent with, His essential nature, which as we noted above, revolves around the notions of love and relationality.⁴⁵² In drawing together the character of God alongside the providential implications, Sanders takes a distinctively Christological turn in explaining how providence should be comprehended.⁴⁵³ Critical of the theological lacuna of a Christological

⁴⁵¹ Sanders defines providence as 'the way God has chosen to relate to us and provide for our well-being', Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 16.

⁴⁵² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 181 and 193.

⁴⁵³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 93. It should be noted that Sanders' Christological turn in this matter should be read in conjunction with his teaching of 'general' providence and the problem of evil as discussed in 1.7 above.

doctrine of providence within the Classical tradition (which tends to focus on the connection between ‘omnipotence’ and ‘goodness’), Sanders states that, ‘If Jesus is *the* ultimate revelation of who God is and what humans are supposed to be in relationships to God, then we should pay particular attention to the way divine providence works in the life of Jesus’.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, examining and explicating aspects of the life of Jesus demonstrates how ‘providence is exercised’ and what implications this necessarily holds for soteriology.⁴⁵⁵

Drawing from Tupper’s Christological re-reading of providence, Sanders interprets the events of Jesus’ birth, baptism, ministry, death and resurrection to demonstrate how God manifests His providential care.⁴⁵⁶ In continuation with the relational and risk model of providence evident throughout the OT (*e.g.* Gen. 1:26, Gen. 3, Gen. 15-22, Ex. 32-4, 2 Kings 20 and Hos. 2 and 3), Sanders argues that what is witnessed in the Christ event epitomises and perpetuates God’s providential relationship with the world.⁴⁵⁷ In the birth narratives, God adopts non-coercive means in bringing about Jesus’ conception and birth, dialoguing with Mary and Joseph about the coming events and requesting their permission rather than imposing a foreordained certainty.⁴⁵⁸ Additionally, Jesus’ baptism expresses a crucial aspect of the filial relationship between Jesus and the Father which becomes a foundational motif for providential care, in which humanity ‘can experience the divine presence as *Abba*’.⁴⁵⁹ Jesus encourages his disciples to pray to God as ‘Father’ (Mt. 6:9) signifying a shift away from notions of dominance associated with ‘traditional monarchical’ models of providence. Aloof

⁴⁵⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 93. (Italics in the original).

⁴⁵⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 93.

⁴⁵⁶ E. F. Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995). E. F. Tupper, ‘The Providence of God in Christological Perspective’, *Review and Expositor*, 82:4, 1995, pp. 579-95.

⁴⁵⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 38-92 and 107. Sanders, *God as Personal*, pp. 174-8. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have Future?*, pp. 25-7 and 153-7. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 215-224. J. Sanders, *Reducing God to Human Proportions*, in Porter & Cross, *Semper Reformandum*, pp. 111-43, esp. 120-5.

⁴⁵⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 94-6.

⁴⁵⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 94.

and domineering notions of the divine are supplanted with familial and relational concepts which nurture a theology of love, reconciliation and relationship.⁴⁶⁰ Throughout Jesus' ministry, whether it be compassionate miraculous instances (Mt. 15:21-8, Lk. 8:43-8), preaching upon the importance of love (Lk. 13:34 and Lk. 15) or his providential teaching in Mt. 6:26, what is evidenced time and again is God reaching out in *agape* love, choosing to be vulnerable to and humiliated by, those who may reject his love.⁴⁶¹

3.2.1 The Significance of the Divine Passion

The dimension of divine love and humiliation is dramatically highlighted throughout the events of Jesus' death and resurrection, which holds particular significance for a relational and Open understanding of providence. Within the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' prayers re-enforce the intimacy between the Father (*Abba*, Mk. 14:36) and Son and provide the context for Jesus wrestling with the divine will by asking to have the 'cup' taken from him (Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36 and Lk 22:42). These were not prayers for strength in face of a horrific ordeal, but requests to be spared from it. Jesus never rejects the Father's will, but pleads within the familial relationship for another way, suggesting that Jesus does not accept that the future is set and must run to a predetermined plan. Yet, just as Jesus approaches God relationally, He responds in the same manner by insisting that not his own will be done, but that of the Father.⁴⁶² Such an act of love, to both the Father and humanity, leads to the cross, which according to Sanders is 'a decisive act in which God defines himself in his relationship to sinful creatures'.⁴⁶³ Although the cross possess an inherent 'multifaceted nature' which defies a reductionism to any one theory of atonement or theology, Sanders argues that within the

⁴⁶⁰ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 94.

⁴⁶¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 99-101 and 110-5.

⁴⁶² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 101-2.

⁴⁶³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 105.

passion theology love remains the primary motivation for God in traversing to the cross and forgiving sin.⁴⁶⁴ In line with Moltmann, Sanders agrees that the cross forever changes both God and humanity. The act of Jesus fulfils the judgement against sin, undertaking the suffering so that God and humanity can be reunited whilst simultaneously sharing in humanity's estrangement and pain.⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, Sanders states that there are three significant affirmations which can be made regarding providence in light of the passion narratives of Jesus; (1) God fulfils his providential obligations, but these adapt and change depending upon the decisions and choices of his creatures, (2) through everything which God has achieved, there is a reassurance of His ongoing love and commitment (Heb. 2:18 and 9:24), and (3) we should expect providence to unfold as it did in the life of Jesus – an expression of sacrificial love and not dominating power.⁴⁶⁶ As Sanders summarises, 'God wants a filial relationship with us grounded in his agape love. Instead of using his power to enforce compliance, God has taken the path of vulnerable, humiliating love, giving of himself to us in our wretchedness. The vulnerability of this love exposes the divine risk.'⁴⁶⁷

3.2.2 Wesleyan/Holiness Soteriology

In a distinct adoption of Wesleyan/Holiness soteriology, Sanders develops his understanding of salvation utilising traditional Wesleyan and Arminian concepts alongside the Open doctrines of providence and freedom.⁴⁶⁸ Salvation, for Sanders, is closely related to the original creational intentions of the Triune God which involves establishing loving relations with his creatures, which are then shared among and between them.⁴⁶⁹ However, this intended

⁴⁶⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 106.

⁴⁶⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 106-8.

⁴⁶⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 109.

⁴⁶⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 113.

⁴⁶⁸ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 254.

⁴⁶⁹ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 205. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future*, pp. 67. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 123 and 256.

purpose was marred by the introduction of sin into the world.⁴⁷⁰ Acknowledging that sin was never an original intention or purpose of God, Sanders argues that the rupture of sin always constituted a real possibility due to the relational ontology and freedom which are inherent features of the created order.⁴⁷¹ Therefore, ‘according to the relational model sin is a broken relationship with God’ as humanity failed to trust in the loving provision of God and capitulated to the irrational act of rejecting him. Consequently, sin has become a universal experience for humanity, into which we are both born and socialised into, causing us to be enslaved by it (Rom. 6:17).⁴⁷²

Despite the turn to sin, God never abandoned humanity nor gave up upon the original intention of creation, and has continually sought ways to call humanity back to its relational purpose by redeeming the world.⁴⁷³ This understanding of redemption and salvation is predicated upon one of the central tenets of Sanders’ theology; that God is responsive to human actions which calls for a rejection of strong forms of divine immutability.⁴⁷⁴ Having posited that God *is* a fully responsive being, Sanders argues that the relational understanding of soteriology is that of a personal and loving relationship with God.⁴⁷⁵ Yet the question remains, if humanity is enslaved to sin, how is it possible that a response can be proffered to God’s call and a relationship established?⁴⁷⁶

3.2.3 *The Spirit and ‘Enabling’ Grace*

Here, Sanders draws upon a Trinitarian reading of ‘enabling grace’ within an Open

⁴⁷⁰ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 205. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 255-6.

⁴⁷¹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 255. Sanders distinguishes this model of sin against Reformed notions of hamartiology and the fall by stressing the contingent nature of creation upon the free choices of creatures and the theological implications associated with this, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 249-54.

⁴⁷² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 255.

⁴⁷³ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 205.

⁴⁷⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 255. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have a Future*, pp. 64-70.

⁴⁷⁵ In a personal correspondence, Sanders describes how the establishment of the divine-human relationship culminates in *theosis*.

⁴⁷⁶ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 256.

context to explain how the divine-human relationship is formed. Agreeing with Van de Beek that ‘what the Spirit does is to make known in the world, by way of human agents and human history, the decision that has been made in Christ’, Sanders asserts that the Spirit is working in divine wisdom, patience, resourcefulness and flexibility to bring about the accomplishment of the divine project.⁴⁷⁷ This is first established through the Spirit’s provision of ‘enabling grace’, which is the initial empowerment for repentance, as ‘the Holy Spirit empowers us through the Gospel story of Jesus to see God’s stance toward us as one of love that beckons us to return home.’⁴⁷⁸ As sinners, humanity does not possess an inherent inclination to love or trust God, which means that no reconciliation can take place unless the Holy Spirit first enables people to be receptive and responsive to God’s call.⁴⁷⁹ However, the presence of ‘enabling grace’ is not synonymous with the act of salvation or regeneration itself.⁴⁸⁰ Although it is a ‘necessary’ condition for salvation, enabling grace only opens up the offer and possibility of God’s love and mercy (1 Pet. 1:3), but requires the human cooperation to bring it to full fruition. Salvation is the reunification of a broken relationship, and consequently, love and relationship cannot be forced or brought about through coercion.⁴⁸¹ Therefore, the relational structure of salvation means that enabling grace is resistible and can be rejected (as too can the renewed relationship with God which opens the possibility of apostasy) which ties into Sanders wider providential model of ‘risk’, as God waits for the human response with no guarantees of acquisition.⁴⁸² The human response is a ‘necessary’

⁴⁷⁷ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 123 quoting A. Van de Beek (trans. J. Vriend), *Why? On Suffering, Guilt and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 297.

⁴⁷⁸ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 205-6.

⁴⁷⁹ Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 206. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 256-7. It is important to note that Sanders distinguishes between human freewill (*liberum arbitrium*) and the ability to respond favourably to God (*liberum consilium*) (Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 257).

⁴⁸⁰ It should be noted that despite Sanders’ strong Trinitarian doctrine of salvation, this is not restricted to an ‘exclusivist’ understanding of salvation. For Sanders’ defence of an ‘inclusivist’ soteriology, see, J. Sanders, *No Other Name: Can Only Christians be Saved?* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 215-86.

⁴⁸¹ Sanders, *DPOG*, p. 206. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 257 and 261.

⁴⁸² Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 206-7. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 257.

condition for reconciliation and salvation if the personal and relation character is to be maintained, meaning that ‘faith, then, is altogether the work of God and altogether the work of human persons.’⁴⁸³

3.2.4 Summary

The three major themes of love, risk and divine vulnerability which were identified in the previous chapter continue as strong motifs in Sanders reading of soteriology and providence. Intimately tied into these concepts is the notion of choice, both human and divine, which stresses the strong relational ontology which Sanders wishes to establish. Sanders draws together the significance of how choices for love involve certain risks, especially those of rejection and loss of relationship, which is central to overcoming the notion of sin present in the world. As Sanders develops his thought, the person and work of Jesus comes centre stage, as both the choices enacted by Jesus (especially in accepting His own death and the agony of Gethsemane) and humanity’s response to these actions, create the meaning of all life: a reunification in the relationship with God. This concept is expressed through traditional Arminian/Wesleyan language, emphasising again the notions of love and choice which stand at the very heart of Sanders theological endeavours.

3.3 William Hasker: *Christus Victor* as Salvation and Providence

As with Hasker’s portrait of God above, there is a combination of both philosophy and theology in how he accounts for evil in the world and God’s response to it within his providential care. For the most part, Hasker attributes evil in the world to the choices and acts of ‘rebellious’ creatures who misuse their free will.⁴⁸⁴ This is situated, however, within a

⁴⁸³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 257.

⁴⁸⁴ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 152. Hasker, *Response*, pp. 42. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 202.

broader theological context of God's creation, which contains not only the story of humanity's 'spiritual alienation' from God, but how this is impacted by 'powers we can only describe as demonic'.⁴⁸⁵ Therefore, Hasker's work oscillates between the two poles of philosophy and theology in responding to and explaining how evil and providence are understood and explained. Due to the broad arc which Hasker engages in when discussing the topics of evil and providence, the section here will focus solely upon his discussions relating to Open Theism.⁴⁸⁶

3.3.1 Competing Theories of Divine Providence

In approaching the topic of providence, Hasker establishes a strong consistency between his relational view of God and the manner in which He cares for the world. Central within his thinking are the themes of freedom, openness and love which are often contrasted against other providential models, which he argues possess significant theological and philosophical weaknesses. Throughout his writings, Hasker has identified four main competing theories of providence against which he has shaped his Open Theism and offered

⁴⁸⁵ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 9, 202 and 210. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 163.

⁴⁸⁶ Hasker has engaged in and contributed to a number of philosophical issues relating to the problem of evil. *The Triumph of God Over Evil and Providence and Evil and the Openness of God*, alongside various articles, include dialogues with J. Hick (*Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966)). M. Peterson ('Recent Work on the Problem of Evil', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, No. 20, 1983, pp. 321-39) and E. Stump ('The Problem of Evil', *Faith and Philosophy*, No. 2, 1985, pp.392-423) in respects to 'Soul-Making' theodicy (see also, W. Hasker, 'Suffering, Soul-Making, and Salvation', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 1988, pp. 3-19); W. Rowe ('The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16: 4, 1979, pp. 333-41. 'Ruminations About Evil', *Philosophical Perspectives*, No. 5, 1991, pp. 69-88) on the responses to gratuitous evil (see also, W. Hasker, 'The Necessity of Gratuitous Evil', *Faith and Philosophy* 9: 1, 1992, pp. 23-44. W. Hasker, 'Must God Do His Best?', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 16: 3, 1984, pp. 213-23); W. Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For the debate concerning the best created world, please see the work on the question of theodicy, J. Roth, 'A Theodicy of Protest' in S. T. Davis (ed.), *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). D. Z. Phillips, 'Theism Without Theodicy', in Davis, *Encountering*, pp. 145-61. D. Z. Phillips, 'William Hasker's Avoidance of the Problems of Evil and God (or: On Looking Outside the Igloo', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 62: 1, 2007, pp. 33-42. See also, W. Hasker, 'D. Z. Phillips' Problems with Evil and with God', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 61 :3, 2007, pp. 151-60).

critiques (theological determinism, Molinism, SFK and Process theology).⁴⁸⁷ Although a full evaluation of these models lies beyond the current scope, it is important to outline Hasker's criticisms of these systems as they form a context in which to understand his developments within Open Theism. The main difficulties for both theological determinism and Molinism revolve around the responses they proffer to the problem of evil.⁴⁸⁸ Fundamentally, Hasker argues that both theological determinism and Molinism need to affirm 'meticulous providence', which asserts that in their own differing ways, God has planned for evils which occur in the world, meaning that He is ultimately responsible for them.⁴⁸⁹ In his response to SFK, Hasker is in broad agreement with much of the discussion raised in above, that SFK offers little or no providential value, as what God 'sees' is fixed and 'impossible to change'.⁴⁹⁰ Hence, there is no way that God can respond to prayer or supplications if they are contrary to fixed future events. Finally, Hasker is critical of the Process depiction of the divine as this model reduces God's involvement in the world to persuasion alone. Hasker finds this description inadequate, as not only does it contradict the biblical portrayal of God's involvement in the world, but it also restricts God's current providential activities. According to the Process model, God can do no more than he is presently doing in communicating his 'ideal will'. He is restricted by his own means of persuasion, meaning that divine power is severely limited as he cannot unilaterally intervene in any event.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁷ Hasker, *PP*, p. 134.

⁴⁸⁸ In the instance of Molinism, Hasker's criticism extends beyond the problem of evil, as he argues against the logical difficulties in establishing *counterfactuals*, see, Hasker, *PP*, pp. 144-5. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 39-52. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 155-63. Hasker, 'Antinomies of Divine Providence', *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 4, 2002, pp. 365-79. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 173-6 and 203-7.

⁴⁸⁹ It is worth noting here that Hasker uses 'meticulous providence' in a more philosophically defined manner than Sanders which was explained in 1.7. Hasker follows M. Peterson's definition 'which holds that every single instance of evil that occurs is such that God's permitting either that specific evil or some other equal or greater evil is necessary for some greater good that is better than anything God could have brought about without permitting the evil in question', Hasker, *PP*, pp. 143-7, esp. 146. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 60, 117 and esp. 129. See also, M. Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), pp. 79-99.

⁴⁹⁰ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 147-50. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 104 and 118. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 53-63 and 197, esp. 59-63.

⁴⁹¹ Hasker, *PP*, pp. 140. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 144. Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 242-5. See, 1.7 above.

3.3.2 The Benefits of an Open Model of Divine Providence

In response to the deficiencies which exist in the previous models, Hasker argues that the Open view avoids many of the philosophical and ethical pitfalls which beset them while remaining biblically faithful. By arguing along similar lines as developed in Chapter One, Hasker argues that the Open model of providence possesses significant advantages over the previously mentioned models.⁴⁹² The Open view is biblically faithful to the portrait of God as a loving being, but also accounts for sin, evil and suffering in such a way as to be consistent with God's character and purposes.⁴⁹³ God never intended sin or suffering in the world, but consistent with his creational purposes, does not persistently override freewill, as this is counter-intuitive to the reason freewill was originally given and also prevents humanity's needs to tackle evil situations and seek ways to overcome them.⁴⁹⁴ This absolves God of any responsibility for evil entering the world and allows God to work through 'general strategies' of providence, in a combination of significant persuasion, which is God's preferred means of communication, but also allows for specific intervention when needed. This then accounts for a stronger depiction of God and providence as it actively accounts for God's participation in the world, but one that does not contradict His loving nature and His willingness to grant humanity a level of control within the world.⁴⁹⁵ Hasker acknowledges that this view is not without its detractors, most significantly the question of how can God guarantee a final victory in a world which is not meticulously controlled.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹² For references referring to the basic free-will premise see, Hasker, *PP*, pp. 136-8. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 77-8, 90-2, 149-56 and 173-4. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 25. For God as a 'risk-taker' see, W. Hasker, 'The Need for a Bigger God', in Hasker, *GOU*, pp. 15-29, esp. 19. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 151. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 204. Hasker, *GTK*, pp. 197. For being an emotive being which can be affected by human decisions, see, Hasker, *POEG*, pp. 158-9. For the possibility of God's purposes being thwarted see, Hasker, *Bigger God*, pp. 19. Hasker, *Response*, pp. 41-2. Hasker, *POEG*, pp. 161.

⁴⁹³ Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 119.

⁴⁹⁴ Hasker, *Response*, pp. 43. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 65, 132 and 144-6. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 205.

⁴⁹⁵ Hasker, *Response*, pp. 41-3. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 152-3. Hasker, *PP*, pp. 139-40.

⁴⁹⁶ Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 102. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 199-225.

3.3.3 *Christus Victor*

In response to this question, Hasker offers the following riposte. Drawing from the notion of God as creator, *all* ultimate power and control resides in God.⁴⁹⁷ However, through the divine decision to share power with humanity, God chooses to restrict his power in a voluntarily ‘*self-limited*’ manner so that human actions are morally significant.⁴⁹⁸ However, this cannot be interpreted as meaning that God relinquishes all power, or lacks it metaphysically. This is evident when Christian resources are utilised to answer the problem of evil, especially when contextualised and interpreted in the Christ event.⁴⁹⁹ For Hasker, this event is embedded within the biblical account which starts with Abraham’s call and progresses throughout the OT.⁵⁰⁰ However, the arrival of the Messiah in Jesus presents a new ‘solution’ to the problem of evil. The key for Hasker lies in the potential for ‘inward transformation’ of believers which results in a deliverance from evil, which is made possible through Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection.⁵⁰¹ By His vicarious sacrifice and taking humanity’s sin upon Himself, Jesus wins victory over sin, evil and death, affirming the traditional notion of *Christus Victor*, which not only signifies the power of divine love but also opens up a new access to God.⁵⁰² In this we see that God, far from causing evil in the world, is prepared to work in all things to bring healing, love and forgiveness (Rom. 8:28).⁵⁰³ This victory is yet only anticipatory, as the final victory will be established at the eschaton, when Jesus returns, fully expressing love and justice in a ‘decisive intervention by God’,

⁴⁹⁷ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 218-222. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 201.

⁴⁹⁸ Hasker notes that, “God, who potentially has absolute, meticulous control exactly as posited by theological determinism, *has willingly chosen to become self-limited* by creating free persons on whom he bestows limited but nevertheless quite significant powers to affect both their own lives and the world around them” (Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 153, italics in the original).

⁴⁹⁹ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 9.

⁵⁰⁰ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 207-8.

⁵⁰¹ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 209-11. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 3.

⁵⁰² Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 211.

⁵⁰³ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 214-8.

which will witness the end to all suffering and evil.⁵⁰⁴

3.3.4. Summary

In the previous chapter, we noted that Hasker's specific contribution to Open Theism incorporates a detailed merging of philosophical ideas within contemporary theological debates such as the Trinity and a Christologically focussed monotheism. In the same vein of drawing from both philosophy and theology, both historical and contemporary, Hasker draws from the same resources in answering questions relating to the notions of providence and eschatology. Hasker critically delineates competing notions of providence to establish his claim that Open Theism offers the most coherent and consistent response to the problem of evil. This is accomplished with the use of biblical and Christian language. Traditional Christian concepts such as Christ, sin and the *Parousia* are invoked to present an over-arching Christian meta-narrative into which his understanding of spiritual alienation and evil are accounted for. It is within this same theological narrative that it becomes clear how God overcomes the present state of affairs through the Christ event and how analytical thought and philosophy assists in establishing this idea.

3.4 Thomas Oord: Further Developments within Essential *Kenosis*

Oord observes that the interplay between interpretations of divine love and power, and how they are subsequently applied to the problem of evil, have often proved influential in shaping conceptions of divine providence. Throughout Church history, theologians have offered various models of providence, each possessing their own understanding of divine love and power, which subsequently impact how evil and God's providential care have been

⁵⁰⁴ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 214 and 224-5. Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 238.

explained. Oord summarises the spectrum of providential views within the Christian tradition into seven broad categories so as to evaluate previous models and situate his doctrine of *Essential Kenosis*, which he believes resolves many of the difficulties which exist in former models.⁵⁰⁵ As was noted in the previous chapter, the driving hermeneutical *loci* of Oord's work is a consistent theology of love, which by necessity promotes overall well-being and relationship whilst rejecting any notion of coercion. Oord argues that within an adequate theology of love, there is a fundamental necessity 'to combine God's power and love well', which requires a re-evaluation of the nature of and engagement between divine power and love and how this satisfactorily answers the question of evil.⁵⁰⁶ However, in developing the assertion that love and coercion are fundamentally irreconcilable, Oord argues that God is metaphysically unable to coerce and that he *cannot* entirely controls others, which considerably impacts how God exercises his providential care.⁵⁰⁷ This fundamental assertion forms the grounding for Oord's critique of former models. He argues that any model of providence which possesses an understanding of power in the 'Classical' sense (whether the divine power is fully expressed or modified in some regard of self-limitation) cannot be accepted due to the imbalance between divine love and God's culpability for evil. Likewise, Oord rejects any notion of providence in which God is presented as absent or withdrawn, as this conflicts with the essential relational ontology of God.⁵⁰⁸

3.4.1 Criticisms of Open Theism

Having once explicated the various providential models and argued for the strength of

⁵⁰⁵ The seven broad categories utilised by Oord are: (1) God is the omnicause of all events, (2) God empowers creation, but at any time can overpower it, (3) God is voluntarily self-limited, (4) Essential Kenosis, (5) God sustaining the world through a steady force, (6) God is the initial creator and current observer, and (7) God's ways are not our ways. Taken from unpublished manuscript, T. J. Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pp. 81-105.

⁵⁰⁶ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 114.

⁵⁰⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 114.

⁵⁰⁸ Oord, *ULG*, pp. 160-75.

Essential Kenosis over competing ideas, Oord utilises this foundation as a critique against existing providential thought within Open theology. Focussing primarily upon the writings of Pinnock and Sanders, Oord makes a number of observations which centre around a consistent theology of love and how this impacts God's activity in the world. In framing his critique against Pinnock and Sanders, Oord juxtaposes several of their statements concerning the interplay between love, human freedom, power and the character of God. Oord believes these to be ultimately unsatisfactory because of God's ultimate culpability within the problem of evil and how this subsequently impacts a consistent theology of love.⁵⁰⁹ Both Pinnock and Sanders define evil as a consequence of rejecting God in relationship which stems from divinely ordained freedom. Oord observes, however, that both authors acknowledge that at specific times, God can and does act coercively/unilaterally to bring certain events to pass, which overrides human volition.⁵¹⁰ Oord maintains that these two co-existing assertions are fundamentally problematic if not altogether antithetical. On the one hand, God allows for human freedom, which carries with it the possibility of evil, yet on the other, God can and does act unilaterally to prevent *some* evil events, but not all. Consequently, Oord concludes that 'Pinnock's theology is inconsistent on this crucial issue', as it is a theology which fails to explain why God would not prevent more evil.⁵¹¹ This subsequently impacts a robust theology of love as God possesses the coercive power to prevent evil, but does not consistently do so. Therefore, Oord states that the model of providence advocated by Pinnock and Sanders must be ultimately rejected due to its implications of God's culpability of evil and his inconsistent loving nature.

⁵⁰⁹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 96-7. Oord, *ULG*, pp. 133-49.

⁵¹⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 96-7.

⁵¹¹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 96-9. Oord, *ULG*, pp. 137-44.

3.4.2 Creation: The Rejection of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

Oord supports his critique of divine power as advocated by Pinnock and Sanders by appealing to the Process rejection of *creatio ex nihilo*, which, both authors affirm.⁵¹² Oord highlights a number of theological inconsistencies between God's character and power within the *ex nihilo* model, which once again, significantly impacts a consistent theology of love. Oord begins by questioning the biblical support for the *ex nihilo* position, particularly when established from Genesis 1, by citing Jon Levenson and Catherine Keller among others.⁵¹³ Of particular significance are the *tohu wabohu* and *tehom* in Genesis 1:2 which indicate the pre-existence of primordial matter alongside God which he had to subdue so that order and creation could be established.⁵¹⁴ By identifying the theological themes of divine struggle and the primordial pre-existence of matter within the Genesis 1 account, a different understanding of divine power and its relationship to the world arises as that attested to within the *ex nihilo* model. In contrast to a divine power which can create anything and everything at will (as the *ex nihilo* model states), what is witnessed within Genesis 1 is a *creatio ex chaosmos*; God

⁵¹² For earlier Process critiques of *creatio ex nihilo* see, J. B. Cobb Jr. & D. R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 63-79, esp. 65-8. C. R. Mesle, *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993), pp. 50 and 58-64. D. R. Griffin, *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 137. D. R. Griffin, 'Creation Out of Nothing, Creation Out of Chaos, and the Problem of Evil', in S. T. Davis (ed.), *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 101-19, esp. 114. C. Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵¹³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 102. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 156-7. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 41-3. See, J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). Keller, *Face of the Deep*, pp. xvii. Although it lies beyond the current scope of the thesis to explore the issue in any depth, not all scholars deny that *creatio ex nihilo* is absent from the Genesis 1 account and the wider biblical canon. For support of the *creatio ex nihilo* position, see, Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 39-43. (Sanders concedes the point along with the majority scholarly position that *creatio ex nihilo* 'cannot be derived' from the Genesis 1 account, but appeals to 2 Macc. 7:28, Rom. 4:17 and Heb. 11:3 in support of the doctrine. Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 39). P. Copan & W. L. Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), pp. 11-7. V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 103-17. For a discussion relating to the exegetical, theological and philosophical arguments surrounding the *creatio ex nihilo* debate see, T. J. Oord, *Theologies of Creation: Creatio Ex Nihilo and Its New Rivals* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁵¹⁴ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 155-6.

existing and operating within an established metaphysical order, shaping a co-dependent reality through persuasion and patience to bring order out of chaos which ultimately leads to an understanding of creation as *Creatio ex Creatione a Natura Amoris* (Creation out of Creation with a Nature of Love).⁵¹⁵ According to Oord, the God of *ex nihilo* is the God of coercion who possesses a particular kind of power which can overcome any obstacle or evil unilaterally if He so desires.⁵¹⁶ Within the system of *ex nihilo* the only reason for evil's prevalence is that God allows it. Alongside making a world in which evil is possible, this ultimately, in Oord's opinion, makes God culpable for introducing evil into creation and then not adequately preventing it.⁵¹⁷ However, Oord maintains that the God of *creatio ex nihilo* is not the depiction of the divine character or power we are confronted with in the creation accounts, wider biblical texts, contemporary cosmology and evolutionary theory. God is present within the universe as an intimate panentheistic presence, shaping the created order through a patient loving call.⁵¹⁸ God's essence is love which negates any conception of coercion. Therefore, any of God's working within the world, both in its process of becoming or exerting providential care (although the two cannot be so easily separated), must be appreciated within constraints of love which derive from his own innate character, which *cannot* involve any degree of unilateral control.⁵¹⁹ Hence, providence within *Essential Kenosis* needs to be understood within the limitations of God's power.⁵²⁰ God gives self-

⁵¹⁵ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 160-1. T. J. Oord, 'God Always Creates Out of Creation in Love: *Creatio ex Creatione a Natura Amoris*', in T. J. Oord (ed.), *Theologies of Creation: Creatio Ex Nihilo and Its New Rivals* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 109-22, esp. 117-20. See also, Griffin, *Reenchantment*, pp. 138-43.

⁵¹⁶ Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 41. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 106-8. See also, Griffin, *Reenchantment*, pp. 137.

⁵¹⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 106-7. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 160-1. Oord, *An Open Theology*, pp. 41-2. See also, Griffin, *Reenchantment*, pp. 137. Griffin, *Creation Out of Nothing*, pp. 114.

⁵¹⁸ For Oord's wider discussion on cosmology and evolution and how they relate to God's essential loving nature, see, Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 97-72.

⁵¹⁹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 107.

⁵²⁰ Oord rightly notes that the Christian tradition has long affirmed that divine power is not necessarily unlimited and that there are various actions which God cannot perform, *e. g.* God cannot perform the illogical ($2 + 2 = 5$, married bachelors *etc.*), he cannot go against his own nature (2 Tim. 2:13 and James 1:12) and nor can God self-annihilate or self-duplicate. Oord, *ULG*, pp. 176-80.

determination and agency from within his loving nature which cannot be over-ridden.

Consequently, from the very essence of God's being, there is no manner in which He can bring what He wants unilaterally to pass.⁵²¹ Thus, providence must be comprehended as a co-operation between the divine call and the creaturely response.

3.4.3 Salvation and Eschatology as a Presently Lived Co-operative Experience

Having established Oord's theological and philosophical foundation of non-coercive divine love in relation to God's character, power and engagement within the world, what remains is to explore how these important aspects impact wider soteriological facets of his theology. Oord's discussion of soteriology incorporates a strong eschatological narrative so that both are projected along the same theological trajectory. Salvation is not restricted to an understanding of the afterlife alone, but rather, 'eternal life' should be better comprehended as 'a quality of salvific life that can begin now (Jn 3:16)'.⁵²² According to Oord, 'eternal life' refers more to the model of love and abundancy which Jesus exhibited and offered during his earthly mission (Jn 10:10), which can be presently embraced and later fulfilled after death.⁵²³ However, in line with his doctrine of non-coercive participation between God and creation, Oord argues that salvation also necessarily possesses a quality of creaturely co-operation (Phil. 2:12).⁵²⁴ God inspires and empowers each of his creatures to respond to his loving call, which manifests in the hope, grounded within the resurrection of Jesus, of a loving reign in this current life, hope in the afterlife and the eventual fulfilment of all things.⁵²⁵ Due to the co-operative nature of responding to love and being ultimately shaped by it within salvation,

⁵²¹ The idea of non-coercive co-operation is also significant for Oord's development of miracles. See Oord, *NOL*, pp. 147-50. Oord, *ULG*, pp. 172-3.

⁵²² Oord, *NOL*, pp. 154.

⁵²³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 154-5.

⁵²⁴ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 154.

⁵²⁵ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 152 and 154.

Oord argues that soteriology necessarily involves an eschatological character. In what he describes as a ‘participatory eschatology’, Oord states that for the final victory of love to emerge, there is a necessity for humans to co-operate with God in prayer and loving praxis to manifest the love which God calls us to.⁵²⁶ God’s essential *kenotic* nature prohibits Him from unilaterally bringing the world to its conclusion through coercive means, thus humanity must work with God to bring about the loving conclusion to the created order.⁵²⁷

3.4.4. Summary

In the previous chapter we identified Oord’s significant contribution to Open Theism as the concept of *Essential Kenosis*. Within this particular model, we noted a stronger identification with, and, application of, Process ideas than used by any of the former authors. In attempting to find a consistent theology of divine love, Oord, is amenable to central concepts of Process theology and philosophy to describe how God loves and subsequently operates within the world. The central theme of *Essential Kenosis* clearly continues within his work surveyed throughout this current chapter looking at providence, salvation and eschatology, and we note a clear and consistent development of his thinking working from nature of God to the outworking of His purposes. The strong insistence of the non-coercive love of God which cannot traverse its own nature is developed, with many echoes to existent Process ideas which have been forwarded in the past. However, we need also to acknowledge that Oord does not simply apply these Process ideas without modification. In developing his model, Oord remains willing to use the biblical text to both ground a meta-story of God’s overarching activity from creation to the *eschaton* and to draw from it the idea of love and salvation which serve as important pillars in supporting the narrative.

⁵²⁶ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 152-3.

⁵²⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 153.

3.5 Criticisms and Considerations

In establishing the various criticisms regarding the notions of providence, salvation and eschatology expressed among our authors, we shall follow the three-fold questions which were utilised in the previous chapter. Such an approach will provide invaluable insights into the differences which exist within Open thought regarding these categories, and will additionally supply the means of identifying significant lacunae which will be addressed throughout the dialogical and constructive element of this work. It should also be noted, that, the critiques which were pinpointed in the previous chapter, especially the under-developed Pneumatology which presently exists within Open theology, will continue to play a significant role in this chapter. One of the principle aims within this current chapter seeks to build upon, and develop, the criticisms which were raised previously, so that a more fully rounded critique arises of not only the Open conceptions of God, but how He operates lovingly within the world. It is also worth noting that whereas in the previous chapter the views of Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker were considered together due to the large overlap which existed in their work regarding the Godhead, in the current chapter they will be addressed independently. This need arises because in exploring their own unique contours of providence, salvation and eschatology, each author posits quite differing and divergent views which require its own responses and correctives.

3.5.1 Criticisms of Clark Pinnock

Clark Pinnock encapsulates and epitomises perfectly why in this chapter the notions of providence, soteriology and eschatology are considered together. As he claims, these theological categories are ‘irreducible’ and ‘intimately connected’. It is difficult to imagine how each of these concepts can be granted their full theological purchase if considered separately, while reading them together offers a much deeper insight into God’s activity

within the world in a holistic manner. In this respect, I follow Pinnock's lead in acknowledging their inherent inter-connectedness which requires they be read alongside each other, while also accepting that they each have distinctive functions within Christian doctrine.

3.5.1.1 Providence and the Problem of Evil

In adopting the three-tiered questions to establish criticisms of Pinnock, it is prudent to tackle each facet of his thinking in turn to prevent confusion and duplication of material. In this respect, we shall take each of the topics individually, beginning with Pinnock's ideas relating to divine providence, then moving onto soteriology and finally concluding with some remarks regarding his eschatological vision. As we noted above in Oord's explanation of divine providence, there were instances in which he is critical of Pinnock's explanation of divine providence. Oord's critique of Pinnock is fully developed in Chapter 4 of *The Nature of Love*, which focuses on the consistency between divine love, the problem of evil and how this impacts the conception of providence. This will serve as a gateway into Pinnock's thoughts regarding providence as it is a present and pertinent discussion within the Open community. We initially note that Pinnock is responding to two specific theological debates in his explanation of providence: the challenge of theological determinism which minimises human participation in the world and refuting the idea from Process Theology that God is metaphysically restricted to mere persuasion. In response to these questions, Pinnock posits his 'logic of love' theodicy, which centres around libertarian free-will as an explanation of God's activity in the world and why evil exists. However, as Oord notes, such a response is ultimately unsatisfactory as it does not account for why God prevents genuine evil in the world.⁵²⁸ According to Pinnock's understanding of God as utilising both persuasive and

⁵²⁸ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 96-116, esp. 96-101.

coercive power, Oord questions why a loving God does not do more to prevent evil in the world, which is a valid point that Pinnock admittedly concedes.⁵²⁹ This is undoubtedly a blow for Pinnock's conception of providence as the central question is left unanswered.

However, in reflecting upon the challenge from Oord, we note that Pinnock's understanding of providence leaves some further questions unasked. The manner in which Oord addresses his question about evil in the world and God's providential care, we note that the problem of evil is the topic which governs the debate in relation to God's love. It should rightly be asked, though, if this one aspect within the debate concerning providence should be dominated by one particular question, in this case, the problem of evil. Oord is right to highlight the fact that this is one of the major reasons for the rejection of Christianity and should rightfully be addressed. But, does this necessitate that it then become *the* central hermeneutical key for disseminating a view of providence? By setting up the debate in this manner, forces any answer to conform to one particular concept, rather than letting broader perspectives speak into the discussion on an equal basis. This is particularly pertinent when we consider the constructs which Oord utilises to critique Pinnock's position. As we have noted from Oord, he desires to see a consistent view of the love of God, both in His character and in the outworking of His purposes. While I agree with Oord on this point, I would also take issue in how Oord then subsequently defines divine power (see below). Oord posits that a loving God cannot coerce, as this is not love, and he defines coercion as the means of totally controlling a situation. However, such a position adopts a language which necessarily forces a dichotomy. Within Oord's response to Pinnock, there is a choice of only persuasive or coercive power. There are no other options available within the discussion, and as such, it is reduced to a binary set of choices. Either God coerces or God persuades. This then means that

⁵²⁹ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 149.

in playing this language game, difficulties are bound to arise as no subtlety can be offered to expand the current discussion. Pinnock makes the mistake in his theology of falling into the dichotomised language, instead of offering differing perspectives of how divine power can, and does, function. In this respect, Pinnock fails to offer differing forms of divine power which do not necessarily conform to either divine determinism or Process theology. As such, the debate around God's providential care is cemented within the language of persuasion and coercion which offers little hope of moving forward.

3.5.1.2 The Trinitarian Lacuna within Divine Providence

In addition to this, there is a question of consistency within Pinnock's theological model *vis-a-vis* his understanding of a relational and Trinitarian ontology which all of reality is grounded in. Pinnock is clear that reality is founded upon the inherent relationality of the Triune God, but this central narrative within his overarching theological model is, at best, severely underdeveloped in his thinking regarding divine providence. Given the central place of the Trinity in Pinnock's theological thinking, it is unclear why in the discussion of providential care, this central facet of his theology is all but absent. Granted, Pinnock does acknowledge that the Spirit is operational within the world redeeming it, but this is given no real shape in terms of divine providence. Furthermore, the biblical narrative of the history of Israel, culminating in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and how this relates to the giving of the Spirit is absent in giving shape to how providence could be conceptualised. Consequently, we are left with serious questions regarding Pinnock's view of providence given his wider theological project. Therefore, in evaluating Pinnock's Open Theist contribution to providence, we are left with a model which is beset with difficulties, though the broad notion of his 'logic of love' theodicy holds some promise if corrected with a stronger Pneumatological character. However, the questions he raises in terms of the debates

between determinism and Process thought fail to move the discussion beyond the persuasion/coercion impasse, as well as missing an opportunity to interject new ways to think about divine power which are grounded within the biblical narrative which he seeks to serve as a foundational source.

3.5.1.3 The Laudable Turn to Eastern Orthodoxy

Moving from Pinnock's conception of providence to soteriology we note the laudable turn to a broader ecumenical engagement with Eastern Orthodoxy. Here we see the intention from Pinnock to move beyond Western, largely Protestant, interpretations of salvation as a right-standing before God to something altogether more relational. In questioning the limitations of such a narrow conception of salvation which is focussed primarily, if not exclusively around justification, Pinnock introduces the notions of both recapitulation and *theosis* as alternative means of pressing home a fuller, and deeper, sense of salvation. Pinnock raises the question of the value of viewing the end goal of salvation as just a right-standing before God, which according to Pinnock is misaligned with the loving and relational nature of God. This aspect of his thinking is further supported by his criticisms of any notion of the atonement which relies solely on forensic categories. To posit a view of salvation which has at its heart the idea of an angry punishing God, which only results in a position of attributed righteousness, misses the point of God's love and salvific work within the world. Rather, in face of these criticisms, Pinnock asserts that salvation should be comprehended as something more loving and relational.

3.5.1.4 Pneumatology and Soteriology

It is here that Pinnock applies the notions of Recapitulation and *theosis* as necessary correctives to the largely Reformed ideas posited above. It is by utilising these, Pinnock is able to argue that, in continuation of his insistence in the previous chapter that the Son and

Spirit operate together, we are presented with a salvific model that adequately incorporates the work of the Spirit, something which is largely absent in Reformed thought (at least in the central cruciform drama). By making this significant theological step, the Spirit moves into a central position of the entire salvific drama, which undercuts some of the Christocentric emphasis which was raised in the previous chapter. As Pinnock denotes, the Spirit becomes the fundamental dimension within the salvific drama, as he states, ‘Salvation is the Spirit, who indwells in us, drawing us toward participation in the life of the triune God’.⁵³⁰ Yet, the centrality of the Spirit here operates within a Trinitarian context, as one of the goals of the indwelling Spirit is to conform the believer into a Christ-likeness. The work of the Spirit is operating to make visible the image of God within the world through His believing people. Despite the contrast that this model offers to largely forensic models with their focus on justification, Pinnock still holds to the importance of forensic categories within the overall drama of salvation and atonement. The shaping of the believer into the image and likeness of Christ functions on the premise of cruciformity. It is in and through the death of Jesus that believers take the shape of their own faith through shared ecclesial life and partaking of the sacraments. Here Pinnock, in dialogue with Romans Chapters 5, 6 and 8 ties together the importance of justification, which is just the start of the Christian life, with the notion of *theosis* as a deeper expression of what salvation is intended for.

3.5.1.5 The Adoption of Pinnock’s Soteriology

In summarising Pinnock’s position regarding salvation, it is unquestionable that he presents a very convincing, coherent and persuasive picture of how salvation should be understood within a relational theology. I find that the picture he provides, not only beautiful

⁵³⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 150.

and relational (and should not theology aspire for presenting such models?), but theologically robust and meaningful. Pinnock's ecumenical openness allows for a critique of salvific models which emphasise justification and offer little else, but still acknowledges their importance, especially in light of the biblical narrative. But it is here that we can raise one critical question in regards to Pinnock's melding of *theotic* and forensic categories within his soteriology. More could have been done within Pinnock's thought to draw together the respective narratives so that the notions of union and justification flow more naturally through each other. Unquestionably, the Trinitarian emphasis which Pinnock lays out should have covered more adequately what role the Spirit played within the crucifixion and resurrection. By doing this, there would have been a stronger consistency between the two *loci* of themes which Pinnock seeks to marry within his salvific model. However, in saying this, there is little question that the picture presented by Pinnock of how salvation can be comprehended offers a very significant model for Open Theists. Pinnock answers the questions in part about how biblical models should merge with one another to offer a fuller description of what is meant by salvation, which importantly draws the Spirit into a central place.

3.5.1.6 Humanity's Role within Eschatology

Pinnock extends his soteriological vision into the dialogue with the eschatological by insisting that present salvation is an anticipation of the future consummation of the union with God. There is a very obvious related progression in Pinnock's thought on this matter, which is fully consistent in themes and content, especially in regards to God's loving nature and the essential relational character. As an extension of this notion, the fundamental Trinitarian aspect of Pinnock's thinking is reinforced, as it is the Spirit who works in the hearts of believers to form a Christ-likeness in adherents, which culminates in the final and full union with God. Yet despite the overall coherence within his soteriological and eschatological

understanding, which takes full account of what salvation means, both now and in the future, one significant question seems to have been omitted by Pinnock in expressing this understanding within an over-all Open Theist framework. As Pinnock has acknowledged, God has opened up reality so that humanity shares power with, and thus creates this present reality with, Himself. There is a lack in Pinnock's work about what contribution humanity does, or could, make in bringing the *eschaton* to fruition. We note that Pinnock is keen to demonstrate both the present and future implications within his eschatological thinking, which serves well to avoid the excesses of both a fully realized or futuristic eschatology. But in how the salvific and eschatological fully interact, especially from a human perspective, is met with silence. Within such a system as Open Theism, with its focus on a relationality and co-operation between the divine and humanity, should there not be more reflection on what role humanity plays in bringing about the final eschatological consummation. Omitting this question means that Pinnock lacks a significant dimension in his eschatology in explaining how humanity should act within this time to work with the Triune God in bringing all things to completion.

3.5.1.7 The Ontology of the Present

As a corollary to this idea, we need also ask about the nature, construct and substance of the present reality, which is another important omission from Pinnock. By insisting upon a coherent and consistent relationship between God's essential relational nature and the reflection of this within the world, Pinnock misses the opportunity to explore the full nature of the present reality, especially when grounded in an Open Theist perspective. Pinnock rightly identifies the importance of the salvific moment and how this is related in an anticipatory manner to the coming *eschaton*. Additionally, he also observes how the Church is to work

within this world to bring salvation to all in a praxis-driven anticipation of the end times so that a rigorous and compelling inaugurated eschatology is established. However, despite these significant and important insights from Pinnock, what is lacking is how these coalesce to form a fully comprehensive and coherent whole within Open thought, especially in terms of defining the eschatological imperative in the present moment *now*. Open Theism has a particular understanding of the present moment which is closely related to God's ever-present activity and the irreducible connectedness between the two. Yet despite this understanding which exists in Pinnock's understanding of time, this has not been transposed into his eschatological and soteriological vision.⁵³¹ Whereas Pinnock wants to affirm the participatory nature of the divine and His creatures within a temporal sequence, this is perplexingly absent in the outworking of his eschatology and soteriology. Pinnock lays the foundation for how salvation and eschatology can possibly integrate into the present time, as the two are shown to be necessary allied, but this is not fully realized. The relationship between salvation and eschatology takes a more future emphasis in Pinnock's thought, and subsequently the possibilities of how a present salvation within a temporal matrix can actually be *participatory* as well as anticipatory are not explored. In this way, Pinnock fails to explain how the present reality can possess an inherent eschatological nature as well as expressing how we as creatures have an important role in bringing about the eschatological events. If, as Open Theism purports, humans contribute significantly to the events which occur within the world, is it unreasonable to suggest that we also play a part in how things are brought to their consummation.

⁵³¹ Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 96-9.

3.5.2 Criticisms of John Sanders

In raising the question of divine providence in Sanders theological *oeuvre*, we note in a consistent and coherent manner with other facets of his Open Theism a sustained criticism of Classical Theism. Troubled by the manner in which Classical Theism has portrayed the divine as a distant and often detached deity, Sanders asks if there needs to be significant correctives offered to this picture based upon viewing God as primarily a loving being. Sanders insists that the manner in which providence is explained must run in conjunction with an understanding of God's very nature - love. This, however, causes a basic problem for Sanders as the God portrayed throughout Classical Theism has not been defined by love, but the Hellenistic categories which were outlined above. This subsequently means that the explanation of providence has been divorced from a proper discussion of love despite being coherently constructed within its own metaphysical thought. In this respect, Sanders' fundamental assertion is that any notion of divine providence must rather cohere to the idea of God's love.

3.5.2.1 Christocentrism and Divine Providence

From this fundamental perspective, Sanders questions how adequate the Classical response to providence is, not only in terms of its own internal intelligibility and logic, but in light of revelation and the Christ event. Sanders asks the very important question of Classical providential models of how Christology impacts, or should impact, its overall comprehension. This particular question has significant import as Sanders argues that Christology is absent in Classical models, and that to properly understand how providence functions in this world, there should be a necessary Christological component. Sanders grounds this belief upon the notion that as God's truest revelation, the life of Jesus reveals the essence of God's

providential care. Although Sanders is correct to raise this vital issue, the question must be asked of him if it is entirely consistent with the theological foundation which he establishes for his theology. As we noted in the previous chapter, Sanders, along with Pinnock and Hasker, affirms the basic Trinitarian relational ontology which shapes not only theology, but all of created reality. The fundamental picture of God which is portrayed within his theist foundation requires a robust and consistent understanding of the Trinity. However, this basic notion is not consistently applied throughout his work, as we note that his discussions regarding providence lacks a Pneumatological dimension. It was highlighted in the last chapter that Sanders in his description of the Triune Godhead lacked an adequate Pneumatological component, which has subsequently impacted how he conceives providence. It can come as no surprise that there is little in the way of discussion about the Spirit in his understanding of providence, if in his doctrine of God itself, there was a lacuna regarding the Spirit's very being. Therefore, the inherent Christocentrism which was evident in his understanding of the Trinity is further reinforced when applied to the doctrine of providence. There is no discussion from Sanders of how the Spirit can offer insights into strengthening providential models, and despite the use of narrative portions of the Bible to explain Jesus' role in informing providential care, the book of Acts, with its emphasis upon the Spirit, plays no part in Sanders thinking. Consequently, we see in Sanders a 'binitarian' outworking of providence which focusses solely on the Father and Son, which is ultimately inconsistent with his model of God identified in Chapter 2.

3.5.2.2 The Subsuming of the Spirit within Soteriology

Having now established the broad contours of Sanders' Christocentric model of providence, we move to his conception of salvation to evaluate how this is expressed within

his overall model of Open Theism. We note here, as we did with Pinnock above, that Sanders wishes to maintain a relational concept at the very core of his soteriology. Whereas Pinnock sought ecumenical dialogue for expanding upon Western legal models of the atonement and salvation, we observe in Sanders an application of his Wesleyan/Holiness tradition to answer how salvation can be truly relational. The key for Sanders in the salvific drama is that sin ruptures the original creational and relational purposes of God, therefore, any model of salvation must restore that which was lost through sin. However, for Sanders, the question lies deeper than just a restoration, as he states that in its sinful state, humanity is seemingly unable to respond to God's call. Thus it is the Holy Spirit, who in offering 'enabling grace', provides the means for a relational response to the divine. It is once the incumbent accepts the saving power of Christ, through their own freedom and volition, that they receive the benefits of Christ applied through the Spirit.

From a surface reading, it appears as though the Christocentrism and Pneumatological lacuna which have been highlighted in relation to Sanders work have been stifled within his soteriology, as both the Son and Spirit appear to play crucial roles within the salvific drama. However, a closer reading shows that both aspects continue to dominate his theological construction. Unquestionably, Sanders is seeking a relational model of salvation, and one which does not rely on sole forensic categories to explain how the atonement and salvation functions.⁵³² Yet, in doing this, his return to an understanding of Wesleyan/Holiness soteriology limits, rather than expands, his salvific model at least in terms of Pneumatology. While the inclination to move away from a sole 'Penal Substitution' model of the atonement is laudable as a primary theological move, questions must be raised about how he

⁵³² J. Sanders (ed.), *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

subsequently constructs his soteriology. Sanders raises relational questions which other atonement theories often omit, such as the focus on a loving relationship and the necessary human response within salvation. However, in doing such, Sanders returns to the language and concepts of Wesleyan and Holiness ideas, which in turn are grounded upon traditional Arminian concepts. It should be noted that applying and using Arminian concepts does not nullify Open Theist theology, as Sanders does highlight the large level of theological overlay between the two.⁵³³ However, what it does do in practice is insert concepts from Arminianism into the Open Theist model, without fully negotiating the theological differences which exists between them.⁵³⁴

While it is unlikely that any Open Theist would deny the necessary human component of salvation, we are again drawn to the Trinitarian component ascribed to Open Theism by Sanders which is not fully consistent. In drawing from Wesleyan/Holiness notions of ‘enabling grace’, we plainly see that the Spirit’s role is to offer enabling/prevenient grace, and proffer the *possibility* of salvation. While this may appear to attribute a significant role to the Spirit, in essence, this function once again subsumes the Spirit to Christ. The Spirit only offers the *possibility* of salvation. The Spirit, then applies the benefits gained *by* Christ *to* the believer if they accept. It is Christ who has won salvation and, in turn, bestows the benefits upon the believer. The Spirit plays no central part in the salvific drama, there is no mention of how the Son and Spirit operated together in the act of atonement, and the substance of salvation is separate from the being of the Spirit. Granted, Sanders does highlight the manner in which it is the Spirit which first opens up the possibility for divine love, but after this, the

⁵³³ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 197-9.

⁵³⁴ For a critique of Open Theism from an Arminian perspective which highlights the theological differences between them, see, M. D. Robinson, *The Storms of Providence: Navigating the Waters of Calvinism, Arminianism and Open Theism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003).

Spirit is a silent participant in the ensuing salvation. This is further reinforced by Sanders clear assertion that what the Spirit offers is not salvation proper, only the means to it, further distancing the Spirit from the salvific *crisis* moment. In contrast to the relational and Trinitarian ontology advocated by Sanders, we see a failure from him to ask how this plays out consistently within the drama of salvation, with the Spirit playing a central and intimate role. As with his doctrine of God and providence, we again note a clear absence of the Spirit in the very heart of his thought.

3.5.3 Criticisms of William Hasker

When considering Hasker's contributions to providence, salvation and eschatology, we note, as with Pinnock, that there is a thematic inter-connectedness running through them. In this regard, the innate relational and open nature of God shapes clearly how each of the categories under consideration are formed. In turning again to the three-fold questions which have been utilised throughout this and the previous chapter, we note that while there is much within Hasker's thoughts which can be affirmed, there are also some critical questions which need raising. In offering the objections he does to Theological Determinism, Molinism, SFK and Process Theism, the basic theological problem to which he responds, and subsequently develops his own thinking against, begins to emerge. Central within Hasker's reasoning is the question of how God, within an Open context, can be comprehended relationally which is both biblically faithful and theologically and philosophically consistent compared to other competing ideas.

Hasker begins by stating that the presence of evil in the world is a direct result of creatures' wills and can in no way be attributed to God, which is the indirect implication of Theological Determinism and Molinism. In addition to this assertion is the recognition that

within the systems of SFK and Process Theology, God is, for differing reasons, unable to act directly in the world at the behest of people to prevent evils when they arise. As a response to understanding how God operates within the world in contrast to the above ideas, Hasker posits that God is currently acting responsively within the world, which operates on a power sharing premise between God and His creatures, with *both* persuasive power (His preferred means) and direct action, while retaining all the metaphysical power traditionally associated with the divine. Although I affirm in broad outline the assertions which Hasker makes in relation to his initial inquiry of how to conceive of God relationally which also avoids the pitfalls associated with the other systems of thought, there is a need to interrogate more closely the questions which he raises about God acting within the world and what implications this holds for a coherent reading of Open Theism.

3.5.3.1 The Theological Difficulty of Accepting that God Overrides Freewill

One significant question which arises as a consequence from Hasker's providential premise is how the notion of power sharing between God and His created order is to be fully comprehended. Hasker maintains that while God possesses all ultimate power, in His self-limiting love, God shares the co-creation of reality with His creatures, as they have significant power in shaping how this world will be. Hasker argues that such a view not only accounts for why there is evil in the world, but more importantly, expresses how God can be fully relational in dealings with His creatures. However, it is at this stage that we begin to encounter potential difficulties with the cohesion of Hasker's model. In asserting that God retains all ultimate power which is never completely relinquished, and arguing that God is operational in the world through direct means, Hasker argues that, at certain times, God overrides freewill to ensure that His purposes are fulfilled. Undoubtedly, Hasker's assertion of

God overriding freewill derives, in part, from his insistence that God is not restricted to mere persuasion within the world. But, with the contention that God overrides the freewill of His creatures as a means of positing control, presents not only a serious problem in terms of God's overall relational purposes but also constitutes an inherent inconsistency in Open Theist thought. While I would agree that in remaining biblically faithful there is indeed a need to affirm God's direct activity in the world in some instances, I would nevertheless contend that this *cannot* include the manipulation of creaturely volition. The fundamental reason for this is the direct consequences this has upon the relational heart of the Open model of God, which is jeopardised by such a proposal. The problem for Hasker (and other Open Theists who also posit this idea) is that it is hard to reconcile love and control, which is a point often made by Open Theists. As we have seen throughout this work, love and control are incompatible and the belief that God does, albeit sparingly, apply this form of control questions how God relates to His creatures and what the genuine nature of their responses are. Issues such as whether God ever brings anyone into salvation, which holds as a corollary why He would not do this for all, and why some people are controlled when others are not are problematic questions which Hasker omits to ask as a subsequent result of his contention. Hasker does not clarify if in fact the overriding of volition constitutes the same theological order as other direct instances of divine intervention (such as miracles), implying that that there is little difference between the various forms of divine power. Ultimately, because these questions are not resolved, I would contend that it leaves Hasker's model in a critical position similar to that of Theological Determinism and Molinism, as it is not clarified when and precisely why some people are controlled, leaving open a doubt to the extent of divine manipulation. This understanding also holds serious implications for the problem of evil, as

the question must be asked why God does not act directly to prevent some of the most heinous events in history if He is prepared to control some events and has in fact done so.

Tied with this notion is the question of where biblically Hasker can assert such a view which holds that God uses volitional control sparingly. Far from a determinist understanding of God's power in the world, the Bible demonstrates at various points the freedom which creatures possess to defy God's will, which is a point often emphasised by Open Theists. However, by insisting upon the infringement of freewill produces an inconsistency in the Open Theist position, especially in light of the criticisms levelled by Hasker to forms of Theological Determinism and Molinism. If we take the Christ event as a significant portrayal of God's actions within the world, as Open Theists often contend, then we note the inherent human freedom associated with His ministry. The examples of the 'Rich Young Man' in Mt. 19:16-30 and the response of the cured leper in Lk. 17:11-19 demonstrates the freedom associated with Christ's teaching and acts. Both instances demonstrate clearly the open condition to reject Him. It is difficult to imagine from these examples that volitional constraint is a part of the Christological *modus operandi*. Far from controlling the responses of the people to whom He ministered, we observe a loving acceptance of their freedom even when this results in the direct rejection of who Christ is. In addition to the freedom offered by Christ throughout His ministry, we observe similar instances in the working of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, with the theophanic arrival of the Spirit upon the Apostles and the ensuing *xenolalia*, we note that it is Peter's concomitant speech in association *with* the mighty act that provides the volitional context for the 'God fearers' to accept his testimony (vv. 14-39). Although the Spirit manifested in a powerful and mighty way, there is no compulsion from the Spirit for anyone to accept these signs, and in fact, some do not (vv. 13 and 41). Additionally, in 1 Cor. 12-4, we observe in Paul's writings further

instances of the Spirit's direct activity which is accompanied by Her willingness to allow freedom. As Turner observes, spiritual manifestations have led to 'prideful boastings' and 'divisive elitist practice' within the Corinthian community.⁵³⁵ Yet, for the purposes of our argument, the Spirit has not prevented directly such abuses. Rather, it is up to Paul to offer corrective and pastoral guidance in this matter, again suggesting a volitional freedom is present in how believers can respond to instances of power from the Spirit, even when this involves mistreatment. Although these examples are far from exhaustive, they do at least demonstrate aspects of God's willingness, in His Trinitarian persons, to grant full freedom to humans, even when they come at a personal cost to Himself. Therefore, Hasker's contention that God does at times override His creature's volition requires much further explanation and exegetical support.

3.5.3.2 *Soteriological Christocentrism*

Despite the inconsistency regarding freewill in Hasker's soterio-eschatological rendering of providence, I see that there is much within his proposal which should be rightly affirmed. His adaptation of the *Christus Victor* identifies a number of fundamental concerns about the nature of suffering and evil in the world, and it seeks, through the entire biblical narrative, to clearly demonstrate the loving actions of a caring and involved deity. In asking how salvation, eschatology and providence coalesce to form a unity of action, Hasker not only offers a picture of God who works to bring good out of evil (Rom. 8:28), but he also offers a new approach to the question of providence which is not primarily governed by the

⁵³⁵ M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), pp. 262.

persuasive/coercion dichotomy which has framed many of the providential discussions considered within this work.

However, in admitting that this model offers much in moving forward, there are nevertheless three significant correctives which need raising. The first harks back to the discussion in the previous chapter which highlighted the strong Christocentrism present in Hasker's rendering of the Godhead which diminished the role of the Holy Spirit. Being as this was present within his presentation of God, it can come as little surprise that any subsequent outworking of his understanding also lacks a Pneumatological dimension. Without understating the importance of the Christ event, and what was achieved in His victory on the cross, there is no reflection in Hasker's work of the role the Spirit played within that event, or how She is incorporated into the narrative as a necessary consequence. There is no reflection upon what the Spirit is doing now in terms of providing providential care or how this is related to Christ's victory over the cross. Admittedly, the *Christus Victor* understanding of the atonement has often minimized the role of the Spirit, choosing rather to focus upon the Son (and obviously so!), but being as Hasker wishes to express God acting presently in the world to heal and save then it is perplexing to comprehend how this can be done without proper recourse to the Spirit. The second point ties into this notion, and highlights the danger of selecting one atonement theory without debate or reference to other models. As we saw in Pinnock's ecumenical discussions, he sought to integrate other atonement theories under his lead motif of Recapitulation. In this manner, the cross becomes a multi-faceted event, in which not just one thing was achieved and no one group can claim ownership of it. Hasker misses the opportunity to explore how other theories of the atonement can help to deepen his providential thinking and demonstrate in a deeper way what else God is doing through the cross. Finally, and this echoes completely the criticisms levelled against Pinnock above in this

chapter, Hasker renders the *eschaton* as a future anticipatory event, with no real discourse about how the present contributes towards it. Again, we note an inconsistency in the open nature of our present which forms future events in Hasker's eschatological vision. He tends to emphasise the sovereign act of God as a decisive act but with little consideration of what part humans could or should play within this drama. Within an Open Theist reading of eschatology, there needs to be a much stronger understanding of the present and how this is significant for what will come later.

3.5.4 Criticisms of Thomas Oord

When identifying the initial problem which grounds Oord's reflections regarding providence, salvation and eschatology, we are drawn back to his understanding of divine love and power and how they necessarily intersect with the notion of evil which was identified in the previous chapter. In this respect, the criticisms levelled against Oord in Chapter 2 mirror the current concerns in relation to his theology of providence, soteriology and eschatology. The issues which were highlighted there, which included the lack of hermeneutical clarity regarding the interplay between Process and biblical sources, the diminished Christology and Pneumatological ambiguity continue to impact the evaluation of Oord's work. Yet in stating this, there is also much which needs to be endorsed in what Oord is advocating, especially in terms of his understanding of the co-operative participation humans must enter into alongside God's salvific initiatives.

3.5.4.1 Divine Power and Creation

In turning first to Oord's thoughts regarding providence, we must consider again the notions of coercive and persuasive power and God acting unilaterally in the world as

advocated by Oord. One of the driving themes within Oord's work is the legitimate concern of how the Classical God of unlimited power responds to the problem of evil. For Oord, the God of such power, who can create *ex nihilo* and perform miracles at will is ultimately culpable for not preventing more evil. His critique against Open Theists on this issue holds certain validity, especially the assertion that God intervenes to prevent some evils but not all, and that He can also determine events unilaterally through the control of freewill. In response, Oord posits an understanding of divine power, love and divine activity which exonerates God from the ultimate culpability and responsibility of evil present in the world by insisting that God *is unable* to directly intervene through coercive and unilateral means. But at this point we must interrogate further Oord's assertion regarding the interaction between love and power to see if it holds weight.

As we noted in the previous chapter, the reduction of God's power to persuasion alone was questioned, arguing that from biblical sources, such an understanding of power was far from settled. It was argued that the conception of divine persuasive power tended to reflect aspects of Oord's broader Process metaphysic rather than his use of biblical sources. In this chapter, however, we looked at Oord's use of Genesis chapter 1 which argued for a co-operative and persuasive understanding of creation which challenges traditional unilateral conceptions of *creatio ex nihilo*. Such a move from Oord undoubtedly strengthens the claim for a biblical understanding of persuasive power which subsequently bolsters the wider assertions within the *Essential Kenosis* model. Yet, on closer examination, the issue is not as settled as Oord first suggests. Ricard Rice, in his article supporting the traditional understanding of *creatio ex nihilo* from an Open perspective, agrees with Oord that while Genesis 1 cannot be used in support of creation out of nothing, it is in fact other biblical texts

which are used to uphold the doctrine.⁵³⁶ In drawing insights from Pannenberg, Rice asserts that verses such as Ps. 103:14-30, 139:13, 147:8, Jn. 1:3, Rom. 4:7 and Heb. 11:3 each relate the essential tenets of *creatio ex nihilo* and underpin a proper belief in God's nature and relation to the world.⁵³⁷ Rice insists that maintaining the qualitative distinction between Creator and created is essential within any Christian theology and that by affirming the *creatio* doctrine, God's ontological self-sufficiency through the use of unilateral creative power is completely reinforced as well as emphasising an 'indispensable' aspect of God's nature. Rice also argues that the use of unilateral power by God not only ensures that the end purposes will be achieved, ultimately bringing peace and the reign of love, but that it also tells us something of the great love that God has for the world. Far from being an arbitrary or capricious choice, God has fully invested in His decision to create, time and again illustrating what lengths He will go to bring all into His loving call.⁵³⁸

From Rice's observations two significant challenges emerge to Oord's assertion about divine power. The first ties into the issue surrounding Oord's hermeneutical practice which was highlighted in the previous chapter, which subsequently questions the notion made by Oord that the Bible does not support coercive or unilateral power. As we noted from Oord, this idea is exegetically supported by Genesis 1, but as Rice states, the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, and all of its theological corollaries, are not constructed from this chapter alone. In this respect, we note a silence from Oord concerning how to read and interpret verses such as Heb. 11:3 and Jn. 1:3 if the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* is to be consistently critiqued. Again, we must highlight the hermeneutical point above, of how Oord can, and in practice does,

⁵³⁶ R. Rice, 'Creatio Ex Nihilo: It's Not About Nothing', in Oord, *Theologies of Creation*, pp. 87-98.

⁵³⁷ Rice, *Creatio*, pp. 92-3. See also, W. Pannenberg (trans. G. W. Bromiley), *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 9-19, esp. 15-8.

⁵³⁸ Rice, *Creatio*, pp. 93-4.

prioritise one chapter/verse over another. In this regard, we see that Rice is in a much stronger position biblically to assert the existence of use of divine unilateral power in terms of creation in contrast to Oord's reading. Secondly, Rice's assertion that far from contributing to the problem of evil as Oord maintains, the idea of God working unilaterally is a significant expression of love, which supports and promotes loving action, rather than resulting in God's culpability of evil. The negative implications of Oord's notion that if a loving God can do more to prevent evil than He should, is then somewhat blunted by Rice's insights. Unilateral power is, then, rather a means for God working for the promotion of love within the world instead of a means of controlling all things. But does this then completely remove the central thrust of Oord's objection? Here we come to the crux of the matter via the interplay between the ideas of divine unilateral activity, coercion and persuasion.

3.5.4.2 Divine Power and Human Volition

The question which must be asked at this point concerns the relationship between God's coercive unilateral activity and how this impacts human volition. Specifically, if unilateral divine activity and coercion is related at all to volitional coercion, or, if it is possible to maintain a distinction between a unilateral act of God and human freedom. The implication from Oord is that there exists a very strong relationship between unilateral power and coercion, and in terms of his understanding of *creatio ex nihilo* this is completely justified. God must work both unilaterally and coercively if He were to create from nothing. But in extending this thought, should unilateral activity always be considered in terms of the negative connotations which Oord attributes to unilateral activity and coercion? I think not, especially if we take into consideration the complex matrix of creaturely events which are necessarily involved in God's unilateral activity. As we noted above in responses to Hasker's

work, I proposed the notion that God *never* overrides human volition as this nullifies the salvific and relational project established at creation (on this point I am in complete agreement with Oord). In this regard, God can act in powerful and unilateral ways, but not at the expense of human freedom with the aim of revealing important aspects of who He is. In these instances, God can perform mighty and theophanic acts, but the meaning and implication of these events remain upto the individual to assess and interpret. In this manner, we have a system in which God remains a prominent actor in His own drama and allows for the full participation of His being and nature to self-evidently act. But, that the decisions to accept God on the basis of these actions is grounded entirely in the human volition. The crux of this argument lies in the fact that unilateral activity is then not necessarily non-relational or coercive in terms of human free-will. Unilateral divine activity can and does reveal something of God's power and nature, and the Bible tells time and again that this is the manner through which God often works. The purpose of these events is not to coerce someone into faith against their will, but rather to demonstrate who God is; to offer the possibility of relationship with the full knowledge and choice of what God they are accepting. Persuasion, then, ultimately lies at the heart of all God's activity, as the human volition is the final arbitrator of accepting or rejecting the divine. In this way, unilateral power from God (as long as it never subjugates human choice) must work with the persuasive nature of God, as the final decision on the part of humanity must be free and unrestrained. Unilateral action can be a loving action which establishes and builds genuine human-divine relationships, on the condition that they are truly and openly accepted with no restraints on freedom. Here I would draw a distinction with Oord, who fundamentally associates coercion and unilateral activity as antithetical to God's loving actions. However, I see no biblical argument against this view and, rather, the

argument I present marries together both a biblical telling of God's powerful and mighty acts and human freedom.

3.5.4.3 The Necessity of a Cooperative Soteriology

Having now surveyed aspects of Oord's model of providence, we turn next to his understanding of salvation. Despite the differences highlighted above regarding the notion of divine power and how that manifests within the world, there is much within Oord's work regarding soteriology which should be readily affirmed and developed. More so than any other author considered within this work, Oord strongly emphasises, rightly, the co-operative and relational character of salvation. The understanding of Jesus' loving call as the means to salvation is relationally grounded and underlines perfectly the need for a genuine response. This then allows the potential of sharing in divine love to become a reality. Additionally, the stress from Oord that salvation must be grounded within the present, which challenges any overly futuristic notions of the salvific moment, should be lauded by all Open Theists in presenting what salvation truly means. The present, as an ever-constant ontological reality, is then infused with loving significance, and as Oord maintains, holds with it too, an eschatological dimension (see below).

3.5.4.4 Hamartiological Lacuna

Yet, in commending the central tenets of Oord's soteriological understanding, it is not without its criticisms, as some important questions have been omitted from Oord's analysis. One of the key issues present within Oord's thinking concerns the centrality of evil. Resolving the problem of evil is a fundamental concern for Oord, which as he rightly argues, holds important apologetic, pastoral, theological and philosophical implications. However, the centrality of evil means that Oord under-develops another important biblical and theological

category - sin. Sin should be considered and engaged with more thoroughly in relation to God's activity in the world, especially in explaining the relationship between evil and sin and how it impacts upon the notion of soteriology. Oord is clear that within the world there are different types of evil ranging from human atrocities to tragic events within nature. Undoubtedly these issues require consideration, but there does also need to be a full understanding of sin, and how this contributes to the evil in the world, especially when it is a central concern of the NT. I am in agreement with Oord that sin and evil are not synonymous, but this does not mean that they unconnected somehow, nor that the understanding of evil should take such primacy over the question of sin. Ideally, the understanding of both concepts should develop together, with stresses upon their natural overlap and points of divergence.

3.5.4.5 The Atonement and Pneumatology

The lack of hamartiological consideration becomes significantly more acute when we consider the criticisms of Oord's Christology in the previous chapter and consider the implications of these in specific relation to soteriology. Due to Oord's shift within his use of *kenosis* from Christological criteria to those of a wider doctrine of God, important discussions concerning the ontological nature of Jesus, and what implications this holds for salvation, are left unresolved. There is no discussion about how the incarnation and atonement interact, what the implications are then for understanding sin and ultimately what impact this could have on Oord's wider concern of the problem of evil. The central narrative focus upon the death of Jesus within the NT and how it is tied to hamartiology is subsequently minimised within Oord's writing by the lack of a developed Christology in Oord's writings. In a related theme, and Oord is by no means alone in this, the lack of a full delineation of Pneumatology within his rendering of the Godhead means that the Holy Spirit plays no overt part in what

salvation is nor how it is obtained. Just as we saw from Hasker and Sanders, there is a strong correlation between the minimisation of the Spirit within the Trinity and the outworking of this on soteriological grounds, and Oord follows this unfortunate pattern.

3.5.4.6 Divine Power and Eschatology

In a final consideration of Oord's reflections concerning eschatology, it is laudable in that his eschatological vision is not restricted to the afterlife and that contemporary Christian life and praxis necessarily involves an eschatological dimension. However, his perception of non-coercive power and eschatology again becomes problematic when read alongside biblical texts which purport an eschatological vision which infers a conception of divine power which Oord rejects. Due to the non-coercive nature of God's power, Oord asserts that his understanding of a 'participatory eschatology' negates God drawing the world to a conclusion through a unilateral act. Once again, there is a difficulty here regarding the hermeneutical interplay between Oord's proposal and various biblical texts, such as Mt 22:1-14 and Mt 25. Oord's conception of divine power undermines these texts but there is no discussion how they should be read within his eschatological drama. Matthew 25 presents Jesus' *parousia* as the final consummation and judgement of this world in a manner which involves some degree of unilateral power, as the final judgements are absolute. By presenting the eschatological events as Oord does, not only highlights the need for a much clearer understanding of how he reads the Bible and establishes theological insights from within his constructed metaphysic, but also undermines the final judgement which has been a long-held hope for Christians throughout the centuries for how God will eventually rid the world of evil. In echoes reminiscent of the concluding remarks concerning his soteriology, there is also a lack of explanation involving what role the Holy Spirit will take at the *eschaton*.

3.6 Creating a Context

Before we conclude this chapter, the need remains to collate the material discussed above and systemise it into a format which the insights from Pentecostalism can speak. In a manner akin to the previous chapter, we shall take the critical insights gleaned here and construct a theological context which will form part of the dialogue and development in Chapter 5. In this way, the significant lacunae and recommendations identified above will form salient markers for how to advance. Rather than surveying each of the authors as above, the remainder of this chapter will thematically address the issues of providence, salvation and eschatology and consolidate the important issues.

3.6.1 Divine Providence

Considering first the theological implications associated with the notion of providence, we note from Pinnock and Hasker the value of constructing a theology of providence which is inherently connected to the notions of soteriology and eschatology. By following this lead, we can ensure a model which is both mutually informing and thoroughly coherent in terms of what it purports and in tracking its historical development from biblical times through to the present. In this way, a consistent understanding of God's love in action and how it practically manifests can emerge. Providence is then supported with a historical biblical grounding, a present orientation in salvation and a future focus in the eschatological fulfilment. Each of these facets can reveal something novel and significant for God's dealing with the world. In addition to the need to view providence from a biblical perspective in revealing how God has, and continues to, care for the world, this should necessarily involve a Trinitarian perspective. Sanders rightfully points to the lack of Christological considerations within some Classical models of providence, so tying in aspects of Christology as a means of

bolstering the doctrine appears a constructive way of developing it further. This essentially ties with the stress above of the biblical and historical concerns which have formed the central hub of Open Theist considerations to date. Coupled with the need for a Christological dimension for the understanding of providence within a Trinitarian framework, there is also the need to incorporate a strong Pneumatological facet into this as well. As we have noted before, Open Theism is pregnant with the potential for Pneumatology in which the Spirit's on-going earthly mission can inform what God is actively doing, and working toward, in this present time. In this respect, a new narrative can arise concerning how God is presently active in the world, which has been hitherto restricted by Open Theist proposals.

By introducing the underdeveloped notion of Pneumatology into the sphere of providence, we are able to initiate a new discussion which does not necessarily revolve around the dichotomised language of persuasion and coercion, which has, thus far, dominated the discussion's landscape. Admittedly, any debates concerning God's power will at times need to touch upon these concepts, but as we have argued above, there are new avenues which can be explored about the power which God exerts within the world which does not need to comply with such tightly dichotomised restrictions or the negative connotations which they have been attributed by Oord. Pneumatology potentially offers new insights in this regard, as understanding the role of the Spirit and what She is currently accomplishing can generate novel insights into the wider providential comprehension. In accepting that new initiatives can arise from this understanding, there is also a need to frame them within what was also affirmed above. Accepted there was the agreement with Hasker that God does retain all metaphysical power, but this should be held alongside the assertion that God does not ever override freewill in attaining what He wants. Again, in agreement with Hasker, Romans 8:28 holds the hermeneutical key that God works in and through evil, though not its cause, to bring

good, love and relationship and this should remain a central insight into the practical outworking of providence in this world.

3.6.2 Soteriology

When considering salvation within the dialogical development next chapter, Pinnock's rendering of the salvific act provides a solid framework from which to proceed. The ecumenical and relational character of his model, with the essence of *theosis* functioning alongside compatible notions of the atonement (something absent in Oord's soteriology), supplies a clear vision which to follow. Pinnock overcomes some of the Trinitarian difficulties associated with Open Theist theology, and produces a concept in which the Son and Spirit work in union with the Father in drawing humanity into His loving call. This is all grounded within a biblical reading which recognises both the historical activity of the Son and Spirit in bringing about salvation, but also the importance that this has in confronting sin and the ongoing effects which it produces. In this way, there is a fully relational model, which should be a requirement for all Open Theist conceptions of what salvation means. By providing such a model, we counter two of the specific criticisms which can be levelled against Sanders and Hasker in terms of the lack of Pneumatology within their soteriology, and in the particular case of Sanders, moves us away from just one denominational reading of salvation and into a broader meaning of what salvations can, and does, offer.

Yet in accepting Pinnock and the development into a fully Trinitarian model which escapes the narrow Christocentrism of Hasker and Sanders, there is a need to follow up more closely how Pinnock intends to explain the link between Justification, the Spirit and union with God. Pinnock is light on his explanation, and there is a need to explore more deeply how the traditional understanding of Justification can be read alongside the work of the Spirit in

promoting *theosis* and how the Spirit operates within this facet of theology. By doing this, there is a widening of the ecumenical dimension to theology which Pinnock brings as other traditions can speak into the discussion, creating ever new insights into God's soteriological outworking. Alongside this need, there is also a requirement to develop Oord's important emphasis upon the co-operative nature of salvation. As we have seen throughout, Oord strongly emphasises the co-operative nature of existence which is inherent within Open and Relational theology, and this facet must be clearly defined and promoted in any development of God's saving actions.

3.6.3 Eschatology

The theme of the co-operative work between the divine and human also posits a central consideration when expanding the present thinking regarding eschatology. Here again, Oord's insights into how humanity works in conjunction with God requires that it remains at the forefront of any Open Theist conclusions regarding eschatology. Having such a central concern means that the present activities of both humanity and God impact how the *eschaton* will play out, and the overly futuristic dimension in Hasker is rightly balanced by a dialectical rendering of the present, which directly impacts how the end is subsequently shaped. This again will need to draw from a discussion regarding Pneumatology, which once again, has been largely absent from the Open Theist explanations so far. This means that a particular focus will need to consider the nature and order of the present and what the Spirit is currently doing in this time to bring things into their full consummation with the loving Trinity.

CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE INTO PENTECOSTALISM

Thus far, the focus of the thesis has centred around the theology of Open Theism which has been explored and critiqued in conjunction with the comparative methodology laid out in the 'Introduction'. This has consisted of a broad overview of the major theological tenets of Open thought in Chapter One which was followed by a more detailed examination of the Godhead and providence, salvation and eschatology in Chapters Two and Three respectively. In line with a consistent adherence to Clooney's comparative method, a detailed and critical examination of the beliefs and theologies held within the Open community was compiled and explicated to provide the bedrock for the later theological comparison. By examining the specific contours of the four theological views expressed by Pinnock, Sanders, Hasker and Oord we were able to denote some of the more influential ideas which are presently purported within Open theology. This has had the particular advantage of highlighting the relative strengths and developments within the theology, but also of providing a context in which criticisms within the community can be identified and articulated.

In this regard, the first component of the comparative model is now complete. The major insights of the Open community have been identified which subsequently creates a context for which the 'other' – Pentecostalism - can now speak in to. As we noted in the 'Introduction', Laksana describes the engagement with the 'other' as a 'pilgrimage' so as to properly appreciate, with all due reverence and respect, the insights which will be encountered there. Therefore, it is time to engage Pentecostalism and seek the inscribed religious and theological insights which it possesses within its writings, so as to proffer new possible understandings for the questions and criticisms which arose from the analysis of the home

Open community.

4.1 Steven M. Studebaker

4.1.1 *Subordination of the Spirit*

The mainstay of the delineation of Studebaker's work below will derive from his 2012 book *From Pentecost to the Triune God*. However, before examining Studebaker's Trinitarian contributions from that monograph, there will be a short *excursus* into Studebaker's comments regarding the subordination of the Spirit to Christ in Evangelical and Pentecostal soteriological models which contributes additional awareness to his broader Trinitarian thinking.⁵³⁹ While these explorations will be brief, the necessary detour will allow important insights into relevant issues raised thus far. According to Studebaker, what lies at the heart of the Spirit's subordination to the Father and Son in Pentecostal theology (especially in regards to soteriological categories), is the residual 'Protestant scholasticism' which is latent within Pentecostal thought.⁵⁴⁰ Studebaker argues that traditional Protestant soteriological paradigms compartmentalised salvation into 'Christocentric and pneumatological categories' which made a clear demarcation between the objective achievement of justification by Christ on the cross, and the subjective application of that justification by the Spirit in the lives of believers and their subsequent sanctification.⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, the functional configurations of both Christ and the Spirit in the Protestant *ordo salutis* resulted in two distinct paradigms, the *Objective-Subjective* and *Achiever-Applier*, which had the effect of relegating the Spirit to the role, economy and person of Christ.⁵⁴² The

⁵³⁹ S. M. Studebaker, 'Pentecostal Soteriology and Pneumatology', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 11:2, 2003, pp. 248-70. See also, S. M. Studebaker, 'Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology', *Pneuma*, 28:1, 2006, pp. 5-20, esp. 6-10. S. M. Studebaker, 'Beyond Tongues: A Pentecostal Theology of Grace', in S. M. Studebaker (ed.), *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2008), pp. 46-68, esp. 46-56.

⁵⁴⁰ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 248-50. Studebaker, *Beyond Tongues*, pp. 46-50.

⁵⁴¹ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 248 and 252-61, esp. 258. Studebaker, *Beyond Tongues*, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁴² Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 255-9. Studebaker, *Beyond Tongues*, pp. 48-52.

‘ultimate pivot point for salvation’ within Protestant thought rests upon justification, which was achieved through Christ and not understood as a ‘constitutive’ role of the Spirit.⁵⁴³ The Spirit was thus relegated to a function of applying Christ’s benefits and establishing sanctification, which was ‘not the primary datum of soteriology’.⁵⁴⁴ All of which, according to Studebaker, ‘produces a subordination of pneumatology to Christology’, as Christ’s economy is seen as primary and distinct from the Spirit and where ‘sanctification necessarily plays a secondary role’.⁵⁴⁵

4.1.2 The Trinity and Pneumatology

Turning our attention now to the purpose of Studebaker’s Trinitarian analysis in *From Pentecost* in which he seeks to identify the person, economy and character of the Spirit within the Trinity from the perspective of Pentecost. In this respect, Studebaker attempts to establish a distinctly Pentecostal contribution to Trinitarian theology by interpreting biblical material regarding the Spirit through a decidedly Pentecostal lens. Recapping his important observation regarding how the theology and understanding of the Spirit has been subsumed under the Father and Son, Studebaker notes that this is a tendency not just in Protestant traditions, but a symptomatic problem manifested implicitly within both Eastern and Western traditions more broadly. Due to the dominant motifs which have been adopted to define the Trinity in both strands of the tradition (particularly through the notions of ‘divine procession’ and the ‘bond of mutual love’), Studebaker argues that each have had the unintended tendency of subsuming the work and person of the Spirit, as a degree of ‘ambiguity’ regarding the person of the Spirit has arisen from these motifs.⁵⁴⁶ As a consequence, the Spirit has been

⁵⁴³ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 254.

⁵⁴⁴ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 255.

⁵⁴⁵ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 255.

⁵⁴⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 3.

minimized within central theological themes, particularly the role She plays within the redemptive, salvific and eschatological drama.

Studebaker asserts that this is a broad tendency in wider theology which needs redressing, as recognition is due to the central role the Spirit plays within the drama when he claims, '[i]n fact, the outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost is the capstone of God's redemptive work'.⁵⁴⁷ As a consequence of recognising the important role which the Spirit plays within redemption, Studebaker contends that by applying a modified understanding to Rahner's famous Trinitarian axiom that the 'economic Trinity' is the 'immanent Trinity' and the 'immanent Trinity' is the 'economic Trinity', we arrive at a point when the redemptive activity of the Spirit at Pentecost 'suggests that the Spirit is the divine person who fulfils God's triune identity. The Spirit fulfils the tri-unity of God not only as the third subsistent person, but as one who contributes to the identity of the Father and the Son as well... The implication is that the Spirit consummates the Trinitarian God and as such plays a role in the identity formation of the Son and the Father'.⁵⁴⁸ Studebaker broadly embraces Rahner's Trinitarian axiom, but with one significant caveat. Following David Coffey's insight that the 'economic' Trinity can never exhaust the 'immanent' Trinity, Studebaker submits that the axiom only works in one direction. In this respect, the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity, and not *vice versa*, as 'the transcendence of God means that the immanent Trinity surpasses the economic, even though they are harmonious'.⁵⁴⁹ This understanding of the Trinity has significant import for Studebaker in defining and contributing to the knowledge of God and theological construction, as without reference to God's activity as a corresponding

⁵⁴⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 3.

⁵⁴⁸ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 3. See also, K. Rahner, (trans. J. Donceel), *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad, 1970), pp. 22.

⁵⁴⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 4.

meaningful framework, it is impossible to speak of God at all.⁵⁵⁰ Neither theology nor theological language has a direct recourse to the ‘immanent’ Trinity, therefore, ‘God’s activity in the economy of redemption is the basis of theological reflection’.⁵⁵¹ Building from this particular insight, Studebaker maintains that the innate link between the ‘economic’ and ‘immanent’ Trinity means that all of the Spirit’s work reveals something of Her eternal personal identity. It is from this basis which Studebaker seeks to develop an understanding of the Spirit which reveals a ‘clearer understanding’ of Her personhood which has often been presented in a vague fashion within theology.⁵⁵²

4.1.3 The Narratives of the Spirit

In order to supply the Pneumatological content within the Trinitarian premise modified from Rahner, Studebaker posits that this is composed from a necessary biblical component. In what he entitles the ‘narratives of the Spirit’, he seeks to establish facets of the Spirit’s character through engaging with the stories in the bible relating to the Holy Spirit, culminating in the events of Pentecost, which is where ‘the Spirit’s identity and work is manifested most expressly’.⁵⁵³ Following Rogers, Studebaker acknowledges the need to appreciate the Spirit as a ‘character in a story’ as a means of defining Her character and activity.⁵⁵⁴ As the ‘Spirit of Pentecost’ is most clearly manifested within the outpouring at

⁵⁵⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 4.

⁵⁵¹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 4.

⁵⁵² Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 5. Studebaker’s acknowledges that his understanding of the Trinity, and consequently the appreciation of a ‘person’ within the Trinity adopts a broad Western conception, as he states that ‘a divine person is a unique subsistence of the divine nature’. Although conceding that each member of the Trinity constitutes a ‘distinct instantiation’ of the divine essence, he recognises that this encompasses a unique manifestation of agency and activity without dividing the divine nature. This is reinforced through the understanding that all the members of the Trinity act and respond in a relational and personal manner (Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 6).

⁵⁵³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 5 and 53.

⁵⁵⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 5. See also, E. F. Rogers, Jr., *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 52-3.

Pentecost, Studebaker situates his work within the *locus classicus* of Pentecostal theology, thus reflecting the concerns of the tradition. However, the Spirit cannot be restricted to the events of Pentecost alone, as there is a need to establish Her wider work throughout the biblical narrative, to fully appreciate the implications invested within Pentecost. Therefore, within the narrative frame which Studebaker establishes for delineating the Spirit, he suggests that there are three biblical motifs for identifying the Spirit's activity and subsequent personhood: the Spirit of creation and redemption, Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Pentecost. Within these three motifs, Studebaker applies three further criteria to assess and evaluate the Spirit's work and subsequent identity. These are the *liminal* which refers to the Spirit's presence and activity, the *constitutional* which relates to the central and substantial role of the Spirit and the *consummative/eschatological* which identifies how the Spirit enables the fulfilment of divine goals.⁵⁵⁵ By establishing the narrative framework with its accompanying evaluative criteria, Studebaker summarises the purpose of his project by stating that:

A thematic continuity in the Spirit's work emerges from these episodes in the drama of biblical redemption. Finally, it shows what the personal character of the Spirit's work in redemption adds to Trinitarian theology. In short, since the Spirit is the eschatological fulfilment of the economy of redemption, the Spirit completes the immanent fellowship of the Trinity.⁵⁵⁶

Integral to Studebaker's project is the necessity to link the Old Testament 'Spirit of God'/'*ruach*' with the Holy Spirit of the New Testament. Arguing that the original authors and readers of the Old Testament would not have automatically associated the *ruach* with the Holy Spirit as understood in either the New Testament or the Early Church (as the understanding of the Spirit arose from the Early Church's reflection upon their experience of God alongside a renewed interpretation of the scriptures), Studebaker agrees with Gunton that while caution should be present in aligning the two, there is genuine scope for understanding the activity of

⁵⁵⁵ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 53.

⁵⁵⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 54.

the *ruach* in light of later Trinitarian thought.⁵⁵⁷ This is especially the case when precedents of the Holy Spirit's work can be detected within the Old Testament as 'when the Old Testament work of God's Spirit correlates with the work attributed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, then one can legitimately identify the Hebrew Bible *ruach* of God as the Holy Spirit.'⁵⁵⁸

4.1.4 The Spirit of Creation and Redemption

In turning first to the Pneumatological reflection of the Spirit of creation/redemption, Studebaker suggests that despite the two differing creational accounts in Genesis, there a 'common theme' of the 'transition from lifelessness to life' which has been conveyed through a distinct Pneumatological lens.⁵⁵⁹ From a canonical reading of the Old Testament, Studebaker contends that this is an important association, and one which is not restricted to Genesis alone. Throughout the Old Testament the close affinity between the Spirit's activity within both creation and redemption is an explicit theme and, as Studebaker suggests, are intimately connected. The creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 are the obvious starting point for any theology regarding the *ruach* and creation, as this narrative correlates both the Spirit of God with God's creative activity.⁵⁶⁰ In Gen. 1 we observe the Spirit of God hovering above the formless void establishing order out of chaos, while in Gen. 2, Studebaker postulates a 'Pneumatological anthropology', as, 'to be human is to be imbued with the breath of life, the Spirit of God'.⁵⁶¹ Within these first chapters of the bible, we are confronted with

⁵⁵⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 59-60 and 66. See also, C. E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 17, as quoted in Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 60.

⁵⁵⁸ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 60.

⁵⁵⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 55. For the implications of Studebaker's creational theology within a Pentecostal ecology, see, Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 240-68.

⁵⁶⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 54-60.

⁵⁶¹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 62-3.

Pneumatological imagery which gives life and overcomes primordial chaos by establishing a saving and redemptive order. However, the opening creational accounts in Genesis are not alone in connecting the divine *ruach* with creational purposes. Studebaker posits that the link between life and the divine breath/wind is echoed elsewhere in the Old Testament, including the notion of the Spirit sustaining the Earth. (Gen. 6:3, Job: 27:3, 32:8, 33:4, 34:14 and Ps. 33:6-7, 104:27-30).⁵⁶² Additionally, both Ps. 33:6-7 and Job 26:10, 12-3 draw from Ancient Near Eastern imagery in the same way as Gen. 1 to depict the presence and activity of the Spirit within creation.⁵⁶³

Studebaker develops this theme by drawing into the Pneumatological creation narrative an inherent redemptive component. Understanding that the creation account of Gen. 1 would have been written in an exilic/post-exilic context, Studebaker suggests that the original context of the Spirit over-coming the cosmic forces would have held redemptive connotations for its initial readers.⁵⁶⁴ Psalm 74:12-7 mirrors this emphasis, as creation is expressed in terms of saving redemption by tying a strong link between the order established at creation compared to chaos which reigned in primordial times (see also Gen. 8:1-5, Ex. 14:1-21).⁵⁶⁵ Studebaker notes that the link between Spirit, creation and redemption is also recurrent in the book of Isaiah. There are obvious connections between the Spirit's involvement in creation (Is. 40:12-7 and 51:9-11), the presence of the Spirit during the salvific act of the Exodus (Is. 63:10-4) and a correlation between the Spirit restoring and sustaining the land of Israel (Is. 32:15 and 34:16). Consequently, Studebaker asserts that the overlap in the Spirit's work in redemption, which is aligned to creative purposes, 'suggests the synthesis

⁵⁶² Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 62-3.

⁵⁶³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 60-1.

⁵⁶⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 68.

⁵⁶⁵ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 72-3.

of the Spirit's creative and redemptive work'.⁵⁶⁶ However, the link between the Spirit and redemption is not restricted to the Old Testament alone. Studebaker argues that within the Johannine gospel, the link between Spirit/redemption/creation is maintained utilising Pneumatological imagery (Jn. 3:8 and 20:22-3) which coalesces with the promise of new life arising from the Spirit (Jn. 1:12-3, 3:1-8 and 7:37-9).⁵⁶⁷

By completing a canonical overview of creation and redemption, Studebaker applies his threefold criteria of the liminal, constitutional and eschatological to identify the Spirit within these facets. Arguing that it is a mistake from a biblical perspective to completely separate the notions of creation and redemption, he suggests rather that they should be viewed as 'two modalities of a unified work'.⁵⁶⁸ Therefore, despite the evolution of the language referring to the Spirit in the Old and New Testaments, there is a 'remarkable consistency' in reporting the Spirit's activities. Subsequently, the liminal and constitutional criteria are evident as the Spirit not only plays a significant role but is central within the divine outworking of the related programmes.⁵⁶⁹ However, it is within the eschatological dimension that we glimpse an oft neglected facet of the Spirit's work in the redemptive sphere. Understanding the eschatological as referring to the fulfilment of God's designs rather than an end time apocalypse, Studebaker frames the Spirit's participation within eschatology as bringing God's plan for creation to consummation.⁵⁷⁰ Drawing from the commonly referenced Pentecostal theme of Joel's prophecy in 2:28-32, Studebaker submits that Spirit Baptism is an indicator of the coming Kingdom, but with the important proviso that eschatology be read in

⁵⁶⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 69.

⁵⁶⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 64.

⁵⁶⁸ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 67.

⁵⁶⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 66-74, esp. 72.

⁵⁷⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 75.

light of Spirit baptism and not *vice versa*.⁵⁷¹ His justification for this position rests on the assertion that, '[i]n Joel, the Spirit of God is the agent of eschatological renewal. The charismatic manifestations in the people and the "wonders in the heavens" are the result of the Spirit's activities'. Furthermore, the eschatological view requires a Pneumatological adjustment as 'the Spirit is the primary content of the eschatological promise of Joel' which is brought to fruition in Acts, as evidenced by Peter's speech (Acts 2:17).⁵⁷² Therefore, the close affinity of between creation and redemption with the Spirit as a central character, finds its fulfilment in the outpouring of the Spirit – the Spirit of Pentecost.⁵⁷³

4.1.5 The Spirit of Christ

Before we turn our attention to the Spirit as the 'Spirit of Pentecost', there is first a need to observe how the Spirit is present within the Christ event. The understanding of the Pneumatological dimension of Christology has become increasingly important in contemporary theology, and Studebaker rightly asserts that a full Christology must possess a Pneumatological component.⁵⁷⁴ By building on the creative-redemptive theme expressed above, Studebaker demonstrates the liminal, constitutional and eschatological role of the Spirit within the life and ministry of Jesus. As we observed above, the Spirit 'is the liminal and constituting agent of the incarnation'.⁵⁷⁵ In Mt. 1:20 and Lk. 1:35, the Spirit's presence and activity is evident in the 'threshold of union' between the humanity of Jesus and the Son of God, as the Spirit initiates the hypostatic union in Christ. As he states, 'Matthew and Luke show that what transpires between John 1:1 and John 1:14 (Logos Christology) occurs

⁵⁷¹ For another Pentecostal perspective on how Joel bridges the salvific and eschatological, see, L. R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic hermeneutic* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2009).

⁵⁷² Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 75.

⁵⁷³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 75.

⁵⁷⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 78.

⁵⁷⁵ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 78.

through the agency of the Holy Spirit (Spirit Christology)'.⁵⁷⁶ Yet, the Spirit's liminal or constitutional role in the Christ event is not restricted to the incarnation alone. The Spirit is central, as both a constitutional presence and liminal activity, at Jesus' baptism which ushers in the Messianic reign (Mt. 3:3-17, Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22, Jn. 1:29-34) and overcoming the trials in the wilderness which further affirms Jesus' Messianic status.⁵⁷⁷

Studebaker further develops his orientation of a Pneumatological Christology by examining the implications of the constitutional element that the Spirit plays in the Christ event. Reasserting his well-founded belief that traditional theology possesses an inherent Christocentrism, which defines the role of the Spirit through the life and ministry of Christ, Studebaker argues that the relationship between the Son and Spirit should be understood more in terms of reciprocity especially when framing and defining each other's work and identity.⁵⁷⁸ The term 'The Spirit of Christ' which occurs in Rom. 8:9 and 1 Pet. 1:11 offers important insights into the Spirit's liminal and constitutional salvific work within the Christological framework. Acts 2:33 is clear that it is Jesus who 'pours out' the Spirit, and in this respect, one understanding of 'The Spirit of Christ' is that the Spirit is *from* Jesus. Yet, a reading of Rom. 8:9 allows for a broader understanding of Pneumatology than one which perpetually subsumes the Spirit's role under the Son, which has often been the case in traditional theological motifs relating to the Son and Spirit. In the Romans verse, there is no doubt that to possess the Spirit is to also possess Christ and experience salvation. However, Rom. 8:9 cannot be interpreted through a sole Christological lens, as the new life brought by the Holy Spirit 'is the life the Spirit brought throughout the life of Jesus Christ'.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover,

⁵⁷⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 79.

⁵⁷⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 79-80. The connection between the Spirit and the announcement of Jesus' Messianic ministry is also established in Lk. 4:14-30 which draws from Is. 61:1-2.

⁵⁷⁸ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 78.

⁵⁷⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 81.

defining the Spirit as the ‘Spirit of creation/redemption’ above establishes a continuity with the ‘Spirit of Christ’. Having evidenced the paradigmatic constitutional and liminal involvement of the Spirit within creation and redemption, Studebaker maintains that the Spirit continues this work in Christ, not only in the incarnation but also in the resurrection. In the same manner that the Spirit brings life within the creation account and the dry bones of Ezek. 37:1-14, so the Spirit ‘finds its historical zenith in Christ’ at the resurrection (Rom. 8:11).⁵⁸⁰ In this act, the Spirit is pivotal at the definitive moment of bringing creation into union with the creator which continues the creative and redemptive work established at the beginning of the world.⁵⁸¹

The involvement of the Spirit in the resurrection of Christ also contributes significant eschatological implications. In following Dabney’s understanding of the Spirit’s work at the cross, Studebaker agrees that the Spirit is the presence of God at the moment of Christ’s death when the Father is absent.⁵⁸² It is the Spirit who remains with the Son at the moment and darkness of death, but who is also instrumental in reviving the Son to resurrection life (Rom. 8:11, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 3:18). Consequently, Studebaker insists that without the Spirit there could be no resurrection, salvation or coming Church mission, ‘since the resurrection “declares that Jesus is the Son of God” (Rom. 1:4) the activity [of the Spirit] completes Christ work’.⁵⁸³

4.1.6 The Spirit of Pentecost

This finally brings us to what Studebaker argues is the most important signifier in

⁵⁸⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 83.

⁵⁸¹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 84.

⁵⁸² Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 84. See also, D. L. Dabney, ‘*Pneumatologia Crucis*: Reclaiming *Theologia Crucis* for a Theology of the Spirit Today’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 53: 4, 2000, pp. 511-24.

⁵⁸³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 86-7.

pointing to the Spirit's personhood and activity – the Spirit of Pentecost. In agreement with much of what will be examined in Macchia's work below, Studebaker argues that the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 is an eschatological event, but one which carries with it vital soteriological implications. Building from the Pneumatological categories outlined above, Studebaker argues that the Spirit's participation in both creation/redemption and Christ's life and ministry attain their fulfilment when the Spirit is poured out at Pentecost which must be understood within the context of 'Spirit Baptism'.⁵⁸⁴ Within this event, the Spirit completes Her salvific work, by drawing all people into union with Christ. The release of the Spirit cannot be restricted to the charismatic experience of the disciples in the upper room, but has import for all of humanity because, 'The Spirit of Pentecost, therefore, fulfils the work of redemption, even though the historical actualization of that redemption remains penultimate until the coming of the everlasting kingdom'.⁵⁸⁵ The Spirit's work is ongoing, and hence eschatological, as the Spirit is continually poured into lives of believers, and will remain to do so in this penultimate stage before the *eschaton*. In this manner, the Spirit's work is truly liminal and eschatological as She straddles both sides of the redemptive and eschatological drama, which continues and completes Her redemptive and salvific work. In this regard, the indwelling of the Spirit is the *goal* of the initial creative purposes, as humanity is called to share in the divine life through Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4) which was the initial purpose of the created order. Likewise, culminating all events in the consummation of the kingdom's return and establishment is a central task of the Spirit (Rev. 21:1), as once again She breathes fresh life into all of the renewed creation, as She did at the initial creation, within the life of Israel and Christ's resurrection.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 87 and 91.

⁵⁸⁵ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 89.

⁵⁸⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 89-90.

4.1.7 The Pneumatological Implications for the Trinity

Having argued persuasively for a renewed appreciation of Pneumatology by focussing upon the liminal, constitutional and eschatological facets of the Spirit's work and personhood, Studebaker proposes three key areas which this impacts the wider Trinitarian theology. First, the Trinity must be fully appreciated as a '*Trinitarian* fellowship', in which '[t]he Trinity is not a set of unilateral relationships (processions from the Father) nor bilateral relationships (*filioque*), but a triune community in which the Spirit plays a liminal and constitutional role'.⁵⁸⁷ Therefore, the economic work of the Spirit indicates an immanent characteristic within the Trinity (in line with his modification to Rahner's axiom). Through the creative and redemptive work completed in and by the Spirit, there is clear liminality which reflects the immanent life of the Trinity, as 'only in the subsistence of the Holy Spirit does the Godhead cross the Trinitarian threshold and "become" the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'.⁵⁸⁸

The second point which Studebaker asserts is that within developing the role and person of the Spirit, this should not eclipse, or displace, the role of Christology. Traditional theology has tended to define the Spirit's activity in relation to the Father and Son, which has resulted in subsuming the Spirit's role in the biblical drama. Rather, the inter-Trinitarian relationships are presented biblically as being 'mutually conditioned' as 'Scripture shows that the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ is reciprocal and not unilateral' (Is. 11:1-9, 42:1-9, 61:1-3, Lk. 1:35, Mk. 1:9-11, Mt. 3:16-7, Lk. 3:21-3, Mk. 1:12-3, Mt. 4:1-11,

⁵⁸⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 94-5.

⁵⁸⁸ In clarifying what he means by "become", Studebaker rejects any notion of temporal sequence which can result in an ontological inferiority of the Son or Spirit, by applying the distinguishing terms *in facto esse* and *in fieri*. Acknowledging that humans have no direct discourse of the Trinitarian ontology, there is a need to speak of the Trinity in terms of 'becoming' or *in fieri*. Though in actuality, the *in facto esse* of the Trinitarian life contains no temporal connotations of dependency or procession, 'because God exists eternally as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 95-6.

Lk. 4:1-21, Mt. 12:9-28, Rom. 8:11).⁵⁸⁹ Against such a tendency, Studebaker proposes that, ‘the outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost suggests that the work of the Father and the Son is directed toward to the Spirit: indeed, their work is eschatologically complete only in the coming of the Spirit of Pentecost’.⁵⁹⁰ As a consequence, the Spirit can no longer be understood as subsequent to the Father and Son, but adds something significant to their identities too. In both liminality and constitutionality of the immanent Trinity, the Spirit is a full and participating member and cannot be reduced to impersonal metaphors which express the relationship between the Father and Son as in the mutual love model. As a result, it is important to coordinate both Christology and Pneumatology in constructing theology so that the Spirit is free to contribute to wider theology, rather than being orientated around doctrines of the Father and Son.⁵⁹¹

The final conclusion which Studebaker draws from his reading of the Spirit refers directly to the eschatological implications imbedded within the Spirit as the ‘Spirit of Pentecost’. Maintaining that Pentecost completes the biblical drama of redemption which developed through the Old Testament, incarnation, death and resurrection, Studebaker argues that salvation culminates in the Spirit as the ‘*telos* of the work of the Father in sending the Son’.⁵⁹² In this light, the giving of the Spirit represents much more than a *donum superadditum* which much of Pentecostal theology has portrayed it as in the doctrine of the empowerment for witness. More readily, the liminal, constitutional and eschatological involvement of the Spirit within the economy of salvation indicates a more central role of the Spirit than is previously granted, and which reflects something significant within the

⁵⁸⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 97.

⁵⁹⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 97.

⁵⁹¹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 98.

⁵⁹² Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 98.

‘immanent Trinitarian’ life. Just as the Spirit completes the work of redemption (economic Trinity), so the Spirit brings fulfilment to the Godhead (immanent Trinity).⁵⁹³ Studebaker argues that in the same manner that the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost to consummate the redemptive drama, without the Spirit, the immanent life in the Trinity would also be incomplete. With the inclusion of the Spirit into the Triune life, we witness the fullness of divine love, as ‘[i]n the person of the Holy Spirit, the personal fellowship of the Godhead transcends a binary relational dynamic and achieves a Trinitarian one’.⁵⁹⁴

4.2. Frank D. Macchia

4.2.1 *Spirit Baptism*

In the same manner as Studebaker above, Frank Macchia readily self-identifies as a Pentecostal and constructs his theology from within this framework. The focus in this section describes the dominant themes which are present in Macchia’s writings and explicates them in relation to the notions of Trinity, salvation and eschatology. Standing behind much of Macchia’s systematic development are two central theological motifs which give a particular context and accent for his thought: Baptism in the Spirit and the Kingdom of God. In assessing Baptism in the Spirit, Macchia asserts that this represents the theological distinctive or ‘crown jewel’ of Pentecostal theology, though it has been neglected in recent times by leading Pentecostal scholars and authors. In addition to the neglect in scholarship regarding Spirit Baptism, Macchia also laments the manner in which it has been too narrowly focussed within discussions relating to ‘empowerment for mission’ arising from a particular reading of Acts within the Pentecostal community. According to Macchia, this tendency has splintered the true meaning of Spirit Baptism. Pentecostals have been correct to highlight the missiological dimensions of Spirit Baptism as found in Luke-Acts, but this should not be

⁵⁹³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 98.

⁵⁹⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 99-100.

developed at the expense of the soteriological aspects of Spirit Baptism found within other New Testament writings, especially Paul.⁵⁹⁵ Consequently, Pentecostals have restricted the theological understanding of Spirit Baptism and how it can be more widely comprehended.⁵⁹⁶ With these two issues relating to Spirit Baptism, Macchia seeks to return to Spirit Baptism as the lead theological principle which guides other criteria in Pentecostal theology, but in a modified sense.⁵⁹⁷ The main thrust of Macchia's theological development of Spirit Baptism is that he situates it within a broader context of Pneumatology, something which Macchia argues has been neglected in Pentecostal theology. By adopting the Pneumatological approach to Spirit Baptism, Macchia argues that this allows for a fuller understanding of Pentecostal theology and a life lived in the Spirit as the soteriological, missiological, charismatic and eschatological integrate more holistically.⁵⁹⁸

4.2.2 The Kingdom of God

The second defining feature of Macchia's theology is the Kingdom of God, which he constructs as an underlying motif which informs aspects of his theology. The Kingdom is a recurring aspect within Macchia's work, and one which was developed within his earlier writings concerning the Blumhardt's, and was significantly shaped by their understanding of

⁵⁹⁵ F. D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), pp. 14-8.

⁵⁹⁶ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 26. For his discussion relating to the contemporary interpretations of Spirit Baptism within Pentecostal theology, see pp. 19-60. For important texts within this discussion see also, R. Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984). S. Chan, 'Evidential Glossolalia and the Doctrine of Subsequence', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 195-211. H. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of Spirit Baptism in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988). R. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). G. Fee, 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Issue of Separability and Subsequence', *Pneuma*, 7: 1, 1985, pp. 87-99. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination on the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

⁵⁹⁷ For another example of a Charismatic theologian expanding the Spirit Baptism metaphor in a way congruous to Macchia, see, L. Hart, 'Spirit Baptism: A Dimensional Charismatic Perspective', in C. O. Brand (ed.), *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: 5 Views* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2004), pp. 105-69, esp. 108.

⁵⁹⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 17-8.

the Kingdom.⁵⁹⁹ Viewing the historical development of Pentecostal eschatology as largely apocalyptic (which is marked by the expectation of the Kingdom in-breaking this world and which is not present before the event of the *eschaton*), Macchia asserts that this eschatological understanding undermines how the Kingdom can be comprehended as growing within this world and how it integrates a strong social aspect.⁶⁰⁰ In contrast to the Pentecostal eschatological vision, Macchia advocates the Blumhardt's understanding of 'prophetic' eschatology, which asserts that the kingdom has been initiated within history as evident in the healing of the sick and the liberation of the poor and oppressed, but is yet to reach its fulfilment.⁶⁰¹ The social dimension of the 'prophetic' eschatology, which is central to the Blumhardt's vision, offers an important corrective to Pentecostal eschatology for Macchia. The inaugurated dimension to Macchia's eschatological theology, allows Macchia to assert that the stress in Pentecostalism on individual renewal can be legitimately expanded to a more corporate realm through utilising the Kingdom as a central motif.

4.2.3 Spirit Baptism and the Kingdom of God

As noted above, Macchia seeks to expand the meaning of Spirit Baptism by moving it beyond the traditional Pentecostal boundaries which have marked the discussion in recent decades. An important starting point for Macchia is to situate the understanding of Spirit Baptism within a Trinitarian context, which also gives warrant to incorporate a strong dimension of the Kingdom. As Macchia notes, '[d]eath reigned over creation', which is still evident, but it has been fundamentally undermined by God's activity in bringing creation into

⁵⁹⁹ F. D. Macchia, *Spirituality and Social Liberation: The Message of Blumhardts in the Light of Wuertemberg Pietism* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1993). F. D. Macchia, 'The Spirit and the Kingdom: Implications in the Message of the Blumhardts for a Pentecostal Social Spirituality', *Transformation* 11: 1, 1994, pp. 1-5.

⁶⁰⁰ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9.

⁶⁰¹ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9. See also, F. D. Macchia, 'Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology', in J. Walls (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 280-94.

God's 'dwelling place'.⁶⁰² From the onset, Macchia wants to highlight the link between Spirit Baptism and the Kingdom of God, which can be traced back to both John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-12) and Jesus (Acts 1:2-8), which, as he notes, grants the Spirit Baptism metaphor 'eschatological expansiveness and transcendence'.⁶⁰³ Even though John the Baptist's announcement does not exhaust the full meaning of Spirit Baptism, what it does signify, is that Jesus, as the Christ, is the Spirit Baptizer. This then allows for the Baptist's words to give an initial understanding of the concept, which is prominent within the New Testament. Although Macchia acknowledges that within the New Testament there is a fluidity concerning Spirit Baptism, there is also a continuity regarding its application and use which helps to appreciate its fullness as the eschatological fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.⁶⁰⁴ By delineating the material in this manner, Macchia is able to highlight the inherent coherence between Jesus, the Spirit, the Father, Spirit Baptism, eschatology and the Kingdom.

4.2.4 The Pneumatological Import of Spirit Baptism and the Kingdom

Through Macchia's connection between Spirit Baptism and the Kingdom of God, we are drawn to the Baptist's announcement concerning Jesus which portrays Him as the Spirit Baptizer, whose role it is to usher in the Kingdom (Mt. 3:1-12). Prior to the events of Pentecost, Jesus reiterates these words connecting Jesus' role as Baptizer of the Spirit, the Kingdom and its eschatological import (Acts 1). Reading these events alongside Rom. 14:17, Macchia asserts that because Jesus functions as the Spirit Baptizer, 'the Spirit brings creation into the Kingdom of the King by indwelling all things with the divine presence so as to deliver creation from the reign of death unto the reign of life'.⁶⁰⁵ This idea of the Kingdom

⁶⁰² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 89.

⁶⁰³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 90.

⁶⁰⁴ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 90.

⁶⁰⁵ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 91.

constituting a Pneumatological and eschatological substance and reality is also drawn from important OT notions. Within OT witnesses, God's 'lordship' is tied to acts of redemption and deliverance, with Ex. 3:14 standing as a promise for fulfilment as God 'will be' what He 'will be' in terms of the promise of redemption which is brought to fruition in Ex. 6:1-13.⁶⁰⁶ Additionally, Macchia ties in the Near Eastern notion of justice into the concept of deliverance, restoration and redemption. Stating that justice in OT times did not reflect the judgements of an impartial judge, but rather acts of mercy, he states that, 'the kingdom is present where God is present to exercise divine lordship redemptively in the world'.⁶⁰⁷ Finally, Macchia unites these OT notions together by situating them in a Pneumatological framework, demonstrating that the Spirit will be an essential aspect of God's final reign, coming presence, cleansing, new life and Messianic hope (Joel 2:28, Ezek. 36:25-7, 37:13-4, 39:29 and Is. 61:1-3).⁶⁰⁸

By drawing together the inferences from the OT and the Baptist's words, Macchia suggests that presented within the Gospels is the idea that the Kingdom, 'is primarily a redemptive presence'. The implication here is on the new life in God, which is radically different from the former life, but one which could not have arisen naturally from the former life (Jn. 1:13 and 1 Cor. 15:42 and 50). It is born from the Spirit (Jn. 3:5), but must also pass by the path of the cross, which involves a transformation through a purging by the refining nature of God's own presence (Acts 2:38).⁶⁰⁹ Macchia is keen to stress that the 'in-breaking' of the Spirit into this world is not just restricted to personal transformation, but one that extends to the whole of creation. The kingdom of God is focussed upon the renewal of all

⁶⁰⁶ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 92.

⁶⁰⁷ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 93.

⁶⁰⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 93.

⁶⁰⁹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 95.

creation in which it will finally be the dwelling place of God as it overthrows the reign of sin and death. Yet, Macchia weaves into this thought the inherent inaugurated nature of God's coming rule, which was initiated in Christ's life, death and resurrection. As Macchia summarises, 'the kingdom of God becomes the dynamic within history through the outpouring of the Spirit that is directed toward the divine indwelling in all of creation so that all things might be conformed to Christ's image'.⁶¹⁰ Hence, this accentuates the 'now and not yet' aspect of the kingdom, as God is working towards its fulfilment initiated through Christ's redemptive work, but is yet to be completed (Mt. 13:31-2). This holds the important corollary that the eschatological event is not just a future aspect, but one that overlaps into the present, which gives important interpretative lens for events of the past as well as a promise for the future. Macchia is as equally adamant that the eschatological reality contained within Spirit Baptism cannot be considered in a solely realized manner either, despite the implications for the present moment. One of the dangers that Macchia recognises in overly realized eschatologies is the identification between the Church and the Kingdom. Although they must be conceived as a unity and sharing *koinonia* and communion, they must also need to be understood as separate entities which interact through a 'dynamic dialectic'.⁶¹¹

The significant aspect that Spirit Baptism is a Pneumatological and eschatological event raises the importance of the connection between the Spirit's outpouring and judgment. Again returning to the Baptist's words, Macchia doubts that John the Baptist was only referring to concepts of judgment in Lk. 3:16-7 when speaking of the Spirit and fire. While not denying that judgment is inherent within his words, Macchia asserts that his speech here cannot be contained solely to a divine judgment. Into this speech, Macchia wishes to maintain

⁶¹⁰ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 97.

⁶¹¹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 157.

that the notions of ‘purgation and restoration’ are contained within. In reading the Johannine Gospel in tandem with this idea, Macchia insists that ‘new life’ can only occur on the Spirit (Jn. 1:13 and 3:5), which makes one a ‘participant in the coming reign of God’. This has the subsequent meaning that, ‘the message of the Gospels that the Spirit Baptizer is already bringing the kingdom of God to bear on human experience and life (Matt. 12:28. Luke 4:18) significantly qualifies the apocalyptic hope shared even by John the Baptist that the Messiah will bring the Spirit to the end of the age with final judgment and purgation’.⁶¹² We are struck here at the scope of Spirit Baptism as articulated by Macchia, as it transcends previous conceptions of baptism (including Spirit Baptism) without rejecting them (including John the Baptist). Cleansing and repentance are still inherent features within baptism, but the Spirit Baptism goes beyond this with an important addition, specifically that, ‘*the people of God are baptized in the Spirit to become a holy temple indwelt by the very breath of God*. Spirit baptism encompasses repentance and new life, cleansing and infilling’.⁶¹³

The presence of the Spirit in the believer, while offering new life, is also a ‘foreshadow’ of the divine indwelling of all things at the *eschaton*. However, Macchia draws a distinction here regarding the nature of God’s presence in the present age and that in the age to come. While he concedes that God pervades all reality in this present age (Acts 17:28 and Col. 1:17), the time is coming, through redemptive presence, when all creation will live in the ‘filial relationship between Jesus and his Father (John 17:4)’, as all things will conform to Christ’s image.⁶¹⁴ In this respect, the nature of divine infilling which is posited at Pentecost in Spirit Baptism ties in with eschatology and the coming Kingdom. In reading the NT in this way, Macchia posits a strong Trinitarian ontology to the roles of Spirit Baptism and the

⁶¹² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 99.

⁶¹³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 100. Italics added.

⁶¹⁴ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 104.

coming Kingdom, as each the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each have distinct economies in bringing about the final soteriological and eschatological vision.

4.2.5 The Trinity and Spirit Baptism

Before we move onto Macchia's interpretation of justification, sanctification and life in the Spirit, all of which are defined by the nature of love, it is first important to establish the Trinitarian structure present within his lead motif: Spirit Baptism. The challenge for the Pentecostal community as Macchia defines it, is to affirm that Christ is both the starting point and final goal of a life lived in the Spirit, as the Spirit continues to 'break open' new ways of experiencing the Christ filled life. Pentecostals have traditionally struggled with this notion, by marking a clear distinction between the Spirit's role in binding the believer in soteriological terms to Christ and then noting Christ's role as Spirit Baptizer as associated with empowerment for witness.⁶¹⁵ According to Macchia, Pentecostals have been guilty of misapplying the doctrine of 'appropriation' in coming to this conclusion. Appropriation incorporates the notion that each person in the Godhead has specific functions and economies attributed to them. This is not to deny the inherently shared nature of these tasks, but it is prudent to make a shift away from the manner in which Pentecostals have traditionally conceived this. In traditional Pentecostal thought, the dominant model has been that each member of the Trinity has been attributed very defined and specific modes within a believer's salvation. The Spirit places the believer in Christ, and then Christ, in a second subsequent stage, baptizes the believer into the Spirit. Macchia questions the biblical nature of such a sequential action, suggesting rather that, 'it seems wise to attribute all of the blessings of the Christian life to Christ's impartation of the Spirit as the primary (and not secondary) act,

⁶¹⁵ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 114.

which then provides the basis for the Spirit's drawing us to Christ and then, in Christ, drawing our lives into the flow of that living witness'.⁶¹⁶

4.2.6 Spirit Baptism and Trinitarian Relationality

The notion that Spirit Baptism involves the idea that believers are drawn into Christ accentuates the Triune life of God is not closed, but open to loving relationship which is demonstrated through the metaphor of 'outpouring'. The reign of God can only occur through the generous outpouring of the Spirit, which is the transformative presence of God Himself, as this is what brings believers to a Christlikeness. As noted above, this prefigures the final eschatological goal of God indwelling all things in creation and naturally leads to the notion that in the interim period leading to its fulfilment, Christian believers can participate in God as a foretaste of the coming consummation. Macchia acknowledges that the idea of participation in God sounds unusual to Pentecostal ears, but insists it is an essential component of God's redemptive will. In quoting Rom 5:5, that, 'God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us', Macchia asserts that Spirit Baptism involves being baptized into God Himself.⁶¹⁷ God is both the giver and the gift in an unfolding narrative of God's redemptive work in which God's shared presence is the goal of life. Viewing Spirit baptism in such a manner, allows us to appreciate the relational dimension of God's nature and activity, which makes a dramatic shift away from any notion of God as unilateral force imposing His kingdom.⁶¹⁸ Rather, 'Spirit Baptism implies a God who seeks to baptize the world through and into the divine presence in order to release powers of redemption, liberation and hope'.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 114.

⁶¹⁷ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 116-7.

⁶¹⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 117.

⁶¹⁹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 117.

Within the process of divine infilling and participation involved in Spirit Baptism, Macchia identifies a two way movement within its Trinitarian structure, ‘from the Father through the Son in the Spirit, and then from the Spirit through the Son toward the Father’.⁶²⁰ The first movement of the Trinitarian God arises from the narrative of Jesus which spans from His conception to Pentecost, and Macchia agrees with both Jenson and Pannenberg that the revelation of Jesus is an essential starting point for knowing the Triune God.⁶²¹ Central within the Trinitarian structure which Macchia develops is the fact that within the Christ event, the Father lavishly bestows the Spirit to the Son throughout His entire mission (Mt. 3:17, Lk. 1:35, Jn. 3:34, Heb. 9:14 and Rom. 1:4), establishing Him as the Man of the Spirit. In return, and also a central motif within the Trinitarian structure, is the Son’s devotion to the Father by means of the Spirit. It is ‘in the Spirit’, that Jesus resists the temptations in the wilderness, willingly follows the path to the cross and will ultimately hand all things back to the Father (Mt. 4:1-11 and Heb. 9:14).⁶²² Within this narrative, Jesus is portrayed as the one whose role it is to pour out the Spirit which ultimately fulfils the purposes of the Kingdom. Macchia succinctly describes this when he states that it ‘arises from the journey of Jesus as the Word of the Father anointed by the Spirit, a life that proceeds from his conception in Mary’s womb, to his baptism and life ministry, and to his death and resurrection’.⁶²³

4.2.7 Pneumatological Justification

Having now outlined in some detail Macchia’s Trinitarian vision for Spirit Baptism and its eschatological import, we will turn now to the specific understanding of how

⁶²⁰ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 117.

⁶²¹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 118. See also R. W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), pp. 25. W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 299.

⁶²² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 118 and 123-5.

⁶²³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 119.

he ties this into the participation of God by delineating his understanding of justification, sanctification and charismatic empowerment. From the outset, it is important to appreciate that Macchia rejects the notion that justification and sanctification are completely separate concepts and stages of salvation (as they have often been portrayed in quarters of the Protestant and Pentecostal traditions), and that they ought to be appreciated as overlapping metaphors for the renewal of creation. In this respect, justification follows from Macchia's wider Kingdom theology, in that the Kingdom of God sheds light on the meaning of justification. Critical of the manner in which both Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions have defined justification, as they lack a Pneumatological dimension, Macchia affirms the need for a Pentecostal contribution to justification, which addresses this shortfall.⁶²⁴

Following Dunn in the need for a Pneumatological soteriology, Macchia defines justification as, 'in essence God's covenant faithfulness and righteous favor provided for humanity in Christ's mediation of the Spirit through his faithful life, death, resurrection and Spirit impartation as well as the embrace of the indwelling Spirit within'.⁶²⁵ It is then from the indwelling of the Spirit that the believer is drawn into the favour of God which was inaugurated in Christ's death and resurrection and realized in the Spirit, of which Christ was the bestower (Gal. 3:2-6). Drawing from a range of NT texts and authors, Macchia outlines how justification is approached differently by various NT authors, and when read in a broad manner through a Pneumatological lens, a fluidity attached to the meaning of justification arises which allows a movement beyond the understanding as traditionally conceived in

⁶²⁴ F. D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 15-74 and 186. F. D. Macchia, 'Justification and the Spirit of Life: A Pentecostal Response to the Joint Declaration', in W. G. Rusch (ed.), *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), pp. 133-49. F. D. Macchia, 'Justification through New Creation: The Holy Spirit and the Doctrine by which the Church Stands or Falls', *Theology Today*, 58: 2, 2001, pp. 202-17.

⁶²⁵ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 186-7. Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 136-7.

Protestantism and Catholicism.⁶²⁶ Key within the Pneumatological understanding of justification is an appreciation of the Spirit as the source and substance of justification, the start of a new birth which will be fulfilled at the *eschaton*, a unified vision of Christ and the Spirit working together for salvific and eschatological purposes and the formation of a just community which is socially attuned within the Church.⁶²⁷ Hence, Macchia can clearly state that, '[j]ustified existence is thus pneumatic existence, Spirit-baptized existence'.⁶²⁸

According to Macchia, the reading of justification as Spirit reception is a theme which has its roots in the OT's notion of righteousness, which is intimately connected to God's expression of 'Covenant Faithfulness'. Agreeing with J. Zeisler that the use of the *tsedeq* words in the OT are used within the divine-human relationship, the various meanings of mercy, deliverance, justice and judgment are applied to maintain the covenant relationship.⁶²⁹ Righteousness in an OT context cannot be reduced to a virtue or a set of virtues, nor can it be comprehended in a strictly forensic manner, as, '[p]rimarily, righteousness in the Old Testament referred to the accomplishment of God's faithfulness toward humanity and of appropriately faithful responses from within the community of the covenant'.⁶³⁰ When 'legal' associations are made in connection with *tsedeq* words, this has to be understood within a specifically Hebraic context which involves God's righteous faithfulness to the community. This results in a fundamental relational and functional conception of righteousness which stems from the covenantal commitment between God and

⁶²⁶ Although space restrictions do not allow for a full digest of Macchia's exegetical work, important verses in support of his argument include, Lk. 18:9-14, Acts 13:39, 1 Tim. 3:16, Gal. 2:19, 3:1-5, 4:6, 29, 5:5, Rom. 4:25, 1 Cor. 6:11 and Jn. 16:8-11, 17:20-6, see Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 186-214. Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 132-5.

⁶²⁷ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 215-8.

⁶²⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 139.

⁶²⁹ J. A. Zeisler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 34 and 40-2. Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 105.

⁶³⁰ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 105.

humanity. God lays claims upon His covenant people which involves a necessary reciprocation, but this is all enacted within God's covenantal relationship of redemptive actions for His people.⁶³¹ In this respect, the covenant established by God is unlike any other. While still maintaining the essential power imbalance inherent in Ancient Near Eastern covenants between the participants, the 'rightwising' fulfils justice through grace 'in accordance with the redemptive relationship that the Creator wills and strives to have with the creation'.⁶³²

Macchia moves from the essential relational character of righteousness and covenant within the OT to the Pneumatological implications this holds. Stating that what is commonly overlooked within scholarly treatments regarding God's rightwising within the OT is the Pneumatological dimension of divine presence. Macchia asserts that God's personal presence cannot be detached from His righteousness as covenant faithfulness. This fundamental OT concept is essential in comprehending the wider implications of justification within the biblical narrative as it possesses both a Pneumatological substance and an offer of eschatological hope. By affirming these significant OT motifs from the notion of 'rightwising', Macchia asserts that this consequently provides a foundation for comprehending God's righteousness within humanity.⁶³³ Macchia turns to a number of OT passages which support the essential link between the Spirit, life, divine presence and righteousness, thus demonstrating the basic nature of righteousness and hope – the indwelling nature of the Spirit (Gen. 1:2, Ezek. 33:11, 37:6, 13-4, Is. 45:8, 59:21, Hos. 6:3, 10:12, Ps. 118:21, Jer. 23-6 and Joel 2:28-32).⁶³⁴

⁶³¹ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 106.

⁶³² Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 106-14, esp. 107.

⁶³³ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 121-2.

⁶³⁴ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 121-7.

4.2.8 Justification and Eschatology

In continuation with the eschatological focus which is prominent in Macchia's writings, it comes as little surprise that Macchia's re-working of justification contains an essential eschatological component, which as we noted above, is grounded in OT thought. Within this, Macchia connects creational and hamartiological concerns which impact how soteriology and eschatology coincide by stressing that the original creational purposes were to bear the Spirit to conform into the image of Christ and how this was marred by sin. Sin is more than a 'moral wrong' but actually constitutes an 'alienation from the divine life and from our calling as a creature made for God'.⁶³⁵ In reading 2 Cor. 5:4-5, Macchia argues that Paul emphasises the human yearning for the Pneumatological existence in a resurrected body (see also 1 Cor. 15), which was intended as humanity's original purpose, and will come to fruition at the *eschaton*, when God indwells all things. This path is intricately linked to the path of the cross which was undertaken by Christ, which in turn allows the bestowal of the Spirit to transform all of creation into Christ's image. Consequently, '[t]here is an integral connection between the current possession of the Spirit and the immortal existence of the resurrection, with the former functioning as the first-fruits of the latter and guaranteeing its outcome'.⁶³⁶ Such 'first-fruits' however, does not make the believer immune to the problems associated with this sin laden world. Far from it. But, the manner in which suffering is experienced in this life connects with the Spirit within believers, and a divine hunger arises for the things to come as well as a challenge for how they presently are. In this eschatological dialectic, the coming glorification fulfils the present condition of justification, as, 'faith is the means by which we embrace this treasure within and continue to seek it until the day of final indwelling

⁶³⁵ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 251-2. See also, Rom. 8:17-23.

⁶³⁶ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 252.

and liberation. By participating by faith in Christ through the indwelling Spirit, we participate also in the future new creation to be fashioned in his image'.⁶³⁷

4.2.9 Sanctification

Desiring to move away from an *ordo salutis* which separates justification and sanctification into isolated stages of Christian initiation, Macchia argues that they should be viewed as 'overlapping metaphors of the Christian life'.⁶³⁸ In drawing from Peter Toon's insights that the traditional language of the objective and subjective dimensions of justification and sanctification can be misleading, Macchia acknowledges a distinction between the two concepts, but prefers to speak of a 'distinction of emphasis' as both possess an inherent 'pneumatological and transformationist' aspect (which has been underplayed within traditional Protestant theology).⁶³⁹ In attempting to overturn the objective/subjective language which has framed much of the understanding of justification and sanctification, Macchia wishes to stress the objective nature of sanctification, which is as equally grounded in the grace of God revealed in Christ as justification. In support of this important insight, Macchia applies 1 Cor. 6:11 when Paul states that both justification and sanctification are applied in the name of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. By reading then in this manner, Macchia argues that the objective/subjective criteria is inappropriate, and should rather be understood as a 'distinction of emphasis as well as theological nuance and theme'.⁶⁴⁰

This then brings Macchia to the question of what is the substance of Jesus' sanctification on behalf of believers. In reading Jesus' baptism in Mt. 3:13-5, Macchia asserts

⁶³⁷ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 253.

⁶³⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 140.

⁶³⁹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 140. See also, P. Toon, *Justification and Sanctification* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1984).

⁶⁴⁰ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 141.

that there is a close connection between fulfilling righteousness and identifying with the unrighteous in baptism and fellowship. In this passage, Jesus responds to John the Baptists initial refusal to baptize Jesus by insisting that His baptism is necessary to ‘fulfil righteousness’. In this regard, Jesus’ holiness is not achieved or maintained through the avoidance of sinners, but by seeking and joining with them and offering His redemptive presence. This dimension of Jesus’ fellowship with sinners is reflected also at the crucifixion. When Jesus prays the prayer of the God-forsaken, He does so in solidarity with sinners. Thus, when God answers this prayer by the resurrection, the answer equally applies to sinners also. Here, Macchia argues that there is a close tie between Jesus’ own holiness and righteousness in solidarity with the sinful, being delivered up on their behalf and being raised by the Spirit of holiness for their justification (Rom. 1:4 and 4:25).⁶⁴¹ This consequently demonstrates how righteous and holiness needs to be framed, against the backdrop of the cross and resurrection and the necessary solidarity with sinful humanity. It is in holiness that Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God with the sinful humanity, but in such a manner that requires the Spirit of holiness, which encouraged Him on the path to the cross and subsequent resurrection. As Macchia concludes, ‘[t]he Spirit that Jesus pours out as the Spirit baptizer makes us crucified with Christ living in newness of life in the power of the resurrection (Gal. 2:20). It empowers us to bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2) and so to yearn and strive with all those who suffer for the liberty of God’s grace (Rom. 8:22)’.⁶⁴²

4.2.10 Love

Before we conclude this chapter, there is one outstanding issue in Macchia’s theology which needs to be considered before returning to our dialogue between Open Theism

⁶⁴¹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 142.

⁶⁴² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 143.

and Pentecostalism, and that is the role of love. As we have noted, and as Macchia himself emphasises, his theology of the Trinitarian structure of Spirit baptism which ‘shows that the final end of this kingdom is to be viewed as the transformation of creation into the temple of God’s dwelling’, is nought if it is not grounded in, and defined by, love.⁶⁴³ As Macchia states, [t]here is nothing more important to theological reflection on Spirit baptism than divine love’, especially as it is this which frames humanity’s participation in the Father, Son and Spirit.⁶⁴⁴ Properly understood, divine love is God’s highest gift as it consists of the very being of God and is ‘the essence of God and substance of our participation in God’.⁶⁴⁵ Macchia is clear that all reflection upon the nature of Pentecostal theology, especially in prioritizing Spirit baptism as its organizing principle, must fundamentally reckon upon divine love constituting the substance of Christian life. Without love, all theological categories can become mere abstractions which run the risk of fragmenting, leaving them ultimately bankrupt.⁶⁴⁶

In following Emil Brunner, Macchia acknowledges 1 John 4:8-16 as instrumental in comprehending the nature of love and its theological significance. With the declaration that ‘God is love’, there is a powerful statement concerning the certainty of the inner life of God, which transcends any notion of an ‘attribute’ of God which is shared with other creatures.⁶⁴⁷ Tied to this, is the assertion that by identifying love as God’s very nature resists the temptation to abstractly define love and subsequently apply it to God’s being, as God’s own self-impartment and revelation becomes the grounding for understanding love. Macchia highlights the relational aspect of this distinction by noting that by the actions of Christ as

⁶⁴³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 258.

⁶⁴⁴ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 259.

⁶⁴⁵ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 259.

⁶⁴⁶ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 260.

⁶⁴⁷ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 261. See also, E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), pp. 185.

Spirit baptizer, ‘God imparts his divine self as all-embracing love and not just something about God. The benefit that God wills for the creature is not “something” but God’s presence’.⁶⁴⁸ God’s movement to humanity is consequently ‘self-communication’ which is the essence of His revelation which cannot be subsequently reduced to an abstraction. Divine love and the self-impartment must remain an ‘event’: an event of the incarnation, suffering and death, the resurrection and the ensuing Spirit which is poured out on all flesh (Rom. 5:5). As Macchia states, ‘God as the Spirit Baptizer is God as Self-giving Love’.⁶⁴⁹ In developing this thought, Macchia asserts that God’s love is such that it ‘bears all things’, including death and sin. This rightfully acknowledges God as the ‘crucified God’, whose love is limitless in its capacity to suffer, though never succumbing to, or overwhelmed by, evil and death.

Such is the nature of divine love that it gives new life and genuine hope for the future. Here, the hope which divine love inspires is eschatological, as it not only creates a yearning for Christ’s return as the object of love, but generates an empathetic love for wider creation, reflecting God’s own heart.⁶⁵⁰ Macchia draws from specific Pentecostal experience in establishing these claims, observing how eschatology functions within the community. As he notes, eschatology within Pentecostalism is ‘not just about end times...but is rather a fervent and living hope that pervades all of life’.⁶⁵¹ This is grounded in the relational love expressed in, and towards, the person of Jesus. Although early Pentecostals misjudged when the return of Christ would be, the fact of their prayerful tarrying and longing for Christ’s return demonstrated a clear love which sought fulfilment. This yearning love is transformative according to Macchia, who argues that its eschatological focus is essential to Pentecostal

⁶⁴⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 261.

⁶⁴⁹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 262.

⁶⁵⁰ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 260-71.

⁶⁵¹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 271.

identity and worship.⁶⁵²

4.2.11 Love and Eschatology

The essential link between love and eschatological hope is also needed to balance the apocalypticism inherent within Pentecostal eschatology which holds the very real possibility of dominating and misconstruing Pentecostalism's eschatological vision. As Macchia notes, there has been a tendency within Pentecostalism to favour a 'Premillennial' eschatology, which understands Christ's final return coming before His reign of peace. Such a motif holds a strong 'otherworldly' dimension, in that God will rescue this world supernaturally 'from above' as He ushers in the Kingdom, leaving little or no room for human participation in the final event. Problematic to this within a consistent reading of Pentecostal theology is the notion that God is already present in our midst through the Spirit, guiding and leading creation to its fulfilment. Evidence of this is seen within the Pentecostal soteriology which holds to a strong 'materiality' and whole body healing which is operational within this life.⁶⁵³ Hence, there is a focus in *this* world of God acting and establishing His kingdom through history. This should not negate the final eschatological act of possessing an apocalyptic element, but it should be balanced by the 'Prophetic' eschatology outlined above, which, 'is more orientated toward historical fulfilment of God's will in a way that involves human participation on a level more profound and more genuinely human than merely yielding by faith to supernatural interventions "from above"'.⁶⁵⁴

Such an approach is vital for Macchia if a theological escapism is to be avoided. Marks of the Kingdom include justice and mercy, and they require a presence in this current

⁶⁵² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 272.

⁶⁵³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 276-7.

⁶⁵⁴ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 278.

age as a pointer of the coming Kingdom and the promise of its completion. This brings about the tension of the 'now' and 'not yet', as it positions the current age in relation to its fulfilment, but in a way that should seek justice and love. Macchia quotes Murray W. Dempster in support of this conclusion, as he writes, 'When couched within the prophetic tradition, the eschatological continuity between the 'already' and the 'not yet' kingdom implies that the apocalyptic act at the end of this age will not be one of total *annihilation* of the world but one of total *transformation* of the world'.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁵ M. W. Dempster, 'Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 1: 2, April 1993, pp. 62. Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 278-9.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISON, DIALOGUE AND CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS: THE GODHEAD

Now that the theological contours of the Trinity, soteriology, providence and eschatology have been explored within both Open Theism and Pentecostalism, it is time to draw the two together in a dialogical conversation, and from that, develop some provisional constructive insights which arise from the discussion. But before this occurs, it is prudent to review some of the methodological elements laid out in the Introduction, as this will assist in clarifying which significant factors should be rightfully considered within both the discursive and constructive stages. Throughout the work thus far, there has been an emphasis placed upon the explication of the theological views of Open Theists, which has constituted the ‘home’ community. By exploring the thoughts which presently exist within the Open Theist community regarding the four central topics (Godhead, providence, soteriology and eschatology), we have defined not only the theological content and boundary markers which exist within the community, but also some of the limitations which inevitably accompany them. As such, we have created a theological context from which to begin the dialogical portion of the work. Within the establishment of this given context, there has been an expressed commitment to the central doctrines within Open thought, which seeks to deepen the understanding which currently exists within the community but also critically challenges some of the ideas which also reside there. In this respect, two of the method’s central tenets, the notion that *fides quaerens intellectum* should constitute both the purpose and practice of the theological endeavour and that there should be a clear commitment to the ‘home’ community, have been consistently maintained. Subsequently, the textual delineation and criticisms which have arisen from the careful reading of Open Theist texts has produced a

context for motivation and reflection alongside the invaluable source of information and learning.

However, this only represents one aspect of the methodological procedure. In seeking to advance the current thinking regarding the various ideas within Open theology to date, there must also be a willingness to open oneself up to the thoughts, beliefs and convictions of the ‘other’. As Clooney notes, this must take the form of incorporating an ‘including theology’ into the comparative exercise. By allowing ourselves to listen to the ‘other’ we can move effectively beyond the boundaries and limitations of our ‘home’ to grow and learn through the employment of mutual dialogue. As Clooney notes, this involves a careful ‘double reading’ of both sets of texts, which patiently teases out and illustrates what is both present and absent. Such a conversational theology draws from the insights derived from Gadamer and Tracy in establishing both sets of ‘horizons’, and, by opening oneself to the respective horizons, mutual learning and growth can genuinely occur *if* we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to any new and challenging insights. In this state of vulnerable reading, we must also open ourselves to the *tremendum* of the ‘other’ to speak into our current understanding and allow it to disturb and challenge our current convictions. Through this reading, which must be encouraged, we develop a *facinans*, novel insights, in our own thinking. This will then enable us to offer some provisional proposals for overcoming the criticisms which have been identified in Chapters 2 and 3. The issue of providing initial and provisional proposals in light of the dialogue is a significant one. In line with the relational, ‘including’ and conversational theology practiced within the discussion, a tentative humility must necessarily accompany it. By completing theology in this way, allows for further exploration, criticism and growth within the community, which is the most appropriate context for developing and producing theology given its communal and shared nature.

In light of what has been identified within the overview above, the next two chapters will seek to present a dialogue between Open Theists and Pentecostals and present four small-scale theological ‘experiments’ which are designed to invoke further reflection and comment. The dialogical component will primarily take the form of a biblical reading which takes its major cues from the ‘Canonical Narrative’ focus which was expounded in the Introduction. Notwithstanding the central thrust of the ‘Canonical Narrative’ approach which incorporates the theological rereading of the story of Jesus, this aspect will be necessarily expanded to include a more Trinitarian dimension, as the role of the Holy Spirit will also be considered as a significant part of God’s interactive and ongoing story with creation. After each of the dialogues have concluded, they will be followed by a tentative constructive proposal or ‘experiment’. Each of the constructive proposals tie into the previous discussions, and will suggest novel readings to the notions of *kenosis*, salvation, eschatology and divine providence. It is at this juncture that the significant proposals and contributions within the thesis are forwarded. Throughout the commentary readings within Chapters 2 and 3, it was argued that one of the most serious criticisms arising from the literature is the manner in which there is an inconsistent portrayal of the Trinity due to the lamentable Pneumatological lacuna. While the identification of this lacuna constitutes not only a significant contribution in terms of the Open community’s self-identification as ‘Social’ Trinitarians, it also serves as the bedrock for the constructive proposals. What marks the current work out in relation to the literature under consideration, is the manner in which this problematic oversight is firstly identified, and secondly, corrected. In this regard, the proposals which are provisionally offered situate the current work within the extended dialogue of the Open community, yet seeks to move the discussions forward by offering a more clearly stated theology of the Holy Spirit. By completing this, the thesis adds to the current understanding of the Godhead,

particularly in terms of *kenosis*, which is reconfigured in a Christological context, but which also incorporates a robust Trinitarian dimension. The Pneumatological emphasis subsequently impacts how the notions of salvation, eschatology and divine providence are defined in the following chapter, as there, the presence of the Spirit is more clearly defined in terms of the cooperative nature of the *Missio Dei*. By providing the the proposals in this manner, it is hoped that the current work constitutes not only a clarification of the discussions under review, especially in terms of an extension of Pinnock's theological insights, but posits significantly new thoughts into how these can be understood.

One further point needs raising which explains how the Chapter 6 will proceed. During the peregrination into Pentecostal theology, there was a notable absence from the considerations of both Studebaker and Macchia regarding the topic of divine providence. Whilst this is a central concern within the Open community, the Pentecostal scholars read here do not develop this concept in line with their theological musings concerning the Trinity, salvation and eschatology. In light of this, and in seeking not to impose the pressing concerns of the Open community onto Pentecostal theology, I suggest an alternative approach in developing our thoughts regarding how providence can be considered and subsequently developed. Being as the notions of Trinity, salvation and eschatology have each been undertaken by our respective authors, what I propose is that the insights and provisional conclusions which arise from developing these become the central key for re-reading the notion of providence. In this manner, there is a consistency and coherence in providing answers for this topic. While it may not be ideal in light of the method utilised throughout the thesis, it does overcome the difficulty of the absence of providential reflection in the Pentecostal material.

5.1. Open Theist and Pentecostal Dialogue Concerning the Godhead

The key feature which arose from Chapter 2 was the lacuna regarding Pneumatology which presently exists in Open Theist literature.⁶⁵⁶ Despite the acknowledgement from each of the Open authors concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit within a Trinitarian context, there is little development of how Pneumatology contributes to the wider understanding of the Godhead in a specifically Open context. Therefore, the primary, though not exclusive, focus here will centre upon the person and activity of the Spirit and how this can offer insights into broadening the current conceptions of the Godhead within Open thought. By focusing upon Pneumatology, two specific purposes will emerge. First, it will provide a more robust Trinitarian framework which incorporates the Spirit's personhood and economy, which in turns provides new avenues for comprehending who God is, and secondly, provide further scope for understanding how God operates in the world within an Open context. The relative ambiguity of the Spirit, at least in Sanders, Hasker and Oord, has had the effect of not only minimizing what the Spirit can, and does, do in subsequent facets of theology, but actually impugns the personal, social and relational nature of God by marginalising one of its members. If God is to be understood as loving and relational as Open theology pertains, then this must be reflected within the Godhead itself, thus the requirement of a fully delineated Trinity. Secondly, it then allows the Spirit to engage fully in the development of the other topics under consideration, which have again subsumed aspects of the Spirit's personhood and activity.

⁶⁵⁶ Pinnock's work is the notable exception, but as we commented above, this did involve a degree of subordination of the Spirit to Christology, which ties with the Pneumatological considerations outlined here.

5.2 Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom

Turning our attention first to Sanders, we note that in his assertion for knowing God, albeit in a partial manner, requires an appreciation of, and modification to, Rahner's Trinitarian axiom. In this, God, acting through His economy (*quoad nos*), reflects and expresses, but does not exhaust, His immanent being (*in se*).⁶⁵⁷ Consequently, it is through the *revelation* of the Trinitarian economy that God can be (partially) known. The use of applying a modified reading of Rahner provides a convenient starting point for the comparative work, as Studebaker also applies, and modifies, Rahner's Trinitarian thought.⁶⁵⁸ The difference however in the use and modification to Rahner by Studebaker and Sanders opens up interesting points, and paves the way for reflecting upon the present Open thought concerning the Trinity. As we noted above with Studebaker, he was concerned how the person of the Spirit is understood through Her own history and narratives, which in turn can be drawn back into the immanence of the Godhead. Here the Spirit contributes significantly to not only the economical outworking of God within the world, but also the understanding of who God is. In this regard, Studebaker is more rigorous in developing Rahner's thinking into a methodological procedure. This is then more consistently applied to wider theological categories whilst also containing a more nuanced Pneumatology. We have noted throughout Open Theists have often neglected a full Pneumatological component in their work. This is at the least puzzling, as one of the major theological *loci* of Open Theism is God working alongside humanity in the present moment to co-create the yet unformed future. In this regard, the need of a strong Pneumatology is imperative, as the presence of the Spirit in the world constitutes God's present immanence and fellowship with humanity. Therefore, by reading

⁶⁵⁷ Sanders, *Reducing God*, pp. 119.

⁶⁵⁸ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 3.

Studebaker's methodologically developed use of Rahner against that of Sanders, we note a much broader scope for including the Spirit into all facets of theology, which should be a requirement for all Trinitarian Open Theists. This assists in not only overcoming the Christocentric focus which has been identified in Open writings to date, but in fully assessing God's current activity and economy in the world.

For Studebaker, amending Rahner's axiom necessarily involves incorporating the 'narratives of the Spirit', which depict how the Spirit's personhood and economy is developed throughout the entire biblical account.⁶⁵⁹ It is within this framework that Studebaker identifies not just the thematic continuity of the Spirit's work in Creation/redemption, the Christ event and Pentecost, but that this necessarily beholds liminal, constitutive and eschatological elements. By cautiously drawing a parallel between the OT *ruach* and the NT use of *pneuma*, Studebaker maps the development of the Spirit's significant contributions in not only shaping the world, but also in saving it.⁶⁶⁰ As Studebaker emphasises, such an exercise is imperative if contemporary theology is to overcome the curtailing of the Spirit which has all too often been a feature of theological practice and which has also been regrettably reflected in Open theology. It is through this reading of Studebaker that Open Theists can fully engage with the *tremendum* of not only the Pneumatological theology of Studebaker and Pentecostals more widely, but with the Spirit Herself. In seeking to learn from the comparative exercise, Open Theists need to seek and appreciate not only how the Spirit can function within the community's theology, but actively engage with how the Spirit has operated in the past, which guides and shapes our responsibility in forming the future. In this respect, a new world of the Spirit opens up. It is in this dual reading that the full force of the Spirit's *facinans* can,

⁶⁵⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 5 and 53.

⁶⁶⁰ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 60.

and should, significantly impact and inspire Open theology. Open Theists should actively seek and engage in the Spirit's movement, desiring ever new insights to arise from reading Her participation in both the biblical text and the current world. If Open Theists are correct in their understanding of the ontological significance of the present moment in relation to time, then it is in the perpetually renewing of the *now* that the Pneumatological *chronos* of God's immanence and activity in the world, which shapes the yet unformed future, allows for a new awakening and awareness of how God operates. This in turn grants how the economy of God can be read into the Godhead itself, expanding our current comprehension of the Trinity.

5.3 Trinitarian Movement and Love

In addition to the Pneumatological insights offered by Studebaker, further sapience regarding the Trinity can emerge from Macchia's understanding of the two-way movement of God within the salvific mission. Just as Studebaker brings a much needed clarity in reading the biblical accounts anew with the specific intention of identifying the Spirit's liminal, constitutive and eschatological roles, Macchia's cognizance regarding divine motion can further assist in clarifying and developing the important insights derived from Studebaker. As Macchia observes, Christ is the starting point for knowing God as Trinity.⁶⁶¹ In this sense, the Christological focus which exists in Open thought can and should be affirmed, as long as it leads to a fuller appreciation of the Trinity, and does not result in the Christocentrism which currently exists within Open writings. It is imperative that any developing Open Christology leads to a broader concept of the full Godhead, and appreciating how the Spirit functions within the Christ mission is a must, as Pinnock has previously argued. By following Macchia in appreciating Christ as the 'Man of the Spirit' whose entire earthly life was endowed with a

⁶⁶¹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 119.

lavish bestowal of the Spirit from the Father, we become aware of the divine movements which first, flow from the Father, through the Son to the Spirit, and then conversely, from the Spirit, through the Son to the Father.⁶⁶² By determining this divine movement within the salvific mission (see below), it is possible to add further shape to the narratives of the Spirit offered by Studebaker. The significant points to draw from the divine movement is that any movement of God, is, firstly, Trinitarian in its fundamental essence, requiring a clear understanding of the roles each member makes (affirming Macchia's stress on the doctrine of Appropriation), and secondly, that there is a loving and patient movement of God, which starts in love and seeks to reach out beyond the Godhead itself, *but*, with the express intention of returning back to the fullness of the Trinity. Hence, any action performed by God must necessarily be understood as a divine process that extends lovingly outwards to embrace all of creation but always returns to the full consummation of the Trinity.

The divine movement necessarily embodies the expression of divine love, and as we have noted throughout, Open Theists stress the importance of love and rightly place this as a central tenet within their theology. In this regard, one of the closest points of contact within the comparative work between Open Theists and Macchia is the significance of love and what role this should play in not only theological construction, but its importance for comprehending all of life, including life within the Trinity. As we note, both Open Theists and Macchia begin with 1 John 4:8-16 for emphasising that God *is* love, and that love cannot be restricted to a mere attribute of God, but actually defines the ontological nature of the divine. However, a closer reading of Macchia in regards to his explanation of Spirit Baptism and the accompanying understanding of the Spirit, allows for Open Theists to engage anew with both the nature of love and how love is present and active within the world. Due to the

⁶⁶² Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 117.

emphasis which Macchia places on the role of the Spirit, and in contrast to the lack of Pneumatology which is present within the Open literature, we note from Macchia that the giving of the Spirit is the giving of love as an *event*, which allows for an appreciation of a broader conception of love.⁶⁶³ The event of divine love is the giving of the Spirit which is inextricably tied to the life, mission, death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 5:5). In this respect, God imparts Godself into the life of the believer and self-communicates the very essence of His being. By adopting this understanding of love as God self-communicating and imparting His self as love, opens up the *tremendum* of not only the nature of true love and what this means, but also how the Spirit is essential to a full discussion concerning love, which is something which the Open community has been slow to engage in.

5.4 The Trinity and Pneumatology

Having drawn from Studebaker and Macchia fresh insights into the nature of the Godhead, especially in regards to the importance of incorporating a full Pneumatology, we now need to re-read the Open community's present understanding of the Trinity and seek ways of broadening this in light of what has been learnt from the Pentecostal authors under consideration. It is here that we should allow the novel readings to not only challenge us through the *tremendum* of new conceptions, but use these to stimulate a *facinans* to deepen the current thinking. Turning our attention first to Sanders, we note that he has completed a broad survey of biblical material which maps the Open nature of God throughout the Old Testament and the life and mission of Jesus. Into this, he also introduces the notion of 'conceptual metaphors', which allows for a widening of the understanding of God.⁶⁶⁴ However, the survey conducted by Sanders and the manner in which he applies the conceptual

⁶⁶³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 262.

⁶⁶⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 20

metaphors largely ignores the person of the Spirit. Despite his reliance upon the ‘Social’ Trinitarian model, there is a theological disconnect between how the Trinity is theoretically conceived and then the practical outworking of his Trinity. There is no narrative explanation of the Spirit’s role within his survey, nor is the Spirit granted any particular significance in comprehending how the world unfolds from an Open perspective. By broadening the scope of his narrative survey to incorporate the divine activity of the Spirit as Studebaker does, would undoubtedly enrich the work which has gone before. Not only would the biblical account be more balanced in terms of a consistent Trinitarian reading, but the activity and movement of Spirit indicates how the Spirit operates within the world, which as we have witnessed from Studebaker, demonstrates something more of the immanent Godhead. Additionally, the use of conceptual metaphors is ripe with possibilities for exploring the nature and economy of the Spirit, as throughout the biblical account the Spirit is often referred to in metaphorical language. Images such as wind, fire and *Paraclete* each adopt metaphors, and from these can be drawn novel insights which contribute to our understanding of God as Trinity.

Much of what was described in the dialogue with Sanders above is also pertinent when considering William Hasker. In the same manner that the Holy Spirit is acknowledged as a full member of the Trinity, there is also a relative anonymity regarding the Spirit and a lack of an accompanying Pneumatology in Hasker’s work. Unquestionably, there are pregnant possibilities in Hasker’s writings to develop a more rigorous Pneumatology so as to move beyond the Christocentrism which is an unfortunate feature within his writing. Within Hasker’s response to Process theology and his theorizing about the Trinity, there is a created space to advance how the Holy Spirit can contribute to both these aspects by highlighting Her personhood and economy. In defining his fundamental understanding of God, we note that

Hasker replies ‘Father, Son and Spirit’ which establishes a strong Trinitarian basis.⁶⁶⁵ This is unquestionably supported through his careful re-reading of the Pro-Nicene theology of Ayer which develops into his excellent explanation of divine ‘tropes’ as a means of comprehending the divine unity.⁶⁶⁶ Yet, it is at this juncture we encounter Hasker’s Christocentrism.

Acknowledging the Christ event as the departure of Trinitarian thinking (a point not without its merits), there is little in the way of explanation of how the Spirit is active within the Christological event. In reading Studebaker’s account alongside Hasker, we note a lack of description which develops the hypostatic union and incarnation in terms of Pneumatology. In discussing how the incarnation can sustain and protect a ‘threshold of union’ between the Trinity’s respective members, Studebaker’s criteria of liminality and substantive presence ensures the Spirit’s inherent and necessary involvement, this in turn produces a more robust Trinitarian theology.⁶⁶⁷ By reading Studebaker alongside Hasker on this point we witness a stronger reciprocity between the Son and Spirit, which is a feature Hasker is inclined toward within his model of ‘Social’ Trinitarianism but does not fully develop.

Within Hasker’s response to Process theology, there are also missed opportunities to develop a stronger Pneumatological component within his theology. As noted above, one of Hasker’s lead concerns regarding Process theology involves the inherent limitation of persuasion which is placed upon God. In offering correctives to Process theologians regarding this, Hasker identifies three biblical criteria (that God ‘creates’, ‘acts’ and ‘communicates’) as a means of demonstrating the biblical short-comings of the Process view.⁶⁶⁸ While each of these criteria hold a credible validity, there is also a Pneumatological lacuna connected to

⁶⁶⁵ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 258.

⁶⁶⁶ Hasker, *Metaphysics*, pp. 51-2, 226 and 250.

⁶⁶⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 53.

⁶⁶⁸ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 218-228. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 207-8.

each of them. By omitting the Pneumatological aspect from these criteria, Hasker fails to emphasise the fundamental ontic difference between a Trinitarian concept of God and the homogeneous portrayal of God in Process thought. The being and presence of the Spirit then becomes not only a clear demarcation between the respective notions of God, but is also a key distinguishing feature of the activity of God within the world. As Studebaker demonstrates, the Spirit's activity in creation is prolific and is necessary in enabling and describing the 'transition from lifelessness to life', which holds within it wider soteriological implications.⁶⁶⁹ If we tie in Macchia's divine movement into Hasker's critique of Process theology, then the scope is broadened to explain how God 'creates', 'acts' and 'communicates' in terms of the Holy Spirit. This not only personalises the nature of the Trinity, but, emphasises the relational nature of God as community who saves by extending out of selfhood to draw others into the divine community. By demonstrating how the Spirit is present in Her liminality and constitutive ways within the salvific movement, then there is a clarity given to the manner in which God presently acts and communicates with humanity, which is an important corrective to Process thought.

In responding to Clark Pinnock's conception of the Trinity, we encounter a different order of considerations as that required in Sanders and Hasker above. Whereas we noted in Sanders and Hasker the acknowledgment of the Spirit in the essential social make-up of the Trinity, there was also a subsequent lacuna of Pneumatological development and a relative anonymity of the Spirit in the out-working of their theology. In this regard, the question of the liminality of the Spirit, which was a significant amendment for both Sanders and Hasker, is not a pertinent one in Pinnock's writings as he clearly acknowledges and develops the Spirit's activity on several levels. Yet, in reading Pinnock against Studebaker, as we did in the

⁶⁶⁹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 55.

criticisms of Chapter 2, we note that notwithstanding the importance of the Spirit's presence in facets of his theology, Pinnock unintentionally subordinates the role of the Spirit to that of Christology.⁶⁷⁰ As Studebaker argues, the motif of the Spirit's 'anointing' of Jesus is a dominate one for Pinnock which governs much of his ensuing exposition. As a consequence, Pinnock, 'misplaces the primary work of the Spirit' by substituting Pneumatological empowerment over uniting the 'divine Son with the 'humanity of Jesus' in the hypostatic union which Studebaker asserts is the 'ultimate and fundamental activity' for the Spirit.⁶⁷¹ By prioritising the themes of 'anointing' and 'empowerment' as Pinnock does within the Spirit's work in the Christ event, a bifurcation of the Spirit's role arises within the incarnation, as the Spirit is ontologically minimized in that moment. This not only overlooks the primary role of the Spirit in the incarnation, but holds the implication that '[t]he Spirit does not play an ontological role in the incarnation, but rather a functional one', which negates the Spirit operating in a constitutive role within the Christ event.⁶⁷²

A major consequence of Pinnock elevating the notion of Pneumatological 'empowerment' over an ontological union within the incarnation is that this reduces the Spirit's activity to a 'super-additum' within the Christ event.⁶⁷³ By acknowledging this through a careful reading between Pinnock and Studebaker, two resulting implications arise. First, we note that in Pinnock's Christology (even when modified as a 'Spirit-Christology'), the Spirit only operates upon and within a fully incarnated Christ, which, as Studebaker argues, holds the implication that, '[t]he placement of the role of the Spirit in the functional

⁶⁷⁰ A key quote for Studebaker's assertion of Pneumatological subordinationism is when Pinnock claims, 'it was the anointing by the Spirit that made Jesus 'Christ', not the hypostatic union, and it was the anointing that made him effective in history as the absolute savior, Jesus was ontologically Son of God from the moment of conception, but he became Christ by the power of the Spirit, Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 80-1.

⁶⁷¹ Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 6.

⁶⁷² Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 10.

⁶⁷³ Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 10.

category and not the ontological one introduces an extrinsicism of the Spirit to the theology of the incarnation'.⁶⁷⁴ Secondly, despite Pinnock's attempts to avoid subsuming the Spirit into Christological categories, a lamentable facet of theology which Pinnock rightly lambastes, he ultimately succumbs to those same trappings. Therefore, in reading these respective aspects of Pinnock and Studebaker against one another, we note that in line with the three criteria outlined by Studebaker, the importance of the Spirit's constitutional and substantive undertakings are clearly demonstrated. Even within attempts such as Pinnock's Spirit-Christology to overcome a long heritage of Christological dominance of the Spirit, Studebaker highlights the inherent dangers this process can possess. Studebaker's observations of Pinnock make us aware of how keenly we need to account for the presence of the Spirit, but more so than this, the diligence which is required in detecting how the Spirit plays a central constitutional and substantive role in all aspects of not only the Trinitarian life, but the out working of all theology.

In approaching Oord and his formulation of the Godhead, we return to similar themes which were raised in connection to Sanders and Hasker regarding Pneumatology, but with some notable differences. Whereas we observed in Sanders and Hasker a 'Social' Trinitarian model which grounded their conception of the Godhead, Oord's delineation of God emerges from a distinct reading of biblical theology and a modified Process metaphysic. As such, this gives Oord's rendering of Open theology a unique perspective. However, as we outlined above in the criticisms of Chapter 2, the fit between Oord's biblical theology in conjunction with Process insights presented several problems, not least in terms of Christology and Pneumatology. In asserting that love should constitute theology's central motif, Oord is focussed upon how this can be coherently maintained in defining the essential

⁶⁷⁴ Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 18.

nature of God. This leads to his definition of *Essential Kenosis* and *theocosmocentrism* which advocate God's necessary loving nature and relatedness to all things. But, as we observed above, both of Oord's lead motifs lack a discernible Christological and Pneumatological component. While it was argued that Oord is distanced from Process theology proper, there still remains an inclination toward, though not a full capitulation to, an understanding and presentation of God as a homogenous being with little distinction between the persons within the Godhead and what their specific economies are (the doctrine of appropriation). In accepting much of Oord's assertion concerning God's primary aim, the absence of Christology and Pneumatology inhibits a full exploration of what the persons within the Trinity do in bringing the world to consummation and what important caveats must be acknowledged within God's fundamental purpose. In acknowledging that each of the persons within the Trinity do in fact draw all of creation into the loving heart of God, there must also be a recognition of the theological corollaries which explain, in Christological and Pneumatological categories, how this is achieved, which is absent from Oord.

Subsequently, reading Studebaker's Pneumatological criteria into Oord's work, in a comparable manner with Sanders and Hasker, overcomes some of the Trinitarian shortcomings in Oord's writing. By acknowledging the liminal and constitutive elements of the Spirit's work would necessarily broaden Oord's depiction of God, and, offer a clear distinction of the persons of the Trinity which can later be developed into *how* God is calling all of creation into His loving embrace.⁶⁷⁵ As we noted from Studebaker, the critical manner in which it is possible to speak of God rests upon drawing insights from each of the Trinitarian Persons economic activity. Therefore, in reading this notion alongside Oord, we are challenged, through a Trinitarian structure, to think about how God can be conceived and

⁶⁷⁵ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 192. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 118 and 146.

what conclusions can be drawn about His loving nature. Granted, this holds parallels with Oord's movement from *kenosis* into the heart of God, but by incorporating the Spirit into the very centre of the exercise allows for a much more inclusive picture of the divine to emerge.⁶⁷⁶ Furthermore, by incorporating the Spirit's clear liminal and constitutive components would also further support Oord's desire to establish God as 'omni-present' without compromising divine transcendence and capitulating into an 'omni-immanence'.⁶⁷⁷ Additionally, by accepting the Spirit's central role, both in Her personhood and economy, would create a space for exploring a more robust Christology given the coalesced nature of the Son and Spirit's mission. As Studebaker notes, any constructive developments of the Christ event must possess a Pneumatological component, which in this instance, would mean a natural and reciprocal reading of the Son and Spirit operating in love together. Macchia echoes this sentiment by stating, along very similar lines to Oord, that love should be a focal point for not just understanding God's essence, but the goal of all divine activity. Despite the obvious overlap between Macchia and Oord on this point, Macchia ties the notion of love much more acutely to the economic outworking of the members of the Trinity. As Macchia suggests, love is equal to the 'self-impartment' of God, which is achieved through Jesus as the Spirit-Baptizer who was sent from the Father.⁶⁷⁸ Love is therefore grounded in each member of the Trinity, which is expressed through their particular economy, which must be considered when reflecting on either the nature of the Godhead, or the nature of love.

5.5 Findings Arising from the Comparisons

Therefore, in reading Studebaker and Macchia alongside the Open Theists in terms

⁶⁷⁶ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, pp. 156.

⁶⁷⁷ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 192.

⁶⁷⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 261.

of a comparative exercise for learning about the Godhead, we note that there are three important themes which require emphasising; first, that the Spirit is a fully functioning member of the Trinity in both God's economy and immanence and this has to be taken account of in any portrayal of the divine, secondly, there is a clear need to raise the profile of the Spirit and avoid Her relative anonymity in Open literature, and finally, there is a need to appreciate that the Spirit's liminal and constitutive activity not only contributes to comprehending Her as a 'person' of the Trinity, but that this subsequently reinforces the relational aspect within the Godhead. The Spirit's work brings a completion to the Godhead by drawing all of creation into Godself through the divine movement outlined by Macchia. Having now set the theological parameters from the comparative work governing the Godhead, it now time to turn to the short theological experiment to propose changes to the current thinking of Open thought in respect to the Trinity. Although there are a number of options which are available for this, I have selected to re-read the understanding of *kenosis*. This is due to the inclusion of *kenosis* by both Sanders and Pinnock in their Christological renderings and the centrality that it has within Oord's entire theological programme.

5.6 Provisional Constructive Proposals for the Godhead: *Kenosis*

On reflection of the comparison between Open Theism and Pentecostalism regarding the Godhead, the major proposal which arises is the need to accommodate the Holy Spirit more robustly into the fabric of Open thought. The manner in which the Spirit is presented in the work of Studebaker and Macchia offers both a *tremendum* and *facinans* for appreciating not only a stronger awareness of the Spirit, but in recognizing how this is inherently connected to the Spirit's fundamental activity in all things. Although the criticisms of Chapter 2 identified a Pneumatological weakness in the majority of Open thought, allowing the

Pentecostal rendering of Pneumatology to be read into the context of the Godhead further exposes the frailty which currently exists. Through exposing the Open view to its vulnerability in this regard, the anonymity of the Spirit is drawn in stark contrast to that of Studebaker and Macchia, which must subsequently impact any future development of Pneumatology within Open Theism's wider theological construction. In applying and utilising a Pentecostal Pneumatology as a departure for a corrective in Open theology, there is a need to allow the breadth and scope of both Studebaker and Macchia to challenge the current thinking. In engaging with the biblical narratives of the Spirit (Studebaker) and all that it necessarily involves in terms of the divine movement (Macchia), must then open up new ways of not only approaching the text and anticipating how it can speak to us in regards of Pneumatology, but also how Open theology should consequently conceive its own theology in terms of the Spirit. Open Theists should readily expect to discover the Spirit in every facet of life and its theology, and from this point of renewed discovery, seek to develop how the Holy Spirit contributes to the wider understanding of Open Theology.

The need to promote a more conscious Pneumatological awareness in Open thought is not intended as a means of advancing Pneumatology at the expense of other members of the Trinity, but rather as a means of correcting the current Trinitarian understanding which exists in Open thought. The aim is rather to bring a balance and reciprocity into the Trinitarian thought which is currently advocated for, though not consistently developed. The primary way that this can be achieved is through a willingness to read the Spirit as integral to all facets of theology. A test case for this is how to read the Spirit into the notion of *kenosis*. Due to the fact that neither Studebaker nor Macchia directly address the subject of *kenosis* we need to infer any development in light of what has been previously asserted about the Godhead from the Pentecostal perspectives above. As we noted in Pinnock, he draws from an understanding

of *kenosis* which advocates a Pneumatological appreciation of divine self-emptying which is an important component of his Spirit-Christology.⁶⁷⁹ This in turn offers a preliminary avenue for pursuing and developing the reading of *kenosis* here. Likewise, we have noted how Oord utilises the concept of *kenosis* as a central theme for interpreting God in terms of His fundamental self-giving and self-emptying nature.⁶⁸⁰ It is into these literary contexts that the insights and *facinans* which have arisen from the engagement with the Pentecostal community will provide new opportunities for exploring how *kenosis* can be more fully comprehended and appreciated within the Open community.

In Pinnock, the use of the Spirit within *kenosis* is developed, largely, within the incarnational moment, which suggests that it is tied to the *economy* of the Godhead.⁶⁸¹ The manner in which the Spirit is integral to the incarnation, as we noted above in the amendment to Pinnock's Spirit-Christology from Studebaker, supports this idea, because in strengthening the understanding of the necessary hypostatic union, the Spirit becomes more visible in a liminal and constitutive way in bringing the incarnation to its full fruition.⁶⁸² The Spirit is present throughout the economic transition from *Christos asarkos* to full incarnation as witnessed in Luke's birth accounts (Lk 1:35), and then fully active throughout the entirety of Jesus' earthly mission, which Pinnock rightly acknowledges within his Spirit-Christology. Therefore, in reading Pinnock in this manner, and developing his basic notion, though retaining its central thrust, we note that *kenosis* then becomes a *transitory and transitional moment within a wider divine movement* of the Godhead, albeit a very significant one. In this reading, *kenosis* is appreciated more as one aspect of a wider purpose-driven praxis, which,

⁶⁷⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 88.

⁶⁸⁰ Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, pp. 156.

⁶⁸¹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 80-1.

⁶⁸² Studebaker, *Integrating*, pp. 18.

while retaining ontological implications for the Godhead of divine self-emptying, places the main focus on an economic Trinitarian *movement* within a wider divine project. By appreciating *kenosis* in this manner allows for the Spirit's activity within the incarnational moment, but also contextualises *kenosis* into the wider mission of the Son and Spirit. This then subsequently allows for a development of the *kenotic* moment to be expressed through the two unified missions of the Son and Spirit, which provides more opportunity to express why *kenosis* occurred, and to what economic and salvific ends it serves (Phil 2:6-11). By applying Macchia's two-way Trinitarian movement into this understanding further reinforces this idea of *kenosis* as part of the full *missio Dei*, as it is in the fullness of the entire divine mission of the Trinitarian members returning to the fullness and consummation of God that we comprehend why *kenosis* occurred. The divine movement begins with self-emptying, but is completed with the return and the full exaltation of Christ. The purpose of the divine movement in Philippians is not solely to express the nature of God's self-emptying (though this cannot be understated), but to proclaim that Christ undertook this path and will be exalted by the Father throughout all the Heaven and Earth (Phil. 2:9). Here we note that *kenosis* then becomes indispensable to the concurrent missions of the Son and Spirit as part of a *process*, which culminates in divine exaltation and human salvation which is the ultimate goal of *kenotic* activity. Additionally, this reading retains the important Chalcedon emphasis upon the two natures co-existing in Christ and also maintains a reliance of Jesus upon the Spirit throughout His mission, which is an important aspect emphasised by Pinnock.⁶⁸³ It also requires that the notion of *kenosis* must be read as *one* theological category among many within the outworking of the incarnation and any subsequent understanding of Christology. Rather than being the lead Christological or theological criterion, as it only describes part of

⁶⁸³ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 85

the process of incarnation and divine movement and mission, *kenosis* should be read and interpreted within the broader context of an ongoing incarnational-missiological praxis which culminates in the full glorification, victory and exaltation of God at the fulfilment of the *eschaton*. Applying Studebaker's notion that we can provisionally deduce aspects of God's eternal character from His salvific activity and economy cements the notion that God *is* self-emptying and self-imparting, but that this should be read alongside other aspects of the soteriological economy to reveal what *kenosis* ultimately achieves. In this manner, we are presented with a broader picture of God's nature beyond the bounds of *kenosis*, which not only coheres more accurately to the entirety of the divine mission of which *kenosis* is but a part, but also provides a theological context into which *kenosis* must be comprehended.

When this understanding of *kenosis* is read alongside that of Oord, we note some of the limitations which currently exist in his use of the concept. As Oord states, 'I refer to *kenosis* to talk not so much about how God became incarnate as to understand God's nature in light of incarnate love'.⁶⁸⁴ In granting that Oord attempts to establish the meaning of *kenosis* within the economy of 'incarnate love', we note that the initial move away from *how* the incarnation arose, with the Pneumatological component that this possesses, clearly separates *kenosis* from the fundamental Trinitarian activity of the incarnation. However, such a separation of *kenosis* from the incarnational conception should not be considered a viable theological move, as the two are irreducibly intertwined and interconnected. It is rather from the incarnation as a fully Trinitarian act which is part of an ongoing mission-praxis that depends upon both the divinity and humanity of Christ, that we derive an understanding of *kenosis* and not from a retro-active reading of the concept into the life and mission of Jesus. The difficulty that this poses, and which Oord is guilty to some extent, is that the transitory

⁶⁸⁴ Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 156.

moment of *kenosis*, which granted, is significant and from which we can know something of God's immanent character, then becomes *the* key hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the rest of God's mission. This then means that all subsequent theological categories (including salvation and eschatology) become subsumed under this moment and defined by it, and does not allow for a full theological development in their own right. As we have argued, *kenosis* needs to be defined by the broader *missio Dei* which culminates in the return of the Spirit to the Father through the Son at the eschatological conclusion of time and the full exaltation of the Godhead. In this regard, *the divine self-emptying returns back to the fullness of the Godhead*, which sees a completion of the *kenotic* purpose and movement outlined above.

As we noted earlier, Oord defines *kenosis* as *the* key factor of divine love and which expresses how God should be comprehended within the world.⁶⁸⁵ This is especially evident within his model of *theocosmocentrism* which stresses the non-coercive nature of God's love and activity within the created sphere.⁶⁸⁶ However, the relative lack of Christological, Pneumatological, Trinitarian and hermeneutical development coupled with the minimal reflection upon the atonement in Oord's work means that the notion of *kenosis* is then prioritised above the achievements of the incarnation as stated in Phil. 1, despite his assertion that *kenosis* should be understood within the context of 'incarnational love'. Therefore, whilst I would affirm Oord's fundamental assertion regarding *kenosis* that it expresses God's self-emptying disposition and that this is an eternal expression of the Godhead, his understanding needs modifying and re-reading in terms of the persons of the Trinity and their economic activity of the entire salvific mission including the atonement. Without Oord fully engaging

⁶⁸⁵ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 1-4. Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 189 and 206. Oord, *Championing Divine Love*, pp. 61. Oord, *Uncontrolling*, pp. 162.

⁶⁸⁶ Oord, *Defining Love*, pp. 193.

with atonement theology and the divine scope and power that this entails, which necessarily requires a fuller appreciation of the narratives of the Spirit and the divine movement outlined by Macchia, Oord's interpretation of *kenosis* and what this says about God, is, at the least, incomplete. With Oord's theological move of stating that God is spirit, without full consideration of God *as* the Holy Spirit, ignores facets of the biblical account and what they say about God's nature and how this should subsequently impact how we appreciate God's activity within the world.

Therefore, the understanding of *kenosis* presented here, which draws from Studebaker's method of deriving a provisional conception of God through His economy, then allows for a stronger presence of the Spirit and the fundamental need to read the *kenotic* moment into the wider mission of God. In this regard, the re-interpretation of *kenosis* stands as a provisional example of how Open Theists can re-read their theology in light of a more robust Pneumatological manner, which ultimately enhances the understanding of the social and reciprocal nature of the Trinity. By reading the Spirit as an integral an inherent person within the Godhead, we detect new ways in which the Spirit must be included into all facets of Open theology. This then sets a basis for the exploration of soteriology, eschatology and divine providence which will follow, which will also endeavour to express more clearly aspects of God's nature and how He operates within the world.

CHAPTER 6

SOTERIOLOGY, ESCHATOLOGY AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

In the previous chapter, we sought to overcome the Pneumatological deficit which exists in Open Theist literature. It was demonstrated that despite the claims for a strong Trinitarianism among the Open Theist authors, this has not been consistently developed in their respective theological out-workings due to the lack of Pneumatological considerations.⁶⁸⁷ In challenging this significant lacuna and offering a significant contribution to the Open understanding of the Godhead, we drew from the insights gleaned from the dialogue with Pentecostalism to suggest how this facet of Open Theist theology can be overcome. The emphasis from Studebaker and Macchia lay upon acknowledging the role which the Spirit plays within the broader biblical narrative, which in turn accentuated the pivotal nature of the Spirit's personhood and economy. This resulted in an understanding of the Trinity which requires a full and robust inclusion of the Holy Spirit to appreciate both the nature of the Godhead and the role She plays in the unfolding creational/redemptive drama. Having broadly established the need for a full and participatory Pneumatology within the outworking of Open Theist theology (though not at the expense of a Trinitarian framework), we move into the spheres of soteriology, eschatology and divine providence to determine how Open Theism can benefit further from the dialogue with Pentecostalism.

6.1 A Continuation of Pinnock's Theology

By utilising the Pneumatological and Trinitarian gains advanced above, allows for a natural progression from the perception of the Godhead into the realms of soteriology and eschatology. In this manner, and in keeping with the stress within Open theology to maintain

⁶⁸⁷ Again, Pinnock stands as the exemption to this general assertion.

a clear consistency between God's nature and His practical outworking, a salvific and eschatological context is required into which God's essential features can be drawn from and subsequently interpreted and expanded. With this thought in mind, we turn first to Pinnock's soteriological proposal outlined above. As we noted when surveying his work relating to salvation, the atonement and eschatology, there was much to be commended within it, and as a consequence, it shall serve as the fundamental theological framework for what follows here. In adopting his basic narrative framework means that we not only avoid having to 're-invent the wheel' in terms of a basic foundation and structure for an Open soteriology and eschatology, but that there is a central narrative thread which can be readily developed. In recapping Pinnock's soteriological model, we note a fidelity to ancient traditions and a robust Trinitarianism which promotes a strong notion of love and relationship which is fitting for an Open reading of salvation and eschatology. The ecumenical turn to Eastern Orthodox theology opens up a vibrant understanding of *perichoretic* relationship which informs both the substance of Trinitarian being and the goal of human destiny.⁶⁸⁸ This is further supported through Pinnock's adoption of Recapitulation as the lead atonement motif, which not only holds important Christological weight but also possesses a strong incarnational theology that unites humanity with divinity through Christ's participatory journey.⁶⁸⁹ This journey, which accounts for Jesus standing as the 'last Adam' and ultimately fulfils humanity's obligations through His sinless life, allows for humanity's salvific goal to fulfil its original creational vocation of unity with God. The fulfilment of *theosis*, which is inaugurated in this life and completed in the next, holds within it eschatological implications, in that it involves an obedience to and dependence upon the Spirit, which not only mirrors Christ's reliance upon

⁶⁸⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 22 and 31.

⁶⁸⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 79-111 and 151-4. Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 29, 37, 99-100, 102 and 106. Pinnock, *From Augustine*, pp. 23. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 138.

the Spirit, but ensures a necessary Pneumatological component within salvation and eschatology.⁶⁹⁰

However, by placing Pinnock's reading of *theosis* as the principal constituent of an Open model of salvation does not mean that all is settled in terms of an Open soteriology or eschatology. As we previously noted above, alongside the promising ideas which Pinnock has contributed in this sphere, there also remains some outstanding criticisms of his work which need addressing. Additionally, there are also the contributions of Sanders, Hasker and Oord which offer significant insights into what an Open soteriology and eschatology could and should contain which need to be rightfully considered. Therefore, the remainder of the current section will present a dialogue between the Open Theist authors, of which Pinnock's reading of *theosis* will occupy the primary position, and Pentecostalism. This will in turn provide the catalyst for further constructive reflection which culminates in the tentative proposal of an Open Theist reading of salvation and eschatology entitled *realizing eschatology*.

6.2 Soteriological and Eschatological Comparison

6.2.1 Soteriological Considerations

Given the inconsistency within the Open Theist literature concerning the claims for a strong Trinitarianism and the subsequent outworking of this in relation to Pneumatology, there arises a pertinent need within the soteriological and eschatological dialogue to incorporate a more defined presence of the Spirit. It is hardly surprising given the minimal role attributed to the Spirit by Open Theists that this is subsequently reflected within their respective soteriological and eschatological considerations. As noted above, there is a clear, if

⁶⁹⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 150-2. Pinnock, *ST*, pp. 108. Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 45-6. C. H. Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', pp. 95-123, esp. 116 and 119. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 28, 31, 81, 88 and 126-9.

unintended, Christocentrism which marginalises and subsumes the person and role of the Spirit within Open Theist literature, which subsequently impacts facets of the soteriology. As Studebaker has noted, this is not an uncommon feature of Protestant/Evangelical theology, which has tended to describe a rigid *ordo salutis* which often results in the compartmentalized categories of the ‘objective/subjective’ and ‘Achiever/Applier’.⁶⁹¹ While this is not entirely evident within literature surveyed above, there is an allusion to it within Sanders’ soteriology. By drawing such a stark contrast between the ‘enabling grace’ which opens up the possibility of salvation, which is an act of the Spirit, and salvation itself, which is founded in Christ, there is a clear demarcation of what the respective persons of the Trinity fulfil in relation to salvation.⁶⁹² However, as Studebaker further notes, such divisions often lead to a subsuming of the Spirit to the person and role of Christ, as the Spirit merely applies the benefits of Christ, while not being part of the central salvific narrative.⁶⁹³ In desiring a robust doctrine of the Trinity and how this sits coherently within an Open Theist theological framework, any development of an Open Theist soteriology must take heed of Studebaker’s warning, and ensure that any hint or implication of the subsuming or marginalising of the Spirit is eschewed. By adopting Pinnock’s model of *theosis* as the central thread of how the soteriology should be formed, takes seriously the dangers which have been outlined by Studebaker and will go some way towards fully integrating the Spirit into the salvific narrative.

6.2.2 Sin and Salvation

In drawing together the Pentecostal and Open Theist reflections concerning the need for

⁶⁹¹ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 255-9. Studebaker, *Beyond Tongues*, pp. 48-52. Macchia also criticises the manner in which Pentecostals have absorbed traditional Protestant soteriological models which over-stipulate a rigid adherence to an *ordo salutis*. In this way, he laments how traditional Pentecostal theology expresses the salvific economy of the Son and Spirit, as the Spirit is largely reduced to empowering believers for mission. Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 140.

⁶⁹² Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 205-6.

⁶⁹³ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Soteriology*, pp. 254.

salvation, there is a large overlap in what the respective authors and communities state. There is a unanimous consensus that the necessity of salvation arises from the prevailing condition of sin, which not only pervades the world, but was responsible for marring the original creative purposes. Although the hamartiological issue impacts the notion of divine providence (which will be more fully explicated below), the manner in which sin has corrupted the divine-human relationship and necessitated a divine response is a central feature of both communities' salvific narrative. Again, utilising Pinnock as a foundation and focus point for our discussion, we note that his lead atonement motif of Recapitulation is closely tied with the hamartiological condition, as one of the stresses within it rests upon the sinless participatory journey which Jesus undertook.⁶⁹⁴ The need for a sinless representative standing in the place of the 'Old Adam' is central for opening up God's redemptive work. If we further accept Sanders' assertion that the cross, which operates in a multi-faceted capacity, represents the answer to sin, then it is possible to incorporate Hasker's reading of *Christus Victor* into the wider narrative, which claims a victory of love over the prevailing sinful condition and the evil from which it arose.⁶⁹⁵ When the discussion of sin is situated into the broader context of the original purposes of creation, we again see a large agreement between our respective communities, but with one major difference of emphasis – that of the Spirit. As Studebaker has illustrated, the creation accounts cannot be divorced from the narrative of the Spirit, as it is She who gives life.⁶⁹⁶ As he further illustrates, the life-giving nature of the Spirit is a reoccurring biblical theme, which draws together the creational and salvific purposes which serve to overcome sin and bring redemption. Furthermore, Macchia's stress upon the growing nature of the Kingdom, which again is a product of the Spirit's work, has a redemptive and

⁶⁹⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 108.

⁶⁹⁵ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 106. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 211-8.

⁶⁹⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 55.

cleansing *telos* of renewal.⁶⁹⁷ This necessarily involves the eradication of sin, which is a pre-condition for the coming of God's union with all of creation. Macchia defines sin as the fundamental alienating factor in humanity's separation from God which will be fully vanquished in God's final dwelling place and establishment of the Kingdom.⁶⁹⁸

6.2.3 The Spirit as the Substance of Salvation

Having established the need for salvation within the respective communities, our attention now turns to the *substance* of salvation. As we again note in Pinnock, the goal of salvation is that of *theosis* – union with God. Pinnock is critical of the overly forensic nature of salvation and atonement theories which have permeated Western theology and seeks for a more relational concept.⁶⁹⁹ In this, Pinnock describes the adoption of the believer into the Godhead through the Spirit at baptism, which shares in Christ's death and resurrection. By following this pattern, the believer conforms to the cruciform life of Christ through the dependency upon the Spirit, which Christ epitomised during his life and ministry. Summarising this salvific journey, Pinnock notes, 'Salvation is the Spirit, who indwells us, drawing us toward participation in the life of the triune God'.⁷⁰⁰ Therefore, the crux of salvation is the reception of the *Spirit*. The importance of Spirit reception to soteriology is immediately evident in Studebaker's writing. His assessment that the outpouring of the Spirit is the 'capstone' of God's redemptive work necessarily situates it within the current discussion and provides important scope for expanding how Spirit Baptism can be comprehended soteriologically.⁷⁰¹ By accepting one of Studebaker's Pneumatological motifs

⁶⁹⁷ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9. See also, Macchia, 'Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology', pp. 280-94.

⁶⁹⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 95.

⁶⁹⁹ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 149-83. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 46. Pinnock, *MMM*, pp. 36.

⁷⁰⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 150.

⁷⁰¹ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 84.

that the Spirit, creation, life and redemption are inextricably intertwined, when the Spirit's work reaches Her climax at Pentecost, there is a broad biblical context which informs what the Spirit's final salvific act should encompass. As the promises in OT foretell, the presence of the Spirit will equate to a redemptive presence, and the liminal and constitutive elements of the Spirit's salvific work serve as context for understanding the fullness of a Pneumatological soteriology which finds its fruition in the outpouring and indwelling of the Spirit.⁷⁰²

Furthermore, Studebaker's understanding of the 'Spirit of Christ' accentuates the Christological significance of the Spirit's salvific activity and contributes an important Trinitarian focus. By drawing from Dabney's focus upon the Spirit being present throughout Jesus's death and the agent who revives Him into resurrection life (Rom. 8:11, 1 Tim. 3:16 and 1 Pet. 3:18), the Pneumatological focus upon bringing lifelessness to life reaches its apex in Christ.⁷⁰³ It is through the Spirit that Jesus is resurrected, which opens up the salvific quality to all humanity. As Studebaker notes, this leads to the salvific goal of Spirit reception. As evidenced in Acts 2:33, it is Christ who pours out the Spirit at Pentecost, but in the same manner, it is the Spirit who offers the presence of Christ and all the benefits He has won (Rom 8:9). Hence, it is Christ and the Spirit operating in tandem who bring salvation within a Trinitarian framework as the Spirit completes and consummates the work of Christ by indwelling the lives of believers.⁷⁰⁴ While it would be an overstatement to claim that reading Pinnock and Studebaker comparatively produces significantly unique insights, it is nevertheless evident that through a comparative reading of the two, much is confirmed within Pinnock's position, especially in terms of salvation being constituted by the presence and indwelling of the Spirit. Studebaker's emphasis upon the 'narratives of the Spirit' does

⁷⁰² See, Gen. 6:3, 8:1-5, Ex. 14:1-21, Job 26:10-13, 27:3, 32:8, 33:4, 34:14, Ps. 33:6-7, 63:10-14, 74:12-17, 104:27-30, Is. 40:12-17, 51:9-11 and Jn. 1:12-12-3, 3:1-8, and 7:37-39 and 20:22-23.

⁷⁰³ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 84.

⁷⁰⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 89.

provide a richer Pneumatological texture to that offered by Pinnock and consequently deepens aspects of his soteriological narrative. This is particularly evident in tracing the Spirit's liminal and constitutive presence within salvation through the OT to its eventual climax at Pentecost, which provides a broader theological context, historical scope and trajectory of the Spirit within the salvific sphere. By drawing the creational, redemptive and soteriological strands within the OT to the fulfilment of the outpouring of the Spirit, demonstrates more acutely the centrality and history of the Spirit within the soteriological narrative and what scope this should rightly encompass. Additionally, the manner in which Studebaker develops the Spirit as the 'Spirit of Christ', provides a more balanced reading of the divine relationship, and negates any suggestion of the subsuming of Spirit to the Son which has been an unfortunate feature of Open theology.

6.2.4 Spirit Reception and the Kingdom

In addition to Studebaker's reflections upon the essential nature of Spirit reception constituting salvation, Macchia's soteriology echoes many of the same fundamental assertions, though with some additional insights. Primary among these is his stress upon the Kingdom, and how this connects to the narrative flow of biblical prophecy and the outworking of God's salvific actions. The manner in which Macchia interprets and applies the Baptist's words in continuation with the promises of the OT to pronounce Jesus as the 'Spirit Baptizer' who will establish and fulfil the Kingdom (Mt 3:1-12), has pertinent comparative similarities to the soteriological aims of Pinnock and Studebaker.⁷⁰⁵ As Macchia rightfully notes, the promises of the Spirit within the OT foretell a time in which the presence of the Spirit will be equated to God's final reign.⁷⁰⁶ By drawing together the words of the Baptist

⁷⁰⁵ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 99.

⁷⁰⁶ See, Joel 2:28, Ezek. 36:25-7, 37:13-4, 39:29 and Is. 61: 1-3.

with the Pneumatological dimension of the coming Kingdom, allows for Macchia to closely identify the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts by Jesus to the very substance of salvation itself. This understanding of salvation gains a further dimension when Jn. 3:5 and Rom.14:17 are read in conjunction with it, as Macchia asserts that the ‘new life’ which is opened up and the present living within the Kingdom are only possible *in* the Spirit.⁷⁰⁷ As he goes on further to state, receiving the Spirit is the goal of salvation, with *theosis* constituting the essential part of God’s redemptive will. Through this, believers are baptized into God Himself (Rom 5:5).⁷⁰⁸ As with Studebaker above, much of what Macchia writes in regards to Spirit reception and salvation resonates closely with the intentions of Pinnock. Furthermore, the need to appreciate the Pneumatological dimension of salvation is strongly affirmed, while also situating it within the biblical narrative which draws from the OT, John the Baptist and the coming Kingdom. The manner in which Macchia draws from these central motifs deepens the narrative texture of *theosis* and offers new insights into both the Trinitarian nature of salvation and the historical context of God’s salvific economy.

6.2.5 Salvation, Justification and the Spirit

In the search for a relational soteriology, Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker each recognise the need for forensic categories within the salvific and atonement narratives. Both Sanders and Hasker acknowledge the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus and theologically contextualise this within the cross’ multi-faceted purpose which results in God’s victory over sin and death.⁷⁰⁹ Pinnock is more pointed in his survey of forensic categories within soteriology, arguing that Western models have often been overly legal in their explanations, which fails to express the

⁷⁰⁷ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 95.

⁷⁰⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 116-7.

⁷⁰⁹ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 106-8. Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 211.

loving purposes of God and reduces salvation to a mere right-standing before God.⁷¹⁰

However, in acknowledging that forensic categories are required within salvation, there has also been a disconnect between acknowledging the need and integrating it coherently within the wider narrative flow of salvation within Open thought. It is on this point that a comparative reading with Macchia can help to overcome this deficit. In moving beyond the Protestant confines of Justification within the soteriological sphere, Macchia builds upon his view of Spirit reception by highlighting the OT and Pneumatological components of salvation. Within the Hebraic context of God's covenant faithfulness, the notion of righteousness, expressed through *tsedeq*, contains legal connotations, but in a manner which is fully relational whilst encompassing the concepts of mercy, deliverance, judgement and justice.⁷¹¹ God expresses His ongoing faithfulness through the covenant commitment, which culminates in the presence of the redemptive Spirit and brings life, divine presence and righteousness.⁷¹² The 'rightwising' of humanity fulfils the justice of God as a committed and loving arbitrator, as the claims upon His covenant people are fulfilled by the participatory journey of Christ as the Spirit Baptizer who then pours out the Spirit.⁷¹³ It is subsequently into the historical narrative of divine mercy that Macchia argues that the legal categories ought to be understood, as the purpose of God's judgement and justice is to be unified in the Spirit with His covenant people. As Macchia makes clear, this reading of the legal dimension of Justification allows for a movement away from Protestant and Catholic renderings of Justification, which have tended to focus on God's anger and punishment, into a realm of relationality which should govern the forensic reading within soteriology. Consequently, there

⁷¹⁰ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 107, 149-51 and 155-6. Pinnock & Brow, *Unbounded Love*, pp. 100-2.

⁷¹¹ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 105.

⁷¹² See, Gen 1:2, Ezek. 33:11, 37:6, 13-4, Is. 45:8, 59:21, Hos. 6:3, 10:12, Ps. 118:21, Jer. 23-6 and Joel 2:28-32.

⁷¹³ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 106.

is an appreciation of the justice of God, which read alongside Pinnock's affinity to Recapitulation, offers Open Theists a new avenue for exploring how God has not only operated historically in bringing about justice, judgement and redemption, but how this can be understood in a fully Trinitarian and relational manner.

6.2.6 Theosis

The emphasis on *theosis* also opens up the question of Christian formation and the development of holiness within the life of the believer. As Pinnock notes, *theosis* centres around participating in the divine nature. While the ontological distinction between God and humanity is maintained, the presence of the Spirit within the believer, which is made possible through Christ's participatory journey, awakens the truth of love within (2 Pet. 1:4 and Jn. 17:22-3).⁷¹⁴ This necessarily involves a conformity to Christ's cruciform likeness, as the Spirit joins the believer to Christ through His death, resurrection and forgiveness within baptism.⁷¹⁵ Hasker and Oord also highlight the importance of the Christian life being transformative. Hasker speaks of the 'inward transformation' which occurs within the salvific moment and which is God's solution to the problem of evil, whilst Oord engages with the Johannine concept of 'Eternal Life', which is the quality and substance of the salvific life which begins in the present and reflects the love exhibited within His earthly mission.⁷¹⁶ However, as we have noted throughout, the work of Hasker and Oord has routinely omitted the presence and liminality of the Spirit. Therefore, in turning to Macchia once more, we shall explore how a comparative reading can assist Open Theists in expanding the narrative of human transformation and the growth of holiness within a broader Trinitarian context. In a

⁷¹⁴ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 151 and 157.

⁷¹⁵ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 90 and 113-131.

⁷¹⁶ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 209-11. Hasker, *PEOG*, pp. 3. Oord, *NOL*, pp. 154-5.

manner which is compatible with Recapitulation, Macchia highlights Jesus' own solidarity with sinners through His baptism.⁷¹⁷ In Jesus' insistence to be baptised despite the objections from the Baptist, we observe Jesus' desire to not only seek out humanity within their sinful condition, but to join with them. As noted above, God fulfils His righteousness through the redemptive presence, and there is no clearer indication of this than at the crucifixion. In being joined with humanity, the prayer of the God-forsaken is prayed in solidarity with all humanity, on behalf of humanity. Consequently, the answer to that prayer, which comes in the form of the resurrection, is completed by the 'Spirit of Holiness' (Rom. 1:4 and 4:25), and can be equally applied to all. Therefore, it is not in the avoidance of sinners that holiness is established within the Kingdom context, but in uniting with humanity in all the pain and suffering through the redemptive presence of the Spirit who forms believers into a Christlikeness. Subsequently, the path to the cross and the cruciform sacrifice which accompanies it, serves as a significant component in defining not only God's love and salvific economy but the manner in which Spirit reception is framed.

6.3 Eschatological Considerations

6.3.1 Framing the Issue

Continuing with the premise outlined above in promoting Pinnock's understanding of *theosis* as the lead motif in which to frame an Open Theist soteriology, we now turn our attention to eschatology. As Pinnock makes clear, salvation possesses an irreducible eschatological component, as the transformative nature of *theosis* in this life reaches its fulfilment in the next.⁷¹⁸ The cruciform existence of the Christian life which is completed in the Spirit in conjunction with the Church's sacramental mission, helps to establish the

⁷¹⁷ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 142.

⁷¹⁸ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 154-7.

Kingdom in this world which culminates in the eschatological event of Christ's return. Hasker echoes this sentiment, as his inclusion of *Christus Victor* requires God's decisive action within history to bring Christ's victory to its full fruition at the *eschaton*.⁷¹⁹ This is a significant point for Hasker in his dialogue with Process theologians, as he asks how else can God guarantee His final victory and reign over sin, evil and death.⁷²⁰ However, in stating the positions of Pinnock and Hasker respectively, there are important questions which are raised from them, especially in terms of how consistently and coherently they are developed within an Open Theist theology. As noted throughout, Open Theists stress the genuine responsive nature of God to the actions and input from humanity. While this has been highlighted in terms of providence and the participatory nature of salvation, little has been offered from Pinnock and Hasker regarding how the responsive nature of God impacts eschatology. Admittedly, there is the acknowledgment that the actions and decisions which are made by humanity will have consequences and results during the eschatological conclusion. God will respond to humanity's decisions, which, in part, contributes towards creating aspects of the future, but there is a definite lacuna in how the present events lead to the reality and ushering in of the *eschaton*. When considering the temporal tenets of Open Theism, there is a decidedly weighted emphasis upon the future, compared to the reality-forming imperative of the present. This leads to the question, that if humanity genuinely contributes to the make-up of reality, then shouldn't this also impact the events at the *eschaton*? In contrast to the eschatological models advocated by Pinnock and Hasker, we note in Oord a stronger sensitivity to this question, as he pointedly links the present to the unfolding events of the eschatological fulfilment of God. In a manner more consistent with the overall theological framework of Open Theism, Oord develops the notion of a 'Participatory Eschatology', which ties the

⁷¹⁹ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 214 and 224-5. Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 238.

⁷²⁰ Hasker, *An Adequate God*, pp. 238.

present moment to the future fulfilment and indicates specifically how the present shapes the future.⁷²¹ In this respect, Oord offers an imperative insight into what an Open Theist eschatology should contain. Therefore, with the significant insight of how the present impacts the future in mind, the comparative work which follows takes seriously this notion and seeks to develop it alongside the narrative insights from Pentecostalism.

6.3.2 *The Integrated Nature of Soteriology and Eschatology*

As noted briefly above and in more depth in Chapter 3, Pinnock and Hasker identify some of the eschatological implications involved in soteriology. By doing this, the salvific narrative is broadened to incorporate God's fulfilment of the soteriological promises. As was also alluded to, this was not fully developed within an Open Theist theological framework, with only Oord fully delineating this significant point. As Oord asserts, there is an irreducible eschatological component to soteriology, as both salvation and eschatology are projected along the same trajectory, leading to the eventual fulfilment of God's love within all things.⁷²² Within his *Essential Kenosis* model, Oord describes the quality of life and love which begins in this life and fulfilled after death. The non-coercive love and action of God requires human participation to bring this to fruition, as without human cooperation, God is unable to establish it unitarily or unilaterally.⁷²³ In this respect, the cooperative nature of his 'Participatory Eschatology' expresses a very clear progression of how the present *forms* the future. While this aspect of Oord's eschatology should be lauded within an Open context, we again encounter some of the difficulties raised earlier regarding his *Essential Kenosis* in terms of the broad Process metaphysic from which it draws (though again, does not fully capitulate

⁷²¹ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 152-3.

⁷²² Oord, *NOL*, pp. 154-5.

⁷²³ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 153.

to). This is particularly evident in the debate surrounding God's power, how this impacts the question of the final divine judgement and how Christology and Pneumatology should play a role in the eschatological narrative.

When turning to Studebaker, we note that the link between soteriology and eschatology is irreducible and interconnected, in that eschatology fulfils and completes salvation.⁷²⁴ In a manner which resonates with the relational focus of Open Theism, Studebaker states that eschatology should be viewed more as the fulfilment of God's promises and actions, rather than a unilateral end time apocalypse.⁷²⁵ In this respect, Studebaker's comments chime with the expressed views of the Open Theists above. There is also a strong similarity between Pinnock and Studebaker regarding the how the activity of the Spirit is instrumental, or in the words of Studebaker, liminal and constitutive, in bringing the world to its fulfilment by establishing the Kingdom. However, Studebaker demonstrates this point more comprehensively by highlighting the 'penultimate' nature of the present age, which not only ties into the narratives of the Spirit and Her redemptive liminality, but how the fulfilment of salvific goals manifests in an eschatological outworking.⁷²⁶ By drawing together the ongoing salvific work of the Spirit with Peter's use of Joel in Acts 2:17, the reception of the Spirit constitutes not only redemptive presence in this life, but the content, substance and fulfilment of the eschatological promises.⁷²⁷ When Turning to Macchia regarding the link between salvation and eschatology, we note again that the dominant motif is that of the Kingdom. Here, as outlined above, Macchia clarifies in more detail the significance this holds. In a similar vein as Studebaker, Macchia wishes to move away from the traditional

⁷²⁴ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 89-90.

⁷²⁵ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 75.

⁷²⁶ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 89.

⁷²⁷ Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, pp. 75.

Pentecostal view of an end-time apocalypticism towards a more relational understanding of the Kingdom within this age, which expands the stress upon individual renewal to include all of creation and its eventual eschatological consummation.⁷²⁸ The words of the Baptist are again significant for Macchia, because Jesus as Spirit Baptizer, ushers in the Kingdom by the Spirit (Mt 3:1-12), which read alongside Rom. 14:17 illustrates that a life lived in the Spirit, is to share in the same life which will bring the Kingdom to full fruition.⁷²⁹ The Kingdom of God is a dynamic within history through, and in, the presence of the Spirit, which is directed towards the indwelling of God in all things. Therefore, there is a ‘now and not yet’ dialectic in respect to the Kingdom, as the Spirit is working towards the fulfilment of the redemptive purposes which were initiated in Christ, but not yet completed (Mt. 13:31-2).⁷³⁰

6.3.3 The Cooperative Nature of Eschatology

One of the primary concerns which was raised above, at least in terms of an overall coherent and consistent rendering of an Open Theist eschatology, was the focus upon the future fulfilment of events with little consideration granted to how the present contributes to its actual formation (see 3.5.1.6). If, as Open Theists maintain, humanity offers meaningful contributions to the fabric of reality, then this should be rightfully reflected within the espousal of their eschatology. Noted above is Hasker’s understanding of *Christus Victor*, which, while not without its merits, not only lacks the temporal difficulties under consideration, but also an absence of the Spirit. Furthermore, Pinnock’s attempts to draw the soteriological purposes to the coming of the Kingdom and thus ensuring the eschatological import, is unquestionably laudable, it is nevertheless underdeveloped. As we noted, it was

⁷²⁸ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9.

⁷²⁹ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 90.

⁷³⁰ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 157.

only Oord who sought to meld together soteriology and eschatology in such a way that the present actions of humanity significantly impact the eschatological out-workings in terms of how the present will shape the future. While there are some outstanding issues relating to the Oord's Process influenced eschatological reasoning (see below), the manner in which he draws the present and future together is definitely commendable. Therefore, the comparative focus here requires insights into the how the nature of the present shapes the events of the future. While not directly related to the question presently under consideration, Macchia's 'Prophetic Eschatology', may offer some helpful insights into the lacuna in Open Theist thought. With his assertion that the Kingdom has been initiated within history as evidenced by the healing of the sick and the liberation of the poor, the strong social dimension of the Kingdom, which has yet to reach its completion, nevertheless indicates the economy and activity of God in bringing all things into His dwelling.⁷³¹ In this regard, the present realities of the establishment of the Kingdom require human participation and the responsiveness from God. While it may be a stretch to state of Macchia that the present creates a yet as unformed future, there is a definite inference that the present cooperative building of the Kingdom does, to some extent, contribute to how this will play out within the future. Whether or not this will impact when and how God will initiate the *eschaton* is impossible to state from Macchia's insights. However, what can be most definitely gleaned from this is that given the eschatological weight Macchia places upon the Kingdom, and the manner in which humans participate in building the Kingdom through attending to the sick and liberating the poor, the present cooperative work between God and humanity shapes aspects of the future eschatological fulfilment.

⁷³¹ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9.

6.3.4 *The Trinity and Eschatology*

Before developing the comparative readings of soteriology and eschatology into the constructive element of our methodology, there remains one outstanding issue which requires consideration: the Trinity. As has been made abundantly clear throughout, the Open Theists under consideration each affirm the presence of the Trinity, advocating, to varying degrees, the notion of a Social Trinitarianism. Yet, as we have also observed, this has not always been consistently developed, especially in terms of Pneumatology, as the omission of the Spirit is an all too often occurrence. Once again, Pinnock stands as the exception to this finding, as his reading of *theosis* is intricately tied to the presence of the Spirit which is working towards the establishment of God's Kingdom.⁷³² However, we note in both Oord and Hasker a silence regarding the role of the Spirit in their respective eschatological considerations. Hasker's focus upon the future completion of Christ's victory offers nothing in terms of the Spirit's liminal or constitutive presence, while Oord's 'Participatory Eschatology' equally fails in designating the Spirit an adequate role in the establishment of God's love. When surveying Studebaker and Macchia on this vital question, we note from each a clear presence and economy of the Spirit which results in a more coherent and consistent Trinitarian eschatology. The Spirit is central and essential to both authors' over-arching narratives which encompass the original creational purposes, through the life and ministry of Christ to the final completion of history which results in the indwelling and union with the Father. In this respect, clear roles, identities and economies are attributed to each the Father, Son and Spirit within the Pentecostal authors, which contrasts significantly to that of Open Theism.

⁷³² Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 154-7.

6.4 Realizing Eschatology

Having now completed the comparative work between Open Theism and Pentecostalism in regards to soteriology and eschatology, we now turn our attention to the constructive proposal within the methodology. As the discussion above has illustrated, there is an irreducible inter-connectedness between salvation and eschatology, which, while recognising they possess their own theological distinctives, they also significantly impact one another and need to be developed simultaneously. In this respect, the provisional notion of salvation and eschatology offered here, entitled *realizing eschatology*, views them as two sides of the same coin, which appreciates how closely related and necessary they are to one another. In addition to this insight, what else needs to be highlighted is the manner in which *realizing eschatology* is developed specifically within the broader theological framework of Open Theism. Although this is not unique, the focus here is to present a provisional model of salvation and eschatology which is developed in direct recourse to the central tenets of Open Theology. This aspect is of particular importance, because, as noted above, the centrality of Pinnock's model of *theosis* which has been adopted within the work thus far, was developed within his systematic theology of the Holy Spirit and not in Open Theology *per se*. While, it has also been suggested that there are definite Open Theist currents within *Flame of Love*, the constructive proposals developed there were not in direct recourse to Open Theology. While this is not a criticism of *Flame of Love*, it serves to highlight the need to focus upon forging the links between the insights concerning the Spirit and *theosis* and the wider theology of Open Theism.

To begin with, there is a need to affirm many of the central assertions of what an Open Theist model of soteriology and eschatology should consist of. In this respect, the need

to promote the notion of love and relationality stands very much at the fore. As has been posited throughout, the importance of viewing God as a Being whose essence is love from which all of His actions flow, is paramount. Although there is recourse to consider the nature of that love below, the need remains to frame each discussion of God's being and economy within a love-filled relationality. In agreement with what each of the authors have stated about God's love, there is the need to affirm the position that God reaches out in love to form relationship with all of creation and to view this as the driving motivation behind God's salvific activity (Jn. 3:16). In addition to the importance of love and relationality constituting a key theological motif, there is also a fidelity to the biblical text which is a prominent feature of how Open Theology has been previously constructed. However, in contrast to the work of Sanders, Hasker and Oord, and taking its cues from the Pentecostal sources consulted throughout, the biblical reading will attempt to establish a more balanced portrayal of the Spirit. By adding this much needed corrective, it is hoped that a more consistent rendering of the Trinity will emerge and offer important insights for the Open community.

6.4.1 Salvation as Spirit Reception

In a manner akin to Studebaker and Macchia, the notion of salvation should be read within the broader context of Spirit baptism.⁷³³ For all the reasons indicated above, not least that the reception of the Spirit is what constitutes salvation, framing soteriology within the context of the Spirit allows for an over-arching biblical, Trinitarian and relational narrative. In continuation with what was posited above, the original creational purpose was to share union and communion with the Triune God, which was marred by the introduction of sin and caused the great alienation between God and humanity. In this respect, and in agreement with

⁷³³ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 14-8.

Sanders, the loss of the communion with God equates to a loss of relationship.⁷³⁴ Therefore, salvation must be viewed as the restoration of that relationship within the context of Spirit Baptism. It is here that Pinnock's understanding of *theosis* becomes significant, especially when it is adapted in light of Spirit baptism. In moving away from the essence-energies distinction posited by Gregory Palamas, the union with God is predicated upon *Spirit reception*. By allowing the Spirit a central place within a reading of *theosis* allows for an immediate relational bond between God and humanity. While it is paramount to maintain the ontological distinction between God and humanity within *theosis*, salvation understood in this way opens up new insights into how the nature of the salvific relationship is conceived and subsequently expressed.

6.4.2 Salvation as Relationship

By understanding salvation as fundamentally a relationship does not in any way detract from the notion of Spirit reception, but rather gives context and meaning to the manner in which reception and relationship are understood. The focus and *telos* of the divine-human relationship is the indwelling of God, which results in the mutual sharing of perfect love. As with all relationships, the divine-human relationship involves necessary responsibilities and obligations, which is true not only of humanity, but also, for God. The understanding of the mutual-loving obligations which arise from the parameters of the relationship are therefore paramount when understanding not only what salvation is, but how it should be maintained. In this manner, salvation requires its own distinctive relational language to express its purpose and ontology.

In turning first to the biblical support for this understanding, we are drawn to various

⁷³⁴ Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 255.

texts which, when read within a relational hermeneutic, offer significant insights into this appreciation of salvation. At the heart of *realizing eschatology* lies the notion that to be in relationship with God is to experience salvation, but this understanding of relationship and community must also be expanded to incorporate that of humanity as well. We note the relational character of salvation within Heb. 3:12-3, in which living relationally with others not only protects from the falling away from God, but contributes to the fullness and completion of God's salvific purpose through support, encouragement and mutual love. Salvation thrives when it is expressed within the fullness of a loving and healthy community, as this reflects and completes the manner in which humanity was designed to share in and express the presence of the Spirit. Later in Heb. 6:4-5, Spirit reception is tied to the essential nature of salvation, which draws together the relational focus of God within the sharing of the Spirit *to* the loving and encouraging actions of the community. The manner in which human community is intimately connected to the relational and salvific actions of God speaks of a fundamental relational ontology which God has established within salvation and the wider creation. God not only works through His giving of self-hood, but also through the shared love within the human community. In this way, love stands at the fore of God's intended purposes, as humanity are drawn into the life of God and those of the people surrounding them. We note this relational emphasis within the Apostolic community within Acts 4:32-5. The manner in which the community was marked by the power of the Spirit (v. 33), impacted significantly the manner in which they lived and communed together. None went without as the community shared through love and generosity, again, indicating the close affinity between God's presence of the Spirit and a life lived in shared community. Given that humanity was created for relationship and community, it is hardly surprising that the God who epitomises love, community and relationship, wishes to express and fulfil His salvific

goals through these loving, communal and relational means.

With the relational ontology underpinning the means of expressing salvation, we begin to appreciate the need for a relational language to express not only the goal of salvation but other facets of the salvific journey. By modifying how salvation is expressed through relational language opens up new ways of approaching texts to fully appreciate a relational or soteriological component. When Paul speaks of ‘us who are being saved’ (1 Cor. 1:18) and who need to ‘work out’ our salvation (Phil. 2:12) we discover a fresh way of expressing how these texts can be read. There is an undeniable ongoing process implicit within Paul’s words which gain a new dimension when understood within the context of a Spirit baptised relationality. The depth and scope of salvation within this understanding are dependent upon the nature of relationship which is nurtured in and through the Spirit. As the believer gains ever-new insights into God’s love through the relational bond of the Spirit, fresh ways of conforming to Christ’s likeness are opened up. This, in turn, brings new ways of deepening the salvific relationship not only with God, but with all of creation. In terms of how this is expressed within the ongoing process of salvation, we need to appreciate that relationships can never be truly exhausted. At no point can it be said that every aspect of a relationship is completely fulfilled. New experiences change and shape us, leaving room for perpetual growth, driving us ever forward to seek new relational bonds and expressions within any given relationship, not least with the infinite God. Hence, what is enacted and nurtured within salvation is a Spirit-guided loving praxis. Acts of love and relationship are the essence of a life lived in the Spirit, which are ever deepened and expanded, bringing with them novel expressions of the salvific life. Thus, the salvific relationship is ever-deepening and ever-growing, meaning that the process of salvation incorporates a maturing and perpetual awareness of the non-exhaustive ways in which God loves and shapes us through relationship

and the necessary human response to this.

6.4.3 *The Primacy of God's Actions in Salvation*

Against accusations of semi-Pelagianism, which has often been unfairly levelled against other models of Arminian and Open Theist soteriology, there is the need to recognise that God works at the fore in instigating and fulfilling the salvific journey. Although the soteriological focus in *realizing eschatology* is grounded within the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity through the reception of the Spirit and human participation, there is the clear acknowledgement that this is dependent upon God's loving and initial economy. Without God's saving love and grace, no salvation would be open or possible for humanity. However, in stating this, there also needs to be a clarity in what humanity contributes to the salvific decision and how this ties into the over-arching narrative of God's history of salvation. As was affirmed above, the need for salvation has arisen from the free decision of humanity to reject God, which resulted in the tremendous alienation between God and humanity. Therefore, in restoring the divine-human relationship, the conditions which impact it most severely, namely sin and death, must be adequately and satisfactorily dealt with. Here, the understanding of salvation as relationship must necessarily include notions of holiness and atonement, so as to fully appreciate what God has done in restoring the lost relationship. The atonement, or the at-one-ment, is key for not only an understanding of salvation, but for initiating and securing any notion of divine-human relationship. In this significant regard, only God can be considered as the architect of salvation due to the actions which were performed within the atonement drama and the significance this holds for Spirit Baptism.

6.4.4 Salvation and Atonement

By bringing the atonement to a central position within the consideration of relationship, subsequently means that any theology related to the atonement significantly impacts how the nature of relationship is to be understood. The same considerations which frame the atonement must equally apply to the subsequent relationship which emerges from it. In ascribing Pinnock's reading of Recapitulation as the lead atonement motif, it was noted that hamartiology holds a central position within the narrative.⁷³⁵ Christ's journey to live a perfect and sinless life was undertaken on behalf of humanity precisely because of humanity's inability to do so. Therefore, the consideration of sin, and the manner in which sin was dealt with, indicates clear boundary markers for the nature of the Spirit baptised relationship. Yet, it is possible to extend Pinnock's use of Recapitulation by drawing from the insights from Pentecostalism. Undoubtedly, Pinnock's application of Recapitulation possesses a strong Pneumatological component, tied as it is to his Spirit-Christology. However, by incorporating the Spirit as the presence of God which brings life and fulfils holiness, adds further scope to the participatory journey undertaken by Christ. As humanity's representative within the redemptive journey, Christ exemplifies what humanity should be – an existence fulfilled within the Spirit of life and righteousness. Jesus' mission was not just participatory for humanity's benefit, but also paradigmatic as a template for true living. Jesus' lived experience on earth was marked by union, intimacy and relationship with the Spirit, which opens up and illustrates what all life should reflect. As Macchia demonstrates within his discussion of the divine *tsedeq*, the presence of God cannot be separated from His righteousness and covenant commitment, which was fulfilled through His earthly mission, victory over the cross and the

⁷³⁵ Pinnock, *FOL*, pp. 81.

bestowal of the Spirit.⁷³⁶ Consequently, any life which is marked by the Spirit and conforms the believer to a Christlikeness, must not only seek to be relational and loving, but have those qualities refined by the concept of holiness.

6.4.5 Salvation and Love

By insisting upon the necessary relational praxis involved within salvation and the need to inform this alongside a reading of holiness, enables us to affirm much of Oord's definition of love. For Oord, 'to love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to God and others, to promote overall well-being'.⁷³⁷ The benefits of this understanding of love have been propounded above, especially in that it moves away from defining love as reciprocity, which should rather be understood as the fulfilment of love and its highest expression, rather than defining love itself. Yet, by exploring the narratives of the incarnation, the liminal, constitutive and eschatological work of the Spirit, the implications involved within the atonement and holiness and the relational praxis involved within soteriology, requires that Oord's definition of love is subsequently shaped by them if there is to be consistency between God's loving ontology and His subsequent actions. There is a need to readily affirm Oord's assertion to 'act intentionally', as this fits with the praxis which necessarily expresses the salvific commitment and relationship. Likewise, that same praxis involves an essential response to God and others, which directs and shapes, in part, the content of the loving acts. However, in accepting that acting in a responsive manner is essential to the definition of love, then there is also the need to recognise the nature and content of the love which is shaped by God within His salvific economy. In acknowledging that God is love, and that salvation constitutes the reception of the Spirit, results in an

⁷³⁶ Macchia, *Justified*, pp. 106.

⁷³⁷ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 17.

understanding of love that is defined by the Triune essence and economy. The love of God which is expressed through the salvific life and presence of the Spirit is forged through Christ's sacrifice and impartation of the Spirit. In this regard, love gains its most fundamental definition from conforming to a Christlikeness, in and through, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Here, the paradigmatic example of Christ living in union with the Spirit, which engages decisively with sin and death, offers key insights into how Oord's 'overall well-being' should be manifested in love, and how it is to be fully expressed. The purpose and goal of humanity's loving actions within the present, should therefore cohere with the loving mission of the Son and Spirit.

6.4.6 Human Participation within Salvation

The final consideration in regards to the salvific focus within *realizing eschatology*, centres around the Open Theist understanding of the genuine contribution which humanity offers within the make-up of reality. As stated above, any Open Theist reflections upon the nature of salvation and eschatology must rightly wrestle with how this is to be integrated within the wider tenets of the Open community. While the relational facets of the soteriology have been discussed, there also needs to be reflection upon two other distinct facets of Open theology: the role of human participation and how this subsequently impacts how the world is comprised. In turning first to the question of human participation, this must be readily understood within the relational nature of Spirit Baptism outlined above. In adopting the words of Macchia, it should be clear that God is both the giver and the gift of salvation, leaving no doubt that without God, there would neither be life nor salvation.⁷³⁸ But, as previously stated, to experience salvation involves the reception of the Spirit and an ensuing

⁷³⁸ Macchia, *Baptized*, pp. 117.

relationship. Although it was previously suggested that love cannot be defined solely in terms of reciprocity, the nature of divine-human relationship can. Because of the nature of relationship, and the growth of love and acceptance which is required for this to be established, there needs to be genuine responses from both sides of the relationship. In a manner consistent with the covenants of old, God has fulfilled His obligations by forging the conditions in which relationships can prosper. The creation of life, the participatory journey which incorporates the cross and the bestowal of the Spirit, all culminate in the offer of the loving relationship. Yet through all this, God's *offer* for salvation can only be seen as just that. For the divine-human relationship to emerge from what God affords, there is a necessary human response. Without this, there can be no relationship, which is the focus and *telos* of salvation. Put even more pointedly, without the human side consummating the offer from God, *there is no salvation*.

This understanding of salvation derives from the relational ontology which underpins not only the loving act of God in establishing the salvific economy, but also the nature and purpose of life. The original creational purposes are founded upon the notion of God establishing relationship. But, as the fall of humanity indicates, the choices which humanity collectively make severely impacts how reality is subsequently structured. The choices which humanity adopt in response to God determine the reality of this world, both good and bad. Thus, reinforcing the notion of a relational ontology which underscores everything which passes within the created order. While there will be recourse to explore this further below within the discussion of divine providence, God has attributed to humanity not only a significant say in how this world will be, but a *dominant* one. God has allowed humanity to shape this world through the actions which are performed, placing imperative implications upon each free decision. Therefore, the decisions which are made in respect to the salvific

offer, equally inform and structure the nature of all reality. Just as the original and continuing rejection of God leads the world away from its relational purposes, so the acceptance and fulfilment of God's loving economy through the life of Christ and the bestowal of the Spirit, draws it back. Therefore, life is underscored by the presence and activity of God in bringing all of creation back to Himself through the loving and sacrificial call. The goal of life is then realized within the acceptance of Pneumatic existence made possible through Christ and conforming to Christ. Each lived moment then becomes a *crisis* moment - a soteriological crisis of either accepting the fulfilment of the Spirit of Christ which forms reality to its original calling, or, its rejection. By framing the relational soteriology in this way, allows for an understanding of creation to be formed and situated within God's consistent and perpetual loving call. The context for all of reality is thus placed within, and tied to, the loving and saving call from God, granting each moment significant soteriological and reality-forming significance. It is therefore from the free decisions which arise in response to God which create all the conditions within the world. Subsequently, the structure and events within the world are inseparable from its salvation and Saviour. This holds the subsequent corollary that a life lived in the Spirit can be neither predictable or uniform, and the lived experience of salvation will hold surprises depending upon the prompting of the Spirit.⁷³⁹

6.4.7 A Relational Eschatology

Due to the close affinity between soteriology and eschatology, much of what has been stated about salvation is relevant and applicable to the eschatological realm. The relational ontology which underpins all of reality continues to impact the manner in which eschatology is to be understood, as the *telos* of the divine-human relationship reaches its fulfilment and

⁷³⁹ I am indebted to John Sanders for this important insight.

consummation within the events of the *eschaton*. Consequently, when defining the purpose and trajectory of eschatology, the notion of relationship should remain at the fore. In addition to the relational focus within eschatology, what also needs expressing, particularly within an Open Theist theology, is the manner in which partnership and human participation contribute to the overall understanding. In this respect, there needs to be a clear understanding on not only what humans can and do contribute to the eschatological drama, but how this significantly impacts the make-up of the lived reality. By establishing the boundary markers for eschatology in such a way, not only allows for a consistent and coherent development of Open and Relational theologies, but grants significant scope for Studebaker and Macchia's eschatological thought. In this way, Studebaker's comment that eschatology cannot be reduced to an end-time apocalypticism, but, should rather be understood as the completion of God's salvific activity and Macchia's advocacy for a 'Prophetic Eschatology', which appreciates the growth of the Kingdom through history, each contribute something significant to comprehending how an Open Theist eschatology can be expressed.

6.4.8 Eschatology and the Now

As was outlined within the discussion regarding the soteriological implications of *realizing eschatology*, humanity, through its collective decision making, creates the conditions and reality within the world. God has created the world within a relational complex reflective of His own essence and ontology, meaning that how individuals relate to God and the rest of humanity, determines what the world is like. It was also argued, in line with wider Open Theist assertions, that the purpose of creation is to join with God through Spirit reception so that the outworking and fulfilment of life is to experience the fullness of God's love. In this respect, Open Theism is in a unique position to explicate the implications of the

now. With the understanding of time within Open Theism, the *now* holds particular significance, not only in relation to creating the conditions within the world, but impacting how the world will be. There is a tremendous potential for change within the Open Theist world view, allowing for a genuine challenge to much of the evil which presently resides within the world and the fulfilment of all that is loving. Not only is this perception related to the soteriological aims of *realizing eschatology*, as the reception of the Spirit within *theosis* shapes the world towards its original goal, but it also grants that the present moment of the *now* shapes the future towards its full consummation. Consequently, from an Open Theist perspective, each passing and present moment, each manifold expression of the *now*, holds within it tremendous Pneumatological, salvific and eschatological significance and potential.

6.4.9 Human Participation in Eschatology

However, it is not only through the relational structures inherent within the world which necessitates the eschatological import within *realizing eschatology*. As Oord has rightly argued, human participation is an essential facet within an Open and Relational eschatology, as without this, a disconnect arises between wider Open Theist theology and its eschatological understanding. Yet, in accepting that Oord makes a vital contribution to the way in which Open Theists should approach eschatology in regards to human participation, the content of his eschatological narrative needs further consideration. As Oord states in his understanding of the non-coercive nature of God's love, God is unable to act unilaterally, including drawing the events of history to a close.⁷⁴⁰ For Oord, the participation and cooperation of humanity is essential in bringing God's non-coercive love to its full fruition. Yet, in developing this position within his *Essential Kenosis* model, we again note the Process

⁷⁴⁰ Oord, *NOL*, pp. 153.

metaphysic operative within his work. As we have noted throughout, Oord's use of the Process metaphysic at times produces a tension with various biblical texts to which he offers little or no hermeneutical resolution, and the content of his eschatological narrative follows this pattern. Unquestionably, the logic of Oord's metaphysic necessitates his conclusion, but this leaves open the question of the eschatological imagery portrayed within various biblical passages and how this relates to his eschatological understanding. In light of such passages as Mt 25:31-46, 1 Thess. 4:16-7, 2 Pet. 3:10, Rev. 1:7, 22:2, Jn. 5:28-9, Lk. 9:26, Acts 17:31 and Mt 24:30-1, it is difficult to maintain, at least from a biblical perspective, how Oord's eschatological understanding can be fully justified, as God is seen to operate much more decisively within history than Oord is willing to grant. In these texts, and utilising Moltmann's theological language, there is the clear promise of Jesus' return which will be enacted in the fullness of God's power to judge the entire world.⁷⁴¹ This decisive act will finally eradicate sin and death which was initiated within His vicarious sacrifice upon the cross. As the completion of the divine economy, the meta-narrative which spans the fall of humanity to its final judgement, ends with God's reign which is established through direct intervention to defeat sin and initiate the fullness of love. As was witnessed within the salvific economy, dealing with sin requires direct action by God, and as such, bringing the world to its completion by eradicating sin will require another decisive action from God. This should not however suggest a strict unilateral act of God, because just as the salvific economy requires human participation and cooperation, so the eschatological fulfilment of building and establishing the Kingdom also necessitates human participation and cooperation. Consequently, the manner in which Oord envisions the world's consummation into God's love, derives more from the logical conclusion of his Process metaphysic, rather than a

⁷⁴¹ J. Moltmann, (trans. James W. Leitch), *Theology of Hope: On the ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM Press, 1967).

biblical reading. Therefore, what is needed within an Open Theist understanding of eschatology if it is to be more consistent with the biblical text, is a reading of the Bible, which, in the words of Hasker, grants the ‘decisive’ action of God alongside an understanding of human participation which is consistent with it.

In granting that *realizing eschatology* affirms both the ‘decisive’ eschatological drama of Christ’s return, judgement and victory as described by Hasker and an understanding of human participation which is biblically faithful, first requires a reading of the Great Commission in Mt 28:16-20. As Jesus declares to his disciples, all authority has been handed to him (v. 18), which predicates His following command to go and make disciples of all nations (v.19). Within this declaration, we witness the nature and willingness of God to share all things with humanity, even the nature of divine authority and the salvific mission. It is therefore from the divine authority that Jesus issues the mandate to make disciples everywhere, drawing humanity into a central role and position of bringing others into the divine-human relationship. This is not a mission which is designed and enacted by God alone, but is dependent upon the participation and loving praxis of all believers. God does not work alone in establishing His love and Kingdom, but requires humanity, within the relational ontology which underscores all things, to work beside Him. In this way, there is an obvious continuation with the soteriological understanding outlined above. Just as salvation requires human participation for personal and communal experiences of the Spirit which deepens the loving relationship with God and produces an ever-deepening Christlikeness, so the call to cooperate with God in the outworking of His broader mission also requires human participation.

6.4.10 Pentecost and Eschatology

By appreciating that humanity is invited to partake within the *missio Dei*, sets the boundaries markers for God's activity within the world which reaches its fullness and consummation within the events of the *eschaton*. Yet in understanding the unfolding history which leads to the end time consummation, the events of Pentecost are paramount in understanding how this is possible. We have noted from Studebaker and Macchia how the arrival of the Spirit at Pentecost holds both soteriological and eschatological import, as the Spirit of Christ brings both life and mission. But the life and mission which the Spirit inaugurates during the events of Acts 2 are anticipatory and penultimate within this age, and await their completion when Christ returns. The life which is lived now is but a taste of what will come when God finally brings all the created order into his presence, eradicating sin and death. Therefore, the start and end of the eschatological drama is orchestrated, initiated and completed through God's salvific economy. Again, humanity has no scope to claim its own salvation within the salvific and eschatological drama, as all is dependent upon God. Yet, humanity is invited into this drama to play a significant role within its outworking. As Macchia has persuasively argued, the present activity of the Spirit and the coming reign of God are framed within a Kingdom theology, which requires a strong social dimension, which is marked by love. The participation of humanity in following Jesus' words to make disciples of all people must take heed to the social and relational implications inherent within the Kingdom. The building and establishment of the Kingdom is a phenomenon which is grounded within history through the presence and activity of the Spirit, and consequently, the actions which believers perform in participation with God impact the growth of the Kingdom. In stating that believers are responsible, in a life lived in the Spirit, for working with God in growing the Kingdom, it is Christ's return and judgement which brings the Kingdom to its

full fruition. Yet, in a manner which is consistent with the relational ontology which is reflective of God's inner loving essence, the parable of the sheep and goats (Mt. 25:31-46) indicates the relational criteria for which the judgement will be grounded within. Just as there is a relational ontology expressed through God's salvific economy, this is also reflected in the growth of the Kingdom and the final judgement which finally establishes God's loving reign.

6.4.11 Eschatology within the Present

Having now described the manner in which soteriology and eschatology function together within *realizing* eschatology, one final word is needed to clarify the criticisms which were levelled against Pinnock and Hasker in their overly futuristic readings of eschatology. It was noted above that both authors placed too heavy an emphasis upon the future return of Christ, without due consideration of how the present, particularly through human participation, impacts the final decisive actions of God. While it has been readily affirmed that Christ's return and judgement signifies the end of sin and death and the fulfilment of God's Kingdom of love, it should also be noted that the present conditions within world are of paramount importance in growing the Kingdom and exemplifying its significant feature - love. While both Pinnock and Hasker affirm an inaugurated eschatology, in that God's actions in the past have initiated His final victory which is yet to be fully realized, it was also noted that they each placed too heavy an emphasis upon the future without explicating fully how the present contributes toward this coming event. While *realizing eschatology* affirms the importance of an inaugurated eschatology, in that it rejects both a fully realized eschatology due to the return of Christ and the fullness of the Kingdom to come, and an overly futuristic eschatology, which overlooks the growth of the Kingdom within the present age which is tied to the current economy of the Spirit, there is a need to address how inaugurated eschatology

should be understood within Open Theism. The manner in which time is understood within Open Theism, necessitates that the present moment of the *now* is drawn into the temporal complex of the historical events of the divine economy and the future consummation which is to come. Subsequently, the present, due to its reality forming nature, must be granted more significance than has been witnessed in Hasker and Pinnock. The events of the present are shaped through the historical context of the divine economy, but are vital in shaping the events which will come. Therefore, within an Open Theist understanding of inaugurated eschatology, more emphasis is needed within what role the present plays in drawing history towards its eschatological conclusion. Little room can be granted within an Open Theist eschatology which points forward to the *eschaton* and Christ's return but which comes at the expense of the present. It is within the present, within each passing *crisis* infused expression of the *now*, that shapes how and when the end events will occur, as God *responds* to the establishment of the Kingdom within the world which guides what actions are required from Him. In this manner, eschatology is seen as a partnership between God and humanity, as they operate together in creating the conditions for God's responsive and decisive interaction to establish the reign of love.

6.5 Divine Providence

When considering divine providence within the broader context of the current work, there is one obvious difficulty that challenges the comparative method which has guided us thus far. This is that neither Studebaker nor Macchia directly refer to divine providence, which, to be honest, is a stumbling block within a comparative study! In this respect, the question of how providence is conceived holds more urgency within the Open Theist community than for Pentecostals. However, in acknowledging this dilemma and moving

beyond it, there is a need to deviate from how the previous topics of the Godhead, soteriology and eschatology have been approached methodologically. While each of the above have been subject to a close commentary reading, followed by a critical review, a comparative study and finally a constructive proposal, the lack of comparative material within the discussion of divine providence necessitates a methodological shift. Yet, in wishing to remain faithful to the aims of the comparative methodology, in that it results in a novel and provisional proposal, there is a need to forego the comparison with Pentecostalism in this instance, and move directly into the theological construction. It should however be noted, that by making this methodological (mis)step, there still remains important insights which have arisen from the earlier comparative work with Pentecostalism. In this respect, the comparative work which has been conducted throughout, continues to impact how the notion of divine providence is conceived. This then ensures that the comparative study which the entire thesis is grounded within, continues to play an important role in guiding and shaping the theological proposals.

6.5.1 Summary of Realizing Eschatology

Before addressing to the specific implications of divine providence contained within *realizing eschatology*, it is useful first to summarise the essential points of the model, so as to provide context to how the notion of providence is understood within it. In this way, the meta-narrative which incorporates all the events of history, spanning creation to the final consummation at the *eschaton*, helps to illustrate the manner in which God works within the world and what this says about His cooperative economy and loving care. In continuation with the Open Theists above, *realizing eschatology* affirms the notion that the original creational purpose of God was to establish and share in a mutual and loving relationality with all of the created order. The purpose of creating the world in this way is that it reflects the

fundamental loving and Trinitarian nature of God which exists within the perfect community of the Father, Son and Spirit. The intention of offering this relationship was for humanity to share in union with God, so as to live within the harmonious indwelling of the divine, but one which retained the ontological distinction between God and the created order. Due to the necessary libertarian freedom which is required for relationships to be accepted and properly flourish, there was an inherent risk in offering this mode of life and relationship, as it could be as equally rejected as embraced. To God's dismay, the offer of life as union was spurned, resulting in an alienation between God and humanity as sin entered the created order. It was the presence of sin which brought death and constituted the great barrier between God and humanity, a barrier which could only be overcome through a direct and decisive intervention by God. In response to humanity's choices, God did not abandon His original purposes and sought to bridge the divide and re-establish the now lost relationship. The manner in which God enacted his salvific economy derived from His same relational and loving ontology which resulted in the created order. Therefore, the principles of human freedom and the need for humanity's consensual partnership remained essential in how the salvific economy would be enacted. By continuing to offer the freedom which humanity enjoyed at creation, meant that not only did the risk factor remain in place throughout the enactment of salvation, but that humanity possessed, and continues to possess, a dominant say in how the history of this world will unfold.

In and through the establishment of Israel, God began drawing all people back into His perfect relationship, which culminated in the arrival of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. The purpose of Christ's incarnation was primarily to forge a new relational path between God and humanity, but for this to take place, the issue of sin had to be decisively dealt with. Although the atonement cannot be reduced to just one theological motif, as the life

and death of Christ and the importance of the cross must remain a multi-faceted theological phenomenon, the notion of Recapitulation stands as a lead atonement motif, provides important context to other dimensions within the atonement. The reason for Recapitulation's centrality is that it is not only grounded in union and relationship, as Jesus shares in humanity, which subsequently mirrors humanity's sharing in the divine, but that it primarily focuses upon the whole life and mission of Christ, rather than just God's anger. In this way, Recapitulation exemplifies the nature and purposes of God in reaching out to humanity, as life and union become central facets of the salvific narrative over anger and punishment. While sin has been defeated by Jesus' suffering on behalf of the old Adamic humanity, the benefits which were gained through His vicarious sacrifice are extended to all through love and union, thus securing His victory. However, as we have noted throughout, other models of Open Theism have tended towards a Christocentrism which have marginalised or ignored the person and economy of the Holy Spirit. *Realizing eschatology* seeks to overcome this problematic lacuna, by incorporating a necessary Pneumatological dimension into the overarching meta-narrative of salvation and eschatology.

In recognising that the outworking of God's economy is accomplished through the 'two hands' of the Son and the Spirit, the essential nature of salvation as the restoration of relationship, is achieved through the presence and reception of the Spirit within the life of the believer. The baptism of the Spirit, which is the very presence of God indwelling the recipient, forms the context in which *theosis* develops. The union with God is then understood as an immediate and immanent economy of the Spirit which conforms the believer into an ever-deepening awareness of Christlikeness, growing and expanding the divine-human relationship. In this regard, salvation is an ongoing process which is strengthened through relational means. It is for this reason, that the title of *realizing eschatology* is deliberately

expressed through the present continuous tense, as the salvific goal is continually shaped within the present leading to its eschatological fulfilment. Yet, in accepting that the presence of the Spirit constitutes the essence of salvation, embedded within this is the acknowledgement that salvation possesses necessary loving and relational obligations. Notwithstanding the important pastoral concerns that at times there is a need to rest in God for healing and restoration, as salvation is nought without these, but the acceptance of the Spirit and the formation to Christ's very being requires a loving relational praxis. The manner in which God shares the make-up of reality with humanity extends not only to the salvific sphere, but also the eschatological due to the close affinity which exists between salvation and eschatology. Within the call of the 'Great Commission', Jesus extends the *missio Dei* to incorporate humanity as co-workers in exemplifying and extending the fullness of salvation. Believers are to embody and manifest the life in the Spirit so as to share the divine love with all of creation. This loving praxis, which is enacted within the Spirit, is aimed towards expanding the Kingdom within the world, which was initiated in Christ's earthly mission. Just as Jesus, in a life shared with the Spirit, overcame social injustices, sin and death through love and holiness, so His life, as a paradigmatic example for His followers, requires the same enactment. Salvation and the formation to Christ's image necessitates the same cruciform life for believers now as that exemplified by Christ. Here, the presence of the Spirit possesses not only soteriological implications for the present, but eschatological hope for the future. The Spirit is promised as the eschatological agent whose arrival marks the expansion and eventual fulfilment of the Kingdom. Although the Kingdom cannot be fully established until Christ's decisive return at the *eschaton*, the intermediary period is marked by the cooperative work between God and humanity in growing and preparing the Kingdom for Jesus' return.

6.5.2 Divine Providence and the Trinity

In presenting the meta-narrative in this way, provides the context for which the understanding of divine providence can be developed in a consistent manner with God's salvific and eschatological economy. By appreciating that the economy of God reflects His loving essence, grants a coherent understanding for how God operates within the world, meaning that the boundary markers which are established within the soteriological and eschatological drama also inform our understanding of divine providence. In Chapter 1, we noted how Open Theists have sought to expand the notion of divine providence in terms of Christology, drawing providential implications from the life and economy of Christ. While this development is indeed laudable, there is also the need to incorporate and develop the providential activity of the Holy Spirit in line with the Christology.⁷⁴² By recognising the Pneumatological dimension within divine providence provides not only a fuller Trinitarian understanding of how providence is manifested, but more accurately accounts for how God is currently operating within the world. As has been consistently stated throughout, the presence of the Spirit accounts for God's current propinquity within the created order, requiring that this expression of divine immanence is taken full account of within any explication of divine providence.

In moving forward with the Pneumatological understanding of providence, means that the Spirit's providential expression is tied to Her wider soteriological and eschatological economy. As was noted above, the Spirit's role in fulfilling both the soteriological and eschatological goals is indispensable in gaining a full understanding of what salvation entails

⁷⁴² Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 38-92 and 107. Sanders, *God As Personal*, pp. 174-8. Hall & Sanders, *Does God Have Future?*, pp. 25-7 and 153-7. Sanders, *DPOG*, pp. 215-224. J. Sanders, *Reducing God to Human Proportions*, in Porter & Cross, *Semper Reformandum*, pp. 111-43, esp. 120-5.

and to what ends the world will be fully consummated. This subsequently necessitates that the Spirit's scope in caring for the created order is shaped by Her role in constituting salvation through *theosis* and building the Kingdom for Christ's decisive return. It is precisely through God's immanent presence and activity of offering Godself as the true expression of love and life, that divine providence should be comprehended. As argued for above, God has entrusted humanity with both soteriological and eschatological obligations, which consequently draws humanity into partnership of the *missio Dei* with God. The significance for providence of this partnership is that as believers work with, and in, the Spirit to build the Kingdom. The ethical demands which are essential to the Kingdom's identity are enacted within the world, thus suggesting that the manner in which the world is cared for is both a divine *and* human cooperative task. As we noted from Macchia's 'Prophetic' eschatology, there is a theological and ethical imperative to incorporate a strong social dimension into the eschatological narrative.⁷⁴³ This was further reinforced through the work undertaken concerning the theological significance of the *now*, which indicates humanity's responsibility in (con)forming the world to its original creational purposes through the its shared and collective decisions. Therefore, the building of the Kingdom by believers manifests the ethical and loving requirements from God as part of the ongoing salvific and eschatological narrative. The understanding of salvation as *theosis* then functions, in part, as a catalyst for the fulfilment of the ethical and pastoral demands, as the believer is drawn into union with God which conforms them ever closer to the likeness of Christ. In this way, God ensures His providential care within the world, but in a manner consistent with His loving and sharing essence.

⁷⁴³ Macchia, *Spirituality*, pp. 157-9.

6.5.3 Providence as Divine-Human Partnership

Maintained throughout the development of *realizing eschatology* is the central notion of divine-human partnership. While it was noted that the partnership possesses significant soteriological and eschatological implications, the same must also be held for divine providence. In creating and caring for the world, and reflective of His loving and sharing nature, God has sought to work cooperatively with humanity, seeking to fulfil His divine goals through human participation. Dating back to creation, God has worked alongside humanity to achieve His goals, often relying on humanity to continue and complete the shared work, including those tasks which are most essential to the fulfilment of His goals. In desiring to remain biblically faithful in the construction of the theology of partnership, what is required is a brief overview of the ways in which God entrusts His entire mission to the partnership with humanity. This will not only indicate the power sharing mission of God, but signify the ways in which humanity has been required to share in and implement the providential oversights of God. Within the creation accounts, we are introduced to the notion of power-sharing within the stewardship bestowed upon Adam (Gen. 1:28-9, 2:20), later within the flood narrative God elects Noah to ensure humanity's survival (Gen. 6:13-4) and followed by the calling of Abraham to establish a nation which would bless all people (Gen. 12:2-3). Throughout the tumultuous relationship with Israel, we note time and again God's willingness to forgo His judgement and rejection of Israel, always returning to His chosen people to establish them as the chosen people among the nations.⁷⁴⁴ With the arrival of Jesus, the same pattern of divine-human partnership remains, as Jesus selects the disciples as the means of establishing the church and continuing His work in the power of the Spirit (Mt. 28:16-20 and

⁷⁴⁴ Sanders has excellently reviewed the OT material relating to God's providence within Israel's history, see Sanders, *GWR*, pp. 38-71.

Acts 1:8). Yet, it is not just the biblical account which indicates God's cooperative partnerships. The writing of the Bible itself, scribed by human hand and the importance of the Ecumenical councils alongside the ongoing mission of the Church, also demonstrates a constant willingness by God for humanity to contribute significantly to the outworking of His goals. In this respect, the majority of the important moments within the biblical narrative and the ensuing church tradition, has witnessed the partnership between God and humanity.

The understanding of divine providence within *realizing eschatology* is then predicated upon the notion of divine-human partnership. The advantage of viewing providence within this way is that it distances itself from the claim that God is responsible for the evil in the world. In agreement with each of the Open Theists surveyed above, the notion that God has planned for or pre-ordained evil, is completely rejected.⁷⁴⁵ Rather, the presence of evil in the world has originated from the abuses of freewill which was granted to humanity and other heavenly beings at creation. Although this assertion sits comfortably alongside other explanations within 'Free Will Theism', the discussion above in 3.4.3 denies the notion that God ever overrides freewill, which marks a stark distinction between the views held by Pinnock and Sanders and my own. Pinnock and Sanders each assert that, at times, God does directly intervene within the world to control freewill ensuring that His purposes are kept on track.⁷⁴⁶ However, as was discussed above, this assertion is rejected within the providential understanding of *realizing eschatology* as it is maintained that if God restricts freedom in any way, it compromises the entire salvific and co-operative matrix which has been established in bringing humanity into genuine relationship with God. Although there is agreement here with

⁷⁴⁵ Hasker, *TGE*, pp. 214-8.

⁷⁴⁶ In a personal correspondence, John Sanders comments that while aspects of his earlier writings may suggest that God at times controls aspects of humanity's freewill, this is a notion he clearly denies. Sanders affirms that God never controls or determines any human freewill.

Oord as to the denial of divine volitional manipulation, the manner in which this conclusion is reached takes a very different form. Whereas Oord justifies his position within the divine *inability* of God to control people given His essential loving nature, I assert that God retains the metaphysical power, at least theoretically, to restrain volition, but declines to do so, given the consistency required within the salvific structures which have been established within the world. Thus, in agreement with Hasker, Pinnock and Sanders, I affirm the notion that God *self-limits* His power, rather than lacking it metaphysically. By affirming God's power in this way, ensures the final eschatological victory promised by the life in the Spirit. As we noted from Hasker, Process Theology, and by association, Oord's model of *Essential Kenosis* with its underpinning Process metaphysic, cannot guarantee God's final victory over evil, sin and death. In this regard, the eschatological promise, which is enacted through the divine-human partnership, brings God's final reign, once and for all establishing His Kingdom providence of love.

CONCLUSION

1 Summary of Main Ideas

In outlining the central points contained within the thesis, it is important first to highlight the manner in which the methodology has not only structured the flow of the work, but has significantly contributed to the findings contained within. The adoption and adaptation of Clooney's comparative methodology grants a critical appreciation of the home tradition's theology, in this instance Open Theism, while also opening new insights to arise from the dialogue with Pentecostalism. By following Clooney's first step of a careful 'commentary' reading of the texts within Open Theism, it was noted that despite the claims for an adherence to a robust 'Social' Trinitarianism, this was not consistently developed within the wider theology. The crux of the problem lay in the Pneumatological lacuna which existed primary within the writings of Sanders, Hasker and Oord. While Pinnock's theology is more focused upon the person and economy of the Holy Spirit, it was also noted that there were elements of a Pneumatological subordinationism present within his work. Consequently, the manner in which the Spirit has been largely ignored within Open Theist literature, provided the context into which the dialogue and comparison with Pentecostalism would take place. By utilising Studebaker's liminal, constitutive and eschatological criteria to identify the 'narratives of the Spirit' and Macchia's helpful insights into a fully Trinitarian Kingdom theology, which incorporates an integrated and relational soteriology and eschatology, provided the dialogical context into which the comparative work could flourish. By reading both sets of texts comparatively, the Pneumatological oversights which exist within the Open literature were suitably addressed, offering possible new insights into how Pentecostalism could be coherently and consistently developed within an Open Theist

theological framework.

The final aspect of Clooney's comparative method culminates with the suggestion of concise theological 'experiments'. In this regard, the comparative reading opens up new and provisional insights, which form the basis for later theological reflection and development. Clooney emphasises that such 'experiments' should remain just that, as there is little scope within the comparative endeavour to fully explicate each and every facet of the emerging theology. With this in mind, the constructive proposals offered within adhere to Clooney's proposal, as they are presented as provisional suggestions requiring consideration and criticism from the wider Open community. In terms of the theological proposal suggested in relation to the Godhead, it was noted that there is a fundamental re-evaluation required within Open Theist literature and theology to incorporate and develop a more robust Pneumatology. In suggesting how this can be pursued, a case study of *kenosis* was offered as a means of illustrating how the Spirit can be read into Christ's divine movement from *Logos asarkos* to full incarnation. It was argued that by placing *kenosis* within a fully Trinitarian theology, some of the theological implications of *kenosis* suggested by Oord had been overstated. Additionally, in developing a provisional model of soteriology, eschatology and divine providence, there arose the tentative experiment of *realizing eschatology*. While in keeping with many of the central assertions of Pinnock, Hasker and Sanders, *realizing eschatology* does diverge from these authors on three key points. The first is that contrary to their claims, God never overrides human volition in the outworking of His economy, as this negates the relational goals of salvation. Secondly, there is a much stronger emphasis placed upon the Spirit. The unified mission of the Son and Spirit is emphasised in delivering a more coherent Trinitarian theology. Finally, more emphasis is given to humanity in co-creating the actuality of the events now, requiring a more acute awareness of the role that humanity inevitably plays

within divine providence, salvation and the eschatological building of the Kingdom.

2 Theological Issues and Significance

In turning to the specific theological issues at hand, we can identify two dominant concerns which have, to varying degrees, guided the discussion throughout. The first of these relates to the alarming lack of Pneumatology which presently exists within Open literature. It is difficult to justify how a theology such as Open Theism, with its stress upon both an essential 'Social' Trinitarianism and the formation of the present and future between God and humanity, can function without a robust Pneumatology. In both instances, the presence of the Spirit requires essential consideration. How Open Theism can advocate a strong Trinitarian model while one of the members is effectively ignored, and, how God interacts presently within the world without a full recourse to the Spirit is hugely problematic. The second issue, which has been more implicitly inferred, is the influence of Process Theism on the development of Open Theology. This has largely been directed towards Oord's model of *Essential Kenosis*, as many of its central assertions have been critically addressed. While it has been repeatedly noted that Oord's theology cannot, nor should not, be considered as Process Theology proper, there is a definite Process metaphysic operative within his work which impacts his hermeneutics, theology and notion of love.

In highlighting the two theological issues which have essentially framed the writing, allows us to address the importance embedded within them. In turning first to the Pneumatological lacuna, the significance of this relates to the overall coherence and consistency of Open Theism's doctrine of the Trinity. Given that Pinnock, Sanders and Hasker, each ground their doctrine of love within the essential and necessary relational ontology of the Trinity, the manner in which Sanders and Hasker effectively ignore the person and economy of the Holy Spirit presents a worrying trend within Open Theist theology.

Therefore, by directly addressing the issues of the Trinity and Pneumatology allows for reflection in the community on this critical point. If, as our authors have contended, the Trinitarian ontology accurately reflects not only the substance of the divine life, but the structures within the created order, then there must be a consistent and clear portrayal of each member of the Trinity and how they relate to creation. This is a fundamental question of coherence which lies at the heart of Open Theist theology, and one which impacts not only how the community's theology is conceived, but how it is practiced. As was suggested above, Open Theism should seek to develop not only a clear theology, but also a loving and relational praxis. The notions of human responsibility and cooperation are explicitly evident within the tenets of Open Theism, requiring that action accompanies and informs the theological reflection. In this regard, by emphasizing the need to develop a stronger Pneumatology, not only contributes to a more coherent theology of the Trinity, but can significantly contribute to a doxological and loving praxis by reflecting upon the Spirit's current activity which is significant in creating the present and the future.

In respect to the issue relating to Process Theism and the influence which it plays within Open Theist thought, it is significant in terms of Open Theism's continuing development and subsequent theological identity. Process Theism has impacted, to a degree, the development of Open Theism, especially as Oord defines it.⁷⁴⁷ Yet in acknowledging this, there is also the need to recognize the significant differences which exist between the two systems of thought. If we again take our cue from Clooney that academic theology assists in shaping the ecclesial tradition and reflects the concerns of the faith community, then the significance of the relationship between Process and Open Theism takes on more than just an

⁷⁴⁷ I am again indebted to John Sanders for clarifying the relationship between Open and Process Theism, and how the founders of Open thought engaged with Process theology and philosophy.

academic curiosity. At the heart of the issue is the doxological question of God's nature and how He interacts, and will act, within the world. As the discussions of providence and eschatology have demonstrated, there are important and divergent views concerning God's continuing economy, especially in terms of the world's final consummation and how this is understood in terms of biblical revelation. Therefore, the discussions which take place within the academy have a subsequent impact upon the living faith of the shared community, and as such, hold a particular significance and responsibility due to this. This should not subsequently discourage any lines of inquiry or critical questioning, but at the same time it must also acknowledge that the community holds its own narratives and beliefs which are reflected within the dialogue. Consequently, this will impact to what extent Process ideas can, or will shape, Open Theism in the future.

3 Evaluation of Research and Suggestions for Further Inquiries

When evaluating the research which has been conducted throughout, it is pertinent to reflect particularly upon the original contributions which have been suggested. Due to space restrictions which prohibit a full and extensive analysis of each point, the evaluation will rather focus on three specific contributions of the thesis. The first of these relate to Clooney's methodology which was adopted and provided a clear structure for the entire work. The utilization of the comparative method has been significant in allowing important criticisms to arise within the community in terms of the understanding of the Trinity through the 'commentary' reading of the texts. While there has been wide ranging discussion within the Open community regarding the Trinity, little has been offered in terms of a critical evaluation upon those discussions. By contributing the critique of the Trinity in terms of the Pneumatological lacuna within Open thought, offers an insight and corrective to both the Trinitarian and Pneumatological discussions to date. The importance of this critique cannot be

understated given the central place of the Trinity within the formation of the underlying theology in much of Open Theism. Whilst the criticisms have arisen from within the community, and the correctives which were suggested derived from two Pentecostal authors, it nevertheless indicates the scope of the Pneumatological deficiency within the community and the need for further reflection. Open Theists, especially those who incorporate the Trinity into their central theological narrative, need to engage more directly with the academy's broader discussions of Pneumatology, so as to contribute creative and novel insights concerning the Holy Spirit which arise from its central theological tenets. The Open community is uniquely situated to provide novel insights into the Spirit given its emphasis upon how God operates within the *now*, and what implications this holds for the future. The cooperative nature which exists between God and humanity holds much promise for a full Pneumatological exploration in terms of a shedding new light on how God and humanity relate to one another and what this means for the co-creation of the world.

Moving from the discussions of the Trinity and Pneumatology to the work completed on *kenosis* and *realizing eschatology*, there is a need to place their inclusion within the wider methodology, so as to provide an appropriate perspective upon the evaluation. As Clooney notes in relation to the constructive proposals which arise from the comparative reading, they are preliminary, provisional, and tentative, and need to be properly understood as such. The aim of the constructive work which derives from the dialogue is not intended to produce a full theological treatise, but rather to offer novel and experimental ideas which require further discussion, reflection and development within the community. In this regard, the constructive proposals of *kenosis* and *realizing eschatology* follow this understanding, as both are *initial* reflections arising from the dialogue with Pentecostalism, and as such, are kernels of thoughts requiring further development. However, in stating this, there is the acknowledgement that by

proposing the ideas in their current form, a necessary accountability must also accompany them, which takes full responsibility and ownership for the proposed ideas.

In turning first to the work concerning *kenosis*, the contribution, at least within an Open Theist context, lies in how the notion is developed as a transitory movement and moment within the divine, which requires wider Christological motifs to give it context and meaning. In addition to this, it is also placed within a broader Trinitarian framework, requiring a Pneumatological dimension to explain how the Spirit is operational within the incarnation. By doing this, *kenosis* is considered within a largely Christological context, reflecting the focus of Philippians 2. In contrast to Oord who adopts *kenosis* as a controlling theological hermeneutic to describe God more broadly, the focus on *kenosis* here suggests the need to situate it within the overall *economy* of God. By completing this, the understanding of God is derived from a wider narrative portrayal of the divine and is not drawn primarily from one abstracted facet of God. As such, this grants that the entirety of God's economy informs us to the nature and love of God, rather than conforming them to just one interpretation of *kenosis*. While, I believe that this is a fruitful way that *kenosis* should be developed and drawn into the wider understanding of God, there still remains the need for more research to develop this further, not least in regards to a full exegetical survey of Philippians 2.

As Open Theism continues to develop, there will inevitably arise new models which explain how God operates within the world and to what purposes He is enacting His economy. In this respect, the notion of *realizing eschatology* contributes to these discussions. While *realizing eschatology* is situated within the broad landscape of FWT and Open Theism, there are distinct contributions which it endeavours to make. First, and most important, is the assertion that the Holy Spirit needs to become a much more central character in the fulfilment

of the entire historical narrative. Open Theism can no longer ignore the person or economy of the Spirit, especially if it wishes to maintain God's present activity within the world. The Spirit is God with us now, necessitating the awareness of what God is achieving through the Spirit's activity. This also reflects the nature in which God communes with humanity, and what responsibilities arise from that. Therefore, Open Theism needs to develop its own distinct Pneumatology, to not only balance its understanding of the 'Social' Trinity, but to express God's presence within the world. Secondly, *realizing eschatology* places more emphasis upon the role of human freedom and the cooperative nature of humanity with God. Although this conviction is shared with Oord, there is also the distinct difference in how this understanding arises. In contrast to the Process metaphysic which informs Oord on the issue, *realizing eschatology* situates the understanding of human freedom within soteriology, asking how salvation can be meaningful if God does at times override freewill. There is a need within Open Theism to re-engage the question of how God is fully operative within the world with the level of divine power reflective of 'Classical' Theism, but not at the expense of human freedom. Finally, and drawing from the understanding of freewill above, the work completed on soteriology, eschatology and divine providence indicates the strong need for human participation with the divine in creating all of the conditions within the world. Although God is operative within the world, and at times manifests Himself through the miraculous, the present condition of the created order reflects humanity's participatory decisions. In making this claim, it was suggested that the *now* becomes a constant and perpetual *crisis* moment, in creating both the conditions in the present and forming the future. The *now* then becomes infused with Pneumatological, soteriological and eschatological implications, as each decision made by humanity either fulfils or rejects the loving call of God in bringing the created order towards its completion. With more focus on the present moment

within realizing *eschatology*, there is a need for Open Theists to reflect upon how the tenets of its theology impact how the world is now. This creates the need for further research into ecclesiology to understand what the church is currently doing in terms of its cooperative obligations and how it should adapt in the future. Additionally, there exists much further scope for Open Theism to engage within ‘Political’ Theology, so as to investigate how the missiological-praxis, which all believers are called to, can be adequately enacted within the world. Here, there is a challenge for Open Theists to provide meaningful answers for expressing love, equality and justice within the world, while reflecting the Christlikeness which develops within the life of the Spirit and which ultimately draws us back into the presence of the Father.

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