

He Will Glorify Me: Evaluating the Pneumatology of Inclusivists and Pluralists¹

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INTRODUCTION

In Acts 4, Peter and John were summoned before the rulers, elders, and scribes in Jerusalem to explain how they had healed a man lame from birth. They responded, "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." This conviction motivated Peter and John,

and the rest of the apostles, to endure persecution for the sake of Christ and relentlessly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations.

That simple statement of the uniqueness of Jesus did not preach well to the sensibilities of Peter and John's audience.

Nor does it preach well in our current postmodern context. To suggest that there is only one way to be reconciled to God is seen as offensive, intolerant, and just plain rude. Nevertheless, Peter and John were correct. Based upon the biblical evidence, I am convinced that one must hear and believe the gospel in order to be saved, and that the biblical response to the question of "What about those who have never heard?" is "Go tell them!" This conviction is not shared by an increasing number of evangelicals. For reasons of their own, many are uncomfortable with the narrow exclusivity described above and are proposing different ways of interpreting the text of Acts 4:12 and others like them, to allow for a wider hope and a less restrictive stance. Further, many are turning to pneumatology as the starting point for their proposals. Believing that the church has illegitimately circumscribed the mission of the Spirit by the mission of the Son, some inclusivists and pluralists are suggesting that maintaining a relative independence of the Spirit from the Son will create the theological

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space necessary to justify their inclusivist and pluralist proposals. The purpose of this article is to describe those proposals and then to demonstrate that a turn to pneumatology to create theological space for a "wider hope" fails on biblical theological grounds. That is, the Bible's presentation of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is self-consciously Christocentric. The Holy Spirit works to bring glory to the Son (John 16:14).

TERMINOLOGY

In this article, I will utilize the fourfold taxonomy that is typically used for discussing the relationships between salvation, the unique claims of Jesus Christ, and world religions of exclusivism (often called particularism or restrictivism), inclusivism, pluralism, and universalism.¹

Exclusivists maintain that salvation is possible only through conscious faith in Jesus Christ. That is, there is an ontological necessity and an epistemological necessity to the death of Christ in order that any be saved. Only the death and resurrection of Christ can atone for sin and one must submit to Christ in repentance and faith in order to be reconciled to God. Exclusivism has historically been the majority position in the Church.

Inclusivism, on the other hand, is no less committed to the work of Christ as the basis for salvation, but its adherents question the need for explicit faith in Christ in order to be saved. That is, the work of Christ on the cross is ontologically necessary for salvation (Christ's death and resurrection had to happen in history), but it is not epistemologically necessary (one does not need to believe in Christ's death and resurrection in this life to be saved).

Pluralism, which is outside the boundaries associated with evangelical Christianity, abandons the necessity of Christ's atoning work on the cross altogether and sees nothing privileged or unique about Jesus Christ and Christianity in comparison with the other religions of the world.

Rather, pluralists believe that one can find salvation, however it is individually construed, through various religious traditions, belief systems, and ethics. Though not all find salvation, there are many roads that lead to God.

Universalists are convinced that all will ultimately be reconciled to God, hell (if it ever existed in reality and was populated) will be emptied out, and universal salvation will be effected with no individual excepted. Universalism comes in two varieties: evangelical and pluralist. Evangelical universalists believe that the basis for universal reconciliation lies in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Pluralistic universalists root universal reconciliation in the love of God, who may work through a variety of prophets, sacred texts, and world religions, without any necessary recourse to the work of Christ.

Prior to the twentieth century, the response of the church to world religions was consistently negative with regard to their salvific potential. Convictions on how the religions of the world fit into the redemptive purposes of God were articulated, not in formal statements on those religions, but in the response of the church fathers to schismatics. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, set the stage by declaring, "Be not deceived, my brethren: if anyone follows a maker of schism, he does not inherit the Kingdom of God; if anyone walks in strange doctrine he has no part in the passion."² Irenaeus, to whom current advocates of a pneumatological approach to theology of religions most often appeal, pronounced, "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth."³ The gravest condemnation of the possibility of salvation outside the church came from Cyprian: "For they cannot live out of it, since the house of God is one, and there can be no salvation to any except in the Church."⁴ Thus the principle that guided the church for the better part of two millennia, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("no salvation outside the church"), was articulated.

INCLUSIVIST AND PLURALIST PROPOSALS THAT TURN TO PNEUMATOLOGY

Many are now questioning whether indeed there is no salvation outside the church and are seeking grounds for the possibility that the unevangelized may yet be saved apart from faith in Christ. A Christian theology of religions is the study of how the other religions of the world fit into the redemptive purposes of God (if at all). There have been no lack of proposals that find room for salvation for the unevangelized, but the exclusive claims of Christ as recorded in Scripture are difficult to overcome. Lacking epistemological certitude, some appeal to hope and pneumatology. As inclusivist Clark Pinnock writes, “There is no way around it—we must hope that God’s gift of salvation is being applied to people everywhere. If so, how else than by the universal presence and activity of Spirit?”⁵

In what follows, I would like to summarize the proposals for pluralism and inclusivism that focus on the role of the Holy Spirit. I will begin with non-evangelicals before summarizing a couple evangelical proposals. We will find that there is not much new in the evangelical inclusivist arguments. Many of the same pneumatological arguments were made by non-evangelical inclusivists and pluralists many years before.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Two Roman Catholic popes, both named Pius (Pius IX in 1856 and Pius XII in 1943), represent some of the earliest nuances of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, effectively opening the door just a crack for inclusivistic and pluralistic influences. In 1856, Pope Pius IX demanded that those who fall under the witness of the church must enter the church to be saved, but he made provision for the one who did not know of the gospel or Church “through ignorance beyond his control”⁶ or “invincible ignorance.”⁷

In 1943, Pope Pius XII, in the papal encyclical *Mystici Corporis*,⁸ also left the door open when

he spoke of those who were separated from the Catholic Church who nevertheless had an “unconscious desire” and have a “certain relationship with the Mystical Body of the Redeemer.”⁹ He gave no definition of “unconscious desire,” nor did he explain how one can have a “certain relationship” with the body of Christ apart from the church. It is evident, however, that room was allowed for the possibility of salvation outside the church.

Vatican II

The door left ajar by Pius IX and Pius XII was opened wide at the Second Vatican Council. At first glance, the teaching of Vatican II concerning world religions is uncompromising. *Lumen Gentium* (“light of the nations”), while specifically mentioning Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, still declares that the church is “necessary for salvation.”¹⁰ Protestants, who have entered into faith in Christ and submitted to Christian baptism, though they do not “profess the Catholic faith in its entirety” are still joined to the Catholic Church “in some real way” by the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Only those who know the necessity of the Catholic Church and consciously reject it cannot be saved.¹² Those who have not heard of the necessity of the church do not share such condemnation.

Those in any religion who have not heard the gospel “through no fault of their own” may “seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation.”¹³ In perhaps the most specific statement of the work of the Holy Spirit in world religions, *Gaudium et Spes* (“Joy and Hope,” one of the Apostolic Constitutions of Second Vatican) declares that among those who are being saved, there is a universal work of the Spirit that brings the benefits of redemption:

This holds true not for Christians only but also for all persons of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same

destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal mystery.¹⁴

This is perhaps the earliest affirmation in official Catholic teaching of what has become the standard inclusivist position with emphasis on the role of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in *all* who are not Christians, including, then, those who have no knowledge of Christ or the teaching of the church, enabling them to become participants and beneficiaries of the work of Christ apart from gospel proclamation.

After Vatican II

The Roman Catholic Church, since Vatican II, has seen a steady departure from the principle of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.¹⁵ The papacy of John Paul II saw the greatest departure from an exclusivist position. In his encyclicals *Redemptoris Hominis* (1979)¹⁶ and *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), he elevated the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and the church and mission, specifically stating that the Spirit is at work outside the confines of the church, but discernment of that work is the responsibility of the church.¹⁷

According to *Dialogue and Proclamation*, a joint document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples,¹⁸ the basis for interreligious dialogue is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the participants. This dialogue is possible because the Holy Spirit is “mysteriously present in the heart of every person, Christian or otherwise” who engages in authentic prayer.¹⁹ Although there is but “one plan of salvation for humankind, with its center in Jesus Christ,” there is an “active presence of the Holy Spirit in the religious life of the members of the other religious traditions which causes a mystery of unity ... in spite of the differences between religious professions.”²⁰ The Holy Spirit calls people to unity in Christ even if some are “unaware” of the fact. Their saving faith mani-

fest itself in a “sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following dictates of their conscience.”²¹ Such practice constitutes a positive response to God's invitation to salvation in Christ, “even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their saviour.”²² This is a clear articulation of the inclusivist proposal that the Holy Spirit is at work in religious others, applying the work of Christ to those who do not possess conscious faith in Christ.²³

PLURALISTS

Peter Hodgson

A recent proposal by Peter Hodgson, the Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology, Emeritus, in the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University, for a pluralistic theology of religions built upon pneumatology demonstrates the revisionism of biblical doctrines that is taking place in the quest to accommodate pluralistic sensibilities. Hodgson believes that “Spirit” is “a more universally available religious symbol” than “Christ” and should be embraced by Christians as the starting point for a theology of religions.²⁴

Jacques Dupuis

The Belgian-born Jesuit, Jacques Dupuis (1923-2004), articulated what he called a “theology of religious pluralism” that was intentionally Christocentric, so actually bears more in common with inclusivism than religious pluralism.²⁵ For Dupuis, that God saves those outside the Christian faith was axiomatic. He also believed that all salvation is ultimately through Christ, but not necessarily through the gospel. In the mystery of salvation, “every authentic experience of God, among Christians as among others, is an encounter of God in Jesus Christ with the human being.”²⁶ In other words, one experiences the salvation of God through Jesus Christ, but not necessarily through Christianity.²⁷ Dupuis turns to pneumatology to bridge the gap between the particularity of Christ and the cosmic salvific intentions of God manifest

in religious others. The experience of God in other religions is due to the "active presence and life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit."²⁸

Paul Knitter

Paul Knitter, former Divine Word missionary and Professor Emeritus of Theology at Xavier University, is perhaps the most influential Catholic voice in America on the topic of interreligious dialogue. Knitter calls his pluralistic schema, "theocentric Christology."²⁹ Jesus has a relational uniqueness (though not ontological) to God the Father compared to the significant figures in other religions, but he made no exclusive or normative claims, nor is his revelation of God definitive or normative in any sense. There may be other savior figures among the different religions.³⁰ In order for Knitter's theology of religions to be pluralistic and Christian, he turns to pneumatology. Knitter posits that the Holy Spirit is at work redemptively in the world, and neither his work, nor his person can be subordinated to the Son. Any commonalities between the ministries of the Son and the Spirit are the result of both the Son and Spirit having theocentric, yet independent, missions. This allows for significant discontinuities in the economies of the Son and the Spirit, while affirming continuity as each relates to God.³¹

Stanley Samartha

Samartha (1920–2001), an ordained Indian Methodist, was convinced that the ministry of the Holy Spirit could not be circumscribed within the ministry of Christ. A leading advocate of interreligious dialogue for the purposes of mutual theological instruction, Samartha insisted that there is evidence of the activity of the Holy Spirit in religious others, seeing continuity between the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ, the apostles, the Buddha, Muhammad, and perhaps even Gandhi, Marx, and Mao Tse Tung.³² Profitable interreligious dialogue is possible because of the mutual presence of the Spirit in the participants and the Spirit's work to

continually breathe life into the sacred writings of the different religions.³³

Georg Khodr

Georg Khodr grew up in Tripoli, Lebanon, studied theology in Paris, and was elected to the episcopate in 1970. Khodr long advocated taking the Spirit as the starting point for a theology of religions. Doing so allows one to discard the categories of exclusivism and inclusivism. Khodr's largest contribution to the theology of religions project came in his appeal to Irenaeus and the "two hands of God" metaphor to explain how the Son and Spirit can have distinct economies.³⁴ Using the metaphor as a platform, Khodr affirmed a "hypostatic independence" where the "advent of the Holy Spirit in the world is not subordinated to the Son, is not simply a function of the Word."³⁵

Different economies does not mean that there is division in the mind or purposes of God. The economies of the Son and Spirit are differing aspects of the mission of God to create the cosmos, sustain the cosmos, and redeem the cosmos. All redemptive work is unified in God, but whereas the existence and mission of the church is necessarily circumscribed by the economy of the Son, non-Christian religions are seen as arenas where the Spirit is at work redemptively. He applies the work of Christ through the contours of each religion, even when Christ is not named. He also illuminates the sacred texts of each religion in much the same way that he illuminates the Bible for the Christian.

EVANGELICALS

Inclusivism has established a powerful and growing presence in the evangelical church. Among the evangelical scholars that have proposed an inclusivist understanding of salvation are such notables as John Sanders, Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, Terrance Tiessen, Amos Yong, and the late Clark Pinnock and Stanley Grenz.³⁶ Because Pinnock's and Yong's inclusivistic models are more intentionally pneumatocentric, I will focus on

their proposals. Again, time does not permit a full description of their models, but I will highlight the salient points. Clark Pinnock and Amos Yong have provided the most developed investigations into the salvific role of the Holy Spirit outside the proclamation of the gospel, so their proposals will be explained in detail.

Clark Pinnock

Clark Pinnock (1937–2010), the long time professor of Systematic Theology at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, made his most significant contributions to the theology of religions debate in his books, *A Witness in God's Mercy* (1992),³⁷ his article “An Inclusive View,” in the edited volume *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (1995),³⁸ and his pneumatology monograph, *Flame of Love*, published in 1996.

The first axiom of Pinnock's theology of religions is an affirmation of the unbounded and universal love of God for the world. It was this love that led Pinnock to possess a general optimism for the salvation of the world. To Pinnock it was inconceivable that God would not love everybody equally or that he would be miserly in his invitation to salvation.³⁹ Responding to the claims of religious pluralists, Pinnock was unable to believe that the grace of God is limited to the confines of the church.⁴⁰

The second axiom of Pinnock's theology of religions is a high Christology. He was adamant that Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man. However, that does not mean that one needs to believe the gospel to be saved. For evidence, he pointed to the “pagan believers” such as Melchizedek and Job.

Pinnock referred to his hope for the salvation of the unevangelized as pneumatological inclusivism. He did not believe that one need possess conscious faith in Christ in order to enjoy redemption through Jesus. In Pinnock's view, it is highly probable that the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of those outside the church of Jesus Christ. God may

or may not use other religions to effect salvation through the Spirit based upon the work of Christ (modal inclusivism).

The role of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2) in creation is paradigmatic for the work that the Spirit performed throughout all of redemptive history and continues to this day. Creation establishes the omnipresence of the Spirit in the world. Having identified the unique role and work of the Holy Spirit in creation, Pinnock built on this foundation to claim that the Holy Spirit has never ceased to fill the singular role that he began at creation. Because the Spirit continues a like role in redemption, any attempt to subordinate his efforts to the Son is to dishonor the third member of the Trinity. He wrote, “Let us stop demoting the Spirit, relegating him to spheres of church and piety. His role in the creation is foundational to these other activities.... One does not properly defend the uniqueness of Jesus Christ by denying the Spirit's preparatory work that preceded his coming. Let us try to see continuity, not contradiction, in the relation of creation and redemption.”⁴¹

Predictably, Pinnock was highly critical of the *filioque* clause. Pinnock denied the reality of double procession because it subordinates the person and economic role of the Spirit to that of the Son and does not allow the relational autonomy necessary for the Spirit to fulfill his full range of creative and salvific work. Denying double procession allowed Pinnock to establish a measure of independence for the work of the Spirit from that of the Son.⁴²

Pinnock believed that the relationship between the Son and Spirit is reciprocal. He based this on the submission of the Son to the Spirit's guidance during the first advent. Because the Spirit was active in the world prior to the incarnation, led the Son during the first advent, and is not active in the world where Christ is not named, it makes more sense to see Christology in the context of the Spirit's global operations.⁴³ He employed Irenaeus's “two-hands of God” metaphor to create relative autonomy of the Spirit from the Son and called

for a pneumatocentric theological speculation: “Let us see what results from viewing Christ as an aspect of the Spirit’s mission, instead of (as is more usual) viewing Spirit as a function of Christ’s.”⁴⁴

With the Holy Spirit freed from a functional dependence on the Son, the Spirit is also freed from the constraints of the Son’s church. Pinnock explained, “Spirit is not confined to the church but is present everywhere, giving life and creating community.... Because Spirit works everywhere in advance of the church’s mission, preparing the way for Christ, God’s will can be truly and credibly universal.”⁴⁵ To Pinnock, the presence of the Spirit is always a presence of grace to bless and to save. General revelation and natural knowledge of God are always “gracious revelation and a potentially saving knowledge.”⁴⁶ Jesus may not be named in other faiths, but the Holy Spirit is still present and may be encountered there.⁴⁷ Because the work of the Spirit is always potentially salvific, Pinnock suggests that it is legitimate to look for redemptive activity in other religions.⁴⁸ Activity of the Spirit in religious others can be discerned on the basis of piety and accompanying Christ-like works.⁴⁹ Any suggestion that the work of the Spirit could be confined by boundaries established by the explicit proclamation of the Christian gospel is an artificial ecclesiastical construct and was offensive to Pinnock.

Pinnock explained the existence of world religions on the basis of the prevenient grace of the triune God, therefore world religions can play a part in redemptive history. This would include the Holy Spirit, whose activity can be seen in human culture and in the various religions of humanity.⁵⁰ Discerning the work of the Holy Spirit in religious others is difficult, but he ultimately calls for cognitive and ethical criteria. Does the person fear God? Are the fruit of the Spirit manifest in his life? One can tell where the Spirit is at work around the world when one finds people who look like Jesus; that is, they exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and an ethic that matches Jesus’ instruction on the kingdom.⁵¹ Therefore, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is not limited to Christians. This also sug-

gests that saving faith depends only ontologically on the work of Christ, not epistemologically.⁵²

Amos Yong

Amos Yong currently serves as the J. Rodman Williams Professor of Theology at the Regent University School of Divinity. Yong’s contributions to evangelical theology of religions began with *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*.⁵³ He continued to develop his position in *Beyond the Impasse; The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*; and more recently in *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*; and *The Cosmic Breath: Spirit and Nature in the Christianity-Buddhism-Science Trialogue*.⁵⁴

Yong’s Pentecostal background has made him particularly sensitive to the role of the Holy Spirit. He believes that a pneumatological theology of religions will reframe the soteriological question, by allowing serious regard for the person and work of Jesus, without subordinating that work to the church. When the redemptive work of the Spirit is not limited to the confines of the church, then the offer and application of salvation become available to those outside the reach of the church as well.⁵⁵

Yong is unconvinced by the primary proof texts of exclusivists (e.g., Acts 4:12; John 3:17-18; Rom 10:10-13). His conclusion is that the Bible is silent on the fate of the unevangelized and that exclusivism is properly a category that applies only to the evangelized.⁵⁶ But he is not satisfied with the typical arguments of inclusivists because they have a Christological starting point. The main point of religious others in such inclusivist systems is that they are non-Christian. This will be the case for any theology of religions that begins with Christological assumptions. But like Pinnock, Yong asks, “what if one begins with pneumatology rather than christology?”⁵⁷ The end result is that Yong wants to conduct a Christian investigation of other religions, not through

the lens of Christology, but of Pneumatology.

Yong recognizes that modifications to orthodox doctrines of the procession and mission of the Holy Spirit will have profound effects on virtually every other doctrine of Christian theology.⁵⁸ Wanting to emphasize the distinction between the economies of the Son and Spirit, he refuses to subordinate the role of the Spirit to the Son or the Son to the Spirit, but sees them overlapping dimensionally.⁵⁹ This has a two-fold impact on pneumatology: (1) it does not allow for the subordination of the work (or person) of the Spirit to the work (or person) of the Son and (2) it also allows a certain relational autonomy. The Spirit is not to be defined according to the Son, nor is the Son to be defined according to the Spirit.⁶⁰ Yong does not want to allow for any subordination of the Spirit to the Son because when the mission of the Spirit is subordinated to that of the Son, soteriology is defined ecclesialogically—salvation is limited to those who belong to the church of Jesus Christ.⁶¹

Like Pinnock, Yong's model is built on the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit to bless, who was poured out on all flesh, all humanity in a universalistic fashion, at Pentecost.⁶² At Pentecost, the Spirit was active in reversing the Tower of Babel curse, using language and culture. Since language and culture cannot be separated from religious life, the Spirit must be using the religions of the world as well. This does not mean that everything in all religions is good however. It does mean that the Spirit is working redemptively in the midst of them. Because the economies of the Son and Spirit are distinct but overlap, non-Christian faiths can be understood as "belonging to both economies, but in different respects. For starters then, it allows that they be conceived in pneumatological terms, related but not subordinated to or redefined by the economy of the Word."⁶³ Yong is unable to say specifically how the Spirit works in the context of religious others, but he is certain that the Spirit is at work in some sense:

I think it is undeniable that the possible experience of the divine apart from an explicit knowledge of Christ supports the contention that there is an experience of the Spirit that is not explicitly christological. The ancient Israelite experience of Yahweh was certainly mediated by the Holy Spirit, whom they recognized only as the "divine breath." Can we be so certain that present day Jewish and Muslim experience of the divine is not that of the Holy Spirit?⁶⁴

To discern the work of the Spirit in religious others, Yong turns to praxis over doctrine because a pneumatological approach is "much better able to account for the diversity of beliefs that are linked to and shaped by different social, moral, and religious practices."⁶⁵ Establishing criteria is difficult and Yong cautions against either importing criteria that are established by other religions or exporting a Christian set of norms in the mutual evaluation of human religious experience. Yong therefore sees a dialogue between Christianity and other religions as necessary to establish "complex and sophisticated descriptive categories" in order to "respect the importances and the particularities of the different traditions ... which emerge during the course of interreligious engagement."⁶⁶ The sophistication that Yong calls for is exemplified with regard to the development of Christian Scripture. On the basis of the Bible's complex and variegated history, Yong rejects the idea that the sacred writings of religious others are not inspired by God and are therefore not revelatory.⁶⁷

This Spirit-given ability manifests itself in the Christian evangelist who must "convert" to other religions, which is necessary for authentic dialogue. Yong describes conversion as an attitudinal change that occurs when the testimony of a religious other is taken seriously.⁶⁸ Conversion is predicated on the workings of the Spirit of God, therefore, "conversion to other faiths enabled by the Spirit will not contradict or compromise our commitment to Christ" because religious conversion "will emphasize the need to be led by and

to discern the Spirit in and through the dynamic process of encounter with those in other faiths.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, Yong is convinced that Christians can learn from religious others. Just as Christians have learned from the findings of science over the centuries and have adjusted their theology in light of those findings, so Christians should be open to adjusting their theology in light of the “dynamically reconstituting” religions of the world. To refuse to do so will deny Christians the ability to formulate a “Christian theology for the twenty-first century.”⁷⁰

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

What does one do with the inclusivist and pluralist models outlined above? In order to posit an independent salvific work of the Holy Spirit apart from the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, a radical change in perspective in theological method is required. Pinnock summarizes this best by suggesting, “Let us see what results from viewing Christ as an aspect of the Spirit’s mission, instead of (as is more usual) viewing Spirit as a function of Christ’s.”⁷¹ The question before us is whether such a change in perspective is permissible. Is reading Scripture pneumatocentrically a legitimate option or is the Bible to be read Christocentrically?

Pinnock claims that “it lies within the freedom of theology to experiment with ideas.”⁷² But is such freedom actually permitted? Is theological inquiry and formulation a free-play where the only boundaries are those of the theologian’s imagination, or are there limits arising from the nature of the discipline itself and its subject matter? The development of any theological doctrine necessitates the justification of the resulting claims and conclusions. In other words, the theological method of a theologian is implicitly on trial with every proposal. When the object of investigation is Scripture, then it is incumbent on the interpreter to follow the lead of the Bible itself.

Pneumatological inclusivism rests upon a theological method that demands that Scripture be read through a pneumatological lens; but is this

legitimate? Can redemptive history be seen and understood accurately in this light? I believe that it is illegitimate to begin theological formulation with the universal work of the Spirit. It is speculative and illegitimate to view Christ “as an aspect of the Spirit’s mission,” because it ignores the categories, structure, and plot of the Bible. Furthermore, it runs contrary to the way that Jesus Himself and His apostles have told us to read Scripture. Pneumatological inclusivism fails because it has been developed from an unwarranted and illegitimate theological method; that is, it fails on biblical-theological grounds. In short, it violates the way that Christ instructed us to read Scripture.

THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Biblical theology involves the study of the history of God’s dealings with his creation.⁷³ As such, it traces the outworking of God’s plan for the redemption of his creation through his interaction with his people.⁷⁴ This plan for redemption is played out in a series of divine acts. Special revelation records the divine speech acts of God, which includes both commands and interpretations of historical acts. It is stating the obvious that the sourcebook of biblical theology is the Bible,⁷⁵ but this truth entails a necessary understanding of the supernatural revelation contained therein.

According to Geerhardus Vos, a pioneer in the area of biblical theology, the first characteristic feature of supernatural revelation is its historical progress. Truth does not come to us as a static entity, rather, it is dynamic. The dynamic nature of divine revelation suggests that there is a movement forward which Vos believes the Bible self-identifies as the redemption of creation:

It constitutes a part of that great process of the new creation through which the present universe as an organic whole shall be redeemed from the consequences of sin and restored to its ideal state, which it had originally in the intention of God.... As soon as we realize that revelation is at almost every point interwoven with and conditioned by

the redeeming activity of God in its wider sense, and together with the latter connected with the natural development of the present world, its historic character becomes perfectly intelligible and ceases to cause surprise.⁷⁶

It therefore follows that the degree to which one misunderstands the structure of the biblical plot, is the degree to which one's exegesis will be inaccurate. Vos understands special revelation to be inseparable from the activity of God which he calls redemption. "Now redemption could not be other than historically successive, because it addresses itself to the generations of mankind coming into existence in the course of history. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in installments as redemption does."⁷⁷

Finally, divine revelation is organic. Each subsequent increase in revelation consisted in the unfolding of what was germinally there in the beginning of revelation. "So dispensation grows out of dispensation, and the newest is but the fully expanded flower of the oldest."⁷⁸ Because there is a progress to revelation which moves toward a divine end, it follows that there is a consistent theme or actor in this divine drama.⁷⁹ For Vos, the central character in this drama is Jesus Christ:

Hence from the beginning all redeeming acts of God aim at the creation and introduction of this new organic principle, which is none other than Christ. All Old Testament redemption is but the saving activity of God working toward the realization of this goal, the great supernatural prelude to the Incarnation and the Atonement. And Christ having appeared as the head of the new humanity and having accomplished His atoning work, the further renewal of the kosmos is effected through an organic extension of His power in ever widening circles.⁸⁰

Pneumatological inclusivists and pluralists ignore the purposive nature of redemptive his-

tory as given in Scripture. As will be demonstrated in the next section, it is illegitimate to begin with the universal work of the Spirit apart from the work of Christ because it ignores the categories, structure, and plot of the Bible. Jesus Christ is not only the one who reveals God to us. He is the very Word of God (John 1:1, 18; 6:46; 14:9). Because Scripture testifies to Jesus Christ and is inspired by his Spirit (2 Pet 1:16-21), even the nature of the telling of the redemptive story demands a close connection between Christology and Pneumatology.

The very idea of seeing the work of Christ through a pneumatological lens runs contrary to the way that Jesus told us to read Scripture (Luke 24:24-27; Matt 5:17; John 5:39-40). As I have written elsewhere:

The twenty-fourth chapter of Luke records two critical teachings by the Lord Jesus Christ on the nature of Scripture. Following His resurrection, Jesus Christ walked with two disciples who did not recognize him. Responding to Cleopas and his companion who were troubled over the events of the recent days, Jesus called them "unwise and slow" to believe in their hearts "all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). The use of the word "unwise" does not carry the sense of "moronic" in this context, but of "obtuse." The disciples were "slow of heart" because they did not understand the redemptive purposes of God. With this statement, Jesus laid claim to being the center of the biblical prophetic ministry. He then seized the opportunity, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets," to interpret to them "the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (24:27). Though we are not told which passages Jesus interpreted for His listeners, from Luke's perspective it does not matter. The ministries and teachings of Moses and all the prophets, just as all the Scriptures, point toward Christ and His glory through suffering. The two disciples had to have the Scriptures interpreted for them because they did not read them correctly.

In Luke 24:36–49, Jesus joined a larger gathering of disciples and taught them the same lesson. In v. 44, Christ claimed that His ministry was the focal point of “the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (metonymy for the entire Old Testament and its tripartite division). Just as Jesus opened the eyes of the two disciples so that they could recognize Him in v. 31, so in v. 45, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” The parallel establishes that one sees and understands Scripture correctly when one sees and recognizes Christ as pervasive throughout. Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but He is also the central figure in a divine drama that dominates all of human history. This is demonstrated by Christ’s statement “This is what is written: the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (24:46–47). The use of the term “what is written” (*gegraptai*) indicates that Jesus is referring back to the Old Testament. Jesus’ statement, however, was not an explicit quotation of any biblical passage, but was the implicit teaching of the entire Old Testament. The correct reading of Scripture, therefore, is not merely an academic exercise. Jesus claimed that the center and focus of the whole Scriptures was the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through the work of the Messiah.

That the disciples understood this hermeneutical principle is evident from gospel proclamation in the book of Acts. Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14–41 concludes, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah” (2:36). Peter did not arrive at this conclusion based upon naked assertion from the Old Testament texts to which he referred. But when the Old Testament is interpreted in the manner prescribed and modeled by Christ, then the Scriptures point in concert

toward Christ. Toward the end of Acts, Paul summarizes his preaching ministry as “saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23 ESV).⁸¹

Jesus himself drives us back to the Old Testament to read it through a Christological lens, teaching us that it will lead us back to him. We must read the Bible in the manner in which it specifies that we read it.⁸²

I have argued to this point that pneumatological inclusivists and pluralists such as Pinnock and Yong, fundamentally misunderstand the nature of redemptive history and its Christocentric focus. A theology of religions which is pneumatic in character must be grounded in a proper biblical theological understanding of the relationship of the Son and the Spirit. As will be demonstrated below, pneumatological inclusivists’ and pluralists’ theologies of the Spirit are flawed because they disregard the relationship between the Son and the Spirit as played out in special revelation and redemptive history.

The methodology that controls my biblical theology of the Holy Spirit is structured around three essential guidelines.

First, there is the full authority and ontological uniqueness of Scripture. The authority of the Bible is inextricably tied to its divine origin. The Bible alone is the written self-revelation and self-expression of an all-authoritative God. Apart from the Spirit’s movement in the human authors, Scripture can make no legitimate claim to divine authority. Some pneumatological inclusivists affirm the Spirit’s role in Scripture’s authority but seek to move the seat of authority from ontology to utility; that is, Scripture is authoritative because of what it does rather than what it is. For some inclusivists and pluralists, inspiration of the text is best defined by the Spirit breathing life into that text (what they are doing is conflating illumination

with inspiration). This allows them to posit that the Spirit, who is universally present, continually breathes life into the sacred texts of other religions. When this is done, there is no qualitative difference between the words of the Bible and the Qur'an or Gita.

Second, we must posit a biblical theology that is canonical. Scripture comes with its own themes and categories, indeed an entire storyline. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Bible is pre-theoretical. Scripture provides both the forms and the content for its own interpretation. When addressing typically systematic issues such as the role of the Holy Spirit in culture and world religions or the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit, our theological paradigm and method must be dependent upon the content of Scripture that the theological inquiry is seeking to illumine. Closely related to the concept of biblical theology, evangelical theology must be self-consciously canonical. If redemptive history constitutes the organizing structure of Scripture, then theological inquiry must reflect that structure by reading any text of Scripture across the canon in that context. Theological affirmations can only be said to be Christian to the degree that they take into consideration the contours and turning points of redemptive history. As I have written elsewhere:

The problem with the methodologies of pneumatological inclusivists such as Yong and Pinnock is that they effectively treat the Bible as pre-theoretical, ignoring the form, content, and themes given in Scripture for doing theology, seeking to provide their own. Pinnock seeks to "view Christ as an aspect of the Spirit's mission" and explains that "it lies within the freedom of theology to experiment with ideas." This would be fine except that the Spirit-inspired Scriptures do not allow for that theological framework. The theologian cannot mine the Bible as if it were a sterile source book for theological construction, looking to find answers to a set of questions that arise out of the ambient cultural climate. Rather,

the "interpretive matrix should be the interpretive matrix of the Scriptures" and "the structures of systematic theology ought to mirror in some important way the structure of biblical theology. The theological framework ought to be linked to the actual structure of the biblical text itself and not merely to the content of the Bible."⁸³

It is illegitimate to suggest that the theologian, the church, or the interpretive community can claim relative autonomy in determining a theological framework. Prolegomena does not stand apart from the authority of Scripture. It is not on a different epistemological category from the theology that comes from it. The biblical texts, to which the theologian is beholden, do not stand in isolation from one another, but are organically linked. Yong and Pinnock err at this point because they are guilty of ignoring the organic unity of the text, thereby tearing the fabric of Scripture.⁸⁴

Third, we must utilize a biblical theology that is Christocentric. If theology must follow the structure of redemptive history, and the apex of redemptive history is Jesus Christ, it follows that theology should be Christocentric. All things in Scripture point to Christ and Christ is the hermeneutical principle given by Christ himself. This does not mean that the exegete should attempt to find Jesus in every verse of the Old Testament by virtue of his imagination or creative interpretive skill. What it does mean is that Jesus, in obedience to his instruction, is himself the hermeneutical key to understand both the Old and New Testaments.⁸⁵ Because Scripture is structured around redemptive history, of which Christ is the apex, our understanding of the stories of Moses and Abraham and Adam, or any other critical actors in redemptive history, will also be "greatly impoverished" if we fail to relate them to Christ.

A BRIEF CHRISTOCENTRIC BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He gathered His disciples and told them that He would

soon be sending the Spirit to them. Jesus explained, “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13–14). I am convinced that Jesus was identifying the role of the Holy Spirit, not just in the lives of the apostles or the church age, but throughout all of redemptive history. What follows will be an altogether too-brief presentation of a proper biblical theology of the Holy Spirit that is faithful to the Bible’s presentation of the text and is therefore Christocentric.

CREATION

Genesis 1:2, in the creation narrative, recounts that the ruach elohim was already present “hovering over the face of the waters.” This implies that God’s spirit had been involved in his works from the very beginning, establishing the cosmic order.⁸⁶ The activity of the Spirit in creation is fundamental to the biblical narrative because it establishes the active role of the Spirit in redemptive history. Creation is the beginning of God’s interaction with creation (redemptive history), not simply the beginning.⁸⁷ This is evident from Ezekiel 39:29 where the manifestation of the Spirit is promised “with a view to fulfilling a variety of goals in redemptive history.”⁸⁸

What is of special significance is that from the very beginning, there is a close association of the Spirit and the Word of God. In the creation narrative, God’s Spirit is active as God speaks. The link between Spirit and Word is very evident with the prophets, particularly Moses (e.g. Num 11:17–29; 24:2). The link is sometimes only hinted at (as when Jeremiah argues in 5:13 that the prophets are nothing but wind and the breath of the Lord is not in them) but this reference only reinforces the necessary link between Word and Spirit.⁸⁹ Psalm 33:6 summarizes well the close relation between the Word and Spirit in creation.⁹⁰ The New Testament writers interpret the Genesis narrative’s

record of the activity of the divine Word in creation as a recognition of the preeminence of the Son of God in creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1–3).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:15–17. cf. Heb 1:1–4).

It is precisely at this point, the creation narrative, that Pinnock illegitimately separates the Word from the Spirit, ignoring the cooperative roles of both the Spirit and the Son together. Pinnock affirms the work of the Son in creation in the sense that the Son is the pinnacle or archetype of creation—the differentiation between Father and Son serves as the space for creation.⁹¹ He affirms the role of the Spirit in creation—the Holy Spirit is the life-giving force. But in these dual affirmations there is a duality of purposes. Pinnock utilizes the role of the Spirit in creation, relatively autonomous from the Son, to justify the same autonomy of role in the Spirit’s action in redemptive history from that point on. But the affirmation of such a duality is illegitimate. The works of the Word and Spirit are irreducibly linked. There is no work of the Son in creation apart from the Spirit and there is no work of the Spirit in creation apart from the Son. This is the biblical teaching, but the interrelationship between the two is severed in Pinnock’s model.

SPECIAL EMPOWERMENT

Just as redemption is progressively revealed in the history of Israel, so the work of the Spirit is

also progressively revealed. A second pneumatological Old Testament theme is that of special empowerment. From the patriarchs to the high point of the monarchy in Solomon, the Spirit's work is primarily a special endowment granted to God's chosen people for the purpose of mediating God's salvation, in all its various manifestations and driving redemptive history toward its appointed end in Jesus Christ.⁹²

There are approximately sixty references to the work of the Holy Spirit in approximately a hundred individuals in the Old Testament. These occurrences are commonly broken into four categories of people: The Holy Spirit came upon craftsmen, civic leaders, judges, and prophets. In each case, the primary purposes of God in the sending of the Spirit are concurrent and synergistic: the protection and care for the chosen people of God and the active guiding of redemptive history toward the incarnation, cross, and the consummation of all things.

CRAFTSMEN

The first category of Spirit-empowered individual is the craftsman. Bezalel was "appointed by name" by the Lord who "filled him with God's Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every craft" (Exod 31:2-3). To Bezalel was given the task of making those items described to Moses by the Lord Himself. But Bezalel was not merely making beautiful things. He was designing and crafting the tabernacle—the center of Israelite religious, political, and social life. The implements of worship were "copies of the things in the heavens" (Heb 9:23), placed in a sanctuary that was "a model of the true one" (Heb 9:24). All these things were meant to teach the people of Israel of a higher reality: the one who "appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:26). The Holy Spirit uniquely gifted Bezalel to create artifacts that would serve to point the people of God to Jesus Christ. Far from asserting a relative autonomy from the Son, this empowerment of the Holy Spirit was working toward the glorification of the Son.⁹³

JUDGES

The active role of Spirit as the instrument of salvation history is most apparent with the judges. With the judges, the Spirit came upon men at critical junctures in salvation history to rescue Israel in order to further God's grand redemptive purposes—leaving no doubt that the Lord was at work to save his people according to his plan the Spirit, (e.g. Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).. Empowerment of the judges was not an arbitrary, independent, or ad hoc activity. Rather, the Spirit was driving redemptive history toward the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the glorification of the Son.

CIVIL RULERS

There are four individuals specified in the Old Testament as uniquely empowered by the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of governing and leading the people of Israel: Moses (Num 11:17–29), Joshua (Num 27:18; Deut 34:9), Saul (1 Sam 11:6; 16:14), and David (1 Sam 16:13; Ps 51:11).

⁹⁴ An important category of Spirit involvement in redemptive history is the role of the Spirit in the Davidic line and monarchy. David is seen as a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:13). The close association of Spirit with David at his anointing ("and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam 16:13)) points to both the continuity of Spirit empowerment with the past (cf. 1 Sam 11:6) and the uniqueness of David as the forerunner of the Spirit-anointed Messiah.

When we consider the place of this account in redemptive history, it is evident that the work of the Spirit was necessary to save the people of God. Because of the role of the Spirit in the lives of Saul and David, it is clear that the monarchy was not a merely human institution, but its efficacy rested in the ministrations and power of the Spirit of God. The salvation of Israel, through the Spirit-empowered work of the first kings, was absolutely necessary for the plot line of redemptive history to advance and the Messianic line

to continue. The monarchy, more than just the human choice of a fickle people, established, through the Spirit, a throne upon which the coming Christ would reign. David, far more than a godly man and great king, was established by the work of the Spirit as a type of the one whose reign would endure forever (2 Sam 7:8–17).

PROPHETS

The Holy Spirit was especially identified with the prophets who were filled with the Spirit of God. The prophecy in the Old Testament about the Spirit focuses on the saving deeds of God and in the human agents upon whom the Spirit will rest to carry out these deeds. Centrality is given to the Messiah, the one anointed by the Spirit of God to save finally the people of God and effect lasting change, ushering in the final age.⁹⁵ Isaiah records two major prophecies of the Spirit-filled Messiah:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor; and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. (Isa 11:1-5)

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isa 61:1-2a)

The Holy Spirit is the one who heralds the coming of the future world which is ruled by Messiah—the Spirit-anointed. It is the Spirit who inaugurates and introduces that age.⁹⁶ The Holy Spirit is also the source of the future new life. The Spirit becomes characteristic of the eschatological state itself.⁹⁷ In Rabbinic theology the role of the Messiah with respect to the Spirit is broadened. He is not merely the Spirit-anointed, but the one through whom the Spirit will be communicated to others. The Messiah pours out on men the Spirit of grace, so that henceforth they walk in the ways of God.

INCARNATION

The gospels offer a record of the coming of the Messianic King. Jesus is the one to whom the biblical story had been pointing from its beginning pages (e.g. Gen 3:15; 12:1-3; 49:8-12). It is also Jesus who fulfills the promise of Messiah—the Spirit-anointed par excellence—the supreme bearer of the Spirit.

It is no mere tautology to state that it was not by virtue of the deity of Jesus, but rather by the anointing of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was the Christ. The essential interrelationship of pneumatology and Christology is evident in every aspect of Jesus' life. The birth and conception of Jesus is attributed to the power of Spirit (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35).⁹⁸ In the second chapter of Luke, Jesus in his boyhood is said to be “filled with wisdom” (2:40) while the temple teachers are “amazed at his understanding” (2:47). Wisdom and understanding are prophesied as characteristic of the Spirit-filled Messiah in Isaiah 11:2. The Spirit-baptism of Jesus, where the “Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove” (Luke 3:22) is prominently recorded in all four gospels. Immediately after his baptism, Jesus, full of the Spirit, “was led up by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1). Jesus even inaugurates his ministry in Nazareth by reading of the Spirit-anointed Messiah in Isaiah 61:1-2.

The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role in the

ministry of Jesus. The healing power of Jesus is attributed to Spirit empowerment (Matt 12:15-21). Jesus communes and fellowships with the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:17-21). The Father demonstrates his love for his Son by lavishing the Spirit upon him “without measure” (John 3:34-35). The gospels make numerous references to the *dunamis* and *exousia* of Christ which Hawthorne argues is implicit reference to the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus.⁹⁹ Hebrews 9:13-14 links the atoning death of Christ to the Holy Spirit. Finally, the testimony of the New Testament writers attributes the resurrection of Jesus to the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4; 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; cf. Ezek 37:13-14).

It is the explicit testimony of Scripture that Jesus has revealed the Father to us. But it is also evident that Jesus has revealed the Holy Spirit to us as well.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most important aspect of the pneumatological character of Christ’s ministry is the revelation and sending of the Spirit. The major aspects of the Spirit’s church-age mission (convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; guidance into truth; and glorifying the Son) provided by Jesus in John 15:26-16:15 are all specifically related to the ministry and authority of the Son.¹⁰¹

Clearly there is a strong relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus.¹⁰² But Jesus’ teaching on the Spirit reaches beyond the incarnation. Jesus establishes a Christocentric nature to the mission of the Spirit that extends into the age of the Church and beyond.

CHURCH AGE

The work of the Spirit in the Church age continues the story of redemption without alteration to the interdependence of the roles between Spirit and Son. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead his disciples into all truth. Because Jesus Christ is himself the truth, the role of the Spirit is to lead others to, testify of, and glorify him (John 16:3; 14:6; and 16:14 respectively). An implicit, if not explicit tie could be made with the Spirit’s role in inspiration with the testimony of Jesus.¹⁰³

The Spirit is the guarantee of the inheritance that all who hope in Jesus will receive (Eph 1:12-14). The giving of the inheritance entails that believers are made joint heirs with Jesus (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6). Those who are “in Christ Jesus” are to walk “according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:1-2). On the other hand, those who willfully sin “spurn the Son of God” and “outrage the Spirit” (Heb 10:29). In fact the entire goal of sanctification, which is an act of the Spirit, is to be transformed into the image of Christ (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 John 3:2). How close is the relationship between Son and Spirit in apostolic writing? The identity of the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:11, 2 Cor 3:17).

The preaching of the gospel for salvation is performed through the power of the Spirit (Rom 15:19; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Pet 1:12). But what is the gospel? What are its priorities? While it is true that the Spirit gives faith, new birth, testifies to our hearts about Christ, and sanctifies those who love the Lord, these aspects of the Spirit’s work in salvation are not the gospel. They are rather the fruit of the work of Christ, albeit a work that Jesus was Spirit-empowered to perform. But make no mistake, the gospel is thoroughly Christocentric (1 Cor 15:3-6).

THE PROLEPTIC WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A unifying theme within the Bible is new creation or regeneration. Since the fall, God has been in the process of restoring creation. This restoration has been enacted on the stage of history, playing out the divine drama of redemptive history. The Holy Spirit has a revelatory role to play in this drama. This is apparent from 1 Corinthians 2:12-13. Scripture teaches that the primary sphere of the Holy Spirit in the believer is the eschatological—that is, as the Spirit works in us, he is moving us toward what we shall one day be perfectly.¹⁰⁴

In the New Testament, the possession of the Holy Spirit is the sign of acceptance from God, of participation in the privileges of the Christian state (Acts 10:45-47). Of primary importance in New Testament theology, and indeed in the

experience of believers, is the doctrine of resurrection. Those who participate in Christ are partakers of regeneration, re-creation, and look forward to the resurrection (1 Cor 5:17; 15:12-49; Rom 6:4-11). Paul makes clear that the resurrection is no small part of the Christian life—it is essential! If there is no resurrection of the dead, Paul’s teaching is false and the lives, let alone the truth claims, of Christians are laughable (1 Cor 15:14-19). But the Spirit is given to the believer as a firstfruit—an anchor of the soul—to guarantee perseverance and bolster hope of what will happen (Rom 8:19-25).

Christ has been raised from the dead and the renewal, sanctification, and resurrection of the believer shares a vital connection to what was transacted in Christ. Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have died (1 Cor 15:20). As the resurrected Lord he becomes the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45). This latter point is instructive because it brings full circle the entire redemptive story. As was demonstrated above, a primary role of the Spirit in the Old Testament is that of life giver. In the end, the interrelationship of Son and Spirit is reaffirmed by the declaration of Jesus Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

An important implication of this relationship is that to be joined to the Lord is to be one Spirit with him (1 Cor 6:17). If the spiritual life of the believer shares in the spiritual life of Jesus Christ, then “it must to some extent partake of the eschatological character of the latter.”¹⁰⁵ Because it was the Spirit who was the instrumental cause in the resurrection act, the Spirit is also the permanent ground of the resurrection life. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the very one that keeps, empowers, and will one day raise the believer (Rom 8:9-11, 2 Cor 13:4).¹⁰⁶

This interrelationship cannot be severed. To overemphasize the role of the Spirit to the detriment of the Son because of the Spirit’s personal, empowering interaction with the believer is to ignore biblical teaching, the redemptive story, the gospel, and eschatological promises.¹⁰⁷

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to demonstrate that the current proposals for a theology of religions that separate, even cautiously, the works of the Son and the Spirit do not have biblical or theological warrant. The exegesis and theology of such pneumatological inclusivists and pluralists are fallacious because the methodology is fatally flawed. In particular, I have argued, first, it is illegitimate to begin with the universal and non-particular love of God (a dubious doctrine to begin with), propose the Spirit of God as the hope of salvation, and then begin reading Scripture searching for an independent pneumatic role and movement. To do so is to break the rules for reading Scripture provided by Jesus himself; distort the redemptive-historical drama; and ignore the Son-Spirit relationship established and argued from beginning to end of the Bible.

Second, Scripture makes no allowance for the bifurcation of ontology and epistemology in the work of Christ. Inclusivists seek to affirm the work of Christ as the only means of salvation while denying that one need consciously know of him to be saved, hoping that the Spirit can effect a work of salvation in the unevangelized. But Scripture gives no warrant for this hope. The Son-Spirit interrelationship is integral to the fabric of biblical theology.

Third, it is illegitimate to look for fruit to discern the work of the Spirit amongst people where Jesus is not known. Resurrection and regeneration in Christ is the basis for the same in the believer. There is irreducible continuity between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the believer. There is irreducible continuity between the spiritual and resurrection life of the believer and the God-man Jesus Christ because it is the Spirit of Jesus who indwells and empowers believers.

The burden of this article has been to demonstrate that the role of the Holy Spirit described by Jesus Christ in John 16:14, that the Spirit would glorify the Son, is representative of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit always seeks to glorify the Son. In denying

this, pneumatological inclusivism and pluralism fails on Christological grounds and ultimately, ironically, distorts pneumatology.

ENDNOTES

¹ For a defense of the use of this taxonomy and discussion of the alternatives, see *A God of Many Understandings?*, 16-20.

² Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians* 3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 80.

³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.24.1, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

⁴ Cyprian, *The Epistles of Cyprian* 61.4, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 358. This statement comes in a discourse on whether to allow back into the church those women who had made a vow of chastity who were subsequently found in the same bed with a man but had maintained their chastity.

⁵ C. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 188.

⁶ Pius IX, *Singulari Quidem: On the Church in Austria* (17 March 1856) [cited 23 September 2004]. Online: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9singul.htm>.

⁷ Pius IX, *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* (10 August 1863), [cited 23 September 2004]. Online: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanto.htm>.

⁸ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* [cited 23 September 2004]. Online: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi_en.html.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) [cited 4 February 2013]. Online: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See *Lumen Gentium; Ad Gentes Divinitus* 7.

¹³ *Lumen Gentium* 15.

¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

¹⁵ There are some exceptions. For example, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, given in 1975 by Pope Paul VI, there is an explicit statement of the necessity of belief in the gospel for salvation. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 5 [cited 10 September

2004]. Online: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Hominis* (Rome: 4 March 1979), 11-19. The Latin title means, "Redeemer of Man."

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (12 December 1990), 28-29. The Latin title means "Mission of the Redeemer."

¹⁸ *Dialogue and Proclamation: Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples* (Rome: 19 May 1991) [cited 21 August 2004]. Online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html.

¹⁹ Ibid. This is a quotation taken from John Paul II's address to the Roman Curia after the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in January 2002. It was the second such gathering of religious leaders (the first being in October, 1986) from around the globe representing many different faiths and traditions. John Paul was convinced that the basis for calling an inter-faith day of prayer is the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all those who seek God with sincerity.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ In an elaboration on *Gaudium et Spes*, 22, the *Dialogue* reads, Individuals may "have already responded implicitly to God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, a sign of this being the sincere practice of their own religious traditions, insofar as these contain authentic religious values. They may have already been touched by the Spirit and in some way associated unknowingly to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ." Ibid., 68. The impact of Roman Catholic teaching on both non-evangelical and evangelical proponents of pneumatological inclusivism is unquestionably large. In a paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in 2002, Clark Pinnock dedicated a significant portion of his address to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II. Approximately one-fifth of the paper discussed the teaching of the Catholic Church during the papacy

- of John Paul II. C. H. Pinnock, "Religious Pluralism: A Turn to the Holy Spirit" (paper prepared for the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Toronto, Ontario, November 2002) [cited 15 September 2004]. Online: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/mjtm/5-4.htm>.
- ²⁴P. Hodgson, "The Spirit and Religious Pluralism," *Horizons* 31 (2004): 22.
- ²⁵J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997).
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 147.
- ²⁷ Dupuis writes, "Apart from Christianity, God encounters human beings in Christ, but the human face of God remains unknown. In Christianity, God encounters women and men in the human face of the human Jesus, who reflects for us the very image of the Father. While every religion contains an approach to the human being on the part of God, in Christianity God's advance toward the human being becomes fully human." *Ibid.*, 150.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, 152. Dupuis's turn to pneumatology had implications at the most basic level of revelation. Though he was hesitant to grant equal status with the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Canon, the sacred texts of religious others are still the word of God, they are inspired, and they are holy Scripture because of the work of the Spirit. *Ibid.*, 176.
- ²⁹P. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 171-204.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 205.
- ³¹P. F. Knitter, "Can Our 'One and Only' also be a 'One Among Many'? A Response to Responses," in *Uniqueness of Jesus* (ed. L. Swidler and P. Mojzes; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 182.
- ³²S. J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Relationships* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 65.
- ³³*Ibid.*, 74.
- ³⁴For a critique of non-evangelical and evangelical appeals to Irenaeus and his "two-hands" metaphor to attempt bring the weight of church history to their inclusivist proposals, see Todd Miles, "Irenaeus in the Hands of Soteriological Inclusivists: Validation or Tendentious Historiography?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 2 (2008): 4-17.
- ³⁵G. Khodr, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World—The Economy of the Holy Spirit," *Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971): 126.
- ³⁶S. J. Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31 (1994): 49-65; V. Kärkkäinen, "Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions," *International Review of Mission* 91 (2002): 187-98; J. Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); T. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). See also M. J. Erickson, "Hope for Those Who Haven't Heard? Yes, But . . ." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11 (1975): 124; *idem*, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).
- ³⁷C. H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).
- ³⁸C. H. Pinnock, "Inclusivist View," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (ed. D. L. Ockholm and T. R. Phillips; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 95-123.
- ³⁹Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 154.
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 15.
- ⁴¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 63.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, 196. For a thorough critique of the inclusivist call for a rejection of the *filioque*, see T. L. Miles, "Severing the Spirit from the Son: Theological Revisionism in Contemporary Theologies of Salvation," (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 134-51.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, 82.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 80.
- ⁴⁵Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 192. See also *idem*, "Inclusivist View," 102.
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 204.
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 210-11.
- ⁵⁰Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 104.

- ⁵¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 209–11.
- ⁵²Ibid., 195.
- ⁵³A. Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2000).
- ⁵⁴A. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); idem, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); idem, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue, Does the Spirit Blow through the Middle Way?* Studies in Systematic Theology 11 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012); idem, *The Cosmic Breath: Spirit and Nature in the Christianity-Buddhism-Science Trialogue*, Philosophical Studies in Science & Religion 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012). Unfortunately, the publication dates of the latter two books did not allow for timely interaction by the completion of this article.
- ⁵⁵Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 21.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., 25.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., 27.
- ⁵⁸Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 57. Yong lists God's saving grace and love, the character of the kingdom of God, and Christian evangelism and missions, among others.
- ⁵⁹Ibid., 62.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., 69.
- ⁶¹Ibid., 64.
- ⁶²A. Yong, "A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World," *Missiology* 23 (2005): 177.
- ⁶³Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, 62.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., 68.
- ⁶⁵Yong, "A P(new)matological Paradigm," 179.
- ⁶⁶Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 173.
- ⁶⁷Ibid., 181.
- ⁶⁸Ibid.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., 183.
- ⁷⁰Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 240. Yong also appeals to the infinitude of God, who cannot be "exhaustively conveyed in finite time and words" to justify learning from religious others. Ibid.
- ⁷¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 80.
- ⁷²Ibid. Yong also desires to do much the same thing with his foundational pneumatology. See, for example, Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 58-74.
- ⁷³My understanding of biblical theology would be identified as "BT2" under the taxonomy of biblical-theological proposals in Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).
- ⁷⁴J. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 207.
- ⁷⁵Cf. the summary of BT1 and James Barr in Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 29-56.
- ⁷⁶G. Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. R. Gaffin; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 8.
- ⁷⁷Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 5-6.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., 11.
- ⁷⁹Michael S. Horton argues this point very persuasively in *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 99-120.
- ⁸⁰Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology," 12.
- ⁸¹Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 262-264.
- ⁸²G. Goldsworthy comments, "In doing biblical theology as Christians, we do not start at Genesis 1 and work our way forward until we discover where it is leading. Rather we first come to Christ, and he directs us to study the Old Testament in the light of the gospel. The gospel will interpret the Old Testament by showing us its goal and meaning. The Old Testament will increase our understanding of the gospel by showing us what Christ fulfills." Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 55.
- ⁸³Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 270-71.
- ⁸⁴Miles, *A God of Many Understandings*, 272-73.
- ⁸⁵Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 31.
- ⁸⁶Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, (Downers

Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 19.

⁸⁷Ferguson writes, "What is of interest is that the activity of the divine *ruach* is precisely that of extending God's presence into creation in such a way as *to order and complete what has been planned in the mind of God.*" Ibid., 21.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 17.

⁹⁰Eichrodt notes that the association of the spirit of life with the creative word asserts the sovereignty of God over the dominant forces of nature: "It is, therefore as the possessor of the spirit of life that God utters the creative word." W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, (trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:48.

⁹¹Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 58-63.

⁹²Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 214. See also Morris A. Inch, *Saga of the Spirit: A Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Theology of the Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 32.

⁹³Miles, *A God of Many Understandings*, 286.

⁹⁴Ibid., 288.

⁹⁵Isa 11:1-10; 28:5; 42:1; 59:21; 61:1

⁹⁶Joel 3:1ff.

⁹⁷Isa 32:15-17; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29.

⁹⁸The language of Luke 1:35 seems to be an intentional attempt to remind the reader of creation where the Spirit hovered over the waters: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

⁹⁹G. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word, 1991), 154-60.

¹⁰⁰See Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 29.

¹⁰¹Ferguson notes the Christocentric nature of the revelation of the Spirit: "For it is not only because of Christ that we come to know the Spirit more fully, but actually in Christ. Indeed, it is apparently a principle of the divine Spirit's working that he declines to disclose himself in any other way (Jn 16:13-15). He will not be known as he is in himself apart from Christ. Before the Spirit rests permanently on all the faithful children of God, he first must rest on the uniquely faithful Son of God (cf. John 1:33)." Ibid., 30.

¹⁰²Pinnock affirms as much in his work on the Holy Spirit. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 79-112.

¹⁰³Goldsworthy is adamant about this: "Every word of the New Testament comes from the Holy Spirit's testimony to Jesus." Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 49-50. See also Rev 19:10.

¹⁰⁴Geerhardus Vos, "Paul's Eschatological Concept of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. Richard Gaffin; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 120.

¹⁰⁵Vos, "Paul's Eschatological Concept of the Spirit," 114.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 108, 113-14.

¹⁰⁷The evangelical who sees the inward transforming work of the Spirit as the key element of Christianity will soon lose contact with the historic faith and the historic gospel. At the same time he will come to neglect the historical acts of God in the Old Testament. The Christ enthroned in the human heart loses his own incarnate humanity, and the humanity of the Old Testament history will be soon discarded so that the 'inner spiritual' meanings may be applied to the 'inner spiritual' life of the Christian." Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel & Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament*, (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), 113.

