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SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AND TRINITY IN THE THEOLOGY OF DAVID COFFEY

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey

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ABSTRACT

Spirit Christology has emerged as an important focus in recent theology. It offers new perspectives on christology and pneumatology. Can these new perspectives lead to advances in trinitarian theology itself? The classical theologies of both East and West tended to express great reserve about moving too easily from the economy of salvation to ideas about God in se. In the 20th century, Karl Rahner's axiom that the "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and vice versa helped lead to a significant erosion of this reserve, though not without controversy.

Coffey (born 1934) contributes significantly to reflection on this nexus of questions. He explores the relation of Spirit Christology to Logos Christology, arguing that the former need not supplant the latter. He reformulates Rahner's axiom, suggesting ways of overcoming some of its ambiguities. He shows that Spirit Christology offers an "ascending" basis for a "mutual love" pneumatology, in the service of a renewed trinitarian theology.

This dissertation presents an analysis of Coffey's achievement in its various contexts, historical and contemporary. It highlights his methodological balance. It argues that his theology represents an important development within the tradition, casting new light on issues of pressing contemporary interest.

Introduction

David Coffey argues that a properly formulated Spirit Christology demands a reformulation of trinitarian theology itself. The current work examines this argument. The purpose of this introduction is threefold: to offer a brief biographical sketch of David Coffey with a comment on how his work in trinitarian theology fits in with his other theological interests; to alert the reader to some themes and questions that can help situate the current study in a wider context; and, finally, to identify the specific focus of the study, its thematic delimitation and some of its features.

1. Beyond the Revival in Trinitarian Theology

Reports of a "revival" of interest in trinitarian theology in recent decades are widespread.[1] Such reports are in striking contrast to the reports of an earlier generation telling of a perceived paucity and stagnation in this field of theological research.[2] Such reports of "revival" in trinitarian theology do not imply that prior to

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[1]   These reports are often backed up with a listing of important recent publications. Works that open with this observation include: Michael Slusser, "The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 49, (1988): 461–476; Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology*, New Theology Series, vol. (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), vii; Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 59, (1998), 197; Gerald O'Collins, "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1; Declan Marmion, "Trinity and Salvation: A Dialogue With Catherine Lacugna," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74, (2009), 115.

[2]   It is Karl Rahner who is most directly associated with the pessimistic assessment of the state of trinitarian theology. Rahner famously refers to most Christians as "mere monotheists," by which he means that the understanding of God of most Christians in insufficiently "trinitarian." See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, (New York: Burns & Oates, 1970), 10. Authors who appear to show sympathy with this observation include Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, (New York: Crossroad

this "revival" there was simply no interest in trinitarian theology. What they do imply is that the trinitarian theology preceding the "revival" was somehow lacking, that somehow "pre-revival" trinitarian theology was somehow not "trinitarian" enough.

A particular target of criticism was the Roman Catholic neo-scholastic trinitarian theology, often regarded as "arid," "ahistorical," "unscriptural," "speculative," "deductive," and "abstract."[3] Further, it was often claimed that theology in the "pre-revival" period suffered fragmentation, and that trinitarian theology, nominally the heart of the theological endeavour, remained effectively isolated from questions relating to grace, to Christ, to pneumatology, to redemption, to ecclesiology etc.[4] The theology of the Trinity struck many as a series of increasingly subtle definitions and distinctions, apparently unconnected with the rest of the faith or the rest of theology.[5]

Publishing Company, 1986), 234; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 6; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Trinitarian Mystery of God," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 152; O'Collins, "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions," 1–3. O'Collins, however, offers a nuance: there may be, he says, an exaggeration in the claims that the doctrine of the Trinity has been seen as "irrelevant," and cites the trinitarian shape of the formula of baptism and eucharistic prayers.

One of the most radical versions of the claim that the Western theological tradition is insufficiently "trinitarian" is that found in the writings of Colin Gunton who does not hesitate, for example, to accuse Aquinas (and therefore the tradition which followed him) of holding a "Parmenidean" understanding of Being, and allowing this to limit a properly trinitarian understanding of God. See Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 139.

Karen Kilby notes the irony in the fact that many of the recent publications that together are hailed as constituting signs of this "revival" begin with complaints about the neglect of the doctrine. Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems With Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* (2000), 432.

[3]   Clearly adjectives like "speculative," and "abstract" need not be pejorative. In Torrell's work, for example, there is a rehabilitation of the word "speculative," showing that in medieval theology, at least, it was synonymous with "contemplative." In this context, the word "speculative" attains mystical dimensions.

See Jean-Pierre Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work, trans. Robert Royal, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 157.

[4]   We recall the comments of Rahner about the "isolation" of trinitarian doctrine in "piety and textbook theology." See Rahner, *The Trinity*, 10–15. Of particular concern to Rahner was the separation of the tract on the Trinity from the tract on the One God. It is now viewed as unlikely that blame for such a separation can be levelled at Thomas of Aquinas himself.

[5]   Beyond theology proper, it is interesting to note the difficulties faced by preachers in relation to

Given this dim reading of the field prior to the recent "revival," it was clear to many that what was to be revived was not neo-scholastic theology itself, but some other, presumably older form. Here, as in so many other areas, the impulse towards *ressourcement* is strong: one has to look backwards into the tradition in order to move forwards.[6] Various proposals are put forward. Some suggest that we should revive the theology of the earliest church.[7] Others urge that we look rather to the Greek patristic tradition as a whole,[8] or on the contribution of particular Greek Fathers.[9] Others urge that we rethink the legacy of the Latin theological tradition, and argue that, properly understood, it does not suffer from many of the weaknesses attributed to it. Unhelpfully schematic and ahistorical misrepresentations of major

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the doctrine of the Trinity. An informative overview of this issue is found in Marguerite Shuster, "Preaching the Trinity: A Preliminary Investigation," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity,* ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Shuster finds that sermons dealing with the Trinity are rare, and often suffer from doctrinal imprecision and only loose relation to their biblical sources.

[6] Marcellino D'ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio* 18, (1991): 530–555.

[7] Some of the Spirit Christologists mentioned in this study advocate a return to pre-Nicene Spirit Christology. Catherine LaCugna regrets the development of the "rupture" between *theologia* and *oikonomia* that followed the "Arian" controversy, pointing attention to pre-Nicene theology as a useful model for a revival of trinitarian discourse. See LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.*

[8] Karl Rahner presents his proposals as a retrieval of "Greek" emphases, overcoming mistaken Latin emphases. See Rahner, *The Trinity,* 15–21.

[9] John Zizioulas' attempts to establish a basis in the Cappadocians for urging that "person" be put before "substance" has been very influential in Western theology. See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church,* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). Thomas Weinandy looks instead to Athanasius as an underestimated source for trinitarian thought. See Thomas Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship,* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995). For a brief discussion of Weinandy's attempted retrieval of Athanasius, see below at p. 174f.

figures such as Augustine[10] and Aquinas[11] should be set aside, and these figures should be looked at anew.[12] It is argued that rediscovering the work of major trinitarian thinkers in the Latin tradition will revitalise theology as a whole.

That there is a "revival" of interest in trinitarian theology is surely to be welcomed. One of the arguments that this study makes is that David Coffey's theology does not, however, fit comfortably into a "revival" reading of the recent history of trinitarian theology. His is not so much an attempt to revive one or other of the great syntheses, whether patristic or medieval, but rather – in dialogue with voices from the tradition – to set out the parameters of a *new* synthesis, one that explicitly draws out the implications of Spirit Christology for trinitarian theology. An initial appreciation of this might be gained through looking at the outlines of his theological itinerary, to which we now turn.

(a) Introducing David Coffey

David Coffey was born in New South Wales in 1934. His basic philosophical and theological studies were carried out at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. In 1958

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[10]　The work of Michel Barnes and Lewis Ayres is prominent in the attempt to restore historical balance to the reading of Augustine's theology. Michel René Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26, (1995): 51–79; Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56, (1995): 237–250; Michel René Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic," *Studia Patristica* 29, (1997): 205–223; Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (Serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, (2000): 39–82; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Lewis Ayres is about to publish *Augustine's Trinitarian Theology*.

The revival of interest in Augustine's theology of the Trinity as a positive resource has penetrated to systematic theology too. For instance, Edmund Hill has published a book on the Trinity that is entirely based around the presentation of Augustine's *De trinitate*: Edmund Hill, *Mystery of the Trinity*, Introducing Catholic Theology, vol. 4, (San Francisco: Harper, 1986).

[11]　See, for example, Gilles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas*, (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria College, 2003); Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology, vol. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*; Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[12]　Lewis Ayres expresses a rather negative opinion of current systematic theology's engagement with its past. It depends too often on unsustainable schematisations that fail to capture the true legacy of theological traditions, but that encourage systematic theologians to think of their job as that of choosing from an "menu of options." See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, 386.

he earned his Licence in Theology (STL) and was ordained to the priesthood for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. By 1960 he had achieved his doctorate in Sacred Theology (STD) at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, with a dissertation in biblical theology: a study of the concept of truth in the Johannine writings. After a short time serving in Sydney parishes, he was appointed to the faculty at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. From 1964 to 1966, he studied under Michael Schmaus and Karl Rahner at the University of Munich. From 1967, Coffey was again at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, serving as Dean of the faculty from 1970 to 1975, and as President of the faculty from 1976 to 1981. In 1975 he was involved in the foundation of the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA)[13] and served as its first president. From 1976, he also worked as part-time member of the Divinity School at the University of Sydney. From 1981 to 1990 he taught at St. Peter's Centre in Canberra for the further education of clergy.[14]

In 1991, he spent a semester as visiting professor at the Aquinas Institute at the University of St. Louis, Missouri, and after a few further years at the Catholic Institute of Sydney he was appointed, in 1995, to the Presidential Chair in Catholic Systematic Theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a post he held until 2005.[15] Coffey was appointed Professor Emeritus at Marquette in 2006. Since his retirement from full-time teaching, Coffey has continued working, publ-

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[13]   This body of Australian Catholic theologians was set up to work with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on matters of mutual interest, and sometimes functions in an advisory capacity to the bishops.

[14]   This centre was set up to address what was perceived as the rather unsatisfactory state of theological formation of Australian Catholic priests, a situation that became clear in the years following the Second Vatican Council when awareness of the changes brought about by that council remained rather slight among the clergy there. The situation among religious sisters and lay people was rather more positive, and some have described this as a cause of tension in the Australian Catholic Church between the laity and religious women on the one hand, and priests on the other. Part of the explanation for the failure of priests there to update their theology lies with the many pastoral responsibilities of a falling population of ordained men.

[15]   Coffey interrupted his tenure of the presidential chair for one year in 1997 to work at Catholic Institute of Sydney. In 1999 the name of the presidential chair at Marquette was changed to William J. Kelly Chair in Catholic Theology.

ishing a number of important articles. He is currently preparing a new edition of his 1979 book *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*. In addition, he has been assisting in the establishment of an archive of his work at Marquette University.[16]

(b) Coffey and Trinitarian Theology

Coffey's theological journey did not begin with an explicit consideration of the Trinity, a fact not without importance in grasping the shape of Coffey's theology. Coffey wrote:

> Like many of my generation, in my undergraduate studies I took a course on the Trinity that left me puzzled as to what conceivable relevance this topic could have for the rest of theology (apart, perhaps, from that of the Incarnation) or for the challenge of the Christian life.[17]

Note that the relevance Coffey sought was primarily expressed in terms of relevance to the "rest of theology." As a student he perceived that the Trinity "perhaps" had some connections with the Incarnation. Clearly the theology to which he was exposed exemplified the very fragmentation of which Rahner and others complained.[18]

This "puzzlement" continued to exercise Coffey. As a young lecturer teaching the theology of grace, he manifested an unusual interest in the connections by which this tract was related to pneumatology, to christology and to the Trinity. How is the Holy Spirit involved in "grace"? How is the Holy Spirit involved in the Incarnation? How is the "grace" of Christ related to the "grace" of human beings? Such queries led him, reading Mühlen, to wonder at the loss of the patristic theme of an involvement of the Holy Spirit in the anointing of Jesus, a loss that Mühlen documents but does not explain. It led him, reading Rahner, to enquire after the pneumatological possibilities in transcendental theology.[19] Coffey's enquiries

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[16]. Coffey has not provided any comprehensive overview of his theology as a whole, but useful recent comments are found in David Coffey, "Vive La Difference: A Response to Donald Gelpi," *Pneuma* 29, (2007): 106–123; David Coffey, "A Promising Development in Christology: An Address to the Sydney Heretics Club," (2009). The latter paper is yet to be published.

[17]. David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

[18]. See above at p. 1f.

[19]. For comments by Coffey on his profound debt to Rahner, whom he acknowledges as his "prin-

brought him to consider the key role that the Holy Spirit plays not just in the "grace" received by ordinary human beings, but also the importance of pneumatology in relation to Christ.

In 1971, Coffey published an article on "grace" as the gift of the Holy Spirit,[20] and, in 1979, published a book length study of the same matter.[21] In the book we already see a sustained attempt at overcoming the "fragmentation" that he evidently had encountered in his own theological training. The book takes the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit as the major key to an understanding of grace. He discusses a wide range of issues of pertinence to trinitarian theology throughout that work, and offers there an early version of his two-model approach to the Trinity.[22]

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cipal theological influence" see Coffey, "Vive La Difference: A Response to Donald Gelpi," 121–122.

[20] David Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 38, (1971): 202–223.

[21] David Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, Faith and Culture, vol. 2, (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979).

[22] It is worth noting that it is only in the final chapter of the current study that I come to the matter of his two-model approach to the Trinity. My effort has been to smooth the path towards an understanding of what I take to be Coffey's central line of thought. In Coffey's own writings we encounter ingenious solutions to complex problems sometimes before we are clear on what the problems are. This is partly due to the fact that Coffey himself did not always in his early writings appreciate all of the implications of the positions he was elaborating. Often his later writings can be understood precisely as attempts to work out the implications of positions implicit in his earlier writings. In my attempt to smooth the path towards an appropriation of what I believe his final position to be, I have preferred to alter the order of his presentation substantially.

In the years following that publication, through a series of articles,[23] Coffey continued to explore these themes, gradually refining his approach, and taking increasing distance from the scholastic style in which his earlier attempts had been expressed.[24] In 1999, he published *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*.[25] This is Coffey's major work on the Trinity. It takes up and develops his earlier work on pneumatology and christology and explores its application to trinitarian theology. It has proved not to be, however, Coffey's "last word" on the Trinity, as Anthony Kelly had predicted.[26] He has continued to publish on these topics since

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[23] See especially: David Coffey, "The Incarnation: Fact Not Myth," in *Volume 1: Faith and Culture,* Faith and Culture (1978); David Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit," in *Volume 6: Issues for the Australian Church,* ed. Neil Brown, Faith and Culture (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1982); David Coffey, "The Pre-Existent and Incarnate Word," in *Volume 8: Contemporary Questions,* ed. Margaret Press, Faith and Culture (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1983); David Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," *Theological Studies* 45, (1984): 466–480; David Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," *Theological Studies* 47, (1986): 227–250; David Coffey, "Christian Anthropology," in *Volume 14: Bicentennial Reflections,* ed. Neil Brown and Margaret Press, Faith and Culture (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1988); David Coffey, "The Palamite Doctrine of God: A New Perspective," *St. Vladimirs Theological Quarterly* 32, (1988): 329–358; David Coffey, "Our Return to God Through Christ in the Spirit," *Compass* 23, (1989): 33–36; David Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," *Theological Studies* 51, (1990): 193–229; David Coffey, "Review of Anthony Kelly, the Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God," *Pacifica* 4, (1991): 229–232; David Coffey, "Faith in the Creator God," in *The New Catechism: Analysis and Commentary,* ed. Murray Andrew, (Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1994); David Coffey, "The Common and the Ordained Priesthood," *Theological Studies* 58, (1997): 209–236; David Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," *Theological Studies* 60, (1999): 405–431.

[24] Important texts of interest to those who would trace Coffey's changing attitude to scholasticism are found in Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 204 –2005; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 243–244; Coffey, "Vive La Difference: A Response to Donald Gelpi," 121–123.

[25] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God.* Reviews of this book are found at Anthony Kelly, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 77, 365–366; Bruce Marshall, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *First Things* (2000): 58–59; David Moss, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 7, (2000): 506–507; Mark Medley, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology,* http://www.interpretation.org/reviews/q4-01/minor.htm (accessed 1 July 2009); Katherine Tanner, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *The Journal of Religion* 81, (2001): 483–484; David Brown, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *Journal of Theological Studies* 52, (2002): 486–488; Paul Molnar, "Review of Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God By David Coffey," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, (2002): 244–247; William Thompson-Uberuaga, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *Theological Studies* 63, (2002): 617–619; Fred Sanders, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'," *Theology Today* 59, (2003): 628–630. An article that appeared at the same time as the book, drawing on its conclusions is Marie Farrell, "Reclaiming the Spirit," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 76, (1999): 270–280.

[26] See Kelly's review, cited above.

that book, giving further development to one or other point.[27] In his more recent writings it has been the theme of the Holy Spirit that has often provided the primary focus of this theology. An important addition to his published output is found in the Pére Marquette lecture that he delivered on the occasion of his retirement from Marquette University in 2005.[28]

The purpose of this brief biographical sketch was to make clear that at its origins Coffey's theological approach to trinitarian theology is shaped by a particular set of theological themes not ordinarily the *foci* of trinitarian theology: the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ and, in dependence on this paradigmatic case, grace as the gift of the Holy Spirit to ordinary human beings. These themes continue to run through and defined Coffey's theological project.[29]

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[27] David Coffey, "The Spirit of Christ as Entelechy," *Philosophy and Theology* 13, (2001): 363–398; David Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," in *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology,* ed. E. Hinze Bradford and D. Lyle Dabney, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001); David Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67, (2002): 375–378; David Coffey, "The Roman 'Clarification' of the Doctrine of the Filioque," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, (2003): 3–21; David Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential," *Theological Studies* 65, (2004): 95–118; David Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology,* Pére Marquette Theology Lecture, vol. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005); David Coffey, "Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner,* ed. Declan Marmion, and Mary E. Hines, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David Coffey, "Questio Disputata: Response to Neil Ormerod and Beyond," *Theological Studies* 68, (2007): 900–915; David Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan," *Theological Studies* 69, (2008): 852–874.

[28] This lecture is published in extended form as Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*. This work is reviewed at Donald L. Gelpi, "David Coffey's 'Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?': A Review Essay," *Pneuma* 28, (2006): 322–334; Elizabeth T. Groppe, "'Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?' Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology," *Theology Today* 63, no. 2 (2006): 280.

[29] Some of Coffey's other writings, not directly pertinent to my theme, but of interest to those who would gain an overview of Coffey's theology include David Coffey, "The Salvation of the Unbeliever in St. Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 41, (1964): 179–198, 265–282; David Coffey, "Natural Knowledge of God: Reflections on Romans 1:18–32," *Theological Studies* 31, (1970): 674–691; David Coffey, "The Charism of the Theologian," in *Volume 1: Faith and Culture,* Faith and Culture (1978); David Coffey and John Hill, "Demythologization: For and Against," in *Volume 1,* Faith and Culture (1978); David Coffey, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Catholic Orthodoxy," in *Volume 4,* ed. Neil Brown, Faith and Culture (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1980); David Coffey, "A Reply to Bishop J. Cullinane on the Resurrection of Jesus," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 58, (1981): 181–190; David Coffey, "A Further Reply to Bishop J. Cullinane on the Resurrection of Jesus and Catholic Orthodoxy," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 58, (1981): 392–400; David Coffey, "Death as a Question of Negative Theology," in *Volume 5: Reflections on Faith and Culture,* ed. Neil Brown, Faith and Culture (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1981); David Coffey, "A Reply From Darley Road," *Colloquium* 14, (1982): 36–42; David Coffey, "Evangelical Catholicism," *Australian*

2. General Themes

At this point, I introduce some general themes that underlie this study. These themes are (a) the plausibility of trinitarian theology itself and (b) the debated status within trinitarian theology of "immanent Trinity" talk.

(a) The Plausibility of Trinitarian Theology

How should theology deal with the caution of recent biblical scholarship about the matter of finding a direct basis in biblical texts for the doctrine of the Trinity? In the past the matter was simpler. One might invoke the baptismal command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 as a direct teaching by Jesus of the doctrine of the

Trinity.[30] This is no longer possible. Contemporary biblical scholars no longer hold that there is any formally trinitarian discourse in the bible.[31] These reservations are now taken for granted by a broad range of theologians.[32]

The historical methodology today brought to the readings of scripture aims in the first place at uncovering what we call its "literal meaning." This term will be invoked repeatedly in this study. It denotes the meaning intended by the human authors of scripture inasmuch as this can be reconstructed by the tools of historical-

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[30] As recently as 1952, Ludwig Ott, to give an example, was willing to draw the basics of the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" from this verse. He wrote:

> The Mystery of the Trinity is most clearly manifested in the mandate of Jesus to go and baptise. Mt. 28, 19: 'Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' That there are here three persons, emerges as regards the Father and the Son from their relative opposition, as regards the Holy Ghost from the fact that He is completely co-ordinated to the Two Persons, which would not be if spirit here meant merely an essential attribute. The unity of essence of the Three Persons is indicated in the singular form 'in the name' (εἰς τo ὄνομα). The genuineness of the passage is guaranteed by the unanimous tradition of all manuscripts and translations.

See Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books & Publishers, 1974), 56.

It is not suggested that the theological tradition as a whole ever sought to justify the doctrine of the Trinity exclusively on the basis of this verse of Matthew. What is suggested is that this verse gave traditional textbook theology an apparently simple basis for claiming that Jesus taught the doctrine of the Trinity. The great representatives of the Western tradition were more subtle in their approaches to the bible.

[31] This can be quickly be verified by looking up the term "Trinity" in biblical reference works, where the term is not generally found, or if it is, is treated very briefly with statements about how the biblical data is related to trinitarian belief. See, e.g., Daniel N. Schowalter, "Trinity," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible,* ed. Bruce M. Metzger, and Michael D. Coogan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Arthur Wainwright, who devoted a book-length study to the question of the Trinity in the New Testament, argues that rather than speaking of doctrine of the Trinity in the bible we might speak of the "problem" of the Trinity there. New Testament authors were aware, he claims, that the claims being made with Jesus would need to be reconciled with Jewish monotheism. Their attempts to deal with this "problem" may be set in continuity with the later "doctrine" of the Trinity. See Arthur W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1962).

[32] Rahner writes that the scriptures "do not explicitly present a doctrine of the 'immanent' Trinity," Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22. William Hill writes that "it is not possible to discern in the New Testament texts themselves anything amounting to an explicit revelation of the Trinity immanent in the Godhead." William J. Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1982), 3. Catherine LaCugna writes: "there is no doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament." LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 22. John Farrelly phrases the situation more optimistically as an "implicit revelation" of the Trinity in the New Testament. M. John Farrelly, *The Trinity: Rediscovering the Central Christian Mystery*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005), 40– 44. It would not be difficult to multiply examples of this sort.

critical biblical exegesis.[33] We might take trinitarian readings of texts in the Hebrew scriptures such as the identification of Word and Spirit in Genesis 1; or the Trinity in Genesis 18 as examples. The Fathers sometimes saw in these texts reference to the Trinity. Scripture scholarship today would not see such references as part of the "literal meaning" of these texts. Does the primacy of scripture stretch to the readings of scripture made by the Fathers and if so, on what basis? What is the significance of the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity was elaborated in the patristic age, sometimes on the basis of readings of scriptural texts that would not command the agreement of scholars today?

The issues raised here are complex, and cannot form the direct concern of this study. Nevertheless, it is useful to mention them at the outset. The solution to such issues will certainly involve a broadening of the understanding of how scripture functions as source in theology and how it is related to the development of doctrine in the church. As we will see below, some theologians insist on the primacy of the bible in ways that effectively rule out doctrinal development. The result of this position is that trinitarian theology loses its plausibility. In order to counter this, one must go beyond any *simple* appeal to the bible as exclusive source. The primary source must be seen to be not the bible as such, but the Christ event as a whole.

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[33] On the "literal" meaning of scripture and its distinction from "literalist" readings of scripture see Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.htm (accessed 19 May 2009); Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Biblical Commission's Document 'the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church': Text and Commentary*, Subsidia Biblica, vol. 18, (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995). That document refers to Thomas S. Th. I, q. 1, a. 10, ad 1 on the primacy of the "literal" sense. The same source is quoted again by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §115–116.

Ayres and Fowl, in an article criticising the Pontifical Biblical Commission document's privileging of a narrow understanding of the "literal sense" of scripture, argue that the quotation from Thomas has been misrepresented. They criticise the PBC document for this, but not the CCC text for drawing the same inference. They recognise a difference of authority between the PBC text and the CCC, and presumably regard it as safer to criticise the one, but not the other. See Lewis Ayres and Stephen E Fowl, "(Mis)Reading the Face of God: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," *Theological Studies* 60, (1999), 519.

In general, the assumption that I make in this study is that the literal sense of scripture is that discoverable by the historical study of the texts, but that the literal sense is *not* the only valid meaning of those texts: the literal sense is dynamically related to later theological understandings. The issue of how one might judge between such later theological understandings is a further question, the answer to which would include reference to the use of those texts in the church's liturgical and prayer practices, as well as the church's official magisterium etc.

And the Christ event is *not* the "Jesus" event. Christ and the Holy Spirit are be-lieved to be present in the church throughout the ages, the Spirit guiding us "into all truth" (Jn 16:13). Once we embrace some such broader understanding of "Christ event" and its mediation, it becomes clear that Enlightenment historiography cannot offer an adequate guide for theology in its appropriation of the biblical witness.

The issue of how precisely the biblical texts function as source in theology is more decisive for trinitarian theology than for most other areas of theology. The ad-ded difficulty for theology of the Trinity has been stated above: the inconvenient *datum* that the biblical authors are not now held to have themselves directly ex-pressed a doctrine of the Trinity. *If* the bible is the source of theology, *if* the bible is now read in a historically sensitive way, *then* the matter of rooting trinitarian theo-logy in the bible comes to be seen as a rather complex task, more complex today than hitherto.

I believe that a good place to begin unravelling *these*[34] issues is at one re-move from the traditional concerns of trinitarian theology. This study begins there-fore with christology.[35] While it may be the case that the New Testament authors do not directly present a doctrine of the Trinity, it is undoubtedly the case that those authors intend to present reflections on the identity and significance of Jesus as the Christ. The current study follows this order of presentation: beginning with christo-logy, it ends with trinitarian theology. David Coffey's theology is consistent with this orientation, and draws our attention to christology as the systematic starting point for trinitarian theology. This choice should not be regarded as obvious. Tradi-tionally the link between trinitarian theology and christology has been weaker than one might expect.[36]

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[34] I recognise the need to distinguish the epistemological order from the ontological order, the *via inventionis* from the *via doctrinae*. That is why I italicised the word "these." In reflecting on *other* issues, christology may not be the best starting place.

[35] In its ordinary uses, I will use lower case "c" for "christology." In special cases, however, such as "*Logos* Christology" and "Spirit Christology," I will capitalise the word for the purposes of emphasis.

[36] O'Collins notes that "[i]n the 'bad old days' one could write a christological study and largely leave out the Trinity, and – vice versa – one could write a trinitarian study that made little or no ref-erence to Jesus of Nazareth." See O'Collins, "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions," 3. Another Australian theologian, Anne Hunt writes that:

Coffey's focus on the christological point of departure for trinitarian theology has a particular focus: the pneumatological dimensions of the Christ event. His christology may, therefore, be located within the context of recent theological interest in "Spirit Christology." A brief word may be suitable here in order to clarify the importance of this theme for trinitarian theology.

If it is true that "classical" trinitarian theology paid surprisingly little attention to Jesus, it paid even less attention to the trinitarian implications of the relation of the Spirit to Jesus. The effort to give an account of the pneumatological dimensions of the Christ event is generically referred to as "Spirit Christology," and represents an area of considerable interest in recent theology.[37] If christology looks, as urged above, to be the best starting point for trinitarian theology, then surely a Spirit Christology might be expected to be an even more fruitful subject of research, inasmuch as it has something to say not just about the "second divine person" (as later theology would call the *Logos*) but also about the "third divine person" (again post-biblical language). The question thus arises: does Spirit Christology offer a point of access to trinitarian theology suited to the assumptions of contemporary theology? Coffey's suggestion that not only does it offer a point of access, but that it offers the *best* point of access is a central concern of this study.

The specific focus of this study, accordingly, is the examination of the trajectory of thought by which Coffey links Spirit Christology with trinitarian theology. This is examined from the methodological and systematic points of view. This is not, therefore, a general study of the theology of David Coffey, nor even of his

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development of the classical christological doctrine, while undoubtedly grounded in Christian faith in the triune God and designed to protect the realism of Christian faith in Jesus' humanity and divinity, followed in the direction established in the development of trinitarian doctrine and took a strongly metaphysical turn that left it strangely remote from its trinitarian origins and bearings and, moreover, from the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The explicit connection of the doctrines of Trinity and Christology is in fact by no means to be presumed [....]

See Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 56–57.

[37] See below at p. 31f.

Spirit Christology, his pneumatology or his trinitarian theology. The presentation offered has the specific purpose of showing how Coffey takes Spirit Christology as an *economic* starting point for trinitarian theology.[38] Specifically, it focusses on how Coffey finds the basis in a pneumatologically-focussed reading of the story of Jesus for a "mutual love" pneumatology and how this in turn calls for modifications in trinitarian theology itself.

To date the most substantial presentation of Coffey's work is that of Ralph Del Colle.[39] The latter presents Coffey's work in significant continuity with the neo-scholastic tradition, even as it pushes beyond the limits of neo-scholasticism. This means, however, that Del Colle chooses to begin "in good scholastic fashion with the [...] intra-trinitarian relations."[40] In my study, I invert the order, and begin with the "economy of salvation" and specifically with Spirit Christology. Del Colle's book, further, was published in 1994, and is no longer comprehensive in its treatment. Anne Hunt notes that Del Colle's treatment of Coffey needs updating and that a "thorough assessment" of Coffey's contribution is needed.[41] While the current work may not be "thorough" in its assessment, within its limits it aims at filling a real need by contributing to the reception of this important theologian's

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[38]   See n. 56 on p. 24 below for an expression of caution about the use of the term "starting point" in theology generally, and in Coffey's theology in particular.

[39]   Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Del Colle devotes just one (lengthy) chapter to David Coffey's theology, but the book as a whole serves to sets Coffey's work in context, and examines its impact and significance.

Another book that makes significant reference to Coffey's work is Edward Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice: I. Systematic Theology of Liturgy*, (Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1988). This book, however, simply assumes many of Coffey's positions without attempting to explain them. Kilmartin's interest is in the application of Coffey's theology to questions of liturgical theology. He also takes the liberty of proposing modifications to Coffey's thought without clearly stating where and why he does so. Like Del Colle, Kilmartin assumes a starting point in the "immanent Trinity."

The current study more faithfully follows the itinerary that the *later* Coffey clearly indicates: beginning with the biblical data about the "economy of salvation" and moving towards the "immanent Trinity," and then back to the "economic Trinity."

[40]   Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, 97.

[41]   See Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith*, 71.

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work.[42] Beyond its value to the appropriation of Coffey's contribution, it is hoped that this study might also provide some valuable impulses to the question of how trinitarian theology emerges from a pneumatologically-informed christology.

(b) The Status of the "Immanent Trinity"

I now draw attention to a second general theme: the status of the doctrine of the "immanent" Trinity. Theology of the "immanent" Trinity pushes beyond the christological starting point that I have specified to statements about God *in se*. If, as stated above, it is already a complex matter to find a direct statement of the Trinity in the bible, it is all the more difficult to find a directly biblical basis for talk of the "immanent Trinity."[43]

This being so, what is the status of "immanent Trinity" talk? In contemporary theology we find voices strongly in favour of the doctrine, and voices strongly against it. Among those in favour of the doctrine we find two extreme tendencies: some theologians support it precisely because it isolates talk of the Trinity from talk of the economy of salvation,[44] while others look to it for what appears to be the opposite reason: in order to draw lessons from this doctrine for human living.[45] Perhaps we can speak of the first attitude as an "apophatic" approach to the "immanent Trinity;" and of the second as the "cataphatic" approach to the "immanent Trinity."

We will see instances of the "apophatic approach" to the theology of the "immanent Trinity" in the course of this study. The basic feature of this approach is that it sees the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" as an attempt to avoid saying *too*

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[42] The importance of Coffey's contribution is only beginning to be recognised. One recent book notes "Coffey is one of the most influential proponents of a revitalized Spirit-christology that emphasizes the Spirit's constitutive role in the Incarnation." See F. LeRon Shults and Andrea Hollingsworth, *The Holy Spirit*, Guides to Theology, vol. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans, 2008).

[43] The theological attempt at describing God *in se*, that is, prescinding from God's action in the economy of salvation, is generally dated to the 4th century.

[44] The purpose of the "immanent" Trinity, therefore, is to ensure that theology does not compromise a proper sense of God's transcendence and freedom. See, for example, Paul Molnar, "The Trinity and the Freedom of God," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 8, (2003): 59–66.

[45] I make reference below to the example of Leonardo Boff.

much about God. The various distinctions and definitions associated with traditional theology are viewed as serving precisely to set out a grammar that discourages us from thinking of God as a "being," discourages us from reducing God to the comprehensible.[46] In contrast to this, we also find theologians who appear to manifest a kind of "cataphatic" approach to the "immanent Trinity." I have mentioned the alleged isolation of the tract on the Trinity within the received theology, and specifically the paucity in the inherited neo-scholastic tradition of explicit consideration on the doctrine's relevance to the whole range of Christian experience. Attempting to overcome this isolation and lack of clear application of traditional trinitarian theology, many rich attempts have been made to show how, far from being irrelevant, the doctrine of the Trinity throws light on a broad range of fields of human life.

A curious feature of some such efforts is the extent to which many of these efforts draw directly on the conceptual apparatus that evolved in discussion of the "immanent Trinity" and attempt to show how these apply to the world of our experience. Terms like "person," "perichoresis" are found to be richly suggestive as guidance for ordinary human situations and interactions. It is often urged that trinitarian *theology* offers a model for human life in all of its richness. I will cite a passage from Leonardo Boff to illustrate this approach:

> Seeing people as image and likeness of the Trinity implies always setting them in open relationship with others; it is only through being with others, understanding themselves as others see them, being through others, that they can build their own identities. Personal incommunicability exists only

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[46.] Some patristic texts insisting on the incomprehensibility of God are assembled in Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Texts and Commentary*, (London: New City, 1993), 26–34.

One recent example of this interpretation of the purpose of the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" is that of Karen Kilby. She argues that in the case of Thomas of Aquinas, the very purpose of his "immanent Trinity" theology is to show how comprehensively we do not understand God. Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems With Social Doctrines of the Trinity"; Karen Kilby, "Aquinas, the Trinity and the Limits of Understanding," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2005): 414–427.

Matthew Levering has sought to offer some nuances to Kilby's position. See Karen Kilby, "Response to Matthew Levering," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, (2007): 55–57; Matthew Levering, "Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, (2007): 39–54. Another recent response to Kilby is found in Alan Darley, "To What Extent Can Aquinas' Understanding of the Trinity be Termed 'Apophatic'?," *Quadlibet Journal*, http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/darley-aquinas.shtml (accessed 25 May 2009).

so as to allow communion with other people. In the light of the Trinity, being a person in the image and likeness of the divine Persons means acting as a permanently active web of relationships: relating backwards and upwards to one's origin in the unfathomable mystery of the Father, relating outwards to one's fellow human beings by revealing oneself to them and welcoming the revelation of them in the mystery of the Son, relating inwards to the depths of one's own personality in the mystery of the Spirit.[47]

Interesting to note is the range of reactions this kind of reflection provokes. For some, such attempts to throw trinitarian "light" on human interactions is inspiring, edifying and fruitful. For others, such talk appears to be uncontrolled, perhaps even fanciful.[48]

Note the important difference in focus between the traditional theologies of the "immanent Trinity" on which such attempts draw, on the one hand, and the more recent attempts at demonstrating the doctrine's relevance, on the other. In recent theology, the focus on the theological notion of "person," for instance, often leads towards pictures of the "inner" life of the Trinity as an *interaction* of *distinct* persons.[49] This is in strong contrast to the attempts made in traditional theology to

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[47.] Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Liberation and Theology, vol. 2, (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1988), 149.

[48.] Such a reaction will in turn not be comprehended by those who manifest the first kind of reaction. Neil Ormerod recognises the possibility of this kind of mutual incomprehension when he writes of the mistake of covertly introducing "interpersonal categories into the Trinitarian relationships":

> This may seem an odd objection to make. Given the large-scale adoption of such categories in modern Trinitarian theology, an interpersonal consideration of the Trinitarian life is being hailed as a major advance in theological thought. But there is a problem concealed here. [...]

See Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, Marquette Studies in Theology, vol. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 130. Another problem that Ormerod would find in talk such as that found in Boff's is the appeal it makes to the imagination. Again, many would regard an appeal to the imagination as an excellent thing, but Ormerod is concerned to preserve a kind of "intellectual asceticism" that controls exuberant language. The principal target of his complaints about an appeal to the imagination is Hans Urs von Balthasar, but he would find elements of this "problem" in Boff's writing too. See Ibid., 28–29.

[49.] Another theologian who urges what I call an "apophatic" approach to the "immanent" Trinity is Phillip Cary. The latter has argued that recent theology misconstrues the purpose of the theological task when it thinks of understanding the "inner self" of God as a proper objective in theology. Such an approach is deeply modern, and thus alien to the sensitivities of the "classical tradition." He denies, furthermore, that the notion of an "inner self" is a helpful construction, even in ordinary human relationships. This article also denies substantial differences between Eastern and Western theology such as those assumed by Rahner and his followers. The substantial differences, he thinks, are between the "classical tradition" (East and West) and modern theology of the form proposed by Rahner. See Phillip Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity," *The Thomist* 56, (1992): 365–405.

avoid anything that might threaten the heritage of monotheism.[50] If it true that the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" developed as a series of measures designed, in part at least, to exclude too clear an analogy being drawn between human persons and divine persons, it is curious to note how significantly eroded this reserve has been in much recent theology. A sign of this erosion is the easy embrace of images of the Trinity as a "community" or a "family" in contemporary homiletics. Such language would surely horrify the sustainers of the "classical" approach.

Questions of the status of the doctrine of Trinity, and theology of the "immanent Trinity" in particular are, in brief, of central importance in contemporary trinitarian theology. I will argue that David Coffey's contribution to this node of questions is significant. Coffey's theology might strike some readers as a sustained defence of the theology of the "immanent Trinity" by some, and others as yet another instance of the erosion of this doctrine. The current study shows how both approaches miss the point. The key to understanding Coffey's approach to the "immanent Trinity" lies in his reformulation of Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, such that judgement on his approach to the "immanent" Trinity is bound up with the precise role he gives to this doctrine in his theology as a whole.

One should think of Coffey as offering a new reading of the function of "immanent" trinity discourse. As we will see in Chapter Four below, Coffey applies an insight from Lonergan's analysis of cognitive structure to the matter, and distinguishes *three* levels of discourse about the Trinity. He places the theology of the "immanent Trinity" as the second stage in a three-part itinerary, building on the first stage (the biblical mediation of the Christ event), and dynamically oriented towards the third (a deeper appropriation of the economy of salvation). In this way, I

[50.] Note that in some recent authors, in contrast, the term "monotheism" is self-evidently negative. We have cited Rahner's references to "mere monotheism." Boff is a little more careful by speaking of "rigid" or "a-trinitarian" monotheism. See Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 20–23. For Moltmann, on the other hand, the word "monotheism" is unequivocally negative: it is the opposite of trinitarianism. In the words of Ted Peters, Moltmann denies "that Christianity should be monotheistic at all." See Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*, (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993), 103. In the cases alluded to above, in contrast, the heritage of monotheism is regarded as a cornerstone of both religious and intellectual responsibility.

argue, his work offers a solution to the *impasse* sketched above. I noted that a weakness in many attempts to demonstrate this relevance of trinitarian discourse lies in the attempt to draw categories from the theology of the "immanent Trinity," and apply these to matters of practical concern in the world, and that such a cataphatic manoeuvre appears to contrast with the apophatic intention of traditional approaches to the "immanent" Trinity.

Coffey's identification of three levels (rather than Rahner's two) of trinitarian discourse, I argue, helps redefine the debate about the "immanent" Trinity and overcome the *impasse*. Consider the following long quotation from *Deus Trinitas*, where Coffey considers the:

> question about the legitimacy of theologies of the Trinity based on concepts belonging to the immanent Trinity. A case in point is Leonardo Boff's *Trinity and Society*. This book attempts the laudable task of presenting the Trinity in the light of liberation theology. In so doing, it adopts as central the concept of perichoresis, the interpenetration of the three divine persons of the immanent Trinity, seeing this as the model for liberation in human society. Boff maintains that this concept provides 'impulses to liberation.'

Like many, Coffey is critical of the methodological framework that is implicit in such a direct use of the theology of the "immanent" Trinity. He continues:

> This may be true, but, if so, it is hardly true in a very effective way, seeing that we have no experience of the interaction among the persons of the immanent Trinity. The desired impulses come more strongly from the New Testament, and in a more sophisticated form from the doctrine of the economic Trinity, from the teaching that all human beings are created equal before God and are destined to be his children in Christ, and therefore brothers and sisters of each other, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our statements about the immanent Trinity may be formally correct, and therefore do correspond, albeit in a highly inadequate way, to the reality of God, but for us they lack the experiential content that is necessary as a basis for a theology, granted that today any theology seeking acceptance must be able to evince pastoral relevance. Experiential content is acquired by completing the three-stepped process outlined above, by returning to the biblical data and from there developing a theology in dialogue with the tradition and with the contributions and questions of the present age.[51]

Here we see not just that Coffey is aware of the issue, but that he sees that an answer lies in relocating much discourse about the "relevance" of the Trinity from the level of the "immanent Trinity" to what he calls the "economic Trinity." Chapters

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[51.] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 20.

Four and Five below show how Coffey's re-formulation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* both allows a positive function to "immanent" Trinity talk, but also ensures that such talk retains a soteriological orientation.

(c) *Some Applications*

Two others areas of particular interest to contemporary theology should be briefly mentioned here, so as to alert the reader at the outset to the implications of Coffey's project, and by extension of the current study. The first is the matter of the *filioque*, which continues to represent a node of disagreement between Eastern and Western churches. Coffey's theology proposes itself as a way of transcending the *impasse* by placing them in a new light. While I do not fully explore Coffey's achievement from this point of view, I hope to indicate the value of further engagement with his positions in relation to this important matter.

The other area where Coffey's theology could be expected to make an important contribution, one of urgent interest in the early years of the 21st century, is the question of the theology of religions. A number of high profile attempts by Catholic theologians at exploring a pneumatological basis for a theology of religions have run into difficulty precisely on the question of their relation to the Christ event. Coffey's pneumatological christology offers, I believe, a very promising attempt at overcoming some of the difficulties that have characterised the recent attempts of thinkers like Dupuis, Haight and Phan. While the current study does not specifically address these matters, it does set the context for a more direct appropriation of Coffey's contribution to this debate, one on which he has himself published important reflections.

3. The Structure of the Work

I present the core of Coffey's argument in two parts, the first is christological and pneumatological in focus (Chapters One to Three) and the second is more specifically trinitarian (Chapter Four and Five).

The christologically and pneumatologically focused first part takes the shape of a three-stage argument. This structure is suggested by the following important statement of Coffey's:

> [1] *If* Jesus is brought into being as the divine Son in humanity through the Father's radical bestowal of love, which love is the Holy Spirit and [2] *if* the response of Jesus is a love for the Father which ultimately is a return of the same Spirit, [3] *then* in the immanent Trinity, the Holy Spirit exists as the mutual love of the Father and the Son.[52]

It is possible that some readers will read this statement and wonder why I have described it as "important." In order to show its importance, I will devote a chapter to each of its three component parts (Chapters One to Three), and highlight where each of them differs from "classical" theology. As I present it, Coffey's theology is in dialectical relationship with the "classical" tradition on a number of important points. It is precisely in pushing *beyond* the limits of the "classical" tradition that he makes his important contributions.

The second part of this presentation, Chapters Four and Five, takes up the data from this christologically and pneumatologically focused first part and probes its significance for trinitarian theology. Chapter Four focuses on Coffey's reformulation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* (that the "economic Trinity" is the "immanent Trinity" and *vice versa*).[53] Chapter Five focuses on the elaboration of the two-model approach to the Trinity. This I characterise as an attempt to show the dialectical relationship between the positions suggested by Spirit Christology and those developed in the "classical" synthesis of christology and trinitarian theology. This ap-

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[52.] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 479–480; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 234. I have added the numbers for ease of reference.

[53.] This is stated in various places. See, for example, Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

proach has among its other benefits the offer of a framework for moving beyond the *filioque impasse*. Throughout my presentation, I invoke the voices of past and present representatives of the "classical" synthesis to help frame the issues.[54]

David Coffey's theology, in brief, offers rich and stimulating contributions to a number of areas of pressing current interest. It is, to be sure, an expression of the recent "revival" of trinitarian theology, but I argue that it is one that is better understood an attempt to take a further step in trinitarian theology. The seeds of this "further step" are found precisely in his attempt to elaborate a "trinitarian" Spirit Christology responsive to the complete biblical witness, but also to the theological tradition. We turn now to the core of this Spirit Christology: the theme of the anointing of Jesus.

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[54] Particularly helpful has been the work of the contemporary Australian theologian Neil Ormerod. The latter was initially appreciative of Coffey's contribution, devoting a Masters' Thesis to Coffey. Neil Ormerod, "The Holy Spirit – Feeling of God: The Theme of the Holy Spirit as the Love of the Father and the Son in the Writings of David Coffey and Its Dialectic Revival Within a Contemporary Transcendental Anthropology" (Melbourne College of Divinity, 1988). Note: I have not been able to consult this unpublished work.

More recently Ormerod has positioned himself as Coffey's most vocal opponent. See Neil Ormerod, "Wrestling With Rahner on the Trinity," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68, (2003): 213–227; Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*; Neil Ormerod, "What is the Task of Systematic Theology?," *Australian EJournal of Theology*, http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_8/ormerod.htm (accessed 20 July 2009); Neil Ormerod, "Questio Disputata: Two Points Or Four? – Rahner and Lonergan on Trinity, Incarnation, Grace, and Beatific Vision," *Theological Studies* 68, (2007): 661–673; Neil Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74, (2009): 38–52.

1. The Anointing of Jesus as "Starting Point"

1. Introduction

The key to Coffey's trinitarian theology is found in his pneumatology, and the key to his pneumatology in his Spirit Christology. The current study follows the "ascending" logic of Coffey's argument as it moves from Spirit Christology to pneumatological conclusion and from there to trinitarian theology. The starting point for this "ascending" path is Coffey's experiment in Spirit Christology, so I begin there.[55]

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[55] A preliminary note on the terms "starting point" and "ascending theology" may help allay some possible confusion with the terminology. By "starting point" here is intended the starting point of *Coffey's argument*, rather than the starting point for pneumatology or trinitarian theology as such. As we shall see, Coffey accepts the basic validity of the classical tradition and situates his efforts within the ongoing evolution of theology. Coffey sets out an argument for what he regards as an important step *forward* in theology. Talk of "starting point" here, as will become clear, does not imply that he attempts to stand outside or *prior* to the classical tradition. He does not, as Neil Ormerod appears to believe, set aside the theological tradition and return to the biblical data and attempt a theology *ex novo* on that basis. See Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology," 47.

Similar points need to be made in relation to "ascending" method. As we will see, Coffey seeks to synthesise the "yield" of descending and ascending theologies. He does not counter-pose the two, as though "ascending" theology inevitably sweeps away "descending" theology. Assuming the basic validity of "descending" theology, rather, Coffey seeks to develop an "ascending" theology that addresses some of the lacunae and weaknesses of descending theology. What precisely Coffey intends with the term "ascending" theology and how he relates it to "descending" theology will be directly addressed below at p. 109f.

Caution about such ambiguous terminology as "starting point," "ascending" and "descending" is always necessary. See, for example, Nicholas Lash, "Up and Down in Christology," in *New Studies in Theology*, ed. Stephen Sykes and Derek Holmes, (London: Duckworth, 1980); Edward Krasevac, L., "'Christology From Above' and 'Christology From Below'," *The Thomist* (1987): 299–306; John McDade, "The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery," *Heythrop Journal* 29, (1988), 184; Terrence Tilley, "Remembering the Historic Jesus: A New Research Program?," *Theological Studies* 68, (2007): 3–35.

All of these points call for, and will receive, further elaboration. This note aims simply at encouraging the reader to suspend judgement on how precisely terms like "starting point" and "ascending" are to be interpreted. While Coffey's theology is strongly engaged in dialogue with many of the

I have already introduced three important statements that will guide our exploration of Coffey's experiment in Spirit Christology and the suitability of this as a basis for an argument in trinitarian theology.[56] Before looking specifically at the first of these, let us look at the three together, so as to discern the general shape of the argument under examination.

The first statement is as follows: "Jesus is brought into being as the divine Son in humanity through the Father's radical bestowal of love, which love is the Holy Spirit."[57] This pregnant statement forms the focus of interest for the current chapter. Whereas the first statement addresses the reception of the Holy Spirit that brings about the human existence of Jesus, the second addresses the *return* of the Spirit by Jesus to the Father: "the response of Jesus is a love for the Father which ultimately is a return of the same Spirit." This second statement is considered in Chapter Two. For ease of reference, we might call these two statements respectively *Thesis A* and *Thesis B*.[58] The broader argument under consideration takes these theses as premisses and from them draws a conclusion. The argument is that *if* Thesis A *and* Thesis B are true, *then* we are in a position to draw an important conclusion about the Holy Spirit from the force of these two statements. This conclusion, which we will call Coffey's pneumatological conclusion, is that the Holy Spirit should be understood as the *mutual love of the Father and the Son*. It is discussed in Chapter Three below.

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voices of contemporary theology, one needs always to be attentive to his specific use of such terms. In order to understand his theological proposal, careful attention to *his* use of terms will be essential.

[56.] See p. 22 above.

[57.] This and the quotations in the rest of this paragraph come from Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 479–480. They are quoted also in Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 234.

[58.] Coffey does not speak of Thesis A and B, or give these the same structuring function that I give them in the current study. By adopting this terminology, I intend, however, to give prominence to what I take to be a central structuring argument in Coffey's thought.

2. Preliminary Clarifications

Before setting Thesis A in context, it will be well to offer some basic clarifications about its intention. The first clarification relates to the type of discourse involved. In Thesis A we find a *theological* interpretation of the *biblical* theme of the anointing of Jesus.[59] Note that by "anointing" here, Coffey is referring not only to biblical texts about the baptism of Jesus, or Acts 10:38, Romans 1:4, but also and crucially to Luke 1:35, which places the anointing at the very moment of coming into being of Jesus as a human being. Jesus receives the Holy Spirit from God in an "anointing."[60] This reception is somehow foundational of his very existence as Son.[61] Because of this anointing, Jesus is marked out as the "Christ." Coffey's theological interpretation of the biblical theme of anointing involves understanding it as a "bestowal" of "love," a love which is the Holy Spirit.[62] It is as a result of this anointing that Jesus is "brought into being as the divine Son in humanity."

Note that Coffey's theological interpretation of the anointing involves trinitarian talk of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He does not intend with this use of the vocabulary of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to suggest that the biblical authors themselves intended to speak of three distinct trinitarian persons such as would only have been possible in the light of a fully-developed trinitarian theology. He knows

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[59] It is of course recognised that the biblical texts can themselves be understood as theological interpretation. For the sake of simplicity, however, the distinction may be accepted, with "biblical" standing for the literal meaning of biblical texts, and "theological" standing for post-biblical interpretations of these texts going beyond the 'literal' meaning.

[60] This final text is important, since without it the danger of 'adoptionism' is real. Coffey discusses the biblical background to the theme of anointing and its patristic reception in Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 120–144.

[61] He writes that in his theology, there is "no element of adoptionism, since the humanity of Jesus is declared not to have existed prior to the anointing." See Ibid., 120.

[62] Chapter Three below explores how the term "love" here is to be understood.

the importance of distinguishing between the literal meaning of biblical texts and biblical themes on the one hand,[63] and later theological interpretations of those texts, on the other.[64]

In relation to the specific matter of the interpretation of biblical anointing texts, the question of the distinct personal being of the Son and the Holy Spirit arises. Does the fact that doctrinal clarity on the distinct personal identity of the three divine persons came only in the fourth century mean that we should be sceptical about any trinitarian interpretation of the biblical theme of the anointing?

Coffey is aware not only that there is no developed doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, but also that there is not even clarity in the New Testament on whether or how the Holy Spirit should be thought of as distinct from God or, indeed, from Christ. Coffey agrees with those scholars that hold that the term "Holy Spirit" in the New Testament, when read historically, should probably be presumed to be equivalent to "Spirit of God," that is, the "power of God," or "Yahweh himself apprehended in his action."[65] Where New Testament references to the Holy Sprit are personal, he accepts that it is probable that such references were intended by their authors as pointing to the personal dynamic action of God as such, rather than the Holy Spirit as distinct.[66]

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[63] On the "literal meaning" of biblical texts see above at p. 11.

[64] The reader need not infer that such interpretation is arbitrary. One might see here the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides the church into all truth (John 16:13).

[65] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 11. For a general overview of the biblical understanding of the "Spirit of God" see Ibid., 10–11. Elsewhere Coffey writes "It is not possible for any part of the Bible to present the same doctrine of the Holy Spirit as that of the First Council of Constantinople." Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 128; Coffey, "The Palamite Doctrine of God: A New Perspective," 350; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 210.

For a general overview of biblical meanings of the term "Holy Spirit" see Geoffrey Lampe, "Holy Spirit," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bble: Volume 2: E–J*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962); Eduard Schweizer, "Πνευμα, Πνευματικος, Πνεω, Εκπνεω, Θεοπνευστος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 6: Πε – P*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968); F. W. Horn, "Holy Spirit," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary: Volume 3: H – J*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

[66] Coffey distinguishes between the question of the personhood (ontological) and the personality (psychological) of the Holy Spirit. Since the New Testament does not penetrate, he thinks, to an ontological level of discourse, there is no question of there being any recognition in it of a distinct per-

If Coffey is indeed clear that at the level of the literal meaning of the biblical texts, a fully developed trinitarian reading would be anachronistic, the question arises: is he confusing matters by bringing post-New Testament ideas about the distinction of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to a reading of New Testament texts in which such a distinction is only obscurely, if at all, present? The answer is simply stated: in using the trinitarian language of the Father bestowing the Holy Spirit on the Jesus as Son, Coffey is self-consciously offering a *theological interpretation* of the biblical theme of the anointing of Jesus. Recognising a certain primacy of the literal meaning of biblical texts does not mean ruling out the possibility of a theological interpretation of those texts. I will have occasion to comment further on the how he handles the biblical data and the complex manner in which he construes the relationship between this and the theological interpretation he advances. At this stage, it is sufficient to note that in offering a trinitarian reading of the biblical

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sonhood of the Holy Spirit. What traces of a recognition of a personality of the Holy Spirit there are in the New Testament are linked with the "personality" of God or with the "personality" of Christ:

> no distinct personality is awarded him. The content of the experience of the Holy Spirit remains either the Father or Christ; inasmuch as the Father is transcendent and hence ineffable, in practical terms this content must simply be said to be Christ. After the Resurrection, then, the Holy Spirit has a personality, but it is the personality of Christ.

See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 11. See also Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 212.

There are, however, the *beginnings* of an awareness of a real distinctness of the Holy Spirit in the occasional use of personal pronouns of the Spirit, even in the New Testament. The direction of development of doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit is *towards* the recognition of distinction, eventually fully recognised by the Council of Constantinople (381). The direction of thought in relation to Jesus is, conversely, towards unity with God, which flourishes in the *homoousios* of the Council of Nicaea (325).

For expressions of caution about the attribution of even "personality" to the Holy Spirit, see Schweizer, "Πνευμα, Πνευματικος, Πνεω, Εκπνεω, Θεοπνευστος," 433–434.

We might note in passing an important early step in the development towards an awareness of the distinctness of the Holy Spirit, already evident in some New Testament writings, namely the beginnings of an association of the Holy Spirit (the dynamic action of God in the world) with the risen Jesus. After the Resurrection, Jesus is understood by the church's earliest communities to have been transferred to the realm of the Spirit, so that the continuation of the gifts that God makes through Jesus Christ is understood to be mediated by a Spirit that now has taken on the personality of Jesus. See Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ". Coffey refers for this point to J.D.G. Dunn. See James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus as Reflected in the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 318– 326, 350– 357.

Thus we explain the New Testament references to the "Spirit of Christ." Just as the Spirit is identified with the action of God, so too is the Spirit now identified with Jesus Christ.

theme of the anointing of Jesus, Coffey is not engaged in ahistorical eisegesis. With this first clarification, I have introduced the theme of the relation of the biblical texts to the theological interpretation of those texts, a theme to which we will return.

A second clarification addresses the relation between Coffey's theological interpretation in Thesis A and the theological interpretations of the classical trinitarian tradition. Although the language employed in Thesis A is that of classical trinitarian theology (Father, Son and Holy Spirit, understood as distinct divine persons), this language is used in a way that differs in some key respects from that of the classical theological tradition. The more obvious of these will be here mentioned.

First, note the *shape* of Thesis A itself. Classical christological statements typically begin with the idea of the pre-existing divine Son and go on to speak of the Incarnation of this Son as Jesus.[67] The subject here is the pre-existing divine Son. This reflects a logic that contemporary theology describes as "descending." Coffey's statement, in contrast, begins with *Jesus* (rather than the Eternal Son) and describes what happens to Jesus as a result of the bestowal of the Spirit. The subject here is Jesus. Contemporary theology describes such a structure, beginning with Jesus and ending (so to speak) with the Son as "ascending."

Second, note that the Holy Spirit is portrayed as centrally involved in this account of how Jesus is brought into being as "divine Son in humanity." In this too Coffey's statement diverges from the classical approach in Christology, which does not generally invoke the Holy Spirit in accounts of the Incarnation.

Third, Coffey's reading of the biblical theme of the anointing of Jesus employs some unusual expressions: Jesus is said to be "brought into being" as divine

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[67.] The "Second Letter of Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius," which was accepted as official church teaching at the Council of Ephesus (431), exemplifies the typical shape of the statements of classical Christology: "we affirm that the Word, having united to himself according to the *hypostasis (kath' hupostasin)* the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner and was called the Son of man." Translation in *The Christian Faith: Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* ed. Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, 6th Revised and Expanded Edition ed., (New York: Alba House, 1996), 64. Note that the subject is the Word and that no reference to the Spirit is made.

Son "in humanity." As we will see, in speaking of the divine Son "in humanity," Coffey is referring not just to the idea of hypostatic union, but rather to the effect of this union on the humanity of Jesus:[68] the sanctification of that humanity by the Holy Spirit, such that that nature becomes "theandric."[69]

The task now for the remainder of this chapter is to set Coffey's Thesis A in two contexts. First, I will comment on a broader issue: the relation of "Spirit Christology" to "*Logos* Christology." This is important for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that Coffey's distinctive stand on this matter – a matter directly pertinent to our topic – helps us find points of comparison and contrast with some other theologians writing today. Second, I look at something more specific: the question of the grace of Christ.

3. Spirit and Logos Christology

Recent theology often distinguishes two major approaches to the mystery of Christ: Spirit Christologies and *Logos* Christologies,[70] both of which are said to find their origin in the New Testament. *Logos* Christologies build on the use of the symbol of *Logos* or Word of God found in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. This *Logos*, or "incarnational,"[71] approach to christology came to dominate christological thought (and thereby trinitarian thought) for reasons that I will review. In *Logos* Christologies, the *subject*, i.e. the one who becomes incarnate, is the divine *Logos*.

[68.] In training his attention in this way on the human Jesus and on the activity of the Holy Spirit Coffey is not unique: contemporary christology offers many examples of theologians who, in different ways, suggest parallel orientations. The specificity of Coffey's contribution lies, as we will see, not at the level of these general orientations, but in the way in which he reflects on the sanctifying effects of the Holy Spirit on the humanity of Jesus.

[69.] See below at 86f.

[70.] Roger Haight, for instance, writes that "[m]uch of present-day christology can be divided between Word or *Logos* christologies and Spirit christologies." Roger Haight, *The Future of Christology*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 168.

[71.] The Johannine *Logos* becomes "flesh" (John 1:14), so Johannine christology is thought of as incarnational.

The second form of christology under consideration, "Spirit Christology," has attracted the attention of theologians over the last few decades.[72] Spirit Christology is so called because of the close attention it pays to the relation of the Spirit with Jesus the Christ, often appealing to the idea of the Holy Spirit sanctifying the human Jesus as the Christ (= anointed one). For Spirit Christology, the idea of "anointing" often occupies a place analogous to, though not identical with, that of "Incarnation" in *Logos* Christology. Since Spirit Christology is said to find its biblical ground in the synoptic gospels, especially in texts such as the baptism accounts, Spirit Christologies are often thought of as the fruit of synoptic christologies, and as such are sometimes thought of as a scripturally-based alternative to Johannine *Logos* Christologies.

Even on the basis of this brief sketch, we can see in Coffey's Thesis A the outline of what is identifiably a Spirit Christology.[73] Jesus, he writes, is brought into being as "divine Son in humanity" through an anointing or "bestowal" with the Holy Spirit. The subject in this statement is the human Jesus, a subject brought into human existence through anointing, and the biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit is appealed to in the explanation of the divine element in Christ.

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[72] Rosato writes: "cross-disciplinary theological studies are converging on the most ancient of Christologies, the Pneuma-sarx Christology of early Christianity." See Philip Rosato, J., "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise," *Theological Studies* 38, (1977): 423–449.

The literature evidencing this revival of interest in Spirit Christology is vast, and by no means uniform. Alongside the authors given direct attention here see Harold Hunter, "Spirit Christology: Dilemma and Promise (1)," *Heythrop Journal* 24/2, (1983): 127–140; Newman, Paul, *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm*, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987); John J. O'Donnell, "In Him and Over Him: The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus," *Gregorianum* 70, no. 1 (1989): 25–45; Harold Hunter, "The Resurgence of Spirit Christology," *EPTA Bulletin* 11, (1992): 50–57; John McDade, "Jesus and the Spirit," *The Month* 27, (1994): 498–503; Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, (Dowers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1996); Robert Imbelli, "The New Adam and Life–Giving Spirit: The Paschal Pattern of Spirit Christology," *Communio: An International Catholic Review* 25, (1998): 233–252; Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004); Steven Studebaker, "Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology," *Pneuma* 28, (2006): 5–20; Dermot Lane, "Pneumatology in the Service of Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue: A Case of Neglect?," *Louvain Studies* 33, (2008): 136–158.

[73] David Coffey did not use the term "Spirit Christology" of his work initially, but embraced it after Ralph Del Colle described it as such.

Coffey, however, as we will see, does not construe the relationship between *Logos* Christology and Spirit Christology in terms of alternatives, such that one must choose between one and the other. Coffey's variety of Spirit Christology, furthermore, is distinctively a *trinitarian* Spirit Christology. Since these are qualities that distinguish his efforts from some other recent attempts at Spirit Christology, some closer attention should be given to them here.

(a) *Spirit and Logos Christology in Historical Context*

Perhaps the easiest way to present the relationship between Spirit and *Logos* Christologies is by appeal to historical narrative. According to Coffey's version of this narrative, "early Spirit Christology" developed in the period directly following the New Testament period, a period which had not yet arrived at a clear sense of the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit,[74] and therefore remains – in its theology at least – pre-trinitarian.[75] What characterised this early Spirit Christology was the attempt to account for the "divinity" of Jesus in terms of the scriptural idea of the Holy Spirit rather than the *Logos*.

Coffey holds that the earliest forms of such post-biblical Spirit Christology depend on a reformulation of biblical flesh-spirit two-stage Christology. Biblical flesh-spirit two-stage Christology, it will be recalled, presented Jesus as having passed, in the resurrection, from "flesh" to "spirit," as may be found, for instance, in Romans 1:3f and 1 Peter 3:18. In such New Testament christologies, the terms "flesh" and "spirit" had represented modes of existence. Thus, prior to his resurrec-

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[74] As we will see below, there was considerable ambiguity about how the term "Holy Spirit" was to be understood. The clear distinction that later theology sometimes posits between *Logos* and Spirit Christology can tend to break down once we recognise the fact that the terms "Spirit" and "Son" were sometimes used interchangeably. For a general introduction to early forms of Spirit Christology, see M Simonetti, "Note di cristologia pneumatica," *Augustinianum* 12, (1972): 201–232; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (Peabody: Prince Press, 2004), 142–145.

[75] Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, vii. See also Myk Habets, "Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11, (2003): 199–234. The distinction between pre-trinitarian, trinitarian and post-trinitarian Spirit Christology is important if one is to avoid collapsing all Spirit Christologies together. See note 109 on p. 43 below.

tion, Jesus "was" according to the "flesh," but after God raised him, he "moves" to the realm of the "spirit." In such accounts "spirit" had stood for the realm of the power of God but not yet specifically to the Holy Spirit as divine person.

Gradually, however, Coffey points out, in early post-biblical reflection, the meanings of the terms "flesh" and "spirit" began to change. Under the influence of New Testament reflections on pre-existence, interpretations of Jesus were compelled to reckon with the question of how to understand Jesus prior to his birth. Rather than thinking of "flesh" and "spirit" as modes of existence, these words came to be interpreted as *principles of being*.[76] Thus, early Spirit Christologists "took early Two-Stage Christology of the New Testament and transformed it by interpreting it ontologically in the light of the late New Testament Christology of pre-existence."[77] As a result of this effort, Spirit came to be understood as principle of being, rather than as a mode of existence. This inverted the original order of "flesh" to "spirit" found in the two-stage New Testament christologies with "Spirit" now being used to explain the divine status of the pre-existent Jesus.[78] There is, then, a significant change of emphasis between the New Testament two-stage christologies and the early Spirit Christologies, such that the latter begin to consider the Spirit as a candidate "explanation" for the divine element in Jesus.

Thus, in Coffey's view, the possibility of *early* Spirit Christology lies not directly in the New Testament texts referring to the anointing of Jesus, but in a new interpretation of the Holy Spirit's role as a pre-existent principle of being. Neverthe-

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[76] Coffey cites a famous text from Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Ephesians* 7 to illustrate the tendency to take "flesh" and "spirit" as "distinct but compatible principles of being": "there is one physician composed of flesh and spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, authentic life in death, from Mary and from God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord." See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 316.

[77] Ibid., 315.

[78] The texts that Coffey refers to here are 2 Clement: "Christ the Lord, who saved us, being first of all spirit, became flesh." (PG 1:341); Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam* 27 (PL 2:190), where we find that — in Coffey's paraphrase — the Word who is spirit "clothed himself with flesh in the womb of the Virgin"; and Cyprian who writes that at the "Incarnation the Son of God 'descended in the Virgin and as holy spirit clothed himself with flesh' (*Liber de idolorum vanitate.* 11 (PL 4:458–79). I would suggest that the second two texts owe something also to the fact of the very ambiguity of the symbol Holy Spirit, a blurred distinction between the terms Son and Spirit.

less, this more developed sense of the meaning of Spirit does not yet prove that an understanding of the Spirit as distinct personal identity has yet been reached. An important factor in understanding early Spirit Christologies is the great ambiguity surrounds the use of the term "Spirit." Questions, for instance, about how to reconcile New Testament references to the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ remained unanswered. In many cases, what precisely is meant by authors of the period remains unclear.[79]

In the period between the New Testament and the Council of Constantinople, however, greater clarity was achieved in relation to the Holy Spirit. Pneumatological development reached a decisive point with the Council of Constantinople's teaching that the Holy Spirit is "Lord and Giver of Life" to be "worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son."[80] There was no longer at this point any unclarity about the belief that the Holy Spirit was to be conceived as a distinct divine person.[81] Ironically, the context for this development was set by the growing influence not of Spirit Christology, but rather that of *Logos* Christology.

For Coffey, the development and affirmation of *Logos* Christology is best understood in the light of apologetic and dogmatic concerns. As we will see, the apologetic concerns led to the translation of the Johannine idea of *Logos* from the functional language of the New Testament to the ontological language of the Hellenistic culture in dialogue with which the early church was conducting its theological reflection. The dogmatic concerns were soteriologically motivated: a strong

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[79] Denis Edwards summarises the ambiguities around the use of the term "Holy Spirit" as follows: "In this period, there is often no clear distinction between Christ and the Spirit; nor is it always clear that the word *spirit* is referring to the human spirit, to God in an undifferentiated way, or to one of the trinitarian persons." See Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, 76. Such ambiguity is welcomed by some contemporary theologians. See for instance the view of Geoffrey Lampe, for points to the benefits of a "flexible" understanding of "Holy Spirit" at Geoffrey Lampe, *God as Spirit*, (London: SCM Press, 1977), 211–213.

[80] See Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit."

[81] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, (London: SCM Press, 1973), 176. Coffey points out that the idea of the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit could not have been found in the New Testament for the simple reason that the ontological notion of "person" was not available to the biblical authors; the "seeds" of the doctrine, however, are there. See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 12.

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Logos Christology presented itself as more suitable to the task of excluding any drift towards *adoptionist* christologies which would have been interpreted as undermining the significance of Christ and the Christ event as interpreted by the church.

I begin with the apologetic concern. The apologetic concern motivating the increased influence of *Logos,* rather than Spirit, Christology was the church's desire to communicate the message about Jesus in terms amenable to the Hellenistic culture of the day. In its use of the Johannine term *Logos,* it was all but inevitable that this term would quickly come to be interpreted in the ontological categories favoured in that intellectual milieu. In this, the emerging meaning of the term *Logos* differed in register from that found in the New Testament, where, in Coffey's view, it had been intended in a functional manner only.[82] Evidence of the translation of this concept from functional-Semitic into ontological-Hellenistic categories is first found in the writings of Justin Martyr, who understood and presents the symbol of the *Logos* of the Johannine Prologue in ways that bear the mark of Middle Platonism.[83]

Far from engaging in any simplistic critique of the hellenisation of Christian belief,[84] Coffey adopts a balanced approach to the translation from a functional to an ontological interpretation of *Logos*: it brings both challenges and benefits for theology. The challenges associated with this new approach lie on the soteriological

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[82]   Coffey takes this view even more seriously than most biblical scholars, going so far as excluding an ontological interpretation of the Johannine *Logos* as divine. Historically speaking, Coffey believes, the author of the Johannine Prologue must have understood the *Logos* not as a pre-existent divine being, but as a pre-existent human being such as the "son of man" in Daniel 7. See below at p. 36.

[83]   Ibid., 15.

Coffey provides us with no specific reference to the work of Justin here. In the period between the New Testament and Justin, we see adoption of this term by Ignatius of Antioch, though in purely economic terms, without, that is, the ontological resonances that we find in Justin. In the latter's writing, the term *Logos* resonates with Stoic, neo-Platonic as well as Christian meaning. See Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation,* 31. On Justin's trinitarian thought see Willy Rordorf, "La Trinité Dans Les Écrits De Justin Martyr," *Augustinianum* 20, (1980): 285–297.

[84]   The judgement of Quasten on the question of Hellenisation is well-expressed. Speaking of the Apologists, he writes that they were not "Hellenizers in Christian garb. It is rather more correct to "speak therefore of a Christianization of Hellenism but hardly of a Hellenization of Christianity." See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Volume 1: The Beginnings of Patristic Literature,* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1983), 187–188. See also H.D. McDonald, "Development and Christology," *Vox Evangelica* 9, (1975): 5–27.

and pneumatological level, and will be commented on below. On the positive side, this transition can be understood as an authentic development of human reflection on the mystery of Christ. To illustrate this, Coffey borrows the term "immanent dialectic of thought" from Jacques Maritain to indicate that the dynamic underlying the innovation introduced by Justin, even if it was perhaps "concealed from" Justin himself,[85] was nevertheless a valid and fruitful one. Irrespective of how Justin himself understood his use of the term *Logos*, later generations adopted and further developed it in an ontological sense, and alongside the challenges implicit in this transition, the benefits should not be underestimated.

Coffey presents the logic behind this transition on two levels. On a first level, there was a transition from the Semitic cultural world to the Hellenistic cultural world. Coffey embraces the view that the focus of attention in the New Testament is not on God *in se* but rather on God *pro nobis*. Biblical discourse is, for Coffey, *functional* rather than *ontological* in style,[86] as would be expected from the Semitic rather than Hellenistic culture that produced biblical discourse.[87] In the literal meaning of biblical texts, we find consideration not of God's eternal being *in se* but rather a celebration and contemplation of God's work of salvation *pro nobis*.

In the functional language of the bible, Coffey holds the unusual view that the *Logos* of John 1:14 was understood by its author to be pre-existent, but a pre-existent *divine man*.[88] The author did not assume the kind of ontological division

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[85] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 14.

[86] This language is associated with the work of Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1963). See Coffey, "The Incarnation: Fact Not Myth," 17–20; Coffey, "The Pre-Existent and Incarnate Word."; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 12–14.

[87] This is not to say that biblical discourse is without ontological importance. Matthew Levering argues at length for the ontological importance of biblical discourse. See Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*.

[88] Coffey, "The Incarnation: Fact Not Myth," 17–20; Coffey, "The Pre-Existent and Incarnate Word." 12–13; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 12–14. One has to be careful to grasp precisely what Coffey is suggesting. It is that we do not have evidence that the New Testament authors intended to speak of a pre-existent *divine* Son, ontologically different to human beings. Fred Sanders misreports Coffey's view, suggesting that Coffey finds no evidence in the New Testament of a pre-existence of "Christ." See Sanders, "Review of 'Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God'".

Matthew Levering recognises that Coffey's view is not heterodox in itself, since Coffey allows that

between humanity and divinity that later generations brought to this text. It is only in the post-New Testament interpretations of this text that the *Logos* came to be understood as a pre-existing *divine* being, the self-expression of God, who becomes *human*.

On one level, the translation from functional to ontological language was a matter of finding appropriate expression to protect the truth expressed in the biblical texts. This is what we might call the apologetic motive. For Coffey, such a translation was necessary, as without it "the message of the gospels could not be preserved."[89] That such translations occurred was to be expected. The fundamental reality, after all, is the experience of Christ in the resurrection, rather than the written form in which that reality was appropriated and expressed.[90] The original paschal experience is such that it can be expected to receive different translations into human expression: firstly and authoritatively in the New Testament, but also progressively through the history of the church.

Discussing this process of translation, Coffey acknowledges the addition of elements not explicitly present in the bible, but interprets these as enrichments of the translation. Thus, the New Testament offers one translation, authoritative and criteriological, one suited to the functional language and thought forms dominant in the Semitic world. A subsequent translation embraces the different possibilities of

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later interpretation towards a view of the *Logos* as a pre-existent *divine Logos*, is itself a valid *development*. Levering however notes that Coffey's view on this matter does not find support among biblical scholars. See Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, 146f.

Coffey is aware of the biblical scholarship and mounts a detailed defence of his view, which is found especially in Coffey, "The Pre-Existent and Incarnate Word." The responsibility of the theologian, Coffey insists, is to be informed about the current state of scripture scholarship, but this does not mean that the theologian may not differ from the consensus, as long as that view is well-grounded and well-reasoned.

[89]   Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 15. The allusion here, clearly, is to the danger that Jesus Christ might be understood to be creature, a conclusion that would undermine for the Greek mind the New Testament's confidence (expressed there in Semitic terms) that Jesus is saviour. The motivation here expressed is soteriological.

[90]   We may recall here the theology of revelation evident in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, which replaces any propositionalist approach with an approach based on God's self-communication.

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expression offered by the Greek ontological worldview and can be regarded as, in some ways, an enrichment of the original translation.[91] Coffey expresses this in the following terms:

> This New Testament doctrine of the Trinity, as we may call it, is not something given to the first Christian communities in the first instance in words. It is given in the event of Christ as experienced in the power of his Resurrection. The words are found only later, to give appropriate expression to this transcendental experience of salvation.[92]

The development of an ontological interpretation of the Christ event is therefore, in the first place, understood in terms of the ongoing process of translating the meaning of the Christ event into ever more suitable language.[93]

On another level, the "immanent dialectic" that led Justin and those following him to interpret the biblical symbol of the *Logos* in ontological terms should be understood as more than merely a question of finding the most suitable language to communicate meanings already grasped. It should also be taken as representing a *deeper* penetration into the theological meaning of this salvation history. The soteriological meaning which is emphasised in the New Testament is now interpreted as uncovering a properly *theological* meaning: the Christ event reveals not just God's saving action, but something of God in Godself.

The transposition from the functional categories of the New Testament to the ontological ones of later patristic thought may best be understood as an act of "hermeneusis."[94] In this act of hermeneusis there is both an intellectual as well as a spir-

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[91.] Coffey recognises that while something is gained with such a translation, something is also lost. What is lost is the connection between being and action that Semitic thought forms offered. The disadvantage of this subsequent Hellenistic translation is, therefore, that it encourages a distance between theology and soteriology.

[92.] Ibid., 12.

[93.] Coffey writes: "Revelation is not words dropping like rain from heaven. It is always man's attempt to understand and express; the divine element of it is simply grace. Hence these attempts, even when normative as in the bible, can always be improved on." Coffey and Hill, "Demythologization: For and Against," 35.

[94.] See, for example, Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 202; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 14. Coffey is influenced in his use of the term "hermeneusis" especially by E. Schillebeeckx. He expands on this theme especially in his somewhat controversial writings in defence of the orthodoxy of the Dominican writer's approach to the resurrection of the body of Jesus. See especially Coffey, "A Reply to Bishop J. Cullinane on the Resurrection of Jesus"; Coffey, "A Further Reply to Bishop J. Cullinane on the Resurrection of Jesus and Catholic Orthodoxy"; John Cullinane, "Review Article: The Resurrection of Jesus and

itual *ascent* from the world to God.[95] The dynamic by which such a richer translation comes about is evidence that the church continues to engage with the mystery of Christ as a living, rather than simply as a past event. The section quoted above continues:

> Thus, the ultimate (eschatological) salvation that comes from God and consists, as we would say today, in his very self-communication, actually came to them in the person of Jesus, not, however, from Jesus as he was remembered in the 'flesh' (*sarx*), but rather from the same Jesus as he exists and acts now, in the 'spirit' (*pneuma*). Therefore, for them the concept of God that they had inherited from Judaism had to be expanded to include both Jesus (confessed now as 'the Christ') and the Holy Spirit. Baptism, the rite of entry into the community of salvation, was performed not just in the name of God, but 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 2.38), or, to put it more comprehensively, 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 28.19).[96]

The translation from biblical categories to ontological categories is thus understood both as an expression of dialogue or inculturation, but also as representing the attempt at a *deeper* understanding of the meaning of the Christ event and the ongoing experience of the Spirit in the church than may perhaps have been found in the earlier translation found in the New Testament.[97] This may be held without prejudice to the unique authority of scripture, which in all cases retains foundational and criteriological value.

Catholic Orthodoxy," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 58, (1981): 91–100; John Cullinane, "Resurrection and Orthodoxy: Response to Dr Coffey's Reply," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 58, (1981): 290–299. Since the question of Coffey's approach to the bodily resurrection of Jesus in itself does not impact on our topic it is safe to ignore it here.

[95] This fact "more than justifies the recent trend to ascending Christology among Catholic as well as Protestant theologians." Coffey contrasts his approach to that of Karl Barth, who relies on an "outmoded exegesis, for example, in regard to John 1.14" to justify a view of the Trinity rooted directly in the New Testament itself. See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 19.

[96] Ibid., 12. A small detail may be noted in the way Coffey approaches the two forms of baptism documented in the New Testament. The second is described as being more "comprehensive" than the first. This represents a simple instance of a pattern that we find throughout Coffey's thought: two positions may be true, but one may be more "comprehensive" than the other. This is the basic relation that he will present between the procession and the return model of the Trinity. See Chapter Five below.

[97] John Farrelly expresses a similar attitude when he writes that "the early church began to realize that it needed to interpret Jesus' ministry in a trinitarian context to be able to understand its meaning, source, effect, and uniqueness. The mystery of the Trinity is no superfluous appendix to Jesus' ministry, but this ministry in its depth. We cannot understand the source of the proclamation he offers us or the salvation he offers us except through a full trinitarian interpretation." Farrelly, *The Trinity: Rediscovering the Central Christian Mystery*, 130.

Beyond the apologetic motivations and immanent dialectic propelling theological development towards a deeper penetration of the mystery of Christ, Coffey is also alert to the influence of certain dogmatic concerns that helped confirm the shift away from early Spirit Christology and towards an ontologically conceived *Logos* Christology. The necessity of a decisive move beyond the functional modes of expression associated with the New Testament and implicit still in early forms of Spirit Christology came to centre on the issues first, of *adoptionism* and then, of *subordinationism*. In part, the issue of *adoptionism*[98] had already been addressed in the New Testament itself,[99] but this work continues throughout the early period of christological reflection. The challenge of responding effectively to the issue of adoptionism led the church eventually to prefer accounts of the uniqueness of Jesus structured around the idea of the *Logos*, rather than that of the Spirit. From this point of view, the difficulty with the early Spirit Christologies was that they did not appear to offer convincing ways to account for the *unicity* of Jesus. Thus, if what explains the divine element in Christ is the particular presence of the Holy Spirit, then what grounds are there for believing that the Holy Spirit might not be equally

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[98] The term "adoptionism" is sometimes used to describe an early christological position, such as may have been held by the Ebionites. The terms is also sometimes used to describe a later more "Nestorian" approach, sometimes called "Spanish Adoptionism," which is quite a distinct tendency, and is mentioned briefly below at note 133. By adoptionism here, I refer to the earlier form of adoptionism.

[99] Concern at the possibility of soteriologically inadequate adoptionist christologies is evident in the New Testament. In places, Paul speaks of Jesus being made Son at the resurrection. The gospels provide different narrative starting points, backing progressively away from this adoptionist suggestion. The earliest gospel, Mark, pushes Jesus' sonship back to the beginning of his public ministry, with Jesus appearing to be declared Son at his baptism. The gospels of Matthew and Luke move this starting point back to the conception of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel begins in a time outside time, with a pre-existent *Logos*.

present to other human beings?[100] On the face of it, *Logos* Christology offers a way around this perceived difficulty, with the claim that God's "only Son" has become incarnate in Jesus.

(b) Spirit and/or Logos Christology

The rise of this ontologically interpreted *Logos* Christology had a profound effect on the fortunes of early Spirit Christology. Simply stated: *Logos* Christology eclipsed the early Spirit Christology.[101] For all its apologetic and theological advantages this development had the disadvantage that it tended to obscure any particular role for the Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus.[102] As a result of the church's concern about adoptionism, any role attributed to the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ tended consequently to be understood as second in importance to Christ's identity as *Logos* incarnate.[103] This reading is apparently strengthened by New Testament references to Jesus sending the Spirit (John 15:26), since Jesus here appears to have authority over the Spirit rather than gaining his authority from the Spirit.[104]

Having stated this difficulty, we should also note that the emergence of a strongly developed symbol of the *Logos* is also historically linked to what should be considered a significant gain for pneumatology. The adoption of the *Logos* was the historical motor that led to the (indirect) affirmation of the Holy Spirit as dis-

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[100.] John McDade writes that in the post-New Testament period the Spirit ceased being the "decisive category in Christology" because of a "repeated suspicion that Spirit Christology is likely to be an ambiguous and inadequate account of Jesus' identity." McDade, "Jesus and the Spirit," 498. He offers three rules that together determine christology: one must give a "maximal" account of Jesus, one must not compromise monotheism, one must not compromise the humanity of Jesus. It appears that Spirit Christology is most likely to fall at the first of these hurdles, while *Logos* Christology is more likely to fall at the third.

[101.] Del Colle writes that "orthodox trinitarianism is in part the result of the displacement of Spirit-christology by Logos-christology in the ancient church." See Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, 92.

[102.] It is important to emphasise that it "tends" to obscure this role. It does not necessarily obscure a particular role of the Holy Spirit. The key issue for a trinitarian Spirit Christology, such as what we find in David Coffey's work is how to hold to the validity and fruitfulness of *Logos* Christology, but also to find a particular role for the Holy Spirit in the understanding of Christ.

[103.] This point is expanded below at p. 52f.

[104.] It may also be suggested that the universal quality of the *Logos* idea as found in Justin left little space for the idea of a Spirit.

tinct person, equal with Father and Son in divinity at the Council of Constantinople (381): as soon as the matter of the oneness in being of the *Logos* with God was addressed by the Council of Nicaea (325), the matter of the Holy Spirit inevitably rose to prominence. The existence from earliest times of formulae of prayer, and especially baptismal formulae,[105] invoking God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, saw to that. While the explicit teaching of the Council of Constantinople relates to the equality in divinity of the Holy Spirit, it implicitly but decisively canonises the understanding of the Holy Spirit as a *distinct* divine person. The reality of the hypostatic *distinction* of the Holy Spirit is given clear expression in the idea of "procession" ("he proceeds from the Father").

The reader might recognise the historical irony here, an irony unveiled by Coffey's reading of the history, but one about which he does not directly comment. On the one hand, the story of the affirmation of *Logos* Christology is the story of the lamentable displacing and obscuring of the Spirit in christology. On the other hand, the affirmation of *Logos* Christology in fact set the stage for what in some ways might appear to be a more robust pneumatology than was possible in the period of the early Spirit Christologists: it declares not just the equality in divinity of the Holy Spirit but also the hypostatic distinctness of the Holy Spirit. The outcome of this history, then, is ambiguous. The Holy Spirit is now recognised not just as coequal in divinity with the Father and the Son, but also is recognised as a distinct person. This recognition however comes at a cost: the rise of *Logos* Christology obscured the early Spirit Christologies, and consequently left theology without a clear

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[105] According to William Hill, in some cases, the retention of reference to the Holy Spirit was due to little more than "a sense of reverence for the traditional [baptismal] triadic formula." Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, 32.

sense of a distinct role of the Spirit in the Christ event or, more generally, in the economy of salvation as a whole.[106] In effect, the theological locus of pneumatology moves from christology to trinitarian theology.

Despite these challenges it is clear that Coffey's basic attitude towards the development of this idea of trinitarian persons is positive. He sees in it an instance of doctrinal development.[107] Lest this position appear unworthy of mention, it will be valuable to review briefly an alternative approach, that exemplified by those authors whom we can call post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists.[108] These authors conceive of Spirit Christology primarily as the retrieval of the ancient Spirit Christology that we have discussed above.[109] Among these authors we include Hendrikus

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[106] And, since there is no other ground for building a pneumatology than the economy of salvation, it threatens to leave pneumatology itself without a clear starting point. This is the guiding theme that frames Coffey's treatment of the issue of the proper mission of the Holy Spirit as found in Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 10–42.

[107] The idea that there could be doctrinal development was clearly held in the fourth century, but came to be doubted in the period between Vincent of Lerins (+ c. 445) and Bossuet (1627–1704). In more recent theology a range of approaches to this question have emerged, and a "presumption in its favour" is judged to have been established. See J.H. Walgrave, "Doctrine, Development of," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 4: Com – Dyn*, ed. Berard Marthalar, (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2003).

Coffey thinks that there should be no difficulty for Catholics in accepting that positions not explicit in the New Testament can be made explicit in later theology. He roots the plausibility of doctrinal development in the teaching that scripture and tradition are one single source. He cites *Dei verbum* §9 to this effect in Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 14. See also Coffey, "The Claim of Catholicism," 46.

[108] The distinction between pre-trinitarian, trinitarian and post-trinitarian Spirit Christology is important if one is to avoid collapsing all Spirit Christologies together. The term "post-trinitarian" Spirit Christology is found in Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, vii. See also Habets, "Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo". Steven Studebaker cites Haight as a prominent example of "Spirit Christology conducted without adherence to traditional trinitarian theology. See Studebaker, "Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology," 7.

One author who fails to distinguish the different types of Spirit Christology, concluding that no Spirit Christology is compatible with Christian orthodoxy is Harold Hunter. Hunter, although he states that there is no consensus between authors as to what precisely is meant by Spirit Christology, consciously reserves the term for those authors whose work displays among other traits the rejection of classical trinitarianism. Hunter, "Spirit Christology: Dilemma and Promise (1)," 127.

There is no good reason, however, to reserve the term Spirit Christology to authors who reject classical trinitarianism.

[109] See p. 32f. above.

Berkhof, Geoffrey Lampe and Roger Haight.[110] This comparison will allow us to make some preliminary observations about Coffey's general attitude towards theological tradition and development of doctrine.

Alongside many similarities between the broad lines along which Coffey and these post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists construct their accounts of the rise and decline of early Spirit Christology, there are also important differences. These differences depend to a large extent on the ways in which the fruits of historical research are handled, and the way in which the primacy of scripture is understood. The question of how historical research impacts on pneumatology and trinitarian theology arises because, as stated above, contemporary theology differs from traditional theology in its recognition that one cannot depend on the literal meaning of biblical texts for clear guidance about the distinctness of divine persons. In this context, the question of the theological weight of the literal meaning of biblical texts gains particular significance. If scripture retains primacy within theology,[111] and if the literal meaning of biblical texts is granted a criteriological function,[112] then the question arises: what is the impact of these positions on pneumatology and trinitarian theology? How do we deal with the absence of a clear idea of trinitarian persons in the New Testament?

We have seen that Coffey's approach to these matters allows for the validity of doctrinal development, such that certain interpretations of the biblical data are allowed authoritative function in theology. The approach exemplified by Berkhof, Lampe and Haight is rather different. These authors offer substantially the same account of the "literal meaning" of the symbol "Holy Spirit" in scripture as we find in Coffey, but they do so with a different emphasis. Where Coffey had been content to concede that there is not *yet* a developed sense of the personal distinctness of the

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[110.] Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, (London: Epworth Press, 1965); Lampe, *God as Spirit*; Roger Haight, "The Point of Trinitarian Theology," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4, (1988): 191–204; Roger Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *Theological Studies* 53, (1992): 257–287; Roger Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999).

[111.] *Dei Verbum* §24.

[112.] On the "literal meaning" of biblical texts, see above p. 11.

Holy Spirit, these authors go beyond this to imply that the biblical text somehow specifically mandates an *exclusion* of any idea of personal distinctness. Geoffrey Lampe writes of the Old Testament understanding of God as Spirit:

> In speaking now of God as Spirit we are not referring to an impersonal influence, an energy transmitted by God but distinct from himself. Nor are we indicating a divine entity or hypostasis which is a third person of the Godhead. We are speaking of God himself, his personal presence, as active and related.[113]

These authors hold that the same understanding continues to obtain in the New Testament. As they present it, any change in this basic scriptural understanding of the Holy Spirit would betoken a downgrading of the status of the Holy Spirit. Their argument is that, given Jewish monotheism, if the Holy Spirit was to be understood as in any way distinct from God, then this could only mean that the Spirit was inferior.

While Berkhof, Lampe and Haight present a broadly similar narrative of the rise and fall of early forms of Spirit Christology as that found in Coffey, they manifest a significantly different attitude towards these events. Where Coffey was prepared to find both challenges and opportunities in these developments, the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists discussed here adopt a more negative view of this story. The rise of ontologically conceived *Logos* Christology is understood by these authors as a grave mistake in the history of theology. Haight, for instance, presents this mistake as a misunderstanding of the literary device of personification found in the bible. "Personification," as Haight explains it, involves qualities of God sometimes being presented as though they were persons. What Coffey regards as doctrinal development, namely, the emergence of the idea of divine persons, Haight regards as the mistaken "hypostatization" of what the biblical authors would never have thought of as ontologically distinct in any sense.[114]

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[113] Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 208. See also Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 13–17; Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 447–448.

[114] Haight writes of the process of "personification" being transformed into "hypostatisation." See Ibid., 257, 437–238, 475. Haight writes: "Jewish tradition was quite familiar with the personification of various symbols representing God's action in the world. A most influential example of this is the personification of God's wisdom or *Sophia*. But whereas personification is recognized as figurative speech, hypostatization represents a certain literalization of it. Hypostatization means the making of

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Apart from the matter of the loss of the biblical perspective, these post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists lament the damaging effects of the outcome of this loss of the biblical perspective. These authors object to what they see as the challenge to biblical monotheism implicit in the "hypostatization" of the symbols of Son and Holy Spirit. Let Lampe voice their concerns:

> The adoption of the concept of the pre-existent Son as the dominant model for Christology meant not only that "Spirit" came to be reduced in meaning from a way of speaking about God in his activity to a name for a third, and something like an extra, divine hypostasis, but also that the *Logos* became conceptualised in human terms as Jesus. One effect of this was to make it seem plausible to give to the term "person," which in its theological use referred to purely relational distinctions within the divine unity, the full meaning which it received in Boethius' definition: "an individual substance of a rational nature." The Christian concept of God then becomes inescapably tritheistic; for three "persons" in anything like the modern sense of the word "person" mean in fact three Gods.[115]

Berkhof writes with frustration about the very existence of the idea of divine persons:

> the confused and confusing phrase "the three persons of the Trinity" is still used. It is no use to maintain it any longer, especially since this formula from the very beginning has functioned not as a power of unity but as a source of confusion.[116]

This idea represents for him an innovation, unfounded in scripture.

The fact that these authors regret the emergence of an idea of "person" understood as indicating some sort of distinction in God does not mean that they understand themselves to be rejecting the church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. The

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an idea or a concept or a figure of speech into a real thing or entity." Ibid 475.

[115] Lampe, *God as Spirit*, 135–136.

[116] Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 115. A defence of the language of "person" and its coherence with the biblical tradition may be found in Lawrence B. Porter, "On Keeping 'Persons' in the Trinity," *Theological Studies* 41, (1980): 530–548.

An interesting article has recently been published documenting an unusual reluctance among Dutch theologians to deal with the theme of the Trinity. See Gijsbert and Stephan Van Erp Van Den Brink, "Ignoring God Triune? The Doctrine of the Trinity in Dutch Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2009): 72–90. In that article, Berkhof is said to have played an important role in establishing this Dutch reluctance to deal with the theme of the Trinity. It is interesting that for Berkhof, an important reason motivating his position is the desire to read Jesus in terms of his humanity. As a project, therefore, he shares something with Coffey's view, especially as the latter emerges in Chapter Two of this study. It is not important for current purposes to attempt a sustained comparison and contrast of the views of Coffey in relation to these thinkers. There are nevertheless significant points in common, but even more significant points of contrast between them.

church council that most directly addresses the question of the Holy Spirit, the Council of Constantinople (381), is understood by them as an important achievement. The achievement of this council, however, as they read it, was to ensure that the Spirit of God was understood to be truly divine, against the Pneumatomachians and in defence of the soteriological claims of Christianity. This was, in Berkhof's view, the main import of Athanasius' teaching. The latter had written:

> If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we would have no fellowship with God in him; in that case we would be connected with a creature and we would be alien to the divine nature, so that we in no sense would have fellowship with it.[117]

The emphasis in Athanasius' teaching and in that of the Council of Constantinople thus lies, Berkhof claims, on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. He is not equally influenced by the fact that the Holy Spirit, thus understood to be divine, is understood by the Council Fathers to be hypostatically distinct. That being the case, the assertion by the Council that the Holy Spirit is divine amounts, for Berkhof, not to a recognition of the divinity of the third person, but to an assertion that God's action in the world is truly divine (in some sense), or – to use a typically Haightian expression – that it is truly God who acts in the world.

Nor do these authors believe themselves guilty of doing away with the doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, they see themselves as helping do away with the confusions introduced into that doctrine by the idea of a tripersonal God. It would be worth enquiring whether what they propose might not suitably be regarded as a form of epistemologically motivated modalism. Thus, for Haight, there is still some value in the doctrine of the Trinity as long as we don't take the language of persons literally. He writes:

> one may understand the doctrine of the trinity as religious language, as not affirming two and then three distinct and coequal elements within the Godhead, but as affirming a dramatic view of a God who saves. God symbolized as Father, Son, and Spirit is one God [....][118]

[117.] *Epistula 1 ad Serapionem*, 24. He also quotes Basil the Great, *Epistulae*, no. 8, par. 10 to the same effect.

[118.] Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 485.

Whatever one might make of such an approach to the doctrine of the Trinity, it should be clear that it is not trinitarian in the ordinary sense of this word. There is thus clear warrant for characterising such approaches as "post-trinitarian" Spirit Christology.

I argue that the difference between Coffey and the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists lies not in their respective openness to the yield of historical study as such, but in broader questions of theological method. In the case of the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists here reviewed the literal meaning of biblical texts is accorded not just primacy but also a criteriological function such that meanings that go beyond the literal meaning of biblical texts are judged deficient.[119] Historical method does not of itself mandate such a judgement.[120] In Coffey's theology, the attempt to establish the literal sense of the biblical texts is equally important, but he allows for the possibility of the development of doctrine in post-biblical times. He critically reads this development with the historical-mindedness that contemporary theological method requires.

[119.] There appears to be a curious form of *sola scriptura* in operation here. While such a stance may not be surprising when found in authors like Berkhof and Lampe, it is more unusual to find it in a Catholic author like Roger Haight.

[120.] Lonergan thinks of responsible history taking place between the extremes of "anachronism" and "archaism." He writes:

> [...P]rior to the emergence of historical-mindedness, one had the alternatives of anachronism and archaism. The anachronist attributed to scripture and to the Fathers an implicit grasp of what the Scholastics discovered. The archaist, on the other hand, regarded as a corruption any doctrine that was not to be found in the plain meaning of either scripture or of scripture and patristic tradition."

See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), 312. It would seem that the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists tend towards archaism. However one might judge the details of Coffey's historical reconstruction, it should be judged successful in escaping either of these extremes.

I do not here imply that nothing in Coffey's historical narrative is open to question. Historians of doctrine might wish to raise issues with Coffey's narrative.[121] The point here is, rather, that Coffey's approach is no less historically-minded than that of the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists.

If the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists deny the validity of the doctrinal development that flourished as the doctrine of the Trinity, it is more due to some form of archaism (privileging of the literal meaning of biblical texts and excluding the validity of later developments in interpretation) than to any greater openness on their part to the fruits of historical method as such.

Coffey's contribution to the matter of Spirit Christology and *Logos* Christology, however, is not limited to a defence of *Logos* Christology and the related doctrine of the Trinity. In point of fact, what I am calling Thesis A shows his intention to move beyond the classical theology in a number of significant ways. As the comments above have made clear, in his reaction to the great councils, Coffey sees both positive and negative aspects in the classical approach. He accepts the classical theology that develops from the councils as somehow a *datum* for theology, but he does not think that theology is thereby limited to the ongoing explication of those councils. His theology is not an apologetic for classical theology. The doctrinal definitions are neither simply end nor simply beginning.[122]

I argue that Coffey's motivation for proposing a move beyond the traditional theology of the Trinity is itself biblically motivated, though he does not embrace what I have called the "archaism" of the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists. As it happens, there is an important sense in which Coffey does take the biblical texts as criteriological, though it is not at all the same sense in which they were taken as cri-

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[121] Ayres, for instance, notes that Coffey is among the few recent systematic theologians to note the important challenges to the standard readings of the debates of the fourth century, though Ayres is unhappy with his engagement with the implications of these challenges. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, 385.

[122] Here we recall Rahner's famous title: "Chalcedon: End or Beginning." Karl Rahner, "Chalkedon – Ende Oder Anfang?," in *Das Konzil Von Chalkedon Vol. 3*, ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, (Würzburg: 1954).

teriological by the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists. For Coffey, many of the difficulties with the classical theology of the church derive from its unbalanced appropriation of the biblical witness. I have already stated that *Logos* Christology tends to regard itself as rooted in Johannine christology, while attempts at Spirit Christology tend to root themselves in synoptic christologies. For Coffey it was the dominance of *Logos* Christology that led to the historical neglect[123] of the resources of synoptic christology. He finds in the following words of Edward Schillebeeckx a confirmation of this concern:

> From the Council of Nicaea onwards one particular Christological model – the Johannine – has been developed within very narrow limits and one direction; and in fact only this tradition has made history in the Christian churches. For that reason the course of history has never done justice to the possibilities inherent in the synoptic model; its peculiar dynamic was checked and halted and the model relegated to the "forgotten truths" of Christianity.[124]

Coffey accepts the challenge implicit in Schillebeeckx's diagnosis, and attempts in his theological project to address this imbalance, not by substituting the synoptic model for the Johannine one, but rather by working towards a synthesis of the two. He expresses confidence that the results of his enterprise will ultimately be acceptable as long as they are firmly based on the New Testament itself. In 2005, Coffey comments in retrospect on the impact of Schillebeeckx's diagnosis on his own theological project. He writes of the conviction that the:

> Gospel according to John was not the only Gospel: the New Testament canon contained three additional ones; and a truly balanced trinitarian theology required that it be based on the entirety of the word of God, not just on one

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[123] It might be better to express this neglect of certain dimensions of the New Testament witness in more benevolent terms. Roger Haight obliges: speaking of the appropriation by theology of the full range of New Testament christological approaches he writes that "[i]n the past, these differences were not emphasized, but seem to have been considered accidental to the overwhelmingly central point that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ of God, who eventually came to be recognized as the Logos and Son incarnate. It is characteristic of our historically conscious culture to recognize the real differences in the various appreciations of Jesus that were generated in different communities, by different authors, writing in different situations, with a different set of interpretive categories, to address different questions or problems. The differences among New Testament christologies are such that these many christologies cannot be reduced to one overarching paradigm; to do so would be precisely to negate the distinctiveness of each one." See Haight, *The Future of Christology*, 167.

[124] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 570. Coffey refers to this observation of Schillebeeckx in Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 231; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 222; Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 46–47.

part of it. I was confident that nothing contrary to orthodoxy would emerge from this exercise, because just as different theologies coexist within the one canon of Scripture, so too could different theologies that were logically and historically dependent on them.[125]

We have not yet explicitly come to Coffey's trinitarian theology as such, but Coffey's intention to follow through the Spirit Christology project to its trinitarian consequences is clear.

The terms "synoptic" and "Johannine" are here used as a kind of shorthand. All four gospels are complex documents and no one of them can be reduced to a single position on the coming to be Christ of Jesus. Much less can the three synoptic gospels be accurately summarised by a statement of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the anointing of Jesus. These terms will function as a shorthand not for the gospels as a whole, but just for their use of Logos vs Spirit explanations of the "divine element" in Jesus. Further ahead, we will see that Coffey returns to John's gospel in the development of his own trinitarian model. We should not, in brief, take these terms too strictly.

In brief, though Coffey would count himself among Spirit Christologists, he is clear in his rejection of any simple return to pre-Nicene Spirit Christologies.[126] Coffey argues that a Spirit Christology that includes a Logos Christology is better than one that conceives of itself as an alternative explanation of the divine element in Christ. Conversely, a Logos Christology is illuminated by a trinitarian Spirit Christology.[127] Coffey's Spirit Christology recognises the positive value of *Logos* Christology that developed, and the doctrine of the Trinity that grew from it. He accepts the church's development of a belief in the Holy Spirit as distinct third divine person as expressed in those same councils. He regrets, however, the obscuring of the Spirit Christology perspective that the New Testament also offers. His theology

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[125.] Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 47.

[126.] See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 105; Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 315–338.

[127.] Ibid., 317–319. The term "trinitarian" here, as elsewhere in this chapter, simply means accepting of the idea of three divine persons, not in the literal meaning of the New Testament texts, but as a valid development on the basis of those texts.

represents an attempt systematically to reconcile the divergent strands in New Testament christology, and to do this in dialogue with classical christology. A trinitarian Spirit Christology, for Coffey, will be more comprehensive in its appropriation of the biblical witness than either the traditional *Logos* Christology or a post-trinitarian Spirit Christology that too rashly denies the positive developments that flourished as the doctrine of the Trinity.

Let these comments suffice as an introduction to Coffey's project of developing a trinitarian Spirit Christology. We now move closer to the matter at hand by briefly setting his Thesis A in a narrower context: the question of the grace of Christ.

4. The Grace of Christ

How the Western tradition dealt with the matter of the grace of Christ can be thought of as an application of the preference for *Logos* Christology described above. Thesis A states that the anointing with the Holy Spirit brings about the "Son in humanity." Comparing this with the Western approach to the question of the grace of Christ will help bring out the distinctiveness of Coffey's proposal and further clarify some of the systematic issues that his proposed synthesis with the classical position will have to face.

(a) Grace and Christ in the Western Tradition

The specific question of the "grace of Christ" in the Western tradition asked whether Jesus received grace, and how such grace was related to his divine being. For the Western tradition, the issue of the grace of Christ was a complex one. We have already noted the church's concern to avoid any christology that would account for the divine in Christ simply in terms of grace. Among the advantages of *Logos* Christology was the clarity it brought to the question of the unicity of Christ. In establishing this unicity, the difference between Jesus Christ and other human

beings was understood to be established by the Incarnation of the *Logos* in person, and not by the "quantity" of grace received. *Logos* Christology thus presented itself, among other things, as an effective protection against any form of "degree" christology.[128] The theological tradition, for these reasons, tended to treat talk of grace in relation to Christ only with caution.

Despite this caution, the theological tradition did not conclude that Christ did not receive grace. Instead it distinguished two graces in relation to Christ. The first of these graces was the grace of the Incarnation itself, identified with the assumption of a human nature by the Eternal Son. An influential reflection on the question of the grace of Christ is found in the thought of St. Augustine, who explored an analogy between the gracing of the human nature of Jesus and the gracing of ordinary human beings. Augustine argued that just as the human nature of Jesus did not deserve to be assumed by the *Logos* as Christ, so too ordinary human beings do not deserve to be reborn as Christians. The Incarnation itself is thus thought of as a grace received by the human nature of Jesus.[129] If the first grace was the grace of the Incarnation, the second grace[130] was the grace that the tradition associated with the anointing of Jesus. Reflection on this second grace of Christ was linked to the reflection that the humanity of Christ received by grace all that the divine nature of Christ had by nature.[131] Thus, the biblical theme of the anointing of Jesus was interpreted as reception by his human nature of all that as Son he had by virtue of his divine nature.

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[128] Paul Molnar accuses Coffey of adopting what he calls (following Gunton) Rahner's "degree Christology," along with a number of other errors. For Molnar's concerns about Coffey's christology and some responses to these concerns, see below at p. 90f.

[129] See Augustine, *De Praed Sanct.* 15, quoted by Thomas in ST, III, q. 2 a. 10 *sed contra.* See also Augustine, Enchiridion, 36. English at Augustine of Hippo, *The Augustine Catechism: Enchiridion of Faith, Hope and Love,* ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Bruce Harbert, The Augustine Series, vol. 1, (New York: New City Press, 2002), 66–67.

[130] This terminology should not be confused with that used by Yarnold, where he speaks of creation as a first gift and "grace" as a second gift. Edward Yarnold, *The Second Gift: A Study of Grace,* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1974).

[131] This step was traditionally attributed to Ambrose and Augustine, though on uncertain textual evidence. See T.E. Clark, "Hypostatic Union, Grace of," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 7: Hol – Jub,* ed. Berard Marthalar, (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2003).

On this basis, the traditional christology of the West structured its discussion of the grace of Christ around the distinction of two graces: the grace that was the *Logos* in person, and the graces received by the human nature of Christ.[132] The gracing of the human nature of Jesus was understood to be analogous with the grace received by ordinary human beings. The first grace was termed the "substantial" grace of Christ (the grace of union, identified with the eternal Son) was unique to Jesus Christ, while the other graces were termed the "habitual" or "sanctifying" graces, graces that Christ shared with all other human beings.[133]

It is not difficult to see that such a structure represents an attempt to accommodate the impulses that lie behind a Spirit Christology within the dominating paradigm of a *Logos* Christology. The plain fact is that the New Testament does give us accounts of Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism, of the Holy Spirit resting on him, driving him, guiding him, and later speaks of his having a role in sending the Holy Spirit (from which it is concluded that he possessed the Spirit). Having adopted the *Logos* as the primary explanation of the divine element in Jesus, it was to be expected that the tradition would have to find some way of accommodating the gift of the Holy Spirit. References, then, to the Holy Spirit resting on Jesus and remaining on him and so on were understood as references to "habitual" sanctification, and this was regarded as "accidental."

With this framework in place, theology fielded questions about why, or indeed whether Jesus Christ might need "habitual" grace. Since the assumption of the human nature by the *Logos* appeared to be sufficient to explain his divinity, such questions were often answered with reference to the *perfection* of Christ's human nature. According to the doctrine of Chalcedon, the hypostatic union did not in-

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[132] The discussion of the grace of Christ in the second sense, i.e. the grace received by the human nature of Jesus Christ came to be of some importance in the refutation of the 8th century Spanish Adoptionists, who claimed that the eternal Son was Son by nature, but the human nature of Jesus was Son by adoption only, a position that was regarded as a form of Nestorianism. The tradition responded to this idea much as it had to the classical form of Nestorianism by excluding any speech of two sons: there is only one Son, the person of the Eternal *Logos*.

[133] On this matter, see also Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 146–147.

volve a confusion of the human nature of Jesus with the divine nature. The argument was that if ordinary human beings are perfected by habitual sanctifying grace, then will not the same be true of Jesus Christ as perfect man?[134] A second answer to this question appealed to the idea of Christ as mediator of graces to ordinary human beings. Christ is mediator of grace, and so it was appropriate that he should possess grace so as to be able to communicate it to ordinary human beings.[135]

Most interesting, given that the ultimate focus of the current study will be on trinitarian theology, was a third answer. A point from the classical trinitarian theology of the West was invoked to respond to this christological matter. The Western theology of the Trinity held that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son: the *filioque*. If grace is thought of as the gift of the Holy Spirit (even if by appropriation[136] only), then it was thought to be fitting that the order (*taxis*) implied by the *filioque* be reflected in the case of the gracing of Christ. Hence, the Son (incarnate in Jesus) was understood to send the Holy Spirit not just on the church, but even on the human nature that he himself had assumed. The order of activity of the second and third divine persons was understood in this theological tradition to be fixed by the *filioque*: since the Son was involved in sending the Spirit, the Son must come first.[137] Following this line of reasoning, it was clear that the grace of union (invoking the *Logos*) must precede the sanctifying grace (appropriated to the Holy Spirit). There will be occasion to return to this final point in the context of a discussion of the relation of christology and trinitarian theology. For the moment, we can at least note that the idea of deducing conclusions for christology from premises in trinitarian theology will today strike many as untenable from the point of view of theological method.

[134.] In *Summa theologiae*, III q. 7, a. 1 ad 1 Thomas writes: "the soul of Christ is not essentially Divine. Hence it behooves it to be Divine by participation, which is by grace."

[135.] See *Summa theologiae* III q. 7, a. 1 *responsio*.

[136.] There will be occasion to offer some brief comments on the strategy of appropriations in trinitarian theology below at p. 142f.

[137.] Coffey presents this very issue as an important stimulus for his development of his two-model approach to the Trinity. See Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 470. See below at p. 183f. We will return to the issue of Coffey's approach to *filioque* below at p. 126f and p. 177f.

(b) Coffey's Proposal: the Priority of Sanctification

Compare this traditional approach to the question of the grace of Christ, as sketched above, with what we have seen presented in Coffey's Thesis A. Thesis A, to recall, is that "Jesus is brought into being as the divine Son in humanity through the Father's radical bestowal of love, which love is the Holy Spirit."[138] We have already noted some features of this statement: that it is a theological interpretation of the biblical texts rather than simply an attempt at capturing the literal sense of those texts; that it begins with Jesus; that it focuses on the activity of the Holy Spirit bestowed by the Father; that it identifies the means by which the humanity of Jesus is brought into being as divine Son in humanity.

Against the background sketched above, we can begin to appreciate the most distinctive feature of this statement, namely that for Coffey the activity of the Spirit is somehow *anterior* to the assumption of the humanity of Jesus by the Son. Coffey had already elaborated this position in his book *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, where he acknowledges that for Thomas and the tradition following him, the grace of union precedes the habitual grace of Jesus. In the "ascending" theology that Coffey develops, instead, Jesus' "habitual grace precedes the grace of union."[139] The basis for this radical position is found in the biblical theme of the "anointing of Jesus."

> [...W]e see the action of the Holy Spirit on Jesus as first creating his human-ity, then sanctifying it, and then uniting it in person to the pre-existing di-vine Son, in the order not of time but of nature and understanding. Here the sanctification of Jesus' humanity (the resultant sanctity being identical with his habitual grace) is a necessary stage towards his unity of person with the Son, which is the grace of union. Hence in this theology the habitual grace of Jesus is more firmly established than in Thomism, and is related more in-timately to the grace of union.[140]

[138.] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 479–480. Quoted also Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 234.

[139.] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 109.

[140.] Ibid. Coffey develops this position in dialogue with the very different interpretations of the anointing of Jesus advanced by Scheeben and Mühlen. Thanks to his "bestowal" model of the Trinity, to his distinction between the *in fieri* and *in facto esse* dimensions of the Incarnation, Coffey

The specific and proper activity of the Holy Spirit in relation to the coming into being of Jesus as Son of God in humanity is, according to Coffey, *sanctification* and then *unification*. The Holy Spirit, he argues, sanctifies the human nature of Jesus such that what is assumed in the hypostatic union is already made holy by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then brings about the unity in person of that sanctified humanity with the Eternal Son.[141]

In brief, Coffey is suggesting that the biblical theme of the anointing of Christ allows for a logical priority of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the Incarnation, a logical priority of sanctification over assumption.[142] He thus makes Christ the proper instance of this sanctification leading to Sonship, the paradigmatic case of all grace.

5. Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, some of the contours of Coffey's proposal have already come into focus. This chapter has looked at certain dimensions of what I have called Coffey's Thesis A. We looked at it as an instance of a Spirit Christo-

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is able to go beyond the reluctance that these thinkers show to concluding from the baptism of Jesus texts that Father anoints Jesus with the Holy Spirit, bringing him into human existence. Ibid., 91–119. On the distinction between the *in fieri* and the *in facto esse* dimensions of the Incarnation see below at p. 99f. On the "bestowal model" is found in Chapter Five below at p. 183f.

[141] A more developed statement of this key position of Coffey's may also be quoted. This second statement assumes a degree of trinitarian discourse beyond what we have seen thus far, so it here placed in a footnote:

> When the Father directs his love, which is the Holy Spirit, beyond the Trinity, this love, like all love bestowed in or on the world, will be creative and assimilative. But the bestowal of the Holy Spirit of which we speak in the Incarnation is an utterly radical one, the giving of the Spirit 'without measure.' We should not be surprised, therefore, that it is radically creative and radically assimilative. Thus in one act it calls the humanity of Jesus into existence and assimilates it to its divine source by sanctifying it with the fullness of sanctifying grace and drawing it into hypostatic union with that divine person who in the Trinity is the sole proper object of this love, viz. the Son. The love that rests on the Son in the Trinity *draws into union* with the Son when directed beyond the Trinity.

See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 326–327.

[142] Coffey's position on the priority of sanctification over hypostatic union is criticised by Thomas Weinandy. Weinandy insists on the chronological impossibility of Coffey's conclusion: there is no humanity prior to the Incarnation, and therefore it makes no sense to speak of a sanctification of this humanity *prior* to the Incarnation. See Thomas Weinandy, "Review of 'Christ and the Spirit' By Ralph Del Colle," *The Thomist* 59, (1995), 658. Coffey however has clarified that he intends a "logical" and not a "temporal" priority. See Coffey, "The Common and the Ordained Priesthood," 219–220.

logy, but stressed that it was a specifically trinitarian Spirit Christology. The key feature distinguishing these two contemporary forms of Spirit Christology (post-trinitarian Spirit Christology and trinitarian Spirit Christology) is the attitude taken to the doctrine of the Trinity that emerged in the post-biblical period. The post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists take their understanding of the literal meaning of biblical texts as criteriological, and are therefore forced to deny anything like traditional trinitarianism. Coffey, in contrast, accepts the validity of the doctrinal development of the Trinity. Recognising the historical development of the theme, he is nonetheless willing to consider the adequacy of the classical form of the doctrine of the Trinity to the biblical data. He finds that the "classical" theology is too one-sidedly Johannine in emphasis. His theological project is conceived as an attempt to explore the possibility of synthesis between the Johannine and synoptic christologies of the New Testament.

We then moved on to the matter of the involvement of the Son and the Spirit in the hypostatic union. The classical tradition, on the basis of its *Logos* Christology, did not hesitate to allow for an appropriation to the Holy Spirit of the function of imparting sanctifying grace to Jesus Christ. In so doing, however, it relativised the role of the Holy Spirit in two ways: it restricted the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to appropriation alone, and it made this sanctification (= anointing) secondary to the Incarnation. Coffey, we have seen, proposes that we might invert this classical account, and to place the sanctification by the Holy Spirit prior to the Incarnation. The next chapter will enter further into this theme, and indicate the grounding that Coffey finds for it in the theological tradition, and especially in the work of Karl Rahner.

By way of conclusion, it is important to make clear the focus of what follows. In speaking of the anointing of the human nature of Jesus with the Holy Spirit, a number of possible foci present themselves. One could, for example, focus on the specifically anthropological dimensions of this thesis. Coffey himself writes at length on this matter, particularly in his earlier writings that explicitly address questions of grace. One could also look at this matter with a focus on its christological

dimensions. Again, there would be much in Coffey's theology to justify such a focus. For our purposes, however, it is necessary to state that the focus in these first three chapters remains primarily pneumatological. Thus, I speak of Thesis A and Thesis B as the premises of Coffey's pneumatological conclusion: that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Only on this basis will we move, in the fourth chapter, to a more consistently trinitarian focus.

That said, it should also be allowed that Christian theology is structured in such a way that christology holds and must hold a central position. The very fact that we speak here of Spirit Christology makes the centrality of christology clear. No pneumatology can be successful, nor any trinitarian theology plausible, if the christology that founds it is not sound.[143] In reality, it is impossible fully to separate these various aspects of the discourse in question. Coffey's style is such that it resists sweeping distinctions between these strongly interrelated matters. The same should be true of any fruitful theology.

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[143] Some space will be reserved at the end of Chapter Two for some concerns that have been raised about the soundness of Coffey's christology.

59

2. The "Returning" Love of Jesus

1. Introduction: Thesis B

Theology is mined with questions of priority and sequence. Very often theological projects are judged negatively for having taken what their critics regard as the wrong starting place. Lying beneath such judgements is often the belief that theological argumentation is determined and limited by the starting point adopted.[144] Without looking at the adequacy of particular examples of such criticism at this point, a general point may be made. It is vitally important in approaching any theological proposal, before moving to judge the adequacy of answers, that we first establish what questions the author has set himself or herself.[145]

In the case of the theology of David Coffey, issues of priority and sequence are particularly challenging. Depending on what precise questions are addressed, different "starting points" might be identified. The choice to begin, as I have, with what I am calling Thesis A, should not be taken to imply that that is Coffey's only starting point. The same body of work could be taken up from various points of view, and depending on which point of view is adopted and which questions asked the "starting point" will vary. In the case of the first part of this study, contained in

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[144] This line of criticism is particularly well exemplified in challenges to the Western tradition levelled by authors of both East and West on the basis that somehow the starting point is wrong. Thus, a whole range of authors complain that the Western tradition is inadequate in its trinitarian theology because it takes the unity of divine substance as a starting point. This starting point is then thought to determine and limit the possibility of a truly trinitarian theology. For such criticisms see authors as diverse as Lossky, Zizioulas, Gunton, LaCugna etc.

[145] Of course, some questions may be thought of as more fruitful than others, and one can certainly query the overall theological project of a given author. What one should not do, however, is prematurely judge that an author has adopted the wrong starting point before first enquiring what questions the author intends to pursue.

these first three chapters, the precise question under consideration is: why, according to Coffey, should we understand the Holy Spirit as "mutual love"? For isolating this theme in this way I take responsibility. In Coffey's own writings this theme is woven together with many others. As far as starting point is concerned, the conclusion that Chapter Three will offer, namely that the Holy Spirit is the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son, then becomes the starting point for further questions and represents the starting point for Coffey's trinitarian theology. Thus, in the structure of this study as a whole, Thesis A is not to be identified as starting point, but rather as the first of two premises by which the starting point is established.

The current chapter comments on what is here called Thesis B. The move *from* Thesis A *to* Thesis B raises its own questions of priority and sequence. Thesis B operates as a second premiss for Coffey's pneumatological conclusion, and reads as follows: "the response of Jesus is a love for the Father which ultimately is a return of the same Spirit." The subject of this thesis again is Jesus, but this time not simply as the recipient of God's love in an anointing, but as acting subject, loving the Father in return. If Thesis A addresses questions of how Jesus came to be the Christ, Thesis B relates to Jesus' human activity.

What then is the relation of Thesis A to Thesis B? Why this sequence? Why, in expounding Coffey's thought on these matters, have I started with a chapter about the relationship of christologies (Johannine and synoptic, *Logos* and Spirit etc.), and now move to a chapter about Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus? For some readers, the logic of this sequence will be clear: just as cause precedes effect, so too will issues relating to the "coming into existence" of Jesus as the "divine Son in humanity"[146] (Thesis A) come before matters related to Jesus' love of the Father (referred to in Thesis B). Other readers, however, will be concerned that the choice to start with the relationship between alternative christologies means that this study has begun on a wrong footing. One should begin, such readers

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[146.] This meaning of the unusual expression "divine Son in humanity" will be discussed below at p. 73f.

might argue, with Jesus of Nazareth to the extent that we can know him through the critical and historical reading of our sources, rather than allowing the primary data be overshadowed by the secondary data of theological interpretation, such as is found in both Spirit and *Logos* Christologies.

It will be well, however, to invoke the caution set out above: first establish the question, and only then consider the adequacy of the answer. One must first query what question determines the choice to begin with christologies and then move to say something of the life of Jesus before judging the adequacy of this sequence. A key tool to command here is the distinction between the *epistemological* order and the *ontological* order.[147]

If one assumes an epistemological order of presentation, questions related to the relation of christologies cannot come before historical study of Jesus: from that point of view christologies can only represent conclusions and never starting points. Following an epistemological order of exposition one would have to begin with the Jesus of history, inasmuch as he can be reached through the critical and historical study of our texts and our reconstructions of the world in which this Jesus lived and died. From an epistemological point of view, one might, in reading the first chapter of this study, wonder how exactly we come to be in a position to ask questions, for example, about whether sanctifying grace or the hypostatic union come first. It might be objected that even the terminology used in posing such questions is drawn from the theological reflections of later generations, far removed from the Jesus event in history. From this point of view, one should begin, rather, with the life, activity, death and resurrection of Jesus as experienced by his disciples and medi-ated to us through the writings of the New Testament.

Reading the New Testament, however, is a complex activity. The New Testa-ment mediates the Jesus event not as historical data, but primarily in terms of the salvific meaning of this event. Rather than attempting to present history as such, the

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[147] On this distinction, see Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 16–26. Coffey sometimes refers to these with the traditional language of *ordo inventionis* and *ordo doctrinae*. See Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," 375.

New Testament is itself testament to the fact that the history of Jesus lends itself to interpretation, and grants no direct access to the bare history of Jesus of Nazareth. New Testament interpretations of Jesus are shaped by paschal imagination, symbolic representations of the relationship between Jesus and God, and invocations of scriptural symbols of anointing with the Spirit and Incarnation of the Word. What attitude must one take to such interpretations? Are they to be considered as literary clothing that the historically minded scholar is today called on to peel away to reveal the naked facts? Or do they have some weight in themselves? Do they not come to be in some sense significant primary data in themselves?

If New Testament interpretations of Jesus and the Spirit are accepted as in some sense primary data in themselves, then another system for establishing priority and sequence is opened to theology: ontological priority. Here, the life, activity and death of Jesus are understood in terms of identity: who Jesus *is*. How is this identity understood? In the ontological order, interpretations, whether interpretations based on the symbol of anointing or interpretations invoking the idea of the Incarnation of the *Logos*, or both, have priority of being, in that both are intended as having a sort of explanatory potential.

A simple analogy for the relationship between epistemological priority *versus* ontological priority is found in our thinking about cause and effect. Epistemologically, thoughts about cause arise in response to effects. From this point of view, effects are prior. Ontologically, however, causes are generally treated as prior. The question of whether cause or effect comes first in our thinking depends entirely on whether we adopt the epistemological or the ontological order.

The sequence Thesis A and then Thesis B invoked in this study is shaped by the ontological order of questioning. Christological questions about the identity of Jesus are here presented first, and matters about his life, activity and death come second. This does not mean, however, that epistemological considerations are not

recognised, but merely that they are not to the forefront in the structure of my argument. As the current chapter will illustrate, however, Coffey's attentiveness to epistemological concerns in christology are of decisive importance.

It is not necessary at this stage to specify precisely why the ontological order of presentation has been preferred in the sequencing of these two chapters, except to state that the narrative of the New Testament itself justifies this sequence: Jesus is sent by God and returns to God, God loves Jesus and Jesus' love of God is presented there as a response to this "first" love of God. Further development of the importance of this sequence will be found in Chapter Five below.

Were it not for these matters, it may perhaps have been more comfortable to follow the epistemological order, to begin therefore with the life, activity, death and resurrection of Jesus. Having thus acknowledged the epistemological priority of the material in this chapter, we now turn to a brief overview of New Testament themes about Jesus of particular relevance to Coffey's pneumatological argument.[148]

2. Divine Son "in Humanity" and "Incarnation" of the Holy Spirit

As the last chapter made clear, under the influence of a dominant *Logos* Christology, classical theology thought of Jesus' reception of sanctifying love as secondary reality, useful *pro nobis* but not essential to the divine being of Jesus. Spirit Christology, in contrast makes it possible to understand Jesus as recipient of God's love (= Holy Spirit). Coffey writes:

> It is therefore not correct to move immediately from God's love of His people to Christ's love of them, as though Christ were merely the funnel through which God's love is poured.[149]

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[148] Were the focus here on Coffey's christology, it would be impossible to cover these matters satisfactorily in the space of one chapter. What discussion is here given to specifically christological matters is motivated by the conviction that pneumatology must be christologically anchored and christologically plausible.

[149] Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 207; Coffey, "The Claim of Catholicism."; Coffey, "The

This "funnel" approach to Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit is a consequence of *Logos* Christology and the resulting approach to Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit introduced above.[150] What is divine in Jesus is related, in this view, to the *Logos*, and Jesus' reception of the Holy Spirit is thought of only in *pro nobis* terms. Little attention is paid to the sanctifying effects of the Holy Spirit on the human nature of Jesus as such. The humanity of Jesus is not, traditionally, given a real role in the economy of salvation: it becomes the explanation for the ignorance, hunger, suffering etc. of Jesus,[151] while the *Logos* is the explanation for the salvific work of Jesus. The consequences of this are manifold.

Coffey thinks that the New Testament as a whole communicates a more dynamic sense of what the divine Sonship of Jesus means for his humanity than is implied in the classical approach. Coffey's concern for the humanity of Jesus is thus clearly specified: he is interested not in the humanity as such, but in the humanity

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Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 216; Coffey, "The Spirit of Christ as Entelechy," 394; Coffey, "A Promising Development in Christology: An Address to the Sydney Heretics Club". Compare this to reflections that Coffey offers in 1970 on Jesus as himself recipient of revelation. See David Coffey, "Towards a New Act of Faith," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 47, (1970), 183–185.

[150] See p. 52f.

[151] The origins of this practice are perhaps found in the practice of prosopological exegesis. Important early texts exemplifying this practice are found in Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 27, 30. See Slusser, "The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology". Augustine assumes this traditional exegetical practice. See Mary T. Clark, "De Trinitate," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, (Cambridge: University Press, 2001), 93.

as sanctified by the Holy Spirit.[152] This in turn throws light on the life of Jesus as a manifestation of the activity of the Holy Spirit: in his acts and deeds, Jesus gives human expression to the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit.

With these perspectives in mind, we move now to look at some of the themes from the life of Jesus that illustrate this approach. These themes are the obedience of Jesus that characterises his relationship of love to God as Father; Jesus' love of neighbour by which this obedience is expressed and mediated in categorial actions; the transcendental love of Jesus.[153] On this basis, brief mention may be made of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as the culmination of Jesus' life of loving obedience to God and love of neighbour.

Coffey articulates his discussion of Jesus' love towards God around the important New Testament theme of the obedience of Jesus to God. While in the Johannine christology, the Sonship of Jesus is explained in terms of the *Logos,* in the synoptic theologies – according to Coffey – the divine Sonship of Jesus is actualised (or brought to full expression) in his Spirit-guided perfect obedience to God's special will for him.[154] Jesus is presented as without sin and as acting only in ac-

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[152] Contemporary theology often reads the early Christological controversies in terms of crude distinctions of concern with the divinity of Christ (attributed, for example, to the Alexandrian school) and concern with the humanity of Christ (attributed, for example, to the Antiochian school). Historically, such distinctions are unlikely to be sustainable. See John J. O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth Century Christology," *Theological Studies* 58, (1997): 39–60; Paul Gavrilyuk, "Theopatheia: Nestorius's Main Charge Against Cyril of Alexandria," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2003): 190–207.

Neither can the Western scholastic tradition be reliably accused of losing sight of the humanity of Jesus. If one were to follow up the issue of how the true humanity of Christ was treated in the scholastic tradition, one could do worse than read Davies' brief summary of Aquinas' Christology in Brian Davies, *Aquinas,* ed. Brian Davies, Outstanding Christian Thinkers, vol. (New York: Continuum, 2002), 140–149. On the frustration of those close to the scholastic tradition at the charge that the true humanity of Jesus was obscured in that tradition see F.E. Crowe, "Christologies: How Up–To–Date is Yours?," *Theological Studies* (1968), 87–101.

While there is probably some misplaced criticism of traditional theology in relation to the matter of the humanity of Jesus, Coffey is not taking sides in that debate. The issue for Coffey is not so much the integrity of the human nature as such, as the ability of our theological constructions to *contemplate the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit on and through the human nature of Jesus.*

[153] The terms "categorial" and "transcendental" here show Coffey's dependence on Rahner.

[154] Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 202. Thus, while in Johannine Christology, Sonship is something that is "given" at the beginning of Jesus' life, elsewhere there is a sense in which Sonship is "achieved." It is important to remember here that Coffey is not counter-posing Spirit Christology and *Logos* Christology. If he were, then we would certainly

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cordance with God's will.[155] Moving beyond the synoptic gospels to the New Testament as a whole, we see signs of early engagement with the theme of the obedience of Jesus, with texts indicating that this obedience flourishes perfectly in the way in which Jesus went to his death (Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8–9, 2:10).

Interpreting the life of Jesus in terms of obedience to the Father is not unusual. What is characteristic of Coffey's construction is the way in which he links this theme to the Holy Spirit. On one level, such an interpretation is easily supported in the New Testament. One need only recall the various texts found in all four gospels which speak of the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding Jesus, driving Jesus etc.[156] In particular this theme is associated with the Gospel of Luke, where the author systematically shows the Holy Spirit's involvement at each stage of Jesus' life.[157] Coffey draws the biblical themes of the obedience of Jesus, Jesus' love for the Father and the Holy Spirit together.

> If the Spirit gave Jesus the power to fulfil his ministry, more importantly, as God's love for him, it evoked from him the love for God which was the wellspring of that ministry.[158]

By linking together the themes of obedience, love, and Holy Spirit, Coffey is thus enabled to think of the Holy Spirit as the "bond" between Jesus and the Father.[159]

Alongside the love of Jesus for God, expressed especially in terms of the theme of his obedience, Coffey also considers it important to consider those texts

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have in the idea of the "achieving" divine Sonship an unsatisfactory formulation. The New Testament, Coffey argues, contains *both* approaches, and therefore so should our christology.

[155.] Ibid.

[156.] All four gospels that contain this theme. What distinguishes the Johannine from the synoptic accounts is the degree to which the accounts of Jesus' Sonship depend on the Holy Spirit. In the Johannine gospel, it is primarily the *Logos* that explains Jesus' Sonship. This need not mean, however, that the Fourth gospel does not recognise the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding Jesus.

[157.] Ibid., 205.

[158.] Ibid., 206.

[159.] Ibid. Note that for Coffey, to speak of the Holy Spirit as "bond" of Father and Son is not yet to have arrived at the point of affirming that the Holy Spirit is "mutual love." See Ibid., 218.

that speak of Jesus' love for human beings in general. That the New Testament concentrates so extensively on the matter of Jesus' love for human beings in general is appropriate to the New Testament's *pro nobis* orientation.

Coffey offers both scriptural and theological arguments for an identification of these themes: Jesus' love for God and Jesus' love for human beings. There is a fundamental congruity, he holds, between these such that they are not indeed two separate loves, but one and the same love. Again the link is found in the theme of Jesus' obedience to God. Thus, when Jesus loves his neighbour, he thereby loves God, since that is what God wills him to do. Beyond that, however, the New Testament comes close to thematising this identification. In Mk 12:28–31, for example, Jesus himself sets the commandment to love God alongside that to love one's neighbour. 1 Jn 4:20–21 makes love of neighbour the visible complement and verification of one's love of God. Mt 22:40 and Luke 10:28 make the twin loves of God and neighbour respectively the fulfilment of the law and the prophets and the key to life respectively. Paul agrees with this perspective (see Rom 13:8, 10 and Gal 5:14). Matthew presents the interrelation of these loves in dramatic terms in his account of the final judgement (esp. Mt 25:40).[160] Beyond the New Testament, Coffey himself has recourse to Rahner's theology to defend a rigorous identification of Jesus' love of neighbour and his love of God.[161] For Rahner, Christ's love of God and love of neighbour are the "self-same love."[162]

In interpreting the meaning of the particular acts of obedience and love recounted in the New Testament, Coffey evokes Rahner's distinction of the transcendental and the categorial. The love of Jesus for the Father should be approached, according to Coffey, from both of these points of view. What is most

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[160] Coffey cites these texts in Ibid., 217.; Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 38–39.

[161] Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God," in *Volume 6: Concerning Vatican Council II,* Theological Investigations (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969). Coffey speaks of the *de facto* recognition of the unity of these two loves in the New Testament, but of the demonstration of their union on "anthropological grounds" in Rahner's article. See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 327.

[162] Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 276; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God,* 38.

evident is what he would call, following Rahner, the categorial love of Jesus (the discrete acts of love that Jesus carries out). These, however, are but reflections of the basic love of Jesus, that underlies and is expressed in the categorial expressions of Jesus' love. This love is described as "basic, necessary, subjective, immediate, and transcendental" and is, Coffey says, the consequence of the hypostatic union itself.[163] Thus, from the individual acts of obedience and love we can rise to insight about the basic love of Jesus that itself manifests the hypostatic union.[164]

It is important for Coffey that we think not just of the categorial love of Jesus, but of the transcendental love, for it is Coffey's intention to interpret Jesus' love as itself the Holy Spirit. Neither particular acts of love, nor the habit of love itself, could express the Holy Spirit, for both are finite. Ultimately the infinity of the Holy Spirit can only be explained in terms of the transcendental love of Jesus that underlies particular acts.[165]

Coffey's position might be summarised in terms of two claims, the first of which he shares with many, the second of which is unique to him. The first is that the life of Jesus is itself the expression of his love of God and neighbour. Thus, he writes:

> the love with which Jesus drew ever closer to the Father through the events of his life and which reached its perfection in his death was primarily the work of the Holy Spirit in him.[166]

This first claim is uncontroversial. That Jesus lived a life of obedience, and obedience to the death is already well-expressed in the New Testament.

[163.] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 476.

[164.] I am not suggesting, of course, that an impartial observer could conclude from Jesus' actions directly to an understanding of the hypostatic union. The Christian who accepts the doctrine of the hypostatic union is entitled, however, to see these individual actions of Jesus as manifestations of a more basic love, and to connect this to the hypostatic union. Coffey is not attempting here to establish the grounds for Christian belief, but exploring the intelligibility of the New Testament from a Christian point of view.

[165.] Coffey also explores the psychological implications of the hypostatic union. He generally follows the positions of Rahner here, but rejects the Nestorian implications of Rahner's understanding that Jesus has direct vision of the Logos during his lifetime. Coffey argues instead for direct vision of the Father. See Ibid., 472–474.

[166.] Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 206.

What marks Coffey's interpretation as unique is his position that this response of love *is itself the Holy Spirit*. Coffey acknowledges that the thesis that Jesus' love for the Father is the Holy Spirit is more difficult to demonstrate from scripture than the thesis that the Holy Spirit is God's love for Jesus.[167] In relation to Thesis A, the matter was more straightforward, since direct biblical support for the identification of God's love for Jesus with the Holy Spirit can be sought in the use of the Holy Spirit symbol in the baptism scenes, and in Luke 1:35. What New Testament evidence do we have for identifying the love of Jesus with the Holy Spirit? What is the biblical basis for the position expressed in Thesis B?

The biblical basis for this position, Coffey argues, is found especially in two texts related to the death of Jesus, John 19:30 and Hebrews 9:13–14. Although we cannot replicate the detail of his arguments, it will be necessary to sketch the basic outline here.[168]

The first text describes the death of Jesus: "When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said 'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up the spirit." Coffey's interest here is in the interpretation of this reference to "the spirit." On a literal level, of course, it simply means that Jesus died. But John's writing, Coffey reminds us, is often better understood at a spiritual level. Certain important modifications that John makes to the Septuagint version of the underlying Isaiah 53:12 point to the intention to connect this death in obedience with a sending of the Spirit on the church.[169] On the basis of these observations, he can claim that the culmination of Jesus' human life is seen by John as a giving of the Spirit (communion with God) to human beings.

The second text that Coffey considers in relation to the death of Jesus is Hebrews 9:13–14:

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167. Ibid., 205.

168. These arguments are presented in Ibid., 206–210.; Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 39–41. The first text is cited in the same context, but not discussed on Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 154.

169. On this see, Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 208.

> For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Jesus has offered himself, obedient to God's will, "through eternal Spirit." Again the question is: how should we understand the "Spirit" here? Is it best understood as a reference, as some argue, to the Holy Spirit (third divine person) or, as others hold, to the Spirit of Christ. Coffey concludes that it is most probable that it is a reference to the Holy Spirit, though in a scriptural sense, the "Spirit of God," the very same spirit who guided the action of Isaiah's Servant already alluded to Hebrews 9:18.

On the basis of these texts, Coffey argues that we find a biblical basis for identifying the death of Jesus, the supreme expression of his basic love of God and neighbour, with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift, in keeping with the "double orientation"[170] (towards God and towards human beings) characteristic of his life as a whole, is the bestowal of this love (= Holy Spirit) on God the Father and on the church.[171]

Coffey's interpretation of the death of Jesus as a complex one. On one level, he adopts the position that sees the death of any human being as the culmination of their personhood, and argues that it is therefore in his death that Jesus reaches the culminating expression of his divine personhood (Sonship) in humanity.[172] On another level, he sees it as the definitive expression of his love of God and neighbour. This love is specifically *self-gift*.[173] Jesus gives himself entirely to God in his earthly existence, to the point of his obedient death on the cross.[174]

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[170] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 154.

[171] Coffey distinguishes between the "offer" of the Holy Spirit to human beings, which is adequately understood in terms of the "procession model" of the Trinity and the "bestowal" of the Holy Spirit, best understood in terms of the "bestowal model." See Ibid., 113–116.

[172] Ibid., 150–152.

[173] Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 214.

[174] Although we are not yet explicitly discussing the trinitarian dimensions of the death of Jesus, it is clear that Coffey sees what is happening in the death of Jesus as both the manifestation and reflection of the Son's eternal love for the Father. See, e.g. Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 111.

In this same act, Christ also gives himself entirely to human beings to the point that he confers on the church his very identity. This self-gift of his Spirit is given to the church, who receive it as the Spirit of Sonship, and by this gift they are enabled to be united with Christ: sons (and daughters) in the Son.[175] He links the death of Jesus with his resurrection, with Pentecost and the ascension as the definitive expressions of Jesus' divine Sonship in humanity, his gift of self to the church and his return in obedient love to the Father.[176]

The themes of resurrection (with its primary reference to what happens to Jesus) and of Pentecost (with its primary reference to what happens as a consequence of the resurrection to ordinary human beings) are united in the observation that the Holy Spirit is precisely the "Spirit of sonship."[177] One of the things thus explained, according to Coffey is the "Christological character of the Holy Spirit."[178] The Spirit which Jesus sends on the church is the very Spirit of Sonship that animated his human existence. When the Spirit animates the church, it does so in a way that brings about the reality of the church as Body of Christ.

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[175] The expression "sons [and daughters] in the Son" is founded on texts like Gal 2:20, 3:26, 4:6, 7. It is found very often in the writings of David Coffey. See, for example, Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 222, 223; Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 67, 91–92, 114, 142–143, 149, 261; Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 475, 479; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 237; Coffey, "The Claim of Catholicism," 49, 51; Coffey, "A Case for Christianity Vis-a-Vis the Other World-Religions," 34; Coffey, "The Common and the Ordained Priesthood," 221; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 43. The "prototype" of human salvation is Mary, the Mother of God, whom Coffey sees as co-mediatrix in the sense that redemption needs not only to be offered, but also received. Mary plays a key role, according to scripture, in receiving the event of salvation on the part of "believing Israel." She is therefore the "symbol" of the Church: the one in whom salvation is perfectly received. See Coffey, "Mary, Prototype of Salvation".

[176] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 152–155. With this definitive gift of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, the "proper mission" of the Holy Spirit begins. Coffey distinguishes between the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation prior to Pentecost, prior indeed to the personal history of Jesus as Son in humanity, and the "proper mission" of the Holy Spirit which is grace.

[177] Here Coffey's thought shares something with that of Thomas Weinandy. See Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*. I will comment further on Weinandy below at p. 174f.

[178] See Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 478–479.

For further development of these themes, I must refer the reader to Coffey's own writings. Here I have offered a brief account of the general orientation that he adopts in his reading of the New Testament testimony about Jesus, enough however to serve my overall purpose.

In concluding this section, I note some of the distinctive characteristics of Coffey's interpretation as introduced above. Firstly, in relation to the biblical symbol of the Son, he points to a sense in which Sonship is not simply a static notion. The theological tradition tended to restrict its understanding of Sonship to the onto-logical state brought about by the hypostatic union: Jesus simply *is* the Son. Coffey, in contrast, explores the possibility of a kind of development in the divine Sonship: Sonship is here expressed in acts, in a life, in a history. The Sonship in question is not the eternal Sonship of the *Logos*, but the divine Sonship "in humanity." Unlike the Sonship of the Eternal *Logos*, the divine Sonship in humanity to which Coffey refers is not fully actualised in the Incarnation at the beginning of Jesus' life, since the human nature of Jesus is not at that stage fully developed. As Jesus grew phys-ically, psychologically and spiritually, so too did his human nature become an ever more "apt medium for the actualization of divine sonship."[179] The death of Jesus represents, in this analysis, the highest expression of love that is possible in a human nature.

> Hence in the death of Jesus the progressive "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit
> in his transcendental love of the Father attains the limit that is possible in
> this life.[180]

There is no challenge to divine immutability implied in these statements: Coffey explains the change as being in the humanity, and not in the divinity itself.[181] It is in

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[179] Ibid., 476.

[180] Ibid., 477.

[181] Coffey devotes Chapter Five of *Deus Trinitas* to the questions raised by Process Theology, and emerges as a strong opponent of anything that would erode the "immutability" of God.

order to make just this distinction that he makes use of the term divine Son "in humanity."[182] Clearly, this distinction between the Eternal Son and the divine Son in humanity is particular to Coffey.

The second conclusion relates to the Holy Spirit. For Coffey, the Holy Spirit is expressed humanly through the life of Jesus. The story of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action through the life of Jesus is read by Coffey as a kind of "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit.[183] With this unusual expression Coffey does not, of course, intend to suggest that there is an incarnation of the Holy Spirit distinct from the Incarnation of the Son. The word "incarnation" is used analogously,[184] meaning that the Holy Spirit is given a human story in the ever more perfect love of Jesus.

It may be appropriate at this point to make a brief clarifying statement related to the Trinity, a statement to be expanded upon in later chapters. We can see a clear parallel between the divine Son "in humanity" and the "incarnate" Holy Spirit: in both cases, there is an attempt to speak of the manifestation of a divine person in the economy of salvation. In neither case, however, is Coffey speaking about that divine person apart, as it were, from the economy. The purpose of this distinction is not to separate the Son and the Holy Spirit from the second and third divine persons respectively. Quite the opposite. The point is to draw attention to the perfection (within appropriate limits) of their self-manifestation in the economy. While it is true that the divine Son "in humanity" and the "incarnate" Holy Spirit, as they are known by limited resources of human knowledge are somehow less than the divine persons *in se*, I argue that ultimately Coffey's emphasis lies on their ontological identification with the divine persons of the Eternal Trinity, rather than on the epi-

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[182] This is rooted in Coffey's interpretation that "[w]hatever the New Testament says about Christ, no matter how exalted it may be, is said about him as a man, as a human being. His essential humanity is never pushed beyond legitimate limits by anything it says of him, and so he is never seen as even a possible rival to the one God of Israel, to whom he himself prayed." Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 10.

[183] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 476. He also thinks that we may speak of a "progressive 'Christification' of the Spirit." See Coffey, "The Palamite Doctrine of God: A New Perspective," 349.

[184] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 466.

stemologically-motivated distinctions evident here.[185] When we come to discuss the purpose of the "immanent" Trinity, we will see that the principal purpose of that level of theological discourse is to abstract the second and third divine persons from the limitations of the economy of salvation; but we will also see that this move is provisional: theology of the "immanent Trinity" is incomplete if it is not oriented towards the "economy of salvation."[186]

3. The Problem of the "Wedge"

I have mentioned more than once that the emphases emerging in Coffey's reading of the biblical data differs at a number of points from those of "classical" theology. I have stated that he thinks of his Spirit Christology as somehow complementary to the *Logos* Christology of the classical traditions. In what remains of this chapter, I look at Coffey's attempts to explain the relationship between his positions and those of the "classical" tradition. The reason for this is clear: it is not sufficient to say that two things are compatible for this to be so. One must show how they are compatible. How, in brief, do Coffey's interpretations of scripture relate to the traditional ones? Let us first review some of the principal differences seen thus far.

From the first chapter above we know that the classical theologies were built largely on the basis of *Logos* Christology, while Coffey's theology attempts a Spirit Christology (though he states that this need not mean abandoning *Logos* Christology and the associated doctrine of the Trinity). We also know that Coffey's theology thinks of the Holy Spirit's sanctification of the human nature of Jesus as somehow (though not chronologically) *prior* to the hypostatic union with the Son, a position that inverts the traditional order. From the current chapter, we know that

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[185.] Thus might be answered some of the concerns expressed by Anthony Kelly in his thoughtful review of *Deus Trinitas*, where – missing these points – he politely says that Coffey's methodology "teases theologians."

[186.] These points are expanded upon in Chapters Four and Five below.

Coffey continues to read the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the same way, placing the work of the Holy Spirit somehow *prior*, bringing about the Sonship "in humanity" of Jesus.

Another way of characterising the difference between the broad lines of Coffey's theology and those of the "classical" tradition is with reference to the relationship between what happens in Jesus and what happens in ordinary human beings. In the "classical" approach, the case of Jesus is conceived in a way discontinuous with that of ordinary human beings. The need to do this, as indicated, was linked historically with the need to assert the unicity of Christ, against adoptionism. Accordingly, Jesus is the Son because he is the *Logos* incarnate, while ordinary human beings are saved by grace. What happens in the case of Jesus is no guide to what happens with ordinary human beings, and *vice versa*.

Coffey's theology, in contrast, sets aside the traditional reluctance to explore the continuities, and advances the argument that just as ordinary human beings are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, so too is Jesus sanctified by the Holy Spirit. What happens in the case of Jesus is, for Coffey, the best guide to what happens with ordinary human beings, because the case of Jesus is paradigmatic. As a result of what happens in Jesus, there is even a sense in which we might urge a "vice versa": as long as it is clear that the anointing of Jesus is primary, we can look at the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in ordinary human beings (grace) in order to gain some insight into the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the human nature of Christ.

Yet another way of characterising the difference with Coffey's theology is in relation to the notion of the "Son." Classical theology thinks of the Son as the pre-existent *Logos*, the one who assumes a human nature in Jesus, the principle of unity in Christ. Classical theology has no notion of the Son "in humanity," one who is progressively brought into being by the Holy Spirit through the life of Jesus.

(a) Diagnosing the Problem

Why, from the point of view of traditional theology, would it be difficult to accept Coffey's positions as sketched above? We have already seen that the basic answer is the dominance in the tradition of *Logos* Christology and the comparative neglect of Spirit Christology. It is time now to look at the broad impact of this on the history of christological thought, time to set out Coffey's diagnosis of what he calls the problem of the "wedge."

According to Coffey, the rise of *Logos* Christology in its ontological interpretation brought with it what he regards as an unscriptural division between the human and the divine natures of Christ. No such distinction is found in the bible itself. To claim to find a distinction between the human and divine natures of Christ in the bible would be anachronistically to import the thought-culture of the Hellenistic world into the Semitic world of the biblical authors. I have already sketched something of the rise in the post-biblical period of what Coffey reads as an ontological interpretation of the New Testament *Logos* Christology.[187] A typical fruit of this ontological approach is manifest in the terms of the fourth century "Arian" controversy: *either* the Son is divine *or* the Son is a creature. When, in the fifth century, this framework is brought to christology itself, the ontological chasm dividing Creator from creatures is brought to bear on the heart of the hypostatic union itself. The result of this, for Coffey, is that the human nature of Jesus lies on one side of this chasm on the divine nature on the other. The question of how these two natures are related, Coffey thinks, was left unanswered by the Chalcedonian framework, which insists that both natures are perfect, but also that they are unmixed and unconfused. In its bid to ensure the unicity of Christ, classical *Logos* Christology comes to rely on an opposition between these two natures. This reliance on an ontological chasm to ensure the unicity of Christ came at the price of relegating the effects of the hypostatic union on the human nature of Christ to second place. The principal func-

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[187] See above at p. 32f.

tion of the human nature of Christ in christology comes to be the explanation of the limits and weaknesses in Jesus testified to in scripture.[188] Christ is one with God in his omnipotence, and one with human beings in his weakness.

Coffey, of course, cannot and does not disagree with Chalcedon on these points. In Coffey's view, however, for all its positive points, for all its authority in the Christian tradition, the doctrine of Chalcedon brought with it a significant difficulty: the difficulty of expressing how the two natures in Christ are related. This he refers to as the problem of the "wedge."[189] As a result, although the doctrine of Chalcedon remains the classical statement of christological orthodoxy, it suffers from an imbalance inasmuch as it fails to deal with this "wedge" between the divine and human natures of Christ.[190] This is unfortunate on both anthropological and pneumatological levels.

(b) Addressing the Problem

In Coffey's view, there are hints of a solution to the problem of the "wedge" in Karl Rahner's transcendental christology. He also argues, though less convincingly in my view, that we might find elements of a solution in patristic theology,

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[188.] See above at p. 65f.

[189.] Coffey makes reference to the image of a "wedge" in Ibid., 468. Coffey states that the Chalcedonian dogma was the classical expression of the problem of the wedge.

I would suggest that it is more correctly seen as a refinement of Cyril and the Council of Ephesus' response to the problem of the "wedge." Chalcedon does make a number of statements about the relationship of one nature to the next, but does so on the firm basis of the conviction that it is the Son, the Word who is incarnated, and not simply the divine nature, and that it is the hypostatic union that gives us the ontological basis for our discussion of the relation of the two natures in Christ.

A similar use of the word "wedge" is found in Ivor Davidson, "Theologizing the Human Jesus: An Ancient (and Modern) Approach to Christology Reassessed," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2001), 135. The views set out by Davidson in that article converge with those of Coffey on a number of points. If Davidson's debt to Coffey is direct, he does not make this clear in his article.

[190.] Although it is not our direct concern here, it is important to state that the impact of this "wedge" includes the need to distinguish the "grace of Christ" (the Incarnation) sharply from the "grace of human beings" (grace in general). What makes Christ holy needs in this system to be different to what makes ordinary people holy. The theology of grace thereby loses its christological mooring. This precise problem is the setting and theme of Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*.

78

in the notions of the *enhypostasia,* the *communicatio idiomatum* and the notion of the theandric activity of Christ. Since I find his use of Rahner's transcendental christology more convincing I will begin with that.

The classical accounts and Rahner's theology do not differ on the existence of an ontological chasm dividing the realms of Creator and created. In Rahner's transcendental theology, however, God's definitive action in Christ redefines this relationship by means of God's self-communication, a self-communication that finds its definitive expression in the hypostatic union.

As a result of the self-communication of God, especially in the hypostatic union, the world may no longer be adequately grasped as *simply* non-being, since a created being has become the humanity of the Eternal Son. In Rahner's thought, the hypostatic union is not, however, an unexpected subversion of the Creator-created dialectic. As a result of the hypostatic union, it is possible to re-read the history of the world prior to the birth of Jesus as the history of Spirit in the world. Prior to the hypostatic union, Spirit is already in the world, animating it, moving it in self-transcendence beyond itself. This activity of Spirit in the world moves created reality towards the highest point of its self-transcendence in the Incarnation. This activity of the Spirit moving created reality towards fulfilling its obediential potency[191] in human nature for hypostatic union with the Word is, according to Coffey, the Holy Spirit as "entelechy."[192] Against this background, Rahner understands human nature

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[191] By speaking of "obediential potency" Rahner (and Coffey) intend to rule out any ungraced self-transcendence of humanity that would reach the point of hypostatic union. The position suggested is neither pantheist nor is it a kind of "super-Pelagianism" that would allow humanity of itself to achieve hypostatic union. See Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 218; Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 467; Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 412.

[192] Coffey develops Rahner's idea of the Spirit as "entelechy." See especially Coffey, "The Spirit of Christ as Entelechy". Above I stated that for Coffey, the "proper mission" of the Holy Spirit begins at Pentecost. See above at note 177 on p.72. This does not mean that this was the first entry of the Spirit into the world. By speaking of the Holy Spirit as "entelechy" Coffey not only opens space for Spirit Christology, but also makes space for interesting investigations into the theology of religions. See Ibid. and Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan".

in terms of self-transcendence, and sees this transcendence as fulfilled paradigmatically in Jesus of Nazareth. The culminating point of its obediential potency is unity of person with the Eternal Son.

The idea of self-communication of God is not, however, explained exclusively with reference to the Son. Coffey writes that transcendental theology:

> sees the incarnation and grace as determinations, by God, of man in his openness to him, the incarnation being the uniquely highest such determination. If in each case it is the Holy Spirit as Spirit of sonship who is communicated by God (the Father), it is clear that the uniquely highest form of this determination will be that in which the humanity becomes one in person with the divine Son, while lesser determinations will not be such as to rule out independent human personhood, and so will remain unions of human persons with the Holy Spirit, sons in the Son.[193]

Coffey develops the possibility that just as "Incarnation" is proper to the Son, so too "grace" is proper to the Holy Spirit. Thus Incarnation and grace are two modalities of the self-communication of God.[194] If this is accepted, Coffey can advance the thesis that the flourishing of human transcendence is the work of grace which is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, rather than the fruition of human nature as such.[195]

Returning to Rahner, the next point is that rather than thinking of human nature as that which has not yet been graced, Rahner's theology leads to an understanding of human nature that is always already oriented to God, that the obediential potency towards hypostatic union pertains to the very definition of humanity. Coffey draws our attention to two quotations[196] from Rahner's "On the Theology of the Incarnation," worth reproducing here:

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[193] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 92.

[194] Exploration of how Coffey modifies and refines Rahner's position on the self-communication of God in Incarnation and grace is found especially in Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit"; Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 54–71.

[195] Remember that for Rahner, human nature is reduced to a *Restbegriff*. Thus, while it is possible to consider human nature without the activity of the Holy Spirit, in concrete reality the Holy Spirit is always active with the offer of grace: this offer being the "supernatural existential." Coffey develops some stimulating distinctions between the "offer of grace" and "grace" in Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential".

[196] These quotations and Coffey's comments are found in Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 411–414.

> The indefinable nature [human nature], whose limits — 'definition' — are the unlimited reference to the infinite fullness of the mystery, has, when assumed by God as *his* reality, simply arrived at the point to which it strives by virtue of its essence.[197]

The second quotation:

> The Incarnation of God is therefore the uniquely *highest* of the perfection of the human reality, which consists in the fact that man *is* insofar as he gives himself up. He who understands with theological correctness what *potentia obedientialis* for hypostatic union means — the assumability of human nature by the person of the Word of God — knows that this potential cannot be just another ability alongside other possibilities of the human condition, but is objectively identical with the essence of man.[198]

In Christ, human nature shows itself capable of reaching a divine way of being. Coffey reads Rahner's transcendental christology as the recovery and strongest possible formulation of the ancient description of human beings as *capax Dei*. Coffey's modification of Rahner's position allows him to identify this work of self-transcendence, this dynamic impulse towards the Incarnation, with the Holy Spirit. We have seen that Coffey places the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit prior to the assumption of the human nature of Jesus.[199] Now we see the Rahnerian setting from which Coffey develops this position.

Coffey's appropriation of these insights from Rahner has a further dimension: that of theological epistemology. This too needs to be addressed here. Some readers are alert to questions such as whether and how we can truly know Jesus as divine Son. Is not divine Sonship something essentially beyond the range of human knowing?

Coffey observes that while we cannot directly know the divinity of the Eternal Son, nothing in principle prevents us from knowing the *sanctified nature* of Christ.

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[197] See Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Volume 4: More Recent Writings,* Theological Investigations (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 109. The bracketed gloss specifying that the indefinable nature is human nature is Coffey's. The italics are present in the translation and Rahner's original.

[198] This translation is Coffey's. The standard English translation is found in Ibid., 110. It is interesting that the quotations from Rahner reflect Rahner's descending rather than his ascending theology. On the relation of the two basic types of Christology in Rahner see Karl Rahner, "The Two Basic Types of Christology," in *Volume 13: Theology, Anthropology, Christology,* Theological Investigations (New York: Seabury, 1975); John McDermott, "The Christologies of Karl Rahner," *Gregorianum* 27, (1986): 87–123; 297–327.

[199] See above at p. 56f.

Christ's sanctified human nature is human nature at the peak of its possibility, but is nevertheless still human nature, and is therefore knowable. Coffey argues that what we can know of the divine Son is what is revealed of the divine Son through his human activity, his love etc. In Jesus these are not simply ordinary human activity, human love; in this human activity and love we experience human nature brought to the highest point of perfection by the Spirit.

By concentrating on divine nature *as we can know it* (i.e. divine nature as it is communicated to and through human nature), Coffey sharpens the paradoxical content of Rahner's suggestion, and writes:

> [...] the divinity of Christ is not something different from his humanity; it *is* the humanity, i.e., human nature at the peak of its possibility, which is the achievement of God's grace, to which the human efforts of Jesus are subordinated.[200]

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[200] Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 467.

This position is not monophysist, since Coffey is not talking of the human nature becoming one with the divine nature, or being swamped by the divine nature. He is talking of the perfection, within its own limits, of the properly human nature. Speaking of grounds in the doctrine of the Incarnation for Christian mysticism, Coffey writes:

> The limit of union with God is given concretely in the Incarnation, which is a union that can rightly be called unity, and it can be shared by others who place their faith in Christ, bringing about in their case, simple union with God. This unity broadening out into union constitutes the basis for Christian mysticism. Jesus was uniquely one with God, not just in unity of will and function (the teaching of the New Testament) but also ontologically (the teaching of the early church councils). This statement becomes intelligible in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, Jesus was, by the prevenient grace of God, ontologically one with God, i.e. according to his divine nature, in which he was the pre-existent divine Son, second person of the Trinity. But even in the case of Jesus there was not the absolute unity with God which is taught by Advaita Vedantism. For according to the Council of Chalcedon Jesus, though one with God in his divine nature, differed from him by his human nature, which was a creature. Only in monophysitism, rejected by the Council as heretical, does the human nature of Jesus melt into the divine, becoming one with it and making him indistinguishable from God in every respect. The teaching of the Council was reinforced and developed by the enhypostasia of Leontius of Byzantium, according to which the Incarnation was to be understood in terms of the ontological relationship between the two natures of Christ, or, more exactly, between the human nature and the divine person.

See Coffey, "A Case for Christianity Vis-a-Vis the Other World-Religions," 32–33.

This extraordinary statement, that the divinity of Christ *is* the humanity, should be interpreted in the light of this epistemological focus: the divinity we know is the sanctified humanity of Jesus. While we cannot directly know the divinity of the Eternal Son, we can know the sanctified humanity of Jesus.[201]

It is in this complex sense that Coffey intends the term the divine Son "in humanity." He takes from Rahner the transcendental framework for understanding all humanity in terms of the Incarnation. He spells out the implicit pneumatological moment in this Rahnerian construction. Focussing then on the humanity of Jesus he thinks that this humanity brought to the highest point of human self-transcendence is the proper object of theological investigation.

The transformed human nature of Jesus, Coffey argues, is the starting point for a christology that "transfers the focus of his unity from the divinity to the humanity."[202] It is a christology that, although it assumes the Incarnation, can nevertheless be considered a christology "from below" in much the same sense as Rahner's later christology is "from below." It takes the humanity of Jesus (although it is humanity in a form that has obedientially reached the culmination of its potency) as its starting point.

The question could be raised: is it acceptable to construct a notion of a divinity that is somehow on the side of created reality? Coffey believes not only that this is possible, but that this was already admitted by St. Thomas. Coffey finds support for speaking of the outcome of the hypostatic union as a created reality in *Summa theologiae* III q. 2 a. 7.[203] Here in the "On the contrary" Thomas writes,

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[201] I would argue that what is known in Jesus is not only the sanctified human nature, but more importantly the activity of the second divine person Incarnate. In general one must ask whether Coffey's language places too heavy a burden on the category of nature, and not enough on the category of person.

[202] Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 405. This idea of transferring the focus of unity from divinity to humanity is badly expressed, I believe. In traditional theology, the focus of unity was not the divinity, but the divine person of the Son. As mentioned in the previous footnote, Coffey's theology continually manifests a diminished appreciation of the theological function of the idea of "person." That said, the idea of transferring the focus of unity *to* the sanctified human nature is a new idea, arguably justified by the epistemological focus that Coffey has adopted here.

[203] Coffey makes this "discovery" after 1999 and refers to it in Coffey, "In Response to Paul

> Whatever has a beginning in time is created. Now this union was not from
> eternity, but began in time. Therefore the union is created.

And in the *responsio* of that article Thomas writes,

> The union of which we are speaking is a relation which we consider
> between the Divine and the human nature, inasmuch as they come together
> in one Person of the Son of God. Now, as was said above, every relation
> which we consider between God and the creature is really in the creature,
> by whose change the relation is brought into being; whereas it is not really
> in God, but only in our way of thinking, since it does not arise from any
> change in God. And hence we must say that the union of which we are
> speaking is not really in God, except only in our way of thinking; but in the
> human nature, which is a creature, it is really. Therefore we must say it is
> something created.[204]

The effect of the hypostatic union is therefore a created reality, and this reality is
the reality of divine Sonship in the human nature of Jesus.

(c) Patristic Precedents?

The Rahnerian basis for Coffey's thought here is clear. Coffey wishes, how-
ever, to find a patristic precedent for Rahner's solution. Such precedent, he thinks
he finds in three places: in the doctrine of the *enhypostasia*, in the idea of the
"theandric" activity of Christ and in the *communicatio idiomatum*. In my view,
however, the claim that these represent patristic precedents for Coffey's positions
remains in some doubt.

To recall: Coffey thought that the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon con-
cealed a theological weakness, a weakness that he understands to be the ontological
chasm between the human and the divine natures in Christ, the "problem of the

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Molnar," 376.

[204] Coffey also appeals here to Maurice de la Taille who in his article "Created Actuation by Un-
created Act" writes,

> This substantial actuation is precisely the grace of union; created grace, like sanctifying
> grace; not, however, like the latter, purely habitual, that is, a simple accidental disposition,
> but a truly substantial adaptation and conformation to the Word. [...] [This reality occurs]
> not in the manner of an adoptive sonship or its eventual flowering, but as a true and sub-
> stantial communication of natural sonship: so that *in His very humanity Christ is Son, the
> only Son of God.*

See Ibid. The italics are from Coffey.

wedge."[205] The classical resolution of this issue, for Coffey, comes with the *enhypostasia*. This term was traditionally associated with the theology of Leontius of Byzantium, though its authorship is now disputed.[206] Coffey's enthusiasm for the doctrine (or *theologoumenon*) of the *enhypostasia* is such that he does not hesitate to claim it is "the only orthodox Christology to result from the Council of Chalcedon."[207] According to Coffey the achievement of the *enhypostasia* is to set the two natures of Christ in relation to one another.[208]

In attributing this function to the *enhypostasia*, Coffey diverges sharply from the use of the term made by other commentators. The ordinary assessment of the function of this term is that it relates not to the question of the relation of "natures" but to the issue of where to locate the one *person* in Christ. That person is identified not with the humanity of Jesus, nor for that matter with the divine nature, but with the pre-existing divine Son. This does not mean, however, that the human nature of Jesus is deficient in personhood: the humanity of Jesus, while not itself a person, is hypostatic *in* the person of the Eternal Son.

Coffey's view that the purpose of the *enhypostasia* is to bring the two natures of Christ into communion with one another marginalises the question of the "per-

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[205] As stated, I do not think that this is a helpful way of stating the outcome of the Council of Chalcedon. The structure implied by that Council indicates that rather than thinking of the relationship between natures, we think of relationship of divine "person" and human "nature." Much of the weakness that I find in this aspect of Coffey's presentation relates to this initial misdiagnosis.

[206] The term exerted an important structuring influence in the theology of Karl Barth, and the notion itself and doubts about its authorship and patristic pedigree remains a focus of interest in theology influenced by Barth. See LeRon Shults, F., "A Dubious Christological Formula: From Leontius of Byzantium to Karl Barth," *Theological Investigations* 57, (1996): 431–446; U.M. Lang, "Anhypostasis – Enhypostasis: Church Fathers, Protestantism and Karl Barth," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49, (1998): 630–657; Davidson, "Theologizing the Human Jesus: An Ancient (and Modern) Approach to Christology Reassessed"; Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72–89. For my purposes, the issue of the exact origin of the notion, whether it is Leontius of Byzantium, or another ancient author is unimportant. The principal issue here is the function that the notion plays in subsequent theology.

[207] Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 415.

[208] See Coffey, "The Incarnation: Fact Not Myth."; Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 468; Coffey, "A Case for Christianity Vis-a-Vis the Other World-Religions," 33. Other references to the "enhypostasia" in Coffey's writings include Ibid., 18–19.; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 226; Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 414–418; Coffey, "The 'Unities' of the Episcopal Office," 3.

son" of the Eternal Son. It thereby excludes the precise issue that the *enhypostasia* was designed to answer: the question of the principle of unity in Christ. De-emphasising the issue of the personhood in Christ in this way means that Coffey can go as far as speaking of a certain invertibility of the *enhypostasia*.[209] Thus, Coffey claims that just as we say that the human nature of Christ is hypostatic *in* the divine person, we can also invert this statement and claim that the divine nature is hypostatic *in* the human nature.[210]

The idea that the *enhypostasia* might be invertible appears to me to confuse matters. The term was originally used to show how the human nature was not a-personal. In Coffey's suggestion that it may be inverted, the question of the "person" is lost from sight. The patient reader should, however, having noted this problem, seek to understand what function this manoeuvre has in Coffey's own theology. We have already seen the work that this modified *enhypostasia* is to be put to: the divinity that human beings can know is the divinity that is the humanity of Christ at the highest limit of its self-transcendence. This "divinity in humanity" of the divine Son in humanity can be thought of as representing another focus of unity in christology. Thus, while ontologically, the focus of unity must be the Eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity, epistemologically, the focus of unity can – arguably at least – be the divinised human nature of Jesus. Underlying the matter of epistemology, however, is the more important issue: by shifting the focus of unity from the divine person to the divinised human nature, Coffey wishes to open space for consideration of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.[211]

Coffey's second attempt to find a patristic background to his christology falls into similar difficulty. This attempt is built on the possibilities he sees in the term

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[209] Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 417.

[210] Piet Schoonenberg also writes of an inversion of the *enhypostasia*, but in a different sense. For a brief account of shifts in Schoonenberg's theology on the matter of the invertibility of the *enhypostasia* see Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, n. 58 on p. 188.

[211] Contrast this new focus on the humanity of Jesus with the statement of Pannenberg, more typical of the general opinion, that the *enhypostasia* in fact moves attention *away* the humanity of Jesus: "the doctrine of enhypostasis, the tenacious inclination of the Logos-*sarx* Christology to miss Jesus' true humanity, continued." See Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 339.

"theandric," a term that he uses to describe the human nature of Christ thus sanctified and transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit.[212] One way of expressing the idea that the human nature of Christ becomes "divinity" (not the divinity itself, but the kind of divinity available to human knowing, i.e. humanity at the limits of its self-transcendence) is to say that through the action of the Holy Spirit this nature has become *theandric*. In itself the term means "divine-human,"[213] but in terms of Coffey's meaning it could be translated "divine in a human way, as a result of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit."

The term "theandric" itself is ascribed to Pseudo-Dionysius, who in the fifth century wrote of the co-operation of the human and the divine in Jesus in terms of a theandric *activity*. Though it was sometimes used in what turned out to be an unorthodox way, Coffey points us to an orthodox (dyoenergist[214]) usage of the term by John Damascene. Damascene writes:

> Thus, the theandric operation shows this: when God became man, that is to say, was incarnate, his human operation was divine, that is to say, deified. [.... When] we speak of one theandric operation of Christ, we understand

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[212] Especially in Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ". Coffey had already made appeal to the idea of the "theandric nature" of Christ in Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 157.

[213] For Coffey, there would be something to be said for using the term "theanthropic," because of its gender inclusivity, but he opts rather for "theandric" specifically for its greater antiquity.

[214] The background to the idea of the theandric action of Christ lies in controversy over monothelitism and monoergism. The latter doctrines represented attempts to bridge the gap between Chalcedonian "orthodoxy" and those who continued to sustain forms of monophysitism after Chalcedon.

Pope Honorius' (d. 638) apparent endorsement of the latter doctrines represents something of an embarassment to the See of Rome's record of unswaying orthodoxy. It appears that Honorius in his own statements is in fact orthodox, and uses the term "one will" only to indicate that there was no conflict between the two energies/wills in Christ. He had failed to understand what lay behind the position expressed to him by Sergius of Constantinople. Had he understood the Eastern controversy fully he would more likely have found himself siding with Sophronius rather than Sergius. The defence of the pope's orthodoxy is, simply put, that he appears to have missed the point of the whole debate. That said, his apparent support was of great benefit to the monothelite cause, and was instrumental in fanning the flames of what otherwise may have remained a regional problem. Coffey makes passing allusion to this matter in Coffey, "The Claim of Catholicism," 54.

Monothelism and monoergism were condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople (681), condemnations confirmed by Honorius' successor in Rome, Leo II (682). The council itself drew strongly on the formulations of Pope Leo I's Tome to Flavian (449), and taught that in Jesus there are two wills that are distinct and related in much the same way as the two natures in Christ ("undivided," "unchanged," "inseparable," "unmixed"). But it also clearly taught the concord of the activities of the two natures. This concord of activities was sometimes explained with reference to a theandric activity of Christ.

the two operations of his two natures: the divine operation of the divinity and the human operation of the humanity.[215]

Coffey's interest here is in the fact that the human operation is said to be deified. He quotes from John's *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus* to underline this theme:

> Being made man, he manifested a new, strange, and theandric operation: divine but working through the human, human but serving the divine and exhibiting the tokens of his conjoined divinity.[216]

Coffey's real interest, however, lies not so much in the theandric *action* of Jesus, but in what he takes to be the basis of this action: the theandric *nature* of Jesus Christ. He overcomes the difficulty that neither Pseudo-Dionysius nor John of Damascene makes mention of a theandric *nature* as such, but only a theandric operation, as follows: "Though Pseudo-Dionysius does not say so, the implication is that producing this activity is a single nature of Christ which should also be termed theandric."[217] Coffey claims that the theandric activity reveals the theandric nature.

In the same article, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," Coffey claims that Rahner's position is also foreshadowed in the *communicatio idiomatum*.[218] Coffey's interest in the *communicatio idiomatum* lies in the ontological justification for this practice. He states that the practice of *communicatio idiomatum* must be based on an "ontological communication between the natures." He does refer to the "hypostatic union" as the basis for this communication of attributes.[219] He prefers to deal, however, with this matter as though it were a question of an ontological communication from one nature to another.

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[215] *De fide orthodoxa* 3, 19. Quoted in Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 407–408.

[216] Quoted in Ibid., 408.

[217] Ibid., 407.

[218] It is interesting, given Coffey's relative silence about Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus, to see how he treats of the communication of idioms since this was central to the Nestorian controversy that provoked that council. The question of the attribution of characteristics of one of the natures of Christ to the other nature, a traditional practice of the piety of the people, was being put to the test over the issue of the *theotokos*. Ultimately, the Council defended this practice, on the basis that the union of natures was not merely according to the *prosópon* (not, that is, according to appearances only), but was hypostatic (according to the substantial reality of the divine person).

[219] Here too we see Coffey's unusual reluctance to deal with the idea of person, or hypostatic union.

> [A]lready in antiquity there was some appreciation of the fact that commun-
> ication as predication would be meaningless unless it were based on com-
> munication as event.[220]

From the communion of attributes, Coffey deduces a real communication from the divine nature to the human nature.[221]

It would be a distraction from our main purpose to go into further detail here on these matters. The principal reservation I express is that Coffey does not engage sufficiently with the important theological matter of the divine *person*. Ordinarily, the category of "person" is used as the divine subject who assumes a human nature. Coffey is mistaken in suggesting that the classical theological tradition takes the divine nature of Christ as the focus of unity.[222] It is rather the divine *person* of the Son who is the focus of unity in classical christology. By not engaging with this point, Coffey approaches the *enhypostasia*, the *communicatio idiomatum* and the theandric activity of Christ only in terms of the impact that the divine nature has on the human nature. This framing of the christological issues in terms of the relation of natures risks falling into Nestorianism inasmuch as it does not give adequate account of the unity of Christ.

I do not believe, however, that ultimately Coffey's theology is Nestorian. I hold rather that it represents a *new* set of christological questions, one guided firstly by his project to build a trinitarian Spirit Christology, and secondarily by the epi-

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220. Ibid., 419.

221. Coffey regards the doctrines of the *enhypostasia* and the *communicatio idiomatum* as belonging together as key elements in any balanced Christology. He states this position clearly as follows:

> [M]y claim is that, theologically, these expressions represent heuristic concepts that as such belong together — with the enhypostasia primary and the communicatio secondary — in constituting a template for all orthodox Christology. The enhypostasia sets the two natures in their correct ontological relationship, which the communication of idioms then trans-poses into a dynamic communication from the divine to the human. Ibid., 423.

He doesn't draw our attention to the fact that the *communicatio idiomatum* is the older and more theologically weighty of these two doctrines, inasmuch as the *communicatio idiomatum* is based on the *lex orandi* rather than on the speculative work of seventh century theologians. In my view, then, one would probably do better to see the *communicatio* as primary, and the *enhypostasia* as secondary.

222. I have already quoted the following: "my study transfers the focus of his unity from the divinity to the humanity." See Ibid., 405.

stemological focus mentioned above. It would have been more helpful, in my view, had Coffey been more explicit in recognising that the questions that he poses are *not* ones addressed in the patristic period, and devoted as much space to justifying the significant modifications of patristic notions as he does to his modifications of Rahner's theology. As it stands, his attempted use of these patristic precedents tends to be misleading. Weakness at this point in Coffey's argument has led some of his critics to raise rather serious, understandable, but ultimately unjustified doubts about the christological orthodoxy of his writings. While it is not necessary to engage with these opinions at any great length here, since they represent the fruit of inadequate readings of Coffey, they should at least be mentioned briefly.

4. Concerns about Coffey's Christology

Coffey's Spirit Christology, if it is to be plausible, has to be plausible as christology. Because it is unusual in various respects, Coffey's christology has not gone without criticism. A full consideration of Coffey's christology would engage at much greater length these matters. For our purposes, I can be more brief.

Paul Molnar is concerned that David Coffey's christology might be adoptionistic.[223] He writes:

> Despite Coffey's explicit rejection of it, there is the persistent appearance of adoptionism throughout his work. Thus, he writes: [1] "In the synoptic theology the unique divine Sonship of Jesus is brought about by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on him by the Father", and [2] "Jesus is brought into human existence as his [the Father's] beloved Son"; also [3] "... the Father's radical bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at the moment of his conception brings about his divine Sonship ..." and finally, there is [4] "a progressive realisation of divine Sonship in Jesus..."[224]

[223.] Paul Molnar, "Deus Trinitas: Some Dogmatic Implications of David Coffey's Biblical Approach to the Trinity," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67, (2002), 36–39; Molnar, "Review of Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God By David Coffey," 245.

[224.] I have added the bracketed numbers for convenience. Molnar, "Deus Trinitas: Some Dogmatic Implications of David Coffey's Biblical Approach to the Trinity," 36.

It is interesting to look at the quotations offered by Molnar in support of his charge. The first relates to Coffey's reading of synoptic christology. If it is inaccurate to say that in the synoptic gospels the unique divine Sonship of Jesus is brought about by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, then Molnar should explain precisely why this is so. He should also explain why the expression of such a judgement on the synoptic gospels (whether accurate or not) might make the author of such a judgement adoptionistic. Coffey's attention to the issue of adoptionism is manifest even in his use of the word "unique," a point on which one might expect Molnar at least to comment. He does note that Coffey explicitly rejects the idea that his christology is adoptionistic,[225] but does not engage with these reasons, leaving the impression that Coffey merely protests his innocence without argument.

It is unclear what precisely in the second quotation demonstrates that Coffey expresses an adoptionistic christology. In relation to the third quotation advanced by Molnar, the only way to interpret this as adoptionistic is if one has already decided in advance that any explanation of Christ's Sonship in terms of the Holy Spirit is adoptionistic. Similarly, there is little reason to think that because Coffey explores a sense in which we can think of a progressive realisation of Sonship in Jesus, his is thereby an "adoptionist" christology. Surely "adoptionism" has nothing to do with "progressive realisation": God presumably does not "adopt" progressively, but all at once. Reading Molnar's criticisms leaves one with the impression that Molnar has not engaged with Coffey's thought adequately. There is certainly much to think about in Coffey's presentation, but Molnar has not helped much by suggesting that Coffey's thought is adoptionistic. The term "adoptionism" is too blunt an instrument to deal with Coffey's effectively unprecedented theological proposals.

According to Molnar, the error that leads Coffey towards this alleged adoptionism is his "historicist exegesis."[226] This, he believes, leads the Australian theo-

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[225] Coffey distinguishes his position from adoptionism also at Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 58f; Ibid., 120.; Ibid., 123f. and Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 62; Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," 378.

[226] Molnar, "Deus Trinitas: Some Dogmatic Implications of David Coffey's Biblical Approach to the Trinity," 37.

logian to separate the humanity and the divinity of Christ in his reading of New Testament texts. It is clear from what we have seen above that Coffey does not believe that, historically read, the New Testament allows for any such separation, simply because in his view abstract ideas of divinity and humanity had not entered Christian discourse at that stage. Not recognising this, Molnar attributes the alleged confusion to another (though related) factor, namely Coffey's insistence on the exclusively functional nature of biblical expression. Clearly Molnar assumes that functional discourse can only speak of Christ's humanity, while ontological discourse is required for speech of Christ's divinity, although on what grounds this assumption is held we are left unclear.[227] Certainly, if by "historicist exegesis" Molnar means "historically sensitive exegesis" Coffey would gladly be found guilty.[228]

As the final quotation listed above shows, for Molnar the alleged adoptionistic christology of Coffey is also the fruit of Coffey's view that there can be a "progressive realisation of divine Sonship in Jesus." This, he thinks, is fruit of Coffey's adhesion to Rahner's "degree Christology." The difficulty here, according to Molnar is this whole project rests on a failure to distinguish between Christ's humanity and Christ's divinity.[229] I concede that certain quotations from Coffey taken out of context will certainly give that impression, especially Coffey's claim that the divinity of Christ *is* the humanity. As I have tried to show, however, the context for this and similar statements is clearly set in Coffey's Spirit Christology and in the epistemological framework he sets. Thus, the intention is to say that the divinity that *we can know*, the divinity that is *available to theologians* and *to human beings* in general is not the divinity of the Eternal Son in the immanent Trinity, but the divin-

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[227.] For Coffey, christological claims made in the functional mode of expression of the New Testament are not necessarily signs of a "lower" christology than those that came to be expressed in the ontological language of Greek culture. Indeed, if the later ontologically-expressed christology were to be expressed to a first century Jewish Christian, such christology would probably be seen as lacking inasmuch as the mode of expression adopted would not communicate the dynamic sense of involvement in human history so powerfully expressed in Jewish religious thought. See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 9–10.

[228.] Molnar's allegiances in this matter are with Karl Barth. See above at note 96 on p. 39.

[229.] Molnar, "Deus Trinitas: Some Dogmatic Implications of David Coffey's Biblical Approach to the Trinity," 35.

ity manifest in the sanctified humanity, or theandric nature of Jesus. Whether all can accept this use of the word "divinity" is open to question. Also open to question, however, is the fairness of the accusation that there is here a "confusion" of the two natures.

Emerging from Coffey's account are two uses of the word "divinity": the "divinity" in God and the "divinity in humanity." Molnar leads his reader to suspect that Coffey has simply collapsed the first meaning into the second. This is not so. If anything, as a result of this distinction, the "divinity in God" is even more protected from collapse into the human than is ordinarily the case, since the divinity (in the ordinary sense) of the Eternal Son remains hidden, while only the "divinity in humanity" is manifest.

A further point should be made in relation to the charge of adoptionism on the basis of "degree Christology." Rahner's christology is a recent theology. In rejecting adoptionism, the ancient church cannot be thought to be thereby rejecting "degree Christology."[230] There is, in fact, no specific dogmatic injunction against "degree Christology." Instead what the church clearly rejects is any christology that fails to respect the unicity and divinity of Christ. The issue of progressive realisation of Sonship is not covered by the church's rejection of adoptionism, unless it fails to respect the unicity and divinity of Christ. In the sense in which Coffey intends it, it is the divine Son *in humanity* that is thus realised. This language serves his purpose of developing the implications of Spirit Christology. It is not intended, as we will see presently, to replace *Logos* Christology. The two forms of christology are compatible, because they answer two different sets of questions, as will be clarified in the conclusion of this chapter.

Molnar's reservations appear to suggest that one could never attempt to elaborate a "thoroughgoing" Spirit Christology, since anything less than a traditional

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[230] Note: I am using the term "degree Christology" here aware of the polemical tone with which Colin Gunton uses the phrase. Molnar cites Gunton at Ibid.

Logos theology will fall necessarily into adoptionism.[231] Gary Badcock, however, is correct when he argues that one should not be discouraged from attempting a Spirit Christology for fear of the charge of adoptionism:

> The link with adoptionism past and present, however, is actually a distraction for Spirit Christology. First of all, no adoptionist theology will ever be embraced by the church; since theology is either a servant of the church's faith or nothing, there is really no point in developing such an approach, for it is ruled out as something useless in advance. But more important than this is the fact that adoptionist christology is strictly unnecessary, for Spirit Christology and Logos Christology are surely no more incompatible than Spirit and *Logos* themselves. According to strict trinitarian orthodoxy, after all, the two are one as much as they are distinct.[232]

From the point of view of mainstream Christian thought, there has always been a concern to deny any theological move that would understand what happens with Jesus on an analogy with what happens with ordinary human beings. It is important however to understand the "direction" of the analogy between what happens with ordinary human beings and what happens with Christ. What Coffey does is reverse the ordinary direction of the analogy, making Christ the primary analogue. This is the move that prevents him from falling into adoptionism. Rather than seeing what happens with Jesus as an exalted case of what happens in grace, Coffey sees grace on the analogy with what happens in Jesus. Much confusion about what Coffey intends in his Spirit Christology can be set aside once one fully grasps this point.

The deepest criticism that Molnar makes of Coffey's theology in general is that it represents an instance of thinking from "a centre in oneself" whereas for Molnar (following Barth) theology must be a thinking from "a centre in God."[233] This is the fundamental criticism that Barth made of Pannenberg, and a criticism that Molnar does not hesitate to invoke against Coffey. The following observation might be made: once one accepts the possibility of a transcendental theology, the binary logic of "centre in oneself" *or* "centre in God" tends to break down, just as

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[231.] Coffey recognises the challenge of adoptionism: "I accept that any Spirit Christology is vulnerable to the charge of adoptionism, and that his places on the theologian an onus to show that he or she is not at fault in this regard. See Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," 378. Demonstrating the difference between his position and any form of adoptionism is a recurring concern in Coffey's theology.

[232.] Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 161.

[233.] Molnar, "Review of Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God By David Coffey," 41.

simple dichotomies of Creator and creature fail in the case of the hypostatic union. If indeed the Spirit guides created reality towards a transcendent reality, then talk of static "centres" is ruled out. Transcendental theology does not deal in simple dualities. If the hypostatic union is thought of as the ultimate potential of human nature, the terms of the God–world relation are reformulated. Thus, one might think in terms of starting from a "centre in oneself" or "centre in Christ." Of these two, one would certainly have to prefer a "centre in Christ" as the *locus* of theology. But Christ has his "centre" in God.[234] The issue, hence, is not whether one starts with the human or the divine, but whether and to what extent the human is sanctified by the Spirit and converted to and united to Christ. What Molnar has in mind in making this criticism is that theology "from below" is basically Pelagian. Since, however, Coffey accepts the Rahnerian idea of the "supernatural existential" as always already the offer of grace (the Holy Spirit), the idea that theology "from below" should be thought of as Pelagian does not stand.[235]

Moving beyond Molnar, now, a much more interesting challenge to Coffey's christology is the possibility, already mentioned, that it confuses "person" and "nature." This concern is articulated by Neil Ormerod, who attributes it to the influence of Karl Rahner. Ormerod writes:

> Take for example the statement, "though also divine, Christ's human nature remains basically and integrally human." To what does the word "divine" refer – person or nature? If nature, then it seems to assert that Christ's human nature is divine by sharing somehow in the divine nature. This verges on the Monophysite. On the other hand, if it refers to the divine person, then there is a blurring of the distinction between (the divine) person and (the human) nature. One could ask the same questions about the assertion, "if this nature is also in a sense divine, it remains a nature and does not itself become the person of the Word." Chalcedon does not assert that the human nature of Jesus is divine in any sense, but that the human being Jesus Christ is a divine person."[236]

[234.] It is interesting to think of 1 Corinthians 15:28 in this light.

[235.] See Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," 376. For Coffey's subtle reading of Rahner's theology of the "supernatural existential" see Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential".

[236.] Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 129–130. The quotations from Coffey are from Coffey, "The Theandric Nature of Christ," 412.

Either Coffey's christology is Monophysite, claims Ormerod, or it blurs the distinctions between "person" and "nature." For some reason, he does not develop the possibility that Coffey's theology might, if the latter possibility is accepted, fall into Nestorianism.[237] In Ormerod's view, this possible confusion of "person" and "nature" sets off any number of imbalances in his theology.[238]

In my view, although Ormerod does not offer either a sympathetic or a reliable reading of Coffey's theology,[239] there is something in this criticism. Coffey gives less attention than he might to demonstrating why precisely his position is not Nestorian. Rahner referred once to a preference for "orthodox Nestorianism" over "orthodox Monophysitism."[240] Does Coffey follow the German Jesuit in this direction?

As stated above, there may indeed be a weakness in Coffey's managing of the distinction between "person" and "nature." Without a fully developed use of the term "person," christology may be left without a principle of unity in Christ. If the "natures" are treated as though they were distinct subjects, and then the Chalcedonian doctrine of the natures being "unmixed" and "unconfused" is applied, then effectively there are "two" in Christ, and no "one and the same." Without a principle of unity between the natures, it is not surprising that Coffey has recourse to his version of the *enhypostasia* to re-establish the relation between the natures, even if this

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[237] Neil Ormerod claims that the adoptionism that Molnar alleges implies "Nestorian overtones." This claim is not however found in Molnar, so the intimation that this is the case should be attributed to Ormerod himself. See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 128.

[238] Ormerod both in his book on the Trinity and in a number of articles returns to Coffey's theology often. He usually takes Coffey's theology as an exemplification of the peril of distancing oneself from the classical tradition. Apart from the book cited above see Ormerod, "Wrestling With Rahner on the Trinity"; Ormerod, "Questio Disputata: Two Points Or Four? – Rahner and Lonergan on Trinity, Incarnation, Grace, and Beatific Vision"; Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology".

[239] For instance, in an extraordinary piece of misquotation, Ormerod claims that Coffey has admitted that his position might be called a form of "monophysitism from below." See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 128. It is instructive to compare Ormerod's quotation with the passage from Coffey on which he is commenting. It is difficult to know how to interpret Ormerod's egregious mishandling of the literal meaning of a text here. Coffey responds to Ormerod's criticisms in Coffey, "Questio Disputata: Response to Neil Ormerod and Beyond". and specifically to this one on p. 907.

[240] See Karl Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965 – 1982,* ed. Hubert Biallowons and Paul Imhof, (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 127.

means altering the original and traditional sense of that term. Ultimately, however, in my judgement, Coffey's christology is not Nestorian because, as stated above, the set of theological issues he engages with is not one dealt with in the patristic period. It is nevertheless confusing therefore when he introduces these patristic elements in response to questions not directly raised in the patristic period.[241]

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is of great importance first to establish what questions are being asked before judging the adequacy of answers. Coffey's focus is on finding a space for the action of the Holy Spirit, and he thinks he finds this in the sanctifying of the human nature of Jesus. His focus on this issue inevitably shifts attention away the category of "person," since the "person" in question is the *Logos*. When Coffey speaks of the "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit, he is speaking of the development of the divine Son "in humanity." He writes that: "the 'theandric' Sonship is not a substitute for the Incarnation of the divine Word, but rather its concrete effect on the sacred humanity."[242] It is to be supposed that Coffey's christology is not Nestorian because the discourse it engages in about the sanctification of the humanity of Jesus is not separate from discourse about the action of the person of the Son. Although, as noted, Coffey does not always say enough about the eternal person of the Son, the sanctification of the humanity is understood by Coffey in terms of its becoming an ever more adequate "instrument"[243] of the "person" of the Son. It is united ontologically with the Son at the Incarnation and becomes ever more perfectly united historically throughout the life of Jesus. Although sometimes Coffey's expressions may appear to suggest otherwise, the humanity of Jesus is not an autonomous subject such as would make the charge of Nestorianism more compelling. In Coffey's theology, we can think of the divine

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[241.] In his 1979 book, Coffey engages at significant length on patristic readings of the theme of the anointing of Jesus. He explores the Cappadocians, but especially Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine, and finds that in places their trinitarian reading of the biblical theme of the anointing is close to his. This material would have been a better place to look for a patristic background to support this particular line of enquiry.

[242.] Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," 376.

[243.] In *Summa theologiae* III, q. 7, a. 1 ad 3 Thomas writes that "The humanity of Christ is the instrument of the Godhead – not, indeed, an inanimate instrument, which nowise acts, but is merely acted upon; but an instrument animated by a rational soul, which is so acted upon as to act."

Sonship in itself, and the divine Sonship in humanity. There is no question of Coffey speaking of two distinct sons here. The distinction is not ontological but is epistemological: although there is one divine Son, it is only within the bounds of human nature that we can know this Sonship.[244]

5. Conclusion: Different Questions, Different Answers

In this chapter, we have continued our discussion of Coffey's Theses A and B. These are the premises to what I am calling Coffey's pneumatological conclusion, to which we come in the next chapter. Together these represent for Coffey a New Testament basis for an interpretation of the anointing of Jesus as the love, firstly, of God for Jesus and, secondly, the life of Jesus as his responding love for God. Coffey identifies these "loves" with the Holy Spirit. In the next chapter, I focus more directly on what I have called the pneumatological conclusion drawn from these two premises: namely that the Holy Spirit be understood as the mutual love of Father and Son. This same idea is not unfamiliar in the tradition, but as we will see it was not traditionally based on the biblical themes that we have seen interpreted by Coffey in these first two chapters. Coffey's innovation in this sense is methodological: to ground the mutual love approach to the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. How precisely he argues from what we have seen thus far to his pneumatological conclusion will form the matter of the next chapter.[245]

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[244] Coffey writes: "First on an ontological level: Jesus is ontologically son. His sonship does not depend on his human existence, but it is expressed in his human existence. It is realised in humanity. Thus, his faith flows from his divine sonship, but this divine Sonship "was realized in him only through the exercise of faith by him." Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 74.

[245] Ted Peters writes:

Coffey finds he can argue in the following way: "If Jesus can return the Spirit as his own and as his love, on his fellow human beings, then this shows that Jesus, like the Father, is divine." Now I do not fault his conclusion. But I do question his assumption regarding the nature of the Spirit. He treats the Spirit as if it were a thing that can be possessed and then distributed around. He assumes that the Spirit is a kind of divine football that can be carried or passed. Could it be that Coffey is still working with substantialist assumptions that have

In conclusion, it will be worth briefly stating how Coffey approaches the matter of reconciling these two christological approaches.

According to the classical account of the relationship between the Incarnation and the work of the Holy Spirit there is a sequence to be respected. Congar summarises this sequence faithfully, quoting Thomas:

> The hypostatic union is a metaphysical fact by means of which a human nature subsists through the Person of the Son of God. It clearly requires the man who is thus called into existence to be holy. In Scholastic theology, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, who follows the presence of the Word, and of sanctifying grace, which follows the grace of the union as its consequence (see ST III, q. 7 a. 13).[246]

Where the classical approach thinks of the union first and the sanctification second, Coffey thinks of the sanctification first and the union second.[247] Coffey sees the logic of Thomas' order as descending and that of his own proposal as ascending. His is ascending to the extent that the metaphors suggested by sanctification and then assumption can be seen as raising the human nature beyond its natural limits in two steps.

In typical fashion, Coffey does not simply jettison the classical sequence. He finds a theoretical framework for the accommodation of both sequences by establishing that, in addition to the fact that the two sequences reflect two sets of biblical data, the two sequences also respond to two distinct types of question. To do this he advances a distinction between the *in fieri* and *in facto esse* dimensions in chris-

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"over-thingified" the divine hypostases?

Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*, 69.

Note that Peters here shows little recognition of the carefulness with which Coffey has constructed his position. What Peters ultimately calls into question here is the idea that the Holy Spirit is gift. It is unnecessary to move from the image of gift to the image of "thing to be possessed and then distributed around" and from there to "divine football." In what sense does Peters not fault Coffey's conclusion if he is still in a position to imagine Coffey's presentation of the Holy Spirit in such terms? Further, is the charge that Coffey is working with "substantialist assumptions" grounded in some reasoned suspicion, or is this a merely gratuitous criticism? Peters does not tell us.

[246] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3, (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 166.

[247] Coffey recognises the difference between his position here and that of Thomas in Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 469. I have simplified the issue here by mentioning only sanctification and hypostatic union. In fact, there are three things to be set in sequence. The omitted term is creation, i.e. the creation of the humanity of Jesus.

tology.[248] If christology is interested in the coming to be of Jesus as Son of God, it will appeal to the *in fieri* sequence (sanctification by the Holy Spirit followed by union). If, instead, christology is interested in Jesus Christ as constituted (*in facto esse*) it will appeal, rather to the classical sequence (union, followed by the sanctification by the Spirit).[249] Since the fully developed fruit of the Christ event is the Incarnation of the *Logos* as Jesus, the emphasis will lie there: *Logos* Christology is suited to expressing the perfection of the Christ event. Spirit Christology, in contrast, addresses the "becoming" of Jesus as the Son incarnate. This distinction mirrors, for Coffey, the distinction between descending christology (attending to Christ as constituted), and ascending Christology (attending to the formation of Christ).[250] The epistemological order of presentation (*via inventionis*) will be more attentive to the *in fieri*, while the ontological order (*via doctrinae*) will attend to the *in facto esse*. Coffey is able to accommodate the apparently contradictory results of *Logos* Christology and Spirit Christology, because he is attentive to the fact that theology does not always ask the same questions. Coffey's questions are not those that motivate the classical *Logos* Christology, nor are those that motivate Spirit Christology adequately answered by the classical *Logos* Christology.

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[248] This distinction is found, for example, in Thomas' *Summa theologiae* III, q. 2 a. 8. Thomas' main focus in that passage is on the distinction between speech about the assumption (by the *Logos* of the human nature) and speech about the union (of the divine nature and the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ). Talk about the assumption is talk about the hypostatic union *in fieri* (about the 'becoming' of the hypostatic union), whereas talk about union is talk about the hypostatic union *in facto esse* (about the 'having become' of the hypostatic union, the union as constituted).

[249] A similar manoeuvre is found in Emile Mersch, although he puts it to a different purpose. He too invokes Thomas' distinction, but he translates the terms as "action" (corresponding to *in fieri*) and as "result" (corresponding to *in facto esse*). He writes:

> Regarded as an action, the Incarnation is common to the three divine persons. It is a work ad extra, and every such work is common to the Three. .... But the Incarnation regarded in its term and result, the union of a human nature with a divine person, belongs strictly to the Son. The three divine persons have incarnated; the Second alone is incarnate. This result, however, is not an activity but a way of existing, the way of existing that is realized in the assumed humanity and that causes the humanity to subsist in the Word and accordingly adapts it to such subsistence.

See Emile Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co, 1962), 357.

[250] See Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 91. Elsewhere, as we will have occasion to see, he applies a similar distinction to the Trinity itself. See below at p. 191f.

An important dimension that has been omitted in this discussion, but that was introduced in Chapter One, is how all of this relates to the Trinity. We have not yet arrived at the point of addressing these questions, but it might be worth recalling that one of the reasons advanced in the scholastic tradition of the West for the traditional priority of hypostatic union over sanctification was that of the classical trinitarian *taxis*. The traditional theology of the West concluded, as we saw, from the belief that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to the position that the Son must therefore be prior to the Spirit. In Coffey's construction, as seen above, there is an attempt to see the Spirit as somehow also prior to the Son. These issues will be taken up in Chapter Five. First, we turn to the matter of arguing from what we have seen thus far to the position that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of Father and Son.

3. Towards an Ascending Mutual Love Pneumatology

1. Introduction

Chapters One and Two above presented Theses A and B as premises[251] for a "pneumatological conclusion." That conclusion is "[that] in the immanent Trinity, the Holy Spirit exists as the mutual love of the Father and the Son." This conclusion is sometimes cited as the typical Western approach to the Holy Spirit. Bertrand De Margerie, for example, goes so far as to say that this position is a "common good

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[251.]   In a discussion of pneumatology, Walter Kasper writes: "It is the task of theology to develop [the] data of scripture and tradition into a theology of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean drawing conclusions from the data of scripture and tradition as though these were premises [....]" See Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 224.

While the language of premise and conclusion attributed to Coffey might appear to fall foul of Kasper's admonition, the true force Kasper's statement is to rule out rationalism and private speculation, rather than talk of premises and conclusions. Kasper specifies that in talking about drawing conclusions from premises he is warning against:

> thus passing from the realm of binding faith into the realm of non-binding private speculation. The point is, [he says] rather, to penetrate more deeply into the inner spirit and meaning of what is believed (*intellectus fidei*). This is done by seeking to grasp the internal connection between the various experiences and interpretations of faith (*nexus mysteriorum*), as well as their mutual correspondences (*analogia fidei*), and thus come to understand the one mystery that is manifested in the various mysteries of faith. The point, therefore, is not to do away with mystery by rationalizing it but to gain a deeper understanding of the mystery as mystery.

peacefully possessed by the whole Church and one whose value is recognized even outside its visible limits."[252] In recent times it has received prominence in the papal magisteria of Leo XIII[253] and John Paul II.[254]

Despite this pedigree and despite this presumption in its favour, it is arguable that the "mutual love" approach to pneumatology sits rather uncomfortably within the Western tradition. This is due in no small part to what Frederick Crowe refers to as a "persistent confusion" in relation to this idea.[255] Among the reasons for this confusion is a certain unclarity in the vocabulary. Take, for instance, the following terms: "love," "gift," "common love," "love proceeding," "communion," "source of communion," "bond of love," "bond of communion," "mutual love." All of these are characteristically used of the Holy Spirit. Should we think of these terms as synonymous, or should they be somehow distinguished? If, as Crowe claims, there is a "persistent confusion" then this is due in part to the fact that theological commentators often move from image to image without clearly stating the meaning or at least function of their terms.

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[252] See Bertrand De Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, Studies in Historical Theology, vol. 1, (Still River, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982 (original 1975)), 110–121. With the words "outside the visible limits" De Margerie intends to suggest that it is not just a peaceful possession of the Catholic tradition, but has also exerted an influence on Protestant and Orthodox thinking. He cites Barth and Bulgakov in support of these claims.

Coffey notes some sympathy for this approach in Palamas and Bobrinskoy. See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 326.

[253] *Divinum Illud Munus* (1897), §§ 4 and 9.

[254] John Paul II's encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986) sets out this doctrine in the following terms:

> In his intimate life, 'God is love,' the essential love shared by the three divine persons: personal love is the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Therefore he 'searches even the depths of God,' as uncreated Love-Gift. It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine persons, and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, of this being-love. He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift. Here we have an inexhaustible treasure of the reality and an inexpressible deepening of the concept of person in God, which only divine revelation makes known to us. [§10]

[255] See F.E. Crowe, *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity*, (Unpublished Manuscript: Milltown Park Lonergan Centre, 1970), 94. Crowe believes that this confusion "weakens its position in dogma."

One might object that it is impossible to expect the precision of, for example, scientific discourse in such matters, and that there is room for the multiplication of images for the Holy Spirit or indeed need for such multiplication. No one image can be expected perfectly to describe the Holy Spirit. This is true, of course. The issue here is that discussions of the Holy Spirit as "love" can often lack the necessary intellectual asceticism and focus, they can risk saying more than is warranted by the data and can risk poeticising theological discourse.

The principal points to be argued in this chapter are: (1) that despite the appearance of talk of a "mutual love" pneumatology, the Western tradition has been dominated by a "common love" approach to the Holy Spirit; (2) that where we find evidence of a more sustained effort at developing a "mutual love" pneumatology, this was on grounds that will no longer convince historically-minded contemporary theologians; (3) that Coffey recognises these two points and intends to remedy the situation by arguing for a historically-rooted "mutual love" pneumatology; (4) that Coffey regards the "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit as responding to the question of "ascending" rather than "descending" theology; and (5) that Coffey finds evidence of a dynamic thrust towards an "ascending" "mutual love" pneumatology in the Western *filioque*, even though that doctrine does not itself yet express such a pneumatology.[256]

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[256] An issue that often arises in relation to the "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit is whether "mutual love" can be a person in any proper sense, whether this theory implies a kind of subordination of the Holy Spirit. This issue is succinctly put by Moltmann who writes: "Ever since Augustine, whenever the Spirit is merely termed *vinculum amoris* between the Father and the Son, it is enough to assume a 'duality' in God." See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, (London: SCM Press, 1981), 142–143. For some reflections of Coffey on this, I point the reader to Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 52–55.

Although I do not engage with this question, I register two concerns about the question itself: (1) the concern about how easily anthropomorphic expectations creep into the very posing of this question; (2) the concern about the assumption that the Holy Spirit must be "person" in a way similar to the way in which the "Son" is.

2. The Emergence of a "Common Love" Emphasis

David Coffey distinguishes between what he refers to as the "common love" and what he calls the "mutual love" approaches to the Holy Spirit as "love."[257] This distinction is important and needs to be introduced.

The "common love" approach, for Coffey, thinks of the Holy Spirit as the love of God as such. God is "love" (1 John 4:8), the Holy Spirit is God, so the Holy Spirit is "love." This "love" is the same "love" that is shared by Father and Son. It is the gift of God for the world, and is so even prior to being given. The "mutual love" approach, in contrast, is the love that the Father has for the Son and the Son has for the Father.[258] In Coffey's thought, the term "mutual" love emphasises the *reciprocity* of the love of Father for Son and of Son for Father. It is not simply the "love" that God is, but in a certain sense assumes a distinction of persons upon which reciprocity depends. If, in brief, the "common love" approach takes unity in divine essence as its starting point, a "mutual love" approach takes its starting point in plurality (the distinction of the Father and Son), and moves towards unity.

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[257] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 6; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 198.

[258] The "contrast" here is one of contrasting theological emphases. When speaking of the Holy Spirit do *we* intend first the "love" that the Father and Son have in common, or the "love" that they have for each other? On this see Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 235.

Coffey argues that despite the presumption in favour of the "mutual love" approach mentioned at the outset of this chapter, it is the "common love" approach to the Holy Spirit that dominates.[259] It is our task now to sketch something of a background for this position of Coffey's in the history of pneumatology.

The first step in the historical development of the theme of the Holy Spirit as "common" love was the beginning of an identification of the Holy Spirit with "love."[260] Historically, the emergence of this identification is best explained in the context of the development of pneumatology as a whole. We have already commented on one aspect of the early development of pneumatology: the rise and fall of Spirit Christology.[261] The emergence of the theme of the Holy Spirit as "love," however, had no direct connection with the development of early Spirit Christology. The mainstream of earliest pneumatological discourse focused not so much on the issue of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ, nor even on the Holy Spirit as trinitarian person; but rather on the sanctifying work and effects of the Holy Spirit in the church, through the scriptures, through the sacraments and so on.[262] We have already seen that the process of understanding the Holy Spirit not simply as God active in the economy (as was arguably the biblical view), but as the *third* divine person took time, only being complete at the time of the Second Ecumenical Council.[263] The emergence of an explicit sense of the hypostatic distinctness of the Holy Spirit gave rise to the question of how to express this distinctness. Searching the

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[259] One might look, for example, at the quotation from *Dominum et vivificantem* given above. Here the pope begins with the "essential love" shared between the three divine persons. This love "becomes" "mutual love," but this "mutual love" is said to be "between the divine persons": presumably between the Father, Son *and* the Holy Spirit. It is not clear that he intends the Holy Spirit as the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son. See above at note 255 on 103.

[260] Augustine admits that scripture does not state that the Holy Spirit is love in *De trinitate* 15.27. Thomas is less concerned with the scriptural basis for the equation: the authority he cites is Gregory. See *Summa theologiae* I q. 37 a. 1.

[261] See above p. 30 f.

[262] On this see Robert Louis Wilken, "Spiritus Sanctus Secundum Scripturas Sanctas," *Augustinian Studies* 31, (2000): 1–18.

[263] There is therefore a shift in focus from the work and activity of the Holy Spirit in earlier tradition to a later focus on the Holy Spirit as such. This shift mirrors the move from a functional to an ontological christology, though of course these two lines of theological enquiry follow relatively independent trajectories.

scriptures[264] for language to describe the ecclesial impact of the post-Pentecost mission of the Spirit led certain patristic writers towards reflection on "gift" and "love" as ways of describing what was distinctive about the Holy Spirit.

In the early, pre-Augustinian phase of pneumatological development, exploration of these terms was conducted in a *pro nobis* sense: the Holy Spirit was approached as "gift" to the church, as God's "love" for the world. A new stage in this development is reached in the West in the thought of Augustine himself. He inherits the emerging Western tradition of reflecting on the Holy Spirit as "gift" and "love," but develops it by asking an important new question: "Was [the Holy Spirit] already gift before there was anyone to give him to?"[265] With this question, Augustine signals a move beyond thinking primarily about the work and activity of the Holy Spirit *pro nobis* to thinking about the Holy Spirit *in se*. Augustine's answer is affirmative: the Holy Spirit is "gift" eternally, because a "gift" is such even before it is given. Analogously, the Holy Spirit is "love" not just for the church and in the economy of salvation, but also eternally.

Given the historical context, it is not surprising, however, that Augustine should think of this "gift" and "love" in ways that emphasise the "common" rather than the "mutual love" dimension.[266] That context, recall, was one marked by the struggle with various forms of subordinationism. Against subordinationism, the Council of Nicaea (325) had offered a framework for understanding the unity of the Father and the Son primarily in terms of a oneness in *ousia*,[267] and by the time of

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[264.] Early pneumatology (in contrast to early Christology which had found points of support in pagan, especially in Stoic and Platonist thought), found itself without non-Christian supports when it came to expressing this distinctness. The only resources available for interpreting the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the church were scriptural. See Ibid.

[265.] Augustine puts this question in *De trinitate* 5. 17. On the evolution of the question asked by Augustine see Ibid. Note that *donum* and not *amor* is Augustine's most used word for the Holy Spirit. See Michael O'Carroll, *Veni Creator Spiritus: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Spirit*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 22.

[266.] A quick survey of the passages on the Holy Spirit as "love" is found in Ibid., 22–23. It is clear from these, for example, that it is the "love" that Father and Son have in common rather than their "mutual" love that is central in Augustine's thoughts.

[267.] Although Augustine appears not to have been aware of the teaching of the Council of Constantinople, and although that council had not appealed to the idea of the *homoousios*, it was clear that if the Holy Spirit was true God, then the Spirit too was of one *ousia* with the Father and the Son.

Augustine the Nicene solution had come to be accepted by a broad-range of theological traditions. The *homoousios* offered a new way of conceiving the oneness of God, one that was, however, more closely adapted to the work of defending the Christian understanding of God against subordinationism than it was in reflecting the dynamics of the economy of salvation. This context confirmed a preference for a "common love" (as against a "mutual love") approach. Thus, while in the economy of salvation one may easily speak of the duality of subjects (Jesus and God) and the mutual love between them, in a theology of the "immanent Trinity" that takes the *homoousios* as its "starting point" it is more difficult to accommodate such an idea. It is easier on the basis of the *homoousios* to argue that the Holy Spirit *in se* is "love" because God is love, than to argue the more specific claim that the Holy Spirit is the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son.[268]

This does not mean, of course, that Augustine was not interested in the distinction between Father and Son. Once oneness in divine *ousia* comes to be the dominant heuristic for reflecting the oneness of God, the question of the plurality of divine persons is expressed as the question of *distinction* (between trinitarian "persons"). For Coffey this passage from an assumed oneness towards distinction is precisely what defines "descending" theology.

Athanasius makes the unity in the divine *ousia* explicit in his "Letter to Serapion" 1.27. The authority of the Council of Constantinople may not have been accepted in the West until the early seventh century, though reluctance on this point is related the contested issue of the status of the See of Constantinople and not to the pneumatological teaching. See Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit," 66.

[268] As Coffey correctly states, the implication in the idea of "mutual love" is that it is "by definition the love of two persons in distinction." See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 326.

3. Ascending and Descending Theologies

The metaphors of "ascent" and "descent" are widely used in theology, and especially in christology. Coffey's usage, however, is distinctive and should be approached with attention. I will begin by clarifying what the terminology of ascent and descent *does not* connote in Coffey's theology, before moving to a positive statement of what it *does* connote.

Coffey's usage of the terms "descending" and "ascending" in theology is *not* determined by attitudes towards the dogmas of the early church councils and their place within theological method.[269] I have already introduced the broad lines of Coffey's approach to the sources of trinitarian theology, showing how he attempts to combine the historically-sensitive reading of biblical texts with an acceptance of doctrinal development and recognition of the criteriological value of magisterial statements.[270] His acceptance, in this context, of council teachings as criteriological does not make his a "descending" theology, at least not according to his own understanding of the term.[271] For Coffey, it is perfectly possible to accept the truth of christological and trinitarian dogmas *and* adopt an "ascending" method. In fact, he

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[269] Such a connotation is not uncommon especially in christology, where the christological dogmas are regarded as *either* starting point (descending) *or* proposed point of arrival (ascending). On this usage see, for example, Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 33–35; Dermot A Lane, *The Reality of Jesus: An Essay in Christology*, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1975), 13–18; Thomas P. Rausch, *Who is Jesus?: An Introduction to Christology*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 5. Such usage may be appropriate in christology, but is more difficult to apply in the same form to trinitarian theology.

[270] See p. 48f above.

[271] The best way of thinking of the distinction between "ascending" theology and "descending" theology is to view the distinction as primarily methodological in nature. All theology, if it is theology, assumes "faith." What distinguishes these two approaches is not the matter of faith, but rather the question of explicit starting point. Ascending theology takes the economy of salvation, rather than the church's doctrinal statements, as its explicit starting point: from a point of view of faith, one might explicitly take the literal meaning of biblical texts as starting point, and tries to show the historical process by which these were interpreted, and the process by which the church's belief emerged. Speaking of Christology "from below" (analogous here to ascending theological method), Schillebeeckx writes that it is "faith in search of historical understanding." See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ"*, (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 29. Schillebeeckx also formulates this in Latin in an article entitled "Fides quaerens intellectum historicum." See fn. 9 on p. 144 at Ibid.

argues, the church arrived at its dogmatic positions by means of a method that was, broadly speaking, an ascending one. The issue of the status of dogmatic definitions is, in brief, not pertinent to Coffey's usage of the terminology of "ascending" and "descending."

Coffey writes:

'Descending theology' has as its point of departure the sphere of God and as its term the world of human beings, while 'ascending theology' begins from the world of human experience and rises to the sphere of God. These two complementary ways of doing theology, each with its foundation in the New Testament, have had very different histories. The descending method, awarded a commanding position by the form given to the christological doctrines of the early church councils, has held sway until modern times, when it has begun to be replaced, or at least balanced, by the ascending method.[272]

The position expressed in this paragraph may appear to be in direct tension with that expressed in the previous paragraph. That it is not may be realised once any supposed equivalence between biblical data and "the world of human beings," on the one hand, and between the council teachings and "the sphere of God," on the other, is queried. No such equivalence should be assumed. In point of fact, all theologies, whether biblical or conciliar are necessarily "ascending" at first: all necessarily have a rooting in the world of human experience and all rise thence to the "sphere of God."[273]

"Descending" theology comes *after* this initial "ascent." It takes the results of the "ascent" as a basis for another kind of discourse about God. What are the conditions for the possibility of such an experience of salvation: how must God be in or-

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[272] Coffey, "Priestly Representation and Women's Ordination," 81. Though he does not make it explicit in this quotation, it is clear that the New Testament bases for "descending" and "ascending" theologies are Johannine and synoptic christology respectively.

[273] Accordingly, in the quotation given in this paragraph, both "descending" and "ascending" theology are said to have their point of departure in the New Testament.

Coffey's willingness to root both "ascending" and "descending" forms of theology in the New Testament means that he is in a position to avoid certain ambiguities such as that found in Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 33 and 34. On p. 33 of that book, Pannenberg speaks of New Testament passages (Phil 2:5ff; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4) pointing "in the direction" of "descending" theology, but on p. 34 speaks of "Christology from above" presupposing the Doctrine of the Trinity. Since Pannenberg does not assume that there is a Doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, one is forced to imagine that he regards these New Testament texts as anomalous or at least uncharacteristic in the New Testament.

der to explain what happens in the world? It is not, in brief, the fact of the appropriation and development by church councils of part of the biblical data that signals for Coffey the difference between "descending" and "ascending" theology.

The issue is rather the "descending" *form* in which these dogmas came to be expressed.[274] A new dimension is opened up once one approaches the biblical data with trinitarian assumptions. From a trinitarian point of view, the key issue distinguishing "descending" and "ascending" theology is the question of the *direction* of theological thought with regard to questions of oneness and threeness in God. Once the doctrine of the Trinity is assumed, the question of whether one thinks *from* the unity of God *towards* the distinctness of persons, or *vice versa* arises. To ask how one God can be three persons is to be engaged in "descending theology." To ask, in contrast, on the assumption of a distinction of persons, how the three divine persons are one is, for Coffey, to be engaged in "ascending theology."[275]

How, one might ask, does this relate to metaphors of "ascent" and "descent"? To understand this, let us take firstly the example of "descending" theology. Theo-

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[274] See above at p. 29 for an example of the "descending" form of classical christological statements.

[275] There is no intention here of invoking the questionable but commonplace assumption of a distinction between Eastern and Western theological traditions that holds that Western theology begins with unity and proceeds towards distinction, while Eastern theology does the opposite. As we will see below, in this matter both traditions eventually come to follow a "descending" path in their pneumatology, so that this question does not map onto any distinction between Eastern and Western theology.

Important challenges to the notion that one might distinguish Eastern and Western theological traditions on these grounds are found in Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered"; Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology"; Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity,* ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131; Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology.*

It should also be noted that talk of "beginning with" divine "unity" is highly ambiguous, with both terms calling for careful argument and justification. On the Augustinian understanding of divine "unity" see Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (Serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God". Failure clearly to specify the meaning of terms like divine "unity" often allows theologians to elide important distinctions on the basis of minimal textual evidence. One of Ayres' repeated admonitions to systematicians is that they need to attend much more closely to their historical sources if they are not to fall into unhelpful and misleading generalisations. Such generalisations tend to be ideologically charged. In my discussion, I attempt to avoid the implication of any particular reading of what divine "unity" might mean. The important point in my discussion relates not to the terms "unity" and "diversity" in themselves, but the *direction* of argument: from unity to diversity or from diversity towards unity.

logy that takes the unity of God as "starting point" and enquires after the distinction of persons customarily thinks about this distinction in terms of "missions" by which the Son and the Spirit are thought to have *come forth* from God, "down" into the world. These missions may, in turn, be thought to reveal eternal processions, but it is the missions that anchor the metaphor of "descent." The Father sends the Son into the world, the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. If, in contrast, theological enquiry moves in the opposite direction, from plurality towards unity, then for Coffey it is "ascending" in direction. It is "ascending" because it begins with the plurality found in the distinctness of Jesus from God given in the economy of salvation. One can use the metaphor of "ascent" to explain the move from the plurality given in the economy of salvation, i.e. the distinction of Jesus and the Holy Spirit from God, towards the assertion of unity of the Trinity.[276]

This way of approaching the distinction of "ascending" and "descending" theology is congruent with, but not identical to, epistemological concerns about what human beings can know of God and how. "Ascending" theology, as stated above, begins with the world of human experience, but specifically with the economy of salvation. What is given in the economy of salvation is plurality: Jesus is experienced initially as distinct from God, though powerfully related to God. Theological interpretation rises from this plurality to an interpretation of how God is one. One *ascends*, so to speak, from the plurality manifest in history to claims about

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[276] In other places, Coffey uses a set of metaphors related to inside and outside, drawn from the classical distinction of works of God *ad extra* and relationships *ad intra*. He further develops the dynamic possibilities of this metaphor with talk of centrifugal and centripetal. These metaphors will be invoked below at p. 183f.

oneness in being.[277] Theology needs to be both "descending" and "ascending."[278] The plausibility and limits of such an ascent is one of the key issues upon which Coffey's theology may be judged, an issue that the next chapter addresses.[279]

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[277] This point calls for further nuance, since there is also a sense in which thought about the Holy Spirit historically moved from unity towards distinction. What is first perceived in the economy of salvation is a certain unity of the Spirit with God, and an emerging sense in earliest Christian reflection of a certain unity of the Spirit with Christ. The direction of theological development then moves towards an understanding of the distinctness of the Spirit from both "God" and "Christ." See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 11–12. This does not take, however, from the general point that "ascending" theology moves from plurality towards unity, whether that plurality be diadic or a triadic.

[278] Gregory of Nazianzen writes: "No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One. When I think of any One of the Three I think of Him as the Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of That One so as to attribute a greater greatness to the Rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the Undivided Light." *Oration* 40/41

[279] I limit myself here to stating the objection of Neil Ormerod to the plausibility of such an ascent. He sees it as an attempt to introduce:

> a certain kind of interpersonal categories into the Trinitarian relationships. This may seem an odd objection to make. Given the large-scale adoption of such categories in modern Trinitarian theology, an interpersonal consideration of the Trinitarian life is being hailed as a major advance in theological thought.

He links the problem to Rahner's identification of the immanent and economic *Logos* and writes:

> Now there are many things that we can say about the economic Logos, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ in terms of his relationship to the Father. He is obedient to the will of the Father, he loves the Father, he prays to the Father. We may rightly deploy a whole series of interpersonal categories to describe this relationship. Nonetheless, in classical terms the validity of these interpersonal statements depends on their application to the incarnate human being, Jesus of Nazareth. For example we may speak of the love of Jesus for the Father in terms of an act of the human will of Jesus, and similarly with respect to obedience. However, it is less clear that these same categories can be used of the immanent relationship between the Father and Son in the Trinity. In what sense, if any, is the immanent Logos obedient to the Father? [...] Within the divinity, the homoousios implies a single divine will, equally that of the Father, Son and Spirit. Unless one were to fall into a Monothelite Christology, the divine will of the immanent Logos is distinct from the human will of the economic incarnate Logos. In this case one cannot read back from the economic Trinity truths about the immanent Trinity. In this sense at least the immanent Logos is not strictly the same as the economic Logos. There is no clear reason why interpersonal realities grounded in the human will of Jesus can or should be read back into statements about the immanent Logos. More summarily Lonergan observes, "The person of the Word can speak and actually does speak in accordance with his human nature. But in his divine nature the person of the Word neither can nor does speak but is only spoken."

See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 130. Although Ormerod refers specifically to Rahner, he takes Coffey's theology as an exemplification of the consequences of taking Rahner's proposal to its logical consequences.

4. Descending Theology and the "Common Love" Approach

We are now in a position to return to Coffey's characterisation of Augustine's approach as a "descending" approach, and to show how the "common" love approach to the Holy Spirit coheres with this. On the basis of the Nicene framing of the issue of God's oneness in terms of the *homoousios* it is not surprising that the "common" love might prevail over the "mutual" love approach. The specific issue addressed by Nicaea and the pro-Nicene theology[280] was subordinationism, and this coloured the preference for the "common" love approach. In this polemical context,[281] any tendency that suggested that the Eternal Son might be in relationship of love with the Father, analogous with the relationship between Jesus and God would have been seen as threatening the pro-Nicene defence against subordinationism, a defence built on the oneness of being of Father and Son. The preference for a "common" love approach, further, was congruent with the preference for Johannine christology developed in the previous chapters, since the Johannine christology emphasises not Jesus' reception of the Spirit, but rather his *sending* of the Spirit. Johannine christology suggests and supports a "descending" view of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is understood here primarily as one sent into the world.[282]

It was almost inevitable that pro-Nicene "descending" theology would tend to think of the Holy Spirit primarily as the "common love" of the Father and the Son,

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[280] The term "pro-Nicene" is associated with Ayres and Barnes. By it is designated a broad consensus among theologians faithful to the Nicene settlement of both East and West. The reading of the history of Fourth Century trinitarian thought that this term connotes aims at overturning the hypothesis that East and West occupy different ends of the theological spectrum as regards starting point in trinitarian theology, the East beginning with plurality and the West with unity (the so-called De Régnon hypothesis).

[281] It had been thought that Augustine wrote his treatise on the Trinity without particular polemical intent. This older view is now being contested. An influential statement by a patristics scholar on this is Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology".

[282] A recent article has shown how the deeply the Fourth Gospel shapes the logic of the Augustinian approach to the Trinity. See Evan F. Kuehn, "The Johannine Logic of Augustine's Trinity: A Dogmatic Sketch," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2007): 572–594.

as eternal "gift" given in time in the economy of salvation, rather than as the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son. If not balanced by the synoptic portrait of Jesus as recipient of the Spirit or by the scriptural narrative suggesting that the life of Jesus might be read as a *return* of the Spirit, it is unsurprising that the classical approach to the Holy Spirit as "love" should emphasise the "common" rather than the "mutual" love dimension.[283]

Having thus looked at the emergence of a preference for the "common love" approach, and stated that this emphasis was understandable in the context of pro-Nicene polemics, the question of whether we can attribute a "mutual" love approach to the Holy Spirit to Augustine arises. In several places, Coffey asserts that we can,[284] a view that is not unusual. He is glad to find in Augustine a patristic authority by which to show a traditional precedent for the "mutual love" pneumatology that he himself wants to develop. In making this claim, however, Coffey brings to it a clearer distinction between the "common love" and the "mutual love" approach than is usually the case. The question thus becomes not whether Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love," but whether he does so intending to distinguish this term from what Coffey calls the "common love" approach.

I find that although Augustine does make mention of the Holy Spirit as "mutual" love it is not at all clear that, as Coffey implies, Augustine intends to distinguish this approach from the "common love" approach. Augustine does not, for ex-

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[283.] As a point of nuance I note that in fact theme of the mutual love of Father and Son emerges with even greater clarity in the Johannine gospel. What Coffey notes is the absence in the Fourth Gospel of a basis for connecting this mutual love with the Holy Spirit. While the theme of the mutual love of Father and Son may be less explicit in the synoptic gospels, it is nevertheless present at the level of the narrative as a whole, and may be more easily connected with the Holy Spirit, as attempted in Chapters One and Two above.

Ultimately, as we will see in the final chapter, the distinction offered by Johannine *vs* synoptic christology needs to be set alongside another distinction that Coffey finds in the New Testament: the distinction between the "mission" and the "return" schemas of the Trinity. On this see below at p. 180f.

[284.] In various places, Coffey refers to Augustine as originator and "formulator" of the "mutual" love model. See, for example, Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*; Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 471; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 232; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 193; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 4–5; Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 326; Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 47.

ample, attempt to explain how one model is related to the other.[285] Coffey does not show that Augustine intends this distinction, and his brief acknowledgment that Augustine sometimes confuses the vocabulary of "common" and "mutual" does little to strengthen his case.[286]

That said, the distinction between a "common love" and a "mutual love" approach is sustainable. What is important in Coffey's reading of Augustine on this matter is that he points to Augustine's failure to offer a plausible scriptural basis for the "mutual love" approach, since this is exactly what Coffey's own theology attempts to do. Augustine's only real attempt to root the "mutual love" approach in scripture, Coffey points out, is found in *De fide et symbolo* (9, 19), where the African Father appeals to the work of "others" in finding a scriptural basis for this idea, but does not specify exactly who these "others" are, or what proofs they offer. Augustine preached that:

> This Godhead, then, which they wish to be understood likewise as their [i.e. of the Father and the Son] mutual love and charity, they say is called the Holy Spirit. And this opinion they support by many proofs from the Scrip-

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[285] The clearest Augustinian reference to a "mutual" love approach to the Holy Spirit in the sense intended by Coffey is probably in 15.37. There we read: "if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what [is] more suitable than [that] he who is the common Spirit of them both should distinctively be called charity?" It would be interesting to see how Augustine would himself explain the relation between the mutual love of Father and Son and the communion in divine *substantia*. All he says is that the former "ineffabilitar demostrat" the latter. Is the mutual love "inexpressible" because it appears to depend a kind of plurality in God that Augustine is not in a position to explore, given his pro-Nicene commitments?

[286] Coffey writes:

> It is important to note that Augustine held [...] that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of the Father and the Son: 'According to the holy scriptures this Holy Spirit is not of the Father alone or of the Son alone but of both, and therefore he conveys to us the common love by which the Father and the Son love each other.' As such he is the 'bond' that unites them. From this mutual love must be distinguished the 'common' love of the Father and the Son, by which the two together love some object, be it a divine person or persons or the divine essence. It is unfortunate that in this context Augustine uses the word 'common' in the sense in which we have above defined 'mutual' precisely in order to distinguish it from the proper sense of 'common.' That Augustine held the Holy Spirit to be in fact the mutual, rather than the common, love of the Father and the Son is remarkable [....]

See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 6.

Coffey explains away Augustine's use of the term "common love" where Coffey would prefer to see "mutual love" as a kind of lapse on Augustine's part. I think had Augustine thought it important to distinguish these the two approaches he would not have committed such a lapse.

tures, for example, 'For the love of God is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us,' and many other such testimonies. [287]

Coffey takes this to be Augustine's only attempt to demonstrate a scriptural basis for the idea of the Holy Spirit as mutual love, and correctly points out that as such, it is far from satisfactory. Firstly, the cited Pauline text does not speak of the love of the Father and the Son, but rather of the love of God. Secondly, it does not speak of the love of God between divine persons, but rather of that love directed towards us, i.e. human persons. In practice, then, Coffey believes, Augustine has not offered a satisfactory scriptural basis for this doctrine.[288]

I would further take this as evidence that Augustine is not himself quite clear on the distinction that Coffey is bringing to the material.[289] No matter how we resolve the question of whether Augustine indeed proposes a model of the Holy Spirit as "mutual" (as against "common") love, the basic issue that Coffey raises remains: the question of the scriptural basis for claiming that the Holy Spirit is "mutual love."

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[287] Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 195–196. Augustine does not say who "they" are, but it is commonly thought that this is a tentative way of offering his own opinion on the matter. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, 370–372.

[288] He discusses this matter in Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 201.

[289] Coffey has perhaps himself grown cautious of attributing the "mutual love" theory to Augustine. In 2007, he wrote that he was led to the idea from the theme of the anointing, and not from Augustine. See Coffey, "Vive La Difference: A Response to Donald Gelpi," 120. In 2008 he makes no mention of Augustine when he writes that it has its "theological precedents in Scripture and tradition, not to mention Aquinas." See Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan," 862. I fully accept that the origins of Coffey's idea of the "mutual love" approach is the data of the economy of salvation, and have here merely argued that his earlier enthusiasm for an Augustinian resonance for the idea was probably misguided.

5. Descending Theology Addresses the Distinction of Persons

I have stated that the emphasis that emerges in Augustine is on the Holy Spirit as "common" love. This is not to say, however, that Augustine was not interested in the matter of the real distinction of divine persons. In point of fact, once the unity of God is explained in terms of the *homoousios*, that is the unity in divine *substantia*, the question of the distinction of persons comes to be the principal task facing trinitarian theology.

In order to express the distinction of divine persons, as is well-known, Augustine adopts the category of *relation*.[290] He does this because it appeared to offer a way of expressing the distinctness of the Son and the Father without falling into either modalism or subordinationism. These relations, he argues, are neither substances nor accidents.[291] The category of *relation* allows both unity and real distinction to be preserved.

The adoption of the category of "relation" by Augustine offers an interesting challenge to readers in our time. In modern culture, talk of "relation" evokes images that are *inter*personal in character. This would not have been the case in Augustine's time, where a more metaphysical meaning would have prevailed.

In view of the pro-Nicene context in which the idea of "relation" as a fruitful approach to the distinction of divine persons flourished, it is clear that one should be cautious about assuming any attempt in Augustine to evoke *inter*personal rela-

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[290] The use of the term relation (σχέσις) to speak of the distinction between Father and Son goes back at least as far as Gregory of Laodicea. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, 201. Augustine may have found this idea in Gregory of Nanzianzen, *Oration* 29.16 or Didymus the Blind, *De trinitate* 1.16. Augustine's own discussion of this point is in *De trinitate* 5.5, 7. 1–2. See also *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 68.

[291] This argument of Augustine is found in *De trinitate* 5.3–8.

tionships as a way of understanding the distinction of persons.[292] The basic form of his theology is "descending" (in Coffey's sense) and any attempt at introducing *inter*personal analogies would have to be taken as a reversal of his basic pro-Nicene strategy, the abandonment of the "descending" theology agenda and the adoption of an "ascending" mode of theology.

The contemporary reader should not assume, without evidence, that Augustine intended to draw an analogy between the trinitarian "relations" and human *inter*personal relations, or even to imagine that the New Testament narrative of the relationship between Jesus and God in the economy of salvation might be taken as a starting point in understanding the relations between the divine persons. If Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love," similarly, we should not assume that he does this on the basis of biblical evidence of the "mutual love" of Father and Son such as this is manifest in the economy of salvation. When Augustine writes that Holy Spirit is "a certain inexpressible communion or fellowship between the Father and the Son,"[293] he is probably thinking of their sharing in the divine *substantia* and not directly to any pre-existing eternal relationship between two distinct persons.[294]

The preference for a "common" love approach and the methodological demotion of the biblical witness to the economy of salvation as a source for trinitarian

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[292]   Benner writes: "Augustine more often protects against views of the Trinity that tend toward tritheism and subordinationism   than he protects against views of the Trinity that tend toward modalism." Drayton C Benner, "Augustine and Karl Rahner on the Relationship Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, (2007), 28.

[293]   *De trinitate* 5. 11.

[294]   It would be worth further investigating the influence of Neo-Platonist epistemology on Augustine's failure to clearly indicate the relation of the "immanent Trinity" with the economy of salvation. The influence of Neo-Platonism inculcates a reluctance to imagine that the "visible" realm, in this case the economy of salvation, might lead us to real knowledge of the invisible God. The path to knowledge of the supreme being in neo-Platonism was not through the senses, but through contemplation.

Accordingly, rather than appealing consistently to the economy of salvation as a basis for understanding the relations by which the one God was distinguished as three persons, Augustine has recourse to a "more inner way" (*interiore modo*). This search for a more "inner way" leads Augustine to the development of the psychological analogy for the Trinity.

For further information on the contentious issue of the visibility of Jesus in Augustine, see Michel René Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19, (2003): 329–355.

theology in Augustine's thought is further reinforced by the development of his psychological analogies for the Trinity.[295] Augustine carries out the task of understanding the church's trinitarian faith primarily through his development of trinitarian analogies.[296] The type of analogy Augustine is looking for in the latter part of *De trinitate* is quite clearly defined. He needs an analogy to show how one God can exist as three persons without partitioning the *substantia*. In book 10 of *De trinitate*, Augustine explores, for example, the potential of the triad of memory (*memoria sui*), understanding or knowledge (*intelligentia sui*) and will (*voluntas sui*).[297] The analogy of memory, understanding and will was not to prove the most influential of Augustine's experimental formulations. It was rather the analogy of the mind, its self-knowledge and its self-love[298] that fed much more significantly into the Western tradition as a result of the use made of it by Thomas.

The principal point to note for current purposes is that in the above analogy, the love invoked is not the love of Father and Son, but the self-love of the individual: it is *intra*subjective. The line of enquiry that Coffey will propose, in contrast, is *inter*subjective: the very term "mutual love" indicates a reciprocity of relationship that cannot be adequately represented with intrasubjective analogies.[299]

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[295] Already in *The Confessions* Augustine explores the triad of being, knowing and willing. See *Confessions* 13. 11, no. 12. Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, vol. I/1, (New York: New City Press, 1997). Further comment on the place of the psychological analogy in the structure of Western theological thought is found below at p. 146f.

[296] It is not true, as some allege, that Augustine in developing the psychological analogy for the Trinity is proposing an alternative source for knowledge of God other than the bible. To understand the place of these analogies, one must first understand the difference for Augustine between "faith" and "understanding." For Augustine, faith in the Trinity is a given: he thinks it is found directly in the bible and is taught by the church. In his *De trinitate* Augustine spends much of the first part of the book engaging with the belief of the church, and defending it against wrong beliefs. In the second half of the treatise, Augustine shifts to an emphasis on understanding. What dominates is the attempt to comprehend the intelligibility of the church's trinitarian faith. The analogy is neither an alternative source, nor is it a proof. The preferred English translation of this work is Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity,* ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, vol. I/5, (New York: New City Press, 2002).

[297] Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 80–81.

[298] *De trinitate* 9, 3–5.

[299] It is acknowledged that alongside the psychological analogy, Augustine also experimented with analogies that appealed to interpersonal love. One of the better known analogies presented in *De trinitate* is that with the lover, the one loved and love. Such attempts are found, for example, in *De*

6. The Holy Spirit as Love After Augustine

In the centuries after Augustine, the Western tradition bifurcates on the matter of the Holy Spirit as "love." The dominant tradition takes up the "common love" approach, and after Augustine it is found in Anselm and Thomas and others. There is, however, also a second, but also influential, account, which develops the "mutual love" approach, developing the very incomplete elements of such a theology found in Augustine.[300] This second tradition finds its classic formulation in Richard of St Victor (+ 1173).[301]

A brief word regarding this second tradition. It develops what can indeed be thought of as the "mutual love" pneumatology, perhaps hinted at but not developed in Augustine's writings. What marks Richard's approach as a "mutual love" approach is his willingness to explore the analogy of *inter*personal love. This does not

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trinitate 8.14, 9.2 and 15.10.

Augustine himself, however, was wary of these analogies, and the implicit risk of undermining God's oneness. Perhaps this fear lies behind the mysterious statement in 15.10 when Augustine looks back at his work and recalls how he did not develop such interpersonal analogies: "However, no trinity was yet aparent to us in this, because we could not hold the gaze of our mind fixed on looking for one in that dazzling brilliance; all we were able to perceive was that there is no mass there in which we would have to believe that the size of two or three is something more than that of one."

[300.] Michael Schmaus recognises the existence of these two major theologies of the Trinity in the medieval West, but does not place Augustine at the head of both in the way that Coffey does. The first tradition is that of Augustine, Anselm, Peter Lombard and Thomas, and the second that of Richard of St Victor, Bonaventure. Yves Congar does place Augustine at the head of two traditions, in the following terms: "In the theology of the Trinity, [Augustine] opened two great ways, each of which was followed further in mediaeval thinking. The first of these took up the analysis of the activities of the activities of the spirit, understanding and love, and was followed above all by Anselm and Thomas Aquinas. The second way followed the theme of God-charity and the Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son. This was the way which attracted, with individual differences, Achard and Richard of Saint-Victor, Bonaventure and the Franciscan School." See Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 96. See also John Cowburn, *Love and the Person*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 257; François Bourassa, *Questions De Théologie Trinitaire*, (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1970), 59–124; Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, 226 text and footnote 25.

[301.] The key text is Book Three of Richard's treatise on the Trinity. It is published in English in Richard of Saint Victor, *The Book of the Patriarchs, the Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*, ed. Grover A. Zinn, Classics of Western Spirituality, vol. (London: Paulist Press, 1979), 373–379.

For general notes on Richard, see Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Theological Resources, vol. (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 191–194.

121

mean that Richard has abandoned the project of giving guarantee to divine oneness in theology; in his theology there is indeed a strong emphasis on divine unity. He understands, however, that oneness in a way that in itself implies plurality. The oneness particular to God, for Richard, is not monadic arithmetical oneness, but it is the *Summum Bonum*. This oneness and goodness of God should, he argues, be understood in the light of the "God is love" statement of 1 John 4:8. Since, for Richard, "love" is understood as a type of self-transcendent tending towards the other, the divine unity implies some form of plurality at its heart. Richard connects this with the philosophically elaborated idea of the Good as self-diffusive.[302]

If God is the *Summum Bonum* then there must be in God an *Other,* and this accounts for the procession of the Son.[303] But if this love is to be truly altruistic, as love itself demands, Richard argues, then it calls for a "third," in which love finds its perfection. "The lover seeks a third to share the regard in which he beholds the beloved and to be regarded by the beloved as the beloved is regarded by him."[304] He writes:

> Sharing of love cannot exist among any less than three persons. Now, as has been said, nothing is more glorious, nothing more magnificent, than to share in common whatever you have that is useful and pleasant.

> But this cannot be hidden from supreme wisdom, nor can it fail to be pleasing to supreme benevolence. And as the happiness of the supremely powerful One and the power of the supremely happy One cannot be lacking in what pleases Him, so in Divinity it is impossible for two persons not to be united to a third.[305]

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[302] Theological exploration of God in the light of the philosophy of the Good as self-diffusive is common in much medieval theology.

[303] Peter Abelard (1079–1142) had attempted a similar line of thought in relation to love, but had tried unsuccessfully to reconcile this with the Western emphasis on divine unity as evidenced in Anselm's thought. Accordingly he made the creation of other beings by God necessary in order that God might express charity. This suggestion was, of course, unacceptable. See Cowburn, *Love and the Person,* 258.

[304] See Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation,* 79.

[305] Richard of Saint Victor, *De trinitate* 3.14, translation quoted by Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith,* 25.

Richard argues that the process of multiplication does not, however, continue beyond three, since already with three it is perfect and any more would be superfluous. On the basis of this analogy, we also find grounds for distinguishing between the three persons. Ilia Delio explains Richard's position thus:

> there must be three divine persons: one who is totally gratuitous in love [the Father], one who is totally receptive in love [the Spirit], and one who is both gratuitous and receptive in love [the Son]. Where there are three divine persons in mutual love, there is perfection.[306]

Let this suffice as a comment on the "mutual love" approach of Richard of St. Victor.

While Richard's is indeed a "mutual" rather than a "common" love pneumatology, it raises various questions. It fell to other medieval thinkers, especially within the Franciscan tradition such as Alexander of Hales and St Bonaventure (1221–1274) to bring to "full intelligibility" Richard's vision.[307] Various issues remain: Richard's argument is highly speculative and possibly rationalistic. It may be guilty of "crude anthropomorphism."[308] The concern that occupies us here is that it appears to be insufficiently rooted in scripture. While Coffey appreciates the precedent offered by the Victorine tradition, he is unhappy with Richard's methodology. In his own theology he attempts to argue towards a similar conclusion, drawing however not on metaphysical speculation about the "inner life" of God, but on the resources set out in Chapters One and Two above, the economy of salvation as mediated in the biblical texts interpreted by the church.

With the exception of the Victorine tradition, the mainstream of Western thought developed the "common" love perspective. This too, however, underwent development. One of the most important developments was the promotion after the

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[306.] Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings*, (New York: New City Press, 2001), 42–43.

[307.] Hill, *Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, 78. See also Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith*, 26–28. The treatment of John Cowburn of this development through the figures of William of Auxerre (+ 1249), Alexander of Hales (+ 1245), St Bonaventure (1221–1274) and Henry of Ghent (+ 1293), though brief is well focused and helpful. See Cowburn, *Love and the Person*, 259–263.

[308.] This criticism is made by Von Balthasar, despite sympathy with Richard's project. See Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," 200.

time of Augustine of the psychological analogies almost to the level of dogma. In that context, it is not surprising that the "mutual love" approach failed to develop convincingly: one simply cannot reconcile the *inter*personal presuppositions of "mutual love" talk with the *intra*personal parameters of the psychological analogy.

The eventual affirmation of the mainstream perspective is particularly associated with St Anselm (1033–1109), in whose writings it is often thought that the Western tendency to emphasise the *unity* of divine essence reaches its highest point. Although Augustine inaugurated the tradition of exploring psychological analogies for the Trinity, he himself did not push this attempt as far as did Anselm, who – in Coffey's words – "carried the analogy through to its logical conclusion, which makes the essential acts of knowledge and love the formal reasons of the processions."[309] In the Anselmian form the psychological analogy emerges as a strictly *intra*personal one. For Anselm the *formal reason* of the second procession is the *essential love* of God, that is the self-love of the divine essence.

What of the position of Thomas in this regard? Coffey devotes the second chapter of his *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit* to a lengthy discussion of where to position Thomas on the matter of the Holy Spirit as "love" in the "immanent Trinity."[310] Although the details of his intricate argument cannot detain us here, it is worth noting the importance that Coffey gives to this discussion. This is not surprising, given the central position that Thomas of Aquinas occupies in the Western theological landscape. Coffey's observation is that the position normally attributed to Thomas, namely that the latter favours the Anselmian tradition and the "essen-

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[309.] See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 20. Coffey's reference is to Anselm's *de divinitas essentia monologium* 49–51. In speaking here of the "essential" acts of knowledge and love, Anselm is referring to God's self-knowledge and self-love.

Coffey discusses the use of the terms "essential" and "notional" in Ibid., 16–17. In Thomas' language, the "essential" love is understood as the love that God *is*: God's essence. Accordingly, to say that the Holy Spirit is "essential love" is to say that the Holy Spirit is the very "love" that God *is*. There is no specific reference here to the "mutual" "love" by which the Father and the Son love each other. The term "notional" comes from the technical term "notion," which is used of the "proper idea by which we know a divine person" (ST I, q. 32 a. 3). "Essential love" pertains to God in God's essence, while "notional love" pertains to our knowledge of the persons. See also Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 54–55.

[310.] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 11–32.

tial" love approach over the "notional" love approach associated with Richard of St Victor is only partly correct. It is true, he acknowledges, that in the *Summa theologiae* Thomas clearly thinks of the Holy Spirit proceeding by the "essential" rather than the "notional" love of God. Coffey argues, however, that the position of the later Thomas of the *Summa* differs from that found in his earlier writings, where the Victorine influence is more widely felt. This shift is linked to the increasing distance that Thomas takes from Richard's position, and a move towards Anselm's version of the Augustinian position. One should not invoke Thomas in support of the Anselmian tradition without noting this shift in Thomas' own position.

Recall, at this stage, the statement of De Margerie, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, to the effect that the "mutual love" theology of the Holy Spirit is peacefully held by the whole church. Thus far in this chapter I have argued that the Western tradition does not hold its "mutual love" pneumatology with anything like the tranquillity that De Margerie suggests. I have indicated two barriers to the development of a properly "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit. The first was methodological: attempts to elaborate an account of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love" have been largely expressed in speculative terms, terms that no longer hold the power to convince that they once did, given the demise of the "classical" culture that supported them.[311] The second barrier is more systematic in nature: the need to guarantee the oneness of God.[312]

[311.] On the passage from a "classicist" to a "modern" culture see Bernard Lonergan, "Belief: Today's Issue," in *A Second Collection: Papers By Bernard Lonergan, S.J,* ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrell, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974). The metaphysical framework assumed by thinkers such as Richard can no longer be assumed by contemporary readers for whom, as Lonergan argues, empirical and historical criteria are primary.

[312.] Rahner objects that "mutual love" implies two acts, and as such undermines divine unity. See Rahner, *The Trinity*, 48. Coffey believes that part of the response to this objection lies in some version of Lonergan's position that the one divine consciousness exists in a triple mode, and that each of the three subjects thus implied must in some way be self-conscious, so that the one divine consciousness exists as three self-conscious subjects. On this see Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 289. Coffey offers the terminology of three "relative" subjects. On this matter, see his Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 58–60; Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 48–49.

With respect to this second barrier there is, according to Coffey, a certain dynamism within the Western tradition towards what the elaboration of a properly "mutual" love theology of the Holy Spirit. In turning to this matter we comment now, in conclusion, on the first word of this chapter's title: the "towards."

7. The *Filioque* between "Essentialism" and "Personalism"

The history outlined above, dominated as it is by a "common love" approach to the Holy Spirit but with hints of a "mutual love" approach is not, for Coffey, the story of an irresolvable tension. There is already a dynamism in this history towards the resolution of this tension. He finds evidence of this dynamism, curiously, in the *filioque* theology of the West. This dynamic thrust towards a "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit is tending in our time towards an important step forward. Coffey's pneumatology attempts to identify this dynamic thrust and show where it leads.

Coffey imagines the range of ways in which the theological tradition has interpreted the Holy Spirit as love as being arrayed along a scale that moves from "essentialist" to "personalist." The "common love" approach discussed above corresponds to an "essentialist" view. This means that the "love" in question is the essential love of God. The "mutual love" approach, at the other end of this scale, may be called "personalist." It proceeds from the distinct *persons* of Father and Son, rather than from the divine essence as such.[313] The dynamic is *from* "essential-

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[313.] There is no direct reference here to the philosophical school of "personalism." It might be noted, however, that Coffey does engage with the strengths and weaknesses of "personalism" in the ordinary sense elsewhere. The stimulus for this was the mid-twentieth century debate about whether "personalism" in a more general sense might offer theology resources that could replace those formerly offered by scholasticism. On this distinct question, Coffey wishes to embrace the new possibilities offered by personalism, without jettisoning the advantages of clarity and rigour offered by the scholastic heritage. See Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 204–205; Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 49–53. This topic is not of direct interest to this study, but it does offer a further illustration of Coffey's catholic instincts.

ism" *to* "personalism," or, to express it in other terms, *from* "descending" theology *towards* "ascending" theology. Coffey sees the *filioque* as occupying a *middle position* between these "essentialist" and "personalist" approaches.

In order to situate Coffey's thought on this matter a few comments on the Eastern and Western approaches to the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit will be helpful.[314] Coffey points out that beneath the important differences between the Eastern and the Western approaches to the eternal procession lies a common set of theological preoccupations that he portrays as the classical project of "descending" theology. The master question that characterises this classical project, in both its Eastern and Western forms, is the question of how one God can be three persons. Thus, in both the Eastern and the Western traditions the common questions in relation to the Holy Spirit are (1) how does the Holy Spirit proceed? and (2) how are we to account for the distinctness between the Son and the Holy Spirit? The distinction between Eastern and Western traditions lies not in the questions but in the responses to those questions. The resolution that Coffey seeks, as Chapter Five below will illustrate, lies in a redefinition of the questions: of itself "descending" theology cannot be expected to resolve these matters.

In the meantime, the East and the West answer the questions of "descending" theology differently. As we have seen above, the Western approach develops the idea of the Holy Spirit proceeding as "love," with specific interest in the "love" that is common to the Father and the Son, an eternal "gift" given in the economy of salvation. Both Father and Son share this "love," that tradition speaks of the Holy

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[314] What is dealt with in this chapter is not so much the *filioque* issue in itself, but the relation to this to the Holy Spirit as love theme. The final chapter will return more specifically to the debated question of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.

Coffey's reading of the history of the debates between East and West over the procession of the Holy Spirit as a history of dynamic development along more or less fruitful paths is evident in an early form in Ibid., 7–8.

Spirit as proceeding from the Father *and* the Son. The *filioque* tradition attempts to answer both questions of classical "descending" theology mentioned above by arguing that the Holy Spirit proceeds as love from the Father and the Son.

The Eastern tradition adopted a different approach to answering the questions defined above as the questions of "descending" theology. The Eastern approach has been shaped by two cornerstones: (1) the belief that the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father through the Son and (2) Photian monopatrism.

The first of these is known to the Latin tradition as the *per filium,* and developed independently of the line of development that led to the Western *filioque.* In responding to the question of the eternal origin of the Holy Spirit and that of the distinction between the origin of the Holy Spirit and that of the Son, the Eastern tradition developed the position that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. Following up on hints in Origen,[315] the Cappadocians and the Eastern tradition in general make some tentative steps that culminate in John Damascene's idea of the procession of the Spirit *through* the Son.[316] John of Damascus writes in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 1.12:

> But the Holy Spirit is not the Son of the Father but the Spirit of the Father as proceeding from the Father. For there is no impulse without Spirit. And we speak also of the Spirit of the Son, not as through proceeding from Him, but as proceeding through Him from the Father. For the Father alone is cause.

The phrase "through the Son" was used by Patriarch Tarasius at the Council of Nicaea (787).[317]

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[315] Ibid., 6.

[316] Coffey believes that the Cappadocians appropriate Origen's idea without accepting its implicit subordinationism.

[317] Methodologically, Coffey believes that there is a problem with the way in which the issue is framed in Eastern theology. The problem, as he sees it, is that Eastern thought fails to update its understanding of the principle of unity in God after Nicaea. Unlike the Western tradition, for which the unity of God is more directly guided by the Nicene *homoousios,* the Eastern tradition continues to identify principle of unity with the Father, as was the scriptural usage. For Coffey, this tendency of the Eastern theological tradition represents something of a confusion. Thus he writes,

> Methodologically, the distinction of persons is its end point, not its starting point. It follows from this that in the economic Trinity it is not the Father who is to be equated with Yahweh of the Old Testament. Rather it is God who is to be thus equated, God who differentiates out into Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this despite the fact that in the New Testament

An important difference between this position and that enunciated in the West is that in the Eastern tradition the *per filium* describes what happens in the economy of salvation only. It is not held to reflect the eternal "procession" of the Holy Spirit. The reason for this reluctance to correlate the mission of the Spirit from the Father *per filium* with the eternal procession of the Spirit and the Son is probably found in the ongoing Eastern struggles against a subordination not just of the Son to the Father, but also of the Holy Spirit to the Son.[318] Sensitivity to this danger led Eastern theology consciously to   limit the correspondence between the economic co-sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit, lest this lead to a subordination of the Spirit to the Son. The *per filium* is, for this reason, limited to the economy of salvation.[319]

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the word "God" nearly always refers to the Father.

See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 47–48.

On the question of how the Holy Spirit was to be distinguished from the Son, the Eastern tradition pointed to the fact that while the Son is generated, the Holy Spirit proceeds. Both Son and Holy Spirit proceed (to use the generic Western sense of "proceed") immediately from the Father.

Here we see Coffey adopting an approach analogous to the one that he took in relation to the term "Holy Spirit" in the bible. The literal meaning of the biblical text is not the only meaning. Theological development within the church clarifies the meaning of these texts even when it goes beyond their literal meaning. The biblical text remains criteriological inasmuch as it is the basis upon which theological development takes place, and such development must show itself to be rooted in the biblical texts. Coffey, however, rejects any fundamentalist or archaist approaches to the biblical texts. On this see also Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 8. See also Coffey, "Mary, Prototype of Salvation," 95.

[318.] The Pneumatomachian tendency is not found in the West.

[319.] See Coffey, "The Roman 'Clarification' of the Doctrine of the Filioque," 11–12. For this reason, the *per filium* could not be expected to ascend from statements about the economy to statement about the eternal Trinity.

Attempts to show some degree of equivalence between this position and the Western *filioque* are usually overstated.[320] Coffey recognises this and does not follow those Western thinkers who see in it a basis for arguing for a proto-*filioque* theology in the East.

The second cornerstone of Eastern thought about the eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is Photian monopatrism.[321] This is the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *alone*. Photius, the 9th century patriarch of Constantinople took issue with the *filioque* especially in 867. The word "alone," is not found in the teaching of the Council of Constantinople, which also fails to mention any relation between the eternal procession of the Spirit and the Son. The Photian approach, despite its claims to represent the Eastern tradition as a whole, may be taken as a development within that tradition. By stating that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, the Photian version of the Eastern tradition goes beyond the literal meaning of the Council of Constantinople. Setting aside the unjustified attempt to root monopatrism in the Second Ecumenical Council, we should acknowledge the validity of this doctrine's basic concerns: the need for an account of the origin of the Holy Spirit that respects the *primacy* of the Father, one in other words that does

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[320] Much has been made of the significance of the existence of a *per filium* in the Eastern tradition, and it formed an important part of the basis for the attempted but doomed attempt at reconciliation at the Council of Florence. There are two principal reasons for this failure. Firstly, this phrase from the Damascene is not as typical of the Eastern tradition as has sometimes been supposed. See W.H. Principe, "Filioque," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity,* ed. E. Ferguson, (New York and London: Garland, 1997), 348. Secondly, the *per filium* describes the *sending* of the Holy Spirit. It is thought not to apply to the matter of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.

Attempts such as that at the Council of Florence to make it equivalent to the *filioque* were never likely to command assent. Notwithstanding the above, contemporary Western attempts to work out an accommodation of the *filioque* with the Eastern tradition continue to hinge on the *per filium*. The 1995 Vatican "Clarification" goes so far as to suggest that the *per filium* "must serve for the continuation of the current theological dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox."

In my view, the insistence of some Western theologians on this formula as a path towards reconciliation is extremely unhelpful. It assumes that the *per filium* is doctrine, which it is not. It assumes that the *per filium* is an incipient *filioque*, despite the protests of Eastern theologians who fail to recognise it as such. A helpful step in dialogue, one would think, is to recognise where difficulties lie, rather than simply to insist that they do not exist.

[321] See Markos A Orphanos, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit According to Certain Later Greek Fathers," in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy,* Faith and Order Papers No. 103 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981).

not confuse the Father and Son. If the *filioque* indeed damages this principle then it will never be accepted, even as an instance of "reconciled diversity"[322] by the Eastern tradition.[323]

For current purposes, the important observation is that *both* the Western *filioque, and* the Eastern *per filium* represent fruits of what Coffey calls "descending" theology: both work from divine unity towards the distinction of trinitarian persons. For Coffey, the fact that both Eastern and Western traditions approach this matter from the point of view of descending theology means that both are likely to fail. Neither can reach the *comprehensive* point of view that is available when one brings the descending theology into dialogue with the ascending theology.[324] How Coffey proposes to do this is considered in Chapter Five. In the meantime, there is something to be learned from the *filioque* about the dynamic tendency towards the personalist approach to the Holy Spirit as love referred to above.

Given the limitation, as Coffey sees it, of operating within the framework of a "descending" theology, he nevertheless believes that the Western tradition moves a step beyond what is found in the Eastern tradition, a step in the right direction. Unlike the Eastern tradition that identified the Father as the principle by which we understand divine unity, the Western tradition shows greater clarity in its acceptance of the *homoousios* as the basis of such unity.

Following the argument that the Father and Son are one in all, except that the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, Coffey believes that the Western tradition is correct in concluding that the Father and the Son must be one in the divine operation of breathing forth the Holy Spirit.[325] The *filioque* is not, however,

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[322] The term "reconciled diversity" was introduced into ecumenical conversation by Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer during the WCC Faith and Order convention of 1974.

[323] In 1982, Coffey accepted Garrigues' view that the filioque might be considered a theologoumenon in the West, as might "monopatrism" in the East. See Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit," 72–73. In later writings, Coffey accepts the dogmatic force of the Councils of Lyons and Florence, at least for the West.

[324] Coffey's position has developed on this important point. In his earlier theology he stated, contrary to the above that the Western position is comprehensive and includes the *per filium* logically. See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 7.

[325] Coffey subscribes to the doctrines of the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), while

simply a deduction from the *homoousios*. It does not imply that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the divine *ousia*. If it did, then the Holy Spirit, who shares the divine nature, would also be involved in originating himself. That this was the implication of the *filioque* was argued by the *filioque's* greatest Eastern opponent, the Patriarch Photius. Orphanos summarises the objection:

> According to Photius, the Son cannot be considered as a common cause of the Holy Spirit's procession with the Father, because this would imply that the procession is a common property of the Father and the Son. Since all things common to the Father and the Son are in any case common to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit must thus proceed from himself. Even he will be the principle of himself and at the same time both cause and caused. Nevertheless, Photius says, not without irony, even the myths of the Greeks never fabricated such an idea. (*De Spiritus Mystagogia*, 44, PG 102, 321C).[326]

The mistake in Photius' reasoning is that he posits *only* two possibilities: *either* the Holy Spirit proceeds from the person of the Father, *or* the Holy Spirit proceeds from the *homoousios*. As Congar expresses it, there is an unjustified dualism in Photius' thinking: *either* "persons" *or* "nature."[327] Coffey does not accept the terms of this dualism and points out a middle possibility: that the Holy Spirit is originated from something shared by the Father and the Son: the *vis spiritiva* (the power to breathe forth the Holy Spirit).[328]

Coffey adopts the notion of a *vis spiritiva* from the Western tradition in order to show evidence of a dynamic tendency to move *from* an "essentialist" *towards* a "personalist" approach to the origin of the Holy Spirit. Offering a heuristic understanding of the term, Coffey situates it as the power to breathe forth the Holy Spirit, a power shared by both Father and Son, but something not shared by the Spirit. It is not therefore, as one might be prompted to object, a divine person. Coffey, follow-

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recognising the limits of their basically "descending" theology. He will argue, however, that the limits implicit in the classical *filioque* need to be addressed by an "ascending" "mutual love" approach.

[326] Orphanos, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit According to Certain Later Greek Fathers," 23. See also Brian Gaybba, *The Spirit of Love*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 73–74.

[327] Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 58.

[328] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 48. Edmund Hill appears to suggest that Augustine's theology leaves us with the Photian impasse, but Thomas' theology offers one path beyond it by distinguishing the *virtus spiritiva* from the *supposita* of the breathing forth. In the former Father and Son are one, while in the latter they are "several." See Hill, *Mystery of the Trinity*, 114–115. The text cited from Thomas is *Summa theologiae* I, q. 36, a. 4 ad 1. Coffey's view is that the *virtus spiritiva* is shared by the Father and Son, but not the Spirit. Coffey also refers to this as the *virtus spirandi*. See Coffey, "The Roman 'Clarification' of the Doctrine of the Filioque".

ing the classical definition of person, is careful to point out that while this *vis spirit-iva* is subsistent (since otherwise the Spirit proceeding would not be subsistent), it is not a hypostasis, since it is neither distinct nor incommunicable.[329] In point of fact, it is communicable, since it is communicated from the Father to the Son. This last point is important, since it is precisely in engaging with this fact that Coffey believes the issue of the primacy of the Father can be answered.[330]

Beyond these points, we need not say much about this *vis spiritiva*, other than to acknowledge its function as a theoretical construct that aims at naming something communicated from the Father to the Son, but not possessed by the Holy Spirit. As such, the idea of the *vis spiritiva*, implicit in the *filioque* is something shared not by all three divine persons, in which case it would be essential, but something shared by Father and Son.[331] Thus, Coffey believes that we can see the *filioque* as a middle point between the essentialist view introduced above and the "personalist" view that Coffey himself will advocate.

8. Conclusion: Mutual Love Pneumatology Rooted in the Economy

I have suggested that Coffey imagines the range of approaches to the Holy Spirit as "love" as if along a scale moving from "essentialist" to "personalist." The *filioque* stands as a midway point between these two extremes. In the *filioque* the possibilities of "descending" theology meet their limit. A properly "mutual love"

[329.] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 55.

[330.] This point is taken up in Chapter Five below.

[331.] Coffey thinks that the attempt to root the *filioque* in reflections drawn from the psychological analogy easily fall into a confusion between the "essential" and the "notional" planes of discourse. See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 26. Although in his 1979 book Coffey attempts to reformulate the psychological analogy to accommodate the "notional" level of discourse, this attempt is abandoned in later writings.

account of the Holy Spirit must, in Coffey's theology, rather than beginning with the oneness in divine *ousia,* highlight the "persons" of the Father and the Son loving one another. It must be an "ascending theology."

The grounding that Coffey himself proposes for such an "ascending" "mutual love" approach is that set out above in Chapters One and Two, namely the scriptural witness to God's love of Jesus and Jesus' love of God (whom he called Father), and the scriptural identification of both of these loves with the Holy Spirit. Although the biblical texts do not in their literal meaning contain a doctrine of the Trinity, there is a basis here – in Coffey's view – for an inference of an inner-trinitarian reality, namely that the Holy Spirit is the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son eternally.[332] Whether such an inference is possible is addressed in the next chapter. In this chapter, we have seen how Western reflection on the Holy Spirit as "love" does not usually invoke a properly "mutual" love account, and when it has it has failed to offer the kind of methodological support that would recommend it to theology today. I conclude this chapter with a number of summary observations; they will be expanded on in what remains of this study.

1. Firstly, it will be obvious that in developing this theme, Coffey is taking forward the agenda set out in the first two chapters of this study. In the Fourth Gospel, we saw, the Spirit plays an important role in the life of Jesus, but one that is focused on the manifestation of God's glory in Jesus to ordinary human beings. The Spirit is not in that gospel the ointment by which Jesus is the Son and the Christ; Jesus is the Son and Christ because he is the *Logos* Incarnate. In the synoptic gospels,

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[332] I am not suggesting here that Coffey is unique among recent theologians in trying to draw inferences about the Trinity from the economy of salvation. One statement of the readiness with which contemporary theology does this is the following, from McDade:

> If we ask, 'what is the relationship between Jesus and the Father?' then we must answer that it is the relationship between the Son and the Father within the Triune life; and correspondingly, if we ask, 'what is the relationship between the Son and the Father?' then we must answer that it is precisely the relationship between Jesus and the Father. [That...] which occurs between Jesus and the Father, through the mediation of the Spirit, [is] the proper *locus* for the articulation of the Trinitarian mystery.

See McDade, "The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery," 184. Coffey's work offers a framework for systematising the relationship between the "classic" and the "newer" approaches.

by contrast, Jesus receives the Holy Spirit in an anointing by which he is the Christ, and even the beloved Son. We saw that in the post-biblical period, although there was some early development of the seeds of Spirit Christology implied in the synoptic gospels, doctrinal concerns led to a preference for *Logos* Christology, a preference reinforced by the early church councils.

2. For Coffey the integrity of reception of the biblical witness is a primary concern. In developing the "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit one of his principal motivations is the attempt to restore the "synoptic" dimension that had been obscured in the above process. We have already seen that he wishes to do this without excluding the positive benefits associated with *Logos* Christology.

3. A third observation is that Coffey holds that the Johannine tendency in the classical theological tradition has led to a one-sided interest in "descending" rather than "ascending" theology.[333] In both Eastern and Western forms of the classical theological tradition the question of the Holy Spirit was raised within a firmly "descending" logic, for which the basic question relates to how the distinct persons come forth from the divine unity. To this end, the Johannine christology proved to be a rich resource. Coffey's concern is to explore the resources of the synoptic gospels for the construction of an "ascending" approach to the Trinity.

4. Coffey's principal argument, as I have presented it, takes the form *if* Thesis A *and* Thesis B *then* the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of the Father and the Son in the economy of salvation. This depends on the view that the "economic Trinity" reveals the "immanent Trinity." On this view the Holy Spirit should be understood as mutual love not just in the economy of salvation, but also in the immanent Trinity. The "mutual" love theory depends not just on the plausibility of Theses A and B,

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[333] While in contemporary Christology it is sometimes observed that the synoptic gospels present us with a more "human" Jesus and the Fourth Gospel presents us with a more "divine" Jesus, in Coffey's theology this is not the primary emphasis.

It is possible, in fact, that such a distinction between a more "human" and a more "divine" Jesus is only comprehensible in the light of the church's classical christological doctrines, such that such a distinction cannot be applied directly to the New Testament writings themselves.

but also on the plausibility of an "ascent" from observations about the "economy of salvation" to observations about the "immanent Trinity." Looking more closely at this "ascent" is the business of the next chapter, to which we now turn.

4. From Spirit Christology to Trinitarian Theology

1. Introduction

In his contribution to a symposium on pneumatology held at Marquette University in April 1998, David Coffey stated that: "Spirit Christology provides our best mode of access to the theology of the Trinity."[334] Two claims are made here. The first, to be explored in this chapter, is that Spirit Christology provides *a* mode of access to the theology of the Trinity. The second, to be explored in the next chapter, is that Spirit Christology provides the *best* mode of access.

The first task of this chapter is to introduce some features of what I am calling "classical"[335] trinitarian theology.[336] From the point of view of this "classical" trinitarian theology, the claim that Spirit Christology might provide a mode of access to theology of the Trinity, never mind the claim that it might provide the best mode of access, is open to serious doubt. The purpose of introducing certain features of the "classical" trinitarian tradition is to illustrate how Coffey's approach respects these,

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[334] This talk is published as Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 315.

[335] In my usage "classical" does not represent a judgement of value, whether positive or negative. I place the word "classical" in inverted commas to indicate caution not about the existence of a classical tradition, but rather to indicate that the precise theological value of this tradition needs to be continually explored and explained. For some authors, the "classical" tradition is itself a criterion of right thought, or even orthodoxy, such that any approach that differs in emphasis from the "classical" approach is therefore suspect. Coffey himself prefers to emphasise that alongside significant points of contrast, there is a basic dialectical coherence between the classical approach and his own that mirrors, among other things, the range of christological positions expressed in the New Testament.

[336] Although I concentrate on the Western form of this "classical tradition," many of the features find some degree of correspondence in the Eastern tradition. Philip Cary, for example, would argue that the basic structures of the Eastern and Western traditions are identical on the matters discussed in this chapter. See Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity".

while suggesting ways of addressing some of the important limits that the "classical" tradition would impose on attempts such as his to find a new point of departure for trinitarian theology in Spirit Christology.

2. Some Features of the "Classical" Approach

We have seen that trinitarian theology emerged in dependence on an increasingly influential *Logos* Christology.[337] This brought both benefits and challenges. We saw that in relation to pneumatology it provided the framework for a recognition of a distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit, analogous to that of the Eternal *Logos*, but also that it manifested a certain weakness inasmuch as it tended to obscure the "ascending" "synoptic" data about the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the coming into existence of Christ.[338] Coffey proposes, in contrast, that the biblical data suggesting Spirit Christology might serve as an alternative starting point. In a sense, then, his is an attempt to return to the bible itself for additional data pertinent to trinitarian theology, data that had not attracted particular attention in "classical" trinitarian theology.

Direct appeal to the biblical data, such as we find in Coffey's proposal, runs contrary to an interesting feature of the "classical" tradition: that of limiting direct appeal to the bible as source. The background to this lies, perhaps, in the church's struggle against the flourishing of gnostic and other interpretations of Jesus in the second and third centuries. Among the strategies employed by the church were two kinds of limitation of access to data about the events of the economy of salvation. First, there was a suppression of apocryphal accounts of the story of salvation and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles by means of the establishment of a canon of scripture. Second, more subtly, there was the promotion of a kind of universal and

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[337.] See above at p. 34f.

[338.] See above at p. 41f.

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shared interpretation of the canonical scripture passed down in prayer, sermon, creeds and symbols of faith. This traditional interpretation proved consistent enough to be invoked by a single name: the *regula fidei*.[339] When the Fathers went to the scripture, they went to it not as do historically-minded theologians today; they were guided in their readings by a sense that the scripture was to be read within a very particular tradition of interpretation.[340] This tendency was fortified when the *regula fidei* interpretations found precise formulations in the official creeds promulgated by church councils. Contemporary theology, by contrast, as exemplified by Coffey's work, attempts a more complex manoeuvre, one that is not always successful. It attempts to begin with the data of historically read scripture and, often struggling in the attempt, seeks points of harmony with the *regula fidei*.[341]

Neil Ormerod has positioned himself as a defender of the "classical tradition." He draws attention to the distinction between the "classical" theological tradition and what he sees as "new" and misplaced theological projects such as that found in Coffey. Central to his criticism is the belief that much of contemporary theology has fallen into what he regards as the Kantian error of seeing major statements of belief, statements such as those enshrined in the creeds, but also those expressed in the major representatives of the Western theological tradition (especially Thomas) merely as interpretations. The "Kantian" error is thinking that truth remains inaccessible and all that we can work with is the multiple (phenomenal) interpretations

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[339] See M.E. Williams. "Rule of Faith," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 12: Ref – Sep.* Ed.Berard Marthaler. Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2003

[340] On the use of the *regula fidei* and its relationship with scripture in Irenaeus and Tertullian see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 36–41. Coffey makes an interesting reference to the judgement of Congar "in the primitive Church Scripture was not used for first conversion but only to strengthen and deepen faith," and that of Newman that "The sacred text was never intended to teach doctrine, but only to prove it, and if we would learn doctrine, we must have recourse to formularies of the Church." See Coffey, "Congar's Tradition and Traditions: Thirty Years on," 58.

[341] This increases the likelihood that theologians will arrive at positions difficult to reconcile with the *regula fidei*. Among those whose theology leads them to positions at variance with the *regula fidei* I would include, for example, the "post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists" discussed above. Among those who arrive at positions different from, not necessarily at variance with, the *regula fidei*, I would include theologians like Coffey who allow for the possibility that "new" data might be retrieved from "new" readings of the scriptures. Such independence in interpretation was not characteristic of the Fathers of the Church, or – even – fourth and fifth century "heretics" (most of whom devoted considerable effort to showing that theirs was the traditional interpretation of scripture).

of truth. This "error" is potentiated, Ormerod holds, in an intellectual climate enamoured by the promises of historical research. The multiplication of historical studies of ancient texts tends to train the attention of theologians away from the important task of finding the *truth* of doctrinal and theological assertions towards the distraction of ever better *interpretations* of historical *data*. Ormerod urges a return by systematic theology to its principal task: the *understanding* of theological *truth*.[342]

In the above, Ormerod suggests a very close relation between systematic theology and the "classical theology." The concern of systematic theology, in this account, is the exploration of the intelligibility of the church's trinitarian faith as expressed in the *regula fidei*, in the creeds and in the major representatives of the theological tradition. If this is so, it will not be surprising to find that systematic theology is called to devote itself to the issues of "descending" theology, since these were the issues of the "classical" tradition. It will not want to explore the impact of Spirit Christology or of the "ascending" biblical data, precisely because these are new.

Coffey's theology, in contrast, without denying the validity or fruitfulness of the "classical" theological tradition, argues that the New Testament when read in its entirety calls for *another* set of questions alongside this first set of questions: the questions of what he calls "ascending" theology. Before looking at how he develops his position on this matter, it is best to devote more attention to particular cornerstones of the "classical" trinitarian approach: the principle of "common action," the strategy of "appropriations," and the place of the "psychological analogy."

In the Western form of the "classical" tradition, the solution to the question of the distinction of the divine persons that gained ground in the theological tradition of West was, as stated, built on the Augustinian idea that the persons were to be dis-

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[342] For Ormerod, the true task of "systematic theology," namely the understanding of theological truth, has been best expressed in recent times by Bernard Lonergan and, in dependence on the latter, by Robert Doran. See especially Chapter One of Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*. See also Ormerod, "What is the Task of Systematic Theology?"; Ormerod, "Questio Disputata: Two Points Or Four? – Rahner and Lonergan on Trinity, Incarnation, Grace, and Beatific Vision"; Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology".

tinguished by their relations.[343] These relations, however, as the previous chapter argued, were understood not by any direct appeal to the data of the economy of salvation, but rather in the more rarified terms offered by the theology of the immanent Trinity. "Paternity," "generation," "passive" and "active" spiration, the terms with which these relations are named do, of course, have scriptural basis. That basis is sought especially, however, in the names "Father," "Son" and "Holy Spirit," and not so much in the narrative elements contained in the New Testament. It was, accordingly, by appeal to an idea of mutually opposed relations inferred from the names, rather than from the story of Jesus as such, that the divine persons were understood to be distinct.

A standard statement of this Western approach to the distinction of divine persons points us to the way in which the distinction of divine persons was understood without reference to the economy of salvation. This statement is *in Deo omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.*[344] According to this axiom, the only grounds for distinguishing the divine persons was the opposition of relationships. As this axiom makes clear, this opposition of relationship was not, however, the op-

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[343] See above at p.118.

[344] This is the formulation of the Council of Florence's *Decree for the Copts* (1442). See DS 1330, ND 326. The principle itself is often attributed to St. Anselm. See *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, 1. Anselm's own formulation is more balanced. Anselm wrote:

> Thus, the oneness never loses its own consequence in a case where no opposition of relation stands against it; and the relation does not lose what belongs to it except in the case where the inseparable oneness stands against it.

An English translation is available in Anselm of Canterbury, *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000).

It was the Council of Florence's version, however, that prevailed. Edmund Fortman says that it "seems to be of defined faith." Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 229. On a hermeneutical point, of interest to trinitarian theology, Coffey points out that the desire of the Council of Florence to discourage tritheism lay behind the one-sided emphasis in this formulation. In his judgement, it would be "unwarranted to generalize from this by saying that in all circumstances this emphasis has to be maintained." Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 9.

Karl Rahner, and Coffey following him, cannot simply ignore this axiom, but they would like to offer an important nuance to its application. See Rahner, *The Trinity*, 25. According to Cary, what Rahner does is "call into question the use that the Latin tradition has made of the rule and the implications that have been drawn from it." See Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity". This is a fair way of stating the issue in relation not just to Rahner but also to Coffey.

position of relationship manifest in the story of salvation. Father and Son were distinguished by "paternity" and "generation" rather than by what is learned of the relationship of God and Son from the story of Jesus in the scriptures.[345] The life, death and resurrection of Jesus did not offer the grounds for distinguishing the persons: the grounds for such distinctions were understood to be "strictly inner-trinitarian,"[346] by which we can understand "not economic."

The tendency towards developing trinitarian theology without direct reference to the data of the economy of salvation was historically fortified by the need to ensure that Christian theology maintained a clearly monotheistic form. If the three divine persons are of the same being (*homoousios*), then, the "classical" tradition deduced, that they must be one in their work. This conviction was given standard formulation in the axiom, *omnia opera Trinitatis sunt indivisa*: the works of God *ad extra* are undivided or inseparable. This position represents a laudable extension of the thinking manifest in the previous axiom. The joint impact of these two axioms on the method of trinitarian theology was that they confirmed the tendency already found in Augustine to develop trinitarian theology without direct appeal to the economy of salvation.[347] God does not, in brief, in the "classical view" communicate the grounds of personal distinction with the world.[348]

That said, Christians do in fact attribute certain works more spontaneously to one or other particular divine person. The name "Creator" is often given the Father, "Redeemer" to the Son and "Sanctifier" to the Holy Spirit. This tendency is even

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[345] See note 280 on p.113 above for Ormerod's explicit denial of the value of the relationship of Jesus to God in arriving at an understanding of the Son–Father relationship.

[346] Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 229. An important point to note here is that Coffey accepts the truth of this position of the "classical" tradition, but offers a framework for transcending its apparent limitations. This framework is more fully presented in the next chapter.

[347] See p.119 above.

[348] Coffey, again, accepts these positions, but points to important limits in their application. He agrees that the works of God *ad extra* should be thought of as undivided, and he agrees that the grounds for distinguishing the divine persons should be thought of as "strictly inner-trinitarian." His argument, in brief, is that the "classical" tradition of trinitarian thought in its Western form mistakenly applies these axioms in the case of the "Incarnation" and the case of "grace." These are not, he argues, simply works of God *ad extra*. They are instead the two modalities of the self-communication of God, proper activities of the second and third divine persons in the world.

found, for example, in the creeds. In the Nicene creed, we find the formulation "we believe in One God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen."[349] Strictly speaking, however, according to the "classical" trinitarian tradition, we should not speak of one particular person as Creator if by this we mean to exclude the other divine persons.[350] The "classical" tradition negotiated this impasse by explaining that while strictly speaking all three persons are equally Creator, there is a certain *appropriateness* in speaking of the Father as Creator.[351] The basis for this "appropriateness" is sought in a deduction from an inner-trinitarian argument: in the Trinity, the Father is understood as source (αιτια) of the other divine persons, the generator of the Son and spirator of the Holy Spirit.[352] It is therefore "appropriate" to think of the Father as Creator since in discourse about the immanent Trinity it is from the Father that the other persons are said to come forth. On this basis, according to the classical Western tradition, we may appropriate creative activity to the Father, as long as we do so in ways that at the same time affirm the equal involvement of the other persons. By the same procedure, the Western tradition appropriated certain characteristics to the Son and the Spirit.[353]

[349.] Interestingly, of course, the naming of the Father is preceded with the term "One God."

[350.] Indeed scripture speaks not just of creation by God (in the biblical sense) but also of the involvement of Son–Wisdom and Spirit in creation (though admittedly not in the context of a developed Trinitarian understanding). The involvement of Son and Spirit in creation is also found in the Creed: of the Son it says "by whom all things were made," and of the Spirit it says "Giver of Life."

[351.] A general introduction to the idea of "appropriation" can be had from J.B. Endres, "Appropriation," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 1: A – Azt,* ed. Berard Marthalar, (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2003). Classic texts explaining the operation of appropriation are found in Thomas' *De veritate* 7.3 (see note below) and *Summa theologiae* I q. 39 a. 7.

[352.] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit,* 8–9.

[353.] In Thomas' *De veritate* 7.3 we read:

> To appropriate means nothing else than to contract something common, making it something proper. Now, what is common to the entire Trinity cannot be appropriated to a single Person on the grounds that this belongs more to this Person than it does to another. Such an action would deny the equality of the Persons. However, appropriation may be made on the grounds that what is common nevertheless has a greater resemblance to what is proper to one person than it has to what is proper to another. For example, goodness resembles what is proper to the Holy Spirit, who proceeds as love, because goodness is the object of love, and so is appropriated to the Holy Spirit. Again, power is appropriated to the Father because power as such is a principle, and being the principle of all divinity is proper to the Father. Similarly, wisdom is appropriated to the Son, because it resembles what is proper to the Son, since the Son proceeds from the Father as His Word, and word describes an intel-

We find in the development of this strategy evidence of the very different thought-worlds of pre-modern and contemporary theology.[354] For pre-modern thinkers the question arose: if the works of God *ad extra* are undivided, how should we read biblical references to Jesus and Spirit? For contemporary theology a rather different issue is prominent: namely the grounds on which we can know distinct divine persons in the first place. To take the example of the Holy Spirit: does the doctrine of common action outlined above imply that functions and actions attributed to the Holy Spirit in the scripture are in fact the common actions of all three divine persons? If it does, in our time the question arises, what basis do we have for distinguishing the Holy Spirit from the other two divine persons? What inner-trinitarian reality grounds our appropriations to the Holy Spirit?[355]

Such a line of questioning would not have been so pressing for pre-modern generations. Before the advent of our historically-minded culture the question of how we know that God is both one and three, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit would have been resolved on the basis of a certain understanding of revelation that allowed that passages like Matthew 28:19 reveal the Trinity, and the validity of such a reading of scripture would have been confirmed by the *regula fidei* and ultimately by the creeds.

In "pre-modern" period, the doctrine of the Trinity was a basic *datum*, the "classical" style of trinitarian theology was uncontested and the issue of the plausibility of trinitarian belief simply did not arise. From this comparatively tranquil

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lectual procession.

Note that the grounds for appropriation are drawn not from the economy of salvation but from the properties of the divine persons in the "immanent Trinity."

[354] The word "pre-modern" here does not refer to the period before the "modern" period, which is itself is notoriously difficult to date. It refers to the period before the impact of modern historical-mindedness was felt in theology. In Catholic theology this impact might not have been fully felt until after the Second Vatican Council. Perhaps the promulgation of *Dei Verbum* had the greatest impact on introducing such "modern" thinking into Catholic theology, through its general theology of revelation and its cautious acceptance of the historical-critical method in biblical studies.

[355] Coffey expands on this line of questioning especially in his 2005 Pére Marquette lecture. If such questions are not faced, then the possibility of pneumatology and therefore of trinitarian discourse in any straightforward sense is endangered.

144

starting point the issue of how to deal with the question of reconciling biblical references to the apparently distinctive actions of the Son and the Spirit with the doctrine of the undivided common action of God *ad extra* was resolved with recourse to the strategy of *appropriations*. Although this was originally used to allow for the appropriation of one or other essential properties of God, such as power or wisdom, to particular divine persons, its application was extended to the common "work" of God. Thus, the Incarnation is held to be the common work of the whole Trinity, but it is appropriated to the Son in particular, because it is the Son alone who became incarnate. By means of this strategy, the Western[356] tradition was able, without placing itself in direct conflict with the principle of common action of the triune God *ad extra*, cautiously to draw from the biblical evidence certain ways of speaking of particular divine persons. This allowed for the attribution of certain qualities or activities to one or other of the divine persons while at the same time insisting that these qualities were nonetheless equally present in all three of the divine persons, and this work was carried out by all three inseparably.

Karl Rahner is among the recent theologians who challenge the Western tradition's suspected over-reliance on this strategy of appropriations. The particular focus of his attention was on the apparent use of this strategy in relation to the Incarnation. While the tradition was clear that it was in fact the *Logos* who became incarnate, the opinion of Thomas that any of the divine persons might have become incarnate[357] was taken by Rahner as an instance of too extensive a use of this line of

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[356] According to Lewis Ayres, the interpretation of the scriptural data about the divine persons in the light of the doctrine of appropriation should be regarded as a pro-Nicene strategy, rather than a distinctively Augustinian or Western one. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, 297. I continue, nevertheless, to speak of the Western tradition since it is with this tradition that Coffey develops his position.

[357] The article that Rahner refers to is *Summa theologiae* III, q. 3 a. 5. Rahner appears to misunderstand Thomas' answer, since Thomas is in that question addressing the issue of the "power" of each of the divine persons to assume a human nature. This power of God is shared by each of the divine person. If he had answered that only the Son had the power to assume a human nature, then he would have implied that there was a difference between the power of the Son and that of the other two divine persons. This would then imply a degree of tritheism or partition in God, conclusions unacceptable to Thomas. The Dominican does not, however, doubt that it was in fact the *Logos*, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit, who became incarnate, as Rahner's argument appears to suggest.

argument.[358] For Rahner, the logic of appropriations tended to undermine the kind of correspondence between the "economic Trinity" and the "immanent Trinity" that Rahner's own theology was to propose. David Coffey mounts an analogous exercise in relation to the application of appropriation to the Holy Spirit. Coffey's argument is that the strategy of appropriations is ultimately inadequate to the task of justifying knowledge of the Holy Spirit, because the "classical" theology of the "immanent Trinity" does not yield grounds for the appropriation of any particular function to the Holy Spirit.[359]

A third feature of the Western tradition's "classical" theology, mentioned above, is its adoption and development of the "psychological analogy."[360] This too emerged as a response to the what Coffey identifies as the typical question of "descending" theology: the question of how one God can be three persons. In search of an analogy for the oneness and threeness of God, Augustine, on the basis of the scriptural idea of the human being created in the image and likeness of God presented an innovative exploration of the inner human being. While it was proposed by Augustine as an "aid to understanding," in later generations it rose in status to the point of becoming "virtually a point of faith in medieval thought."[361] Developed and refined by successive generations, especially by Thomas of Aquinas and, in recent times, Bernard Lonergan, the psychological analogy has proved itself as the most effective Western attempt at addressing the specific question of "des-

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[358] Philip Cary argues that Rahner here misunderstands what the doctrine of appropriations implies for the understanding of the Incarnation. In Cary's view, the classical doctrine holds that the Incarnation is the work of the three divine persons working inseparably, such that one can not say that the Incarnation is the work of the Son separate from the Father and the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that we simply do not know which of the three divine persons became incarnate. It is a matter of faith that it was the Eternal *Logos* that did in fact become incarnate. For Cary, Rahner confuses the common "work" and the distinct "roles" of the three in the economy. See Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity," especially p. 371.

[359] For discussion of the epistemological conundrum that overuse of the strategy of appropriations causes for contemporary theology see Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 10–42.

[360] See p. 119f above. It is not necessary to attempt a reconstruction of the emergence and development of the psychological analogy for the Trinity in the Western tradition here. For a recent overview, see Peter Drilling, "The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity: Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71, (2006): 320–337.

[361] Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 79.

cending" theology.[362] Despite the erosion of its position in recent theology, it continues to exert a powerful influence on at least some contemporary theologians. For current purposes, the point to note is that the psychological analogy offered the "classical" tradition an approach to the mystery of the Trinity that depends on a remarkably limited range of biblical texts, and its reliance on an *intra*personal analogy means that it is structurally closed to any appeal to the *inter*personal dynamics manifest in the story of Jesus.

As we will see there is in Coffey's work a cautious but sustained challenge to all of these features of the "classical" approach. The principles of common action and the strategy of appropriations are judged valid, but of limited use in explaining the real presence of Son and Spirit in the economy of salvation. The psychological analogy is, in Coffey's theology said to be of benefit to "descending" theology only. The context for the emergence of Coffey's proposal is clearly set by Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, but as we will now see, Coffey suggests some important modifications to Rahner's axiom.

3. "New" Approaches

At the outset of this chapter, Coffey is quoted as stating that Spirit Christology offers a privileged "mode of access" for trinitarian theology. As should be clear from Chapters One and Two above, such a Spirit Christology is drawn from biblical data about Jesus and the Spirit in the economy of salvation. The question that arises in view of the limits that the "classical" trinitarian theology places on appeal to the economy of salvation, is whether, Spirit Christology should be considered a "mode of access" at all. In view of the "descending" form of the "classical" statements

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[362] In the previous chapter, we already noted one feature of this analogy, namely that it is *intra*subjective rather than *inter*subjective. For defenders of the hegemony of this approach to the Trinity this feature, far from being a deficit is a strength, inasmuch as this feature of the psychological analogy provides much clearer support against the tritheist tendency than do *inter*subjective analogies. Indeed, this feature is effectively required by the "descending" form of the question that the "psychological analogy" sets out to understood, namely: how can one God be three persons.

about the Trinity, the answer to this question would be negative. From the point of view of such theology, Coffey's theological construction appears, paradoxically, to represent a novelty.

Before moving ahead, let us briefly recognise the paradox involved in thinking of Coffey's approach as "novel."[363] The paradox is clear once we remember that what Coffey is proposing is not the introduction of some new source for trinitarian theology, but the re-examination of none other than the oldest and original sources of all theology, i.e. the story of salvation, the Christ event, mediated through the New Testament.[364] Paradoxically, the attempt to use scripture in its integrity as the basis of trinitarian theology can appear to sustainers of the ongoing hegemony of the "descending" "classical" form of theology to be a "novelty."

(a) Rahner's Axiom

In Catholic thought the seminal argument in favour of a return to the "economy of salvation" as the privileged mode of access for trinitarian theology is that of Karl Rahner,[365] whose *Grundaxiom* states that "'economic Trinity' is the 'immanent Trinity' and the 'immanent Trinity' is the 'economic Trinity.'"[366] Rahner's axiom continues to enjoy prominence in the theological landscape. Much of this

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[363] Ormerod uses the term "new" of Coffey's approach to the Trinity, referring both to the discovery of "new and different patterns in the Scriptures taken as data" and in his proposal of a "new" trinitarian model with which to understand this "new" data. See Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology," 47.

[364] Coffey is not, of course, alone in this tendency to return to the "economy of salvation" as starting point. Indeed, the general strategy of appealing to the "economy of salvation" as starting point has come to be almost the norm in contemporary theology. The point of this presentation is not to point out that his project begins with the "economy of salvation" but to explain precisely what this means for him and how exactly he goes about presenting and justifying this attempt.

[365] Rahner was not the first theologian, of course, to consider the relationship between what we might say about God in the economy of salvation and God *in se*. Nancy Dallavalle cites Rahner as himself acknowledging doubt as to the exact origin of the *Grundaxiom*: "We are starting out from the proposition that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. I do not know exactly when and by whom this theological axiom was formulated for the first time." See Nancy Dallavalle, "Revisiting Rahner: On the Theological Status of Trinitarian Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 63, (1998): 133–150.

[366] See Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

prominence is due to the promise it offers to free trinitarian theology from what many understood, agreeing with Rahner's diagnosis, to be its long "neo-scholastic exile."

The genesis of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* is to be sought in his theology of grace and the consequences he draws from this for the doctrine of revelation, but also in his christology. In relation to the former, Rahner's theology of grace, it is especially his recovery of the scholastic category of uncreated grace,[367] and his defence of an account of grace in terms of quasi-formal causality, that establishes his confidence in an account of revelation as the self-communication of God.[368] Rahner reasons that when God acts in the economy, we must hold that such action is the reliable self-revelation of God. Thus, we come to know the tripersonal God directly through the economy of salvation, without need for recourse to complicated strategies like that of appropriation. God, Rahner holds, has given Godself so fully in his absolute self-communication to the creature that the 'immanent' Trinity becomes the Trinity of the 'economy of salvation.' In the epistemological order, we can conclude in turn that "the Trinity of salvation that we experience *is* the immanent Trinity." God reveals Godself fully and reliably: "as trinity of persons."[369] When Rahner insists, against Thomas and others, that only the *Logos* could have become incarnate, his

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[367] Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Created Grace," in *Volume 1: God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, Theological Investigations (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961).

[368] This Rahnerian perspective remains decisive in Coffey's framing of the methodology of trinitarian theology. Philip Cary provides a fascinating critique of what he sees as the particularly modern assumptions and concerns that underlie Rahner's attempt. This critique would, if accepted, apply equally well to Coffey. See Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity". I do not accept Cary's arguments, but do recommend that the reader consult Cary's article.

[369] This and the previous quotation are found in Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Volume 4: More Recent Writings*, Theological Investigations (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 69. Note that in the first part of this statement there is the assumption that the immanent Trinity pre-exists the economic Trinity, and is expressed in it. Here, at least, the distinction is supposed to be ontological.

reasoning is related to the *reliability* of God's self-communication. For Rahner, questions about whether any of the divine persons might have become incarnate imply that God's revelation is somehow deficient as a self-communication.[370]

Although Rahner's theology argues for the identity of the economic and the immanent Trinity, it does not thereby deny the value of the immanent Trinity in guaranteeing the transcendence of God over the economy.[371] Rahner wishes to see a strong link between the mission of the *Logos* and the inner-trinitarian existence of the Son, which he even goes so far as to express in terms of necessity.[372] The ontology of the Symbol underpins the entire effort.[373]

Rahner's *Grundaxiom* was welcomed as a breakthrough by much of the theological community. The debate it provoked proved a major factor in moving the doctrine of the Trinity back into focus for Catholic theology, much as Karl Barth's theology had done for Protestant theology. More precise evaluation of its significance, however, depends greatly on how exactly the terms of the axiom are interpreted. Rahner's exposition of the axiom, alas, left significant areas of ambiguity.

For current purposes, two areas of ambiguity in Rahner's formulation might be highlighted. These serve by way of introduction to Coffey's reformulation of the axiom. They relate to the basic elements of the axiom itself: (1) what should we understand by the term "economic Trinity"? (2) what should we understand by the term "immanent Trinity"? A brief word on each of these.

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[370] As noted above, Rahner has mistaken Thomas' argument here. See above note 358 on p. 145.

[371] The need for such protections around the idea of divine transcendence is reflected, for instance, in the qualification "quasi" that Rahner appends to the idea of "quasi-formal" causality. It is further reflected in Rahner's approach to "pure nature" where the ongoing value of this idea is understood in terms of its theoretical value as a "remainder concept" (*Restbegriff*) guaranteeing the gratuity of God's self-gift.

[372] This linking of the immanent being of God to the economy of salvation appears to threaten the doctrine of God's immutability. Rahner deals with this objection by means of a distinction between changing in God's divine being, and changing in another. God creates human nature, and the *Logos* assumes this. The changes that take place in the economy, however, are in the creature, and not in God's self.

[373] Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," in *Volume 4: More Recent Writings,* Theological Investigations (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966).

(1) If the "economic Trinity" is to function as starting point, it would be good to know exactly what this starting point is. Is it, for Rahner, the Trinity as we find it in the Bible? If it is, then what are we to make of the concerns of biblical scholars about there being a doctrine of the Trinity in the bible in the first place? What of the lack of consensus over how to interpret the biblical symbols of *Logos* and Spirit. Should talk of the "economic Trinity" be confined to the bible at all? Why not include the activity of the Son and Spirit as experienced in the church through the ages or today?[374] The question I highlight here is the difficulty of the "economic Trinity" serving as "starting point" given the obscurity of its meaning.

(2) Rahner does not intend with his *Grundaxiom* to abolish the distinction of the "immanent Trinity" and the "economic Trinity." His axiom does not itself, however, tell us how or why the "immanent Trinity" should be distinguished from the "economic Trinity." What, for instance, does it mean to say that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and *vice versa*? If all that is meant by the axiom is that there is only one Trinity, in recognition of the fact that the theological distinction between economic and immanent Trinity might appear to some to refer to two separate trinities, then surely none would wish to differ.[375] The direct implication,

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[374.] In this way the door can be opened to the broader theological meanings of Tradition. Following Möhler, Tradition comes to be seen not just as the outer, but also as the inner life of the Church. This inner life is that of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost and animating the church. When Tradition is seen in this way, "all texts, Scripture included, have the character of witness, though in this category Scripture is, of course, uniquely privileged." See Coffey, "Congar's Tradition and Traditions: Thirty Years on," 53. If the Holy Spirit truly animates the church, then on what basis is the life of the church to be excluded from the term "economic Trinity"?

Coffey thinks that he goes beyond Congar's position in stating that "[w]hat is handed on in the Church from one generation to the next from the time of the Apostles to the final consummation is not just a body of doctrine, nor just, as Congar thinks, "the Christian life," but the Christian mystery in its entirety. In what does this mystery consist? Essentially it is the risen Christ himself, who is never found on his own but always in union with the Church." Ibid., 55. If this is so, then – to repeat the question – on what basis is the life of the church to be excluded from the term "economic Trinity"?

[375.] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, 151; Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity," 367; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 14.

Nevertheless, G. Gallagher Brown still finds the view that the economic and the immanent Trinity are "logically and really accounts of the same one God" worth recording as one of the notable acquisitions of recent theology. Quoted in Elizabeth T. Groppe, "Catherine Mowry Lacugna's Contribution to Trinitarian to Theology," *Theological Studies* 63, (2002), 734.

151

then, must be to insist that the "economic" and the "immanent" Trinity are more closely linked than was commonly supposed at the time of the axiom's formulation. What then is the nature of the distinction between the two: is it ontological or merely epistemological?[376] What in brief, is the "immanent Trinity" and what is its function? It appears that as Rahner formulates it, the *Grundaxiom* leaves the meaning of both its terms unclear.[377]

(b) Coffey's Reformulation of Rahner's Axiom

Coffey shows consistent commitment to some variant of the *Grundaxiom*.[378] Because God reveals Godself, and not something different from God, Coffey believes we can talk about a necessary consistency "of God in his inner being and his

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[376.] Many of the defenders of the classical tradition urge that we should conceive of this distinction ontologically. The principal alternative is to think of the distinction in epistemological terms, that is to relate it to the ways and limits of theological knowing. Nancy Dallavalle has given eloquent expression to the importance of the deciding between these alternatives. See Dallavalle, "Revisiting Rahner: On the Theological Status of Trinitarian Theology". For Dallavalle, trinitarian theology has always been the "most speculative of systematic claims" and the "most fully theological 'construct'"(p. 134). As such, the way in which the doctrine of the Trinity is handled provides an important illustration of the way in which theology in general conceives its role. For Dallavalle, Rahner's approach is less than satisfactory precisely because it conceals an unresolved tension between these two approaches to the distinction. She writes:

> Rahner rejects the approach of neo-scholasticism, and argues for God as 'the three-fold' on the basis of God's action in the economy of salvation. Yet he also maintains the assertion that God remains distinct as eternally, immanently, 'Trinity,' and this clash of a modern approach with an a priori pre-modern assertion not only occurs within Rahner's work but also is evident in the mixed reception of his axiom identifying the immanent and economic Trinity. Rahner seems poised between preserving the ontological grounding for the economy, that is the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, and pointing out that 'the Trinity' is a theological construct with no proper content outside of the missions of the Son and Spirit. (p. 134)

In effect, she here expresses the key difficulty that many note with Rahner's *Grundaxiom*: the perceived tendency to "downgrade" the doctrine of the immanent Trinity to the status of theological construct, capable only of illustrating and ordering the data of revelation.

[377.] One author has pithily expressed the difficulty of arriving at a clear interpretation of the Grundaxiom as follows: "Rahner's Rule is an axiom in search of an interpretation." See Randall Rauser, "Rahner's Rule: An Emperor Without Clothes?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2005), 81.

[378.] This commitment is stated as early as the beginning of his 1971 article, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit" where he states that he gets his conviction that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity" from Rahner's work, and says that this idea and the associated Rahnerian idea of the self-communication of God have provided the "immediate impetus" for his article. See Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 205.

saving intervention in the world."[379] Coffey, however, especially in his later work, modifies Rahner's formulation of the *Grundaxiom,* offering a framework better adapted to the task of trinitarian theology. In brief, in place of the Rahnerian economic-immanent diad and Rahner's *vice versa,* Coffey proposes a three-stage itinerary for trinitarian theology with the first stage leading to the second, and the second to the third. The sense of the *vice versa* is more clearly stated as a third stage that goes beyond the previous two levels.

It is only in his later writings that Coffey explicitly develops this three-stage itinerary. The breakthrough that allows him to reformulate the *Grundaxiom* came from his reading of one aspect of Bernard Lonergan's thought,[380] though Coffey finds this not in Lonergan, but in a footnote in his countryman Anthony Kelly's *The Trinity of Love.* In that book, Kelly is discussing the difficulty of imposing distinctions such as functional and ontological christology and "immanent" and "economic" on Johannine theology. Kelly writes:

> It seems to me that any distinction between ontological and functional Christology or Trinitarianism, as well as any distinction between the "immanent" and the "economic" is utterly foreign to Johannine theology. The later theological use of such distinctions [has] a limited role and, perhaps, a very provisional one against the day of a critical Christian realism able to distinguish between data, understanding and judgement.[381]

Coffey is unhappy with the first sentence here, but draws our attention to the second sentence. The references in Kelly here to "Christian realism" and to the dis-

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[379]   Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit,* 2. One author who has repeatedly criticised Coffey's theology for its use of this principle is Paul Molnar. Molnar, a Catholic, brings a Barthian tone to his insistence on the theme of the "freedom of God." Evidently Molnar thinks that the principle of necessary consistency undermines God's freedom. This concern will not be shared by many Catholic theologians and I propose not to give direct consideration to this point. One should certainly not draw any parallels between Coffey's use of "necessary" here and the medieval debate over the use of "necessary reasons" in arguments by Anselm, Richard of Saint Victor and others. Coffey's point is not rationalist; it relates rather to the credibility of God's self-revelation. For documentation on the debate between Molnar and Coffey see Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar"; Molnar, "Deus Trinitas: Some Dogmatic Implications of David Coffey's Biblical Approach to the Trinity"; Paul Molnar, "Response to David Coffey," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68, (2003): 61–65.

[380]   Bernard Lonergan, it should be clear, does not represent a particularly significant influence on the thought of David Coffey. In this case, what he accepts from Lonergan is the bare outline of his analysis of cognitive structure. Lonergan's theology of the Trinity is rarely mentioned in Coffey's publications.

[381]   Anthony Kelly, *The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God,* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 47.

tinction of "data," "understanding" and "judgement" alert Coffey to the influence of Bernard Lonergan's analysis of human cognition.[382] Although neither Kelly, nor indeed Lonergan himself, saw in this analysis of cognitive structure the seeds of a reformulation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, Coffey does. In his review of Kelly's book, Coffey writes:

> Here [Kelly] has an exciting point, particularly when it is realised that in the New Testament we have neither the immanent nor the economic Trinity, but a doctrine considerably more primitive than either – which can be called simply the biblical doctrine of the Trinity – from which the other two doctrines were later extrapolated. In this context the "data" would be the relevant New Testament affirmations, the biblical doctrine; the "understanding" would be the immanent Trinity (the truth of this is borne out by the actual history of the development of the ecclesiastical doctrine); and the "judgement," the statement of what actually exists, would be the economic Trinity.[383]

The insight gained here becomes a key structure of Coffey's mature trinitarian thought. Coffey develops the insight as follows:

1. The first stage in our trinitarian theology is the study of the data, the biblical witness which remains the principal and criteriological source for trinitarian theology.[384] This data, he says, should be carefully studied with the best tools provided by biblical research, in a way that is open to new insights and not limited to those dimensions of the biblical text that commanded the attention of the "classical" tradition. Thus, if we find that later tradition worked more intensely with the Johannine-inspired "descending" model for the procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we should not allow this to prejudice our reading of the data. The New Testament is much more complex than such an emphasis allows, both because the Johannine literature itself is not fully expressed by *Logos* Christology that issued

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[382] See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Bernard Lonergan, *Collection: Papers By Bernard Lonergan*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993–11–10), 205–221.

[383] Coffey, "Review of Anthony Kelly, the Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God," 231.

[384] Coffey correctly acknowledges that a more complete approach to the basic data would include other elements: "all our culture, tradition, education, and religious experience." Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 18. For the sake of clarity here it is best to focus our attention on the public and authoritative, and therefore the primary data: the biblical texts.

from it, and because the Johannine literature is not the only body of theological writing in the New Testament and there is no indication in that source that suggests that it should attain criteriological value.[385]

This does not mean that we approach biblical texts with "empty heads."[386] We bring our questions, concerns and expectations to the reading of scripture. Coffey shows his awareness of this in his mention of the "communal and personal biases to which we are subject" which of necessity "impose a certain selectivity on our choice of biblical data."[387] We must allow for the inadequacies of our engagement with the text. Nevertheless, each genuine attempt to engage the text should, he argues, in principle be open to retrieving new dimensions of that text, all of which may be added to a "store of knowledge" such that, even allowing for wrong turns and errors of emphasis, we can still think of our collectively held "knowledge" of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity increasing "in a never-ending cycle, through both simple advancement and dialectic."[388]

Among the questions, concerns and expectations that we can bring to the reading of the biblical texts are those arising from the church's trinitarian faith. This need not mean anachronistically imposing trinitarian shape on the literal meaning of scriptural texts. It can mean, however, isolating and identifying certain kinds of data as relevant to trinitarian theology. Such data is what Coffey calls the "biblical Trinity." It is clear that in identifying elements in the bible pertinent to the doctrine of the Trinity, one is already engaged in a dialogue between the biblical source of all theology and trinitarian theology itself. As such the "biblical Trinity" is the fruit of a dialogue between theology and the bible. While there is no suggestion that

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[385] See above p. 50f.

[386] Lonergan comments on the mistaken, but popular, hermeneutical principle of the "empty head" in Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 157.

[387] See Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 18.

[388] Ibid. In one place, Coffey refers to this process as "illative." See Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 195. It is clear that Coffey sees himself, in his engagement with the biblical texts, as contributing to this cycle of advancing knowledge by "dialectic" rather than by "simple advancement."

there is already a doctrine of the Trinity in the bible, the "biblical Trinity" should nevertheless be the biblical data read in its literal sense. Trinitarian theology asks questions of the text, but the texts are to be allowed to speak in their own voice.

The "biblical Trinity" is, for Coffey, the starting point in the three-part itinerary. It has some important advantages as a candidate for this role over Rahner's "economic Trinity." The fact of the matter is that theology does *not* have immediate access to the "economic Trinity." What theology does have is access to the biblical witness (implicit and undeveloped though it may be) to a trinitarian shape of salvation history, and some access to the history of theological development that led from the biblical texts to the clear affirmation of the trinitarian interpretation of those texts in the great councils. The biblical texts are read as the starting point in a process of theological development.

2. This starting point, however, points beyond itself. Data is not enough; it must be understood. This understanding takes place – inevitably – with the tools proper to each intellectual culture. Historically, the culture that first, and most decisively, provided those tools was the classical world of Greek thought. The yield of this effort of understanding is the "classical" doctrine of the immanent Trinity. As we have seen, this doctrine emerged in a shape determined by *Logos* Christology.

The purpose of a doctrine of the "immanent" Trinity, for Coffey is to attempt:

> to impart form to material which otherwise would remain relatively un-ordered, and thence to provide illustration of the necessary consistency of God in his inner being and his saving intervention in the world.[389]

The material is the data pertinent to the Trinity in the bible, both Johannine and synoptic, both descending and ascending. The attempt to discern the form implied by such data is the theology of the "immanent Trinity." This theology has among its functions the discerning of intelligibility in the data, and the assertion that this intelligibility, while it is based on the data of the economy, is also true of God independently of the economy.

[389.] Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 2.

This understanding, to the extent that it represents a valid understanding of the data, is true. But it can also be incomplete if it neglects certain dimensions of the data. Coffey believes that important dimensions of the biblical data have remained obscured, and that therefore these need to be retrieved so that they might contribute to further more complete understanding of the biblical data and its implications. Coffey pays particular attention to what he calls the "ascending" data of Spirit Christology.

Once a particular understanding of the data (or a subset of the data) has been achieved, the next step, following Lonergan, is *affirmation*: one states that the results of the previous stage are true. The yield of the second stage in this process, namely, the affirmation of understanding of the primary data arrived at in the early centuries in the church's teaching is what we call the "immanent" Trinity. What is affirmed is the reality of the Trinity: that God exists as Trinity, as Coffey carefully puts it, "in its own right."[390] In moving from the "biblical" to the "immanent" Trinity one asserts that the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely an epistemological matter, but is ontological. It is however framed as a stage in a process that attends to the order of our knowing: one proceeds from data to interpretation, and then to affirmation of the truth of this understanding.

3. What then of the "economic" Trinity, the third stage of Coffey's itinerary? The "economic" Trinity is the fruit, he proposes, of a *second* affirmation. This is the affirmation that what is believed and expressed of God as the "immanent Trinity" is true not just of God *in se*, but also of God *pro nobis*.[391] Were it not for

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[390] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 17. Coffey here argues that we must in some sense affirm the reality even of the yield of our understanding: the "immanent" Trinity. In illustration of this need, he draws our attention to the difficulties experienced by those theologians who fail to recognise the importance of the "immanent Trinity," and in particular to the work of Catherine LaCugna. The transcendence of God is protected by a proper understanding of the immanent Trinity. See Ibid., n. 29 on p. 159.

[391] Ibid., 17. In ordinary knowing, at least according to Lonergan's description of cognitional structure, the third level, the level of judgement is at the level of affirmation. Coffey recognises that his application of Lonergan's three-level analysis of human knowing is not exact. In his description of the unfolding of the itinerary of development of theological thinking, Coffey speaks of affirmation at both the second and third level. The difference is that in ordinary thinking the affirmation of the yield of understanding is at the level of abstraction only, whereas in relation to the "immanent"

this second affirmation, one could validly ask how the theological development subsequent to the time of the biblical authors, flourishing in an ontologically framed understanding of the Trinity "in itself," could be helpful to any but the most speculative of minds. If, to take the example of divine personhood discussed in the first chapter,[392] speculative development leads to the assertion that the eternal *Logos* and the Holy Spirit are distinct divine persons, how is this truly useful information if it refers only to what is true of God in Godself?

For Coffey the doctrine of the immanent Trinity needs to be related once again to the story of what happened and happens in the history of salvation. The result of this is, he thinks, the "economic Trinity."

One of the things that Coffey aims at here, by describing this third stage in the itinerary of trinitarian theology, is the clarification of the purpose of the second stage, the "immanent" Trinity. The criticism that Catherine LaCugna had made of *theologia* (for current purposes equivalent to the doctrine of the "immanent" Trinity) was that it represents a form of speculation about the inner being of God that on the one hand goes beyond what we can validly know, and on the other hand is unrelated to the "God for us" dimension.[393] Coffey deals with both of these issues. The "immanent" Trinity is related to the "biblical" Trinity, rooting itself explicitly in biblical texts. On the other hand, the "immanent Trinity" is justified by its orientation towards a further stage: the "economic Trinity." The affirmation of the immanent Trinity should not, Coffey writes, be seen as an "end in itself."[394] It is, rather, meant to "serve our knowledge of the economic Trinity." Consequently,

> We affirm its existence, therefore, for two interconnected reasons and these alone. The primary one is that the divine transcendence obliges us thereto; and the secondary one is that the immanent Trinity is what "drives" the economic Trinity.[395]

Trinity the affirmation is not just of an abstraction but of a reality. See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 323–324.

[392.] See above at p. 42f.

[393.] This is the major theme of LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.*

[394.] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God,* 19.

[395.] Ibid. There are three stages in this process. Here he justifies the second in terms of its impact

For Coffey, the three-stage process of trinitarian theology is such that stopping at either of the first two stages would mean leaving the project essentially incomplete. One begins with the biblical data, since that is the shared authoritative source of all theology. One must go beyond this starting data, however, lest one fall into biblical literalism (in non-historically sensitive versions), or in archaism (in historically sensitive versions).[396] Similarly, if one insists on the "immanent" Trinity as the heart of trinitarian theology, the enterprise lacks soteriological relevance.

In Coffey's view, it is in the third stage that trinitarian theology truly meets its objective. He writes that "the proper study of the Trinity is the study of the economic Trinity [...]."[397] The economic Trinity is where the biblical Trinity and the immanent Trinity are correctly related in relation to the world.

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on the third. The first stage (the biblical starting point) is presupposed.

This position might be compared to that set out by Thomas in ST 1, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3, where the Dominican master gives the reasons why knowledge of divine persons was revealed, and why such knowledge is necessary. The first was to give us "the right idea of creation" and the second and "principal" reason was "that we might think rightly concerning the salvation of the human race, accomplished by the Incarnate Son, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit." In Thomas' view the knowledge of divine persons is speculative (or "contemplative"). Such speculation is not properly speaking opposed to a soteriological focus. See also ST I, q. 1, a. 4.

The soteriological focus of Thomas' work of trinitarian speculation is shown by the shape of his trinitarian treatise in the *Summa* which moves from the immanent processions to the missions in the economy of salvation. Both of these reasons are of interest.

In advancing a justification for reflection on the immanent Trinity as a way of guaranteeing divine transcendence, Coffey offers a way to rebut the accusation of impropriety sometimes brought against trinitarian thought: the theology of the "immanent" Trinity defends divine transcendence not by prying into it, but by offering a theoretical space that can guarantee it. Secondly, by articulating a dynamic of theological enquiry whereby the "immanent" Trinity is seen as a necessary step towards the "economic" Trinity, he can present this not as a step away from the relevant questions of salvation history, but rather as an intermediate stage on a theological path that leads from the world back to the world and its concrete realities. The "economic" Trinity as the final point and end of this process of reflection is better able to give explicit account of salvation to the extent that the actors in the economy of salvation are established in the second phase of trinitarian reflection to be precisely the divine persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[396.] See above at note 121 on p. 48.

[397.] Ibid., 16. Elsewhere Coffey laments the failure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to move beyond the presentation of the "immanent Trinity" to a consideration of the "economic Trinity." See Coffey, "Faith in the Creator God," 18.

It is interesting to note that another criticism that Coffey makes of the Catechism relates to its insufficient loyalty to the Catholic church's teaching on the *Filioque*. Coffey retains an interesting independence of judgement in his theological work, it would be impossible to capture with any accuracy the contours of his theological project using crude labels like "conservative," "revisionist" or "progressive." It is in the nature of theological tradition that it both look back in order to look forward.

What is proposed with this second affirmation is that theology should "return" from the doctrine of the immanent Trinity to the economy of salvation. Stated in this way, the idea can raise scruples, appearing on the face of it to transgress a principle enunciated by Piet Schoonenberg, who wrote:

> Our whole thinking moves from reality towards God and can never move in the opposite direction... In no respect do we conclude from the Trinity to Christ and to the Spirit given to us, but always the other way around.[398]

It appears that in suggesting that there can be a move "from" the immanent Trinity back towards the data of the economy of salvation, Coffey and any who would follow him on this point, fall foul of Schoonenberg's principle. As it happens, however, Coffey accepts this principle and states his desire to be guided by it.[399] He accepts that our thinking, as Schoonenberg insists, moves from this "reality" towards God. There is no other epistemologically responsible starting point. But Coffey then refers us to Walter Kasper's comment, where the latter states that we must:

> proceed not from a 'critique of pure reason' but from the New Testament witness, according to which God has revealed his innermost being and mystery to us in Jesus Christ in an eschatological and definitive manner.[400]

The "reality" from which the theologian moves is the "reality" described in the New Testament witness, it is the "reality" of historical words and deeds understood as revelatory of God's activity in the world. In effect, the theologian must proceed from the data of revelation, found primarily in the bible. The bible records words and deeds of history, it records – to use Schoonenberg's term – "reality." At least to this point, Coffey has shown himself faithful to Schoonenberg's principle.

What though of the other element of Schoonenberg's principle, which states that our thinking "can never move in the opposite direction"? This too is accepted by Coffey, but in a carefully qualified way. We should accept this part of Schoonenberg's principle only, he states, to the extent that this criterion is understood as a warning against deducing from doctrines about God new positions about what happens in the world. We could never, according to Schoonenberg's principle, come to

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[398]   Coffey quotes Schoonenberg from Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, (Paulist Press, 1976–11), 180.

[399]   Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 2; Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 248; Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 16.

[400]   Coffey quotes from *Jesus the Christ*, p. 181 in Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 2.

new knowledge of God based on some presumed knowledge of God drawn from philosophical considerations; we could never deduce from trinitarian theology new considerations about Christ or the Spirit. To do so would violate the correct epistemological order, which can only move from the world to God, and never *vice versa*.

As stated above, the "classical" doctrine of the immanent Trinity is a valid attempt to impart form on the biblical data, though in Coffey's view it is not adequate to the whole range of biblical data. Nevertheless it is valid and binding on systematic theology. Thus, for example, where Christian theological tradition understood, with greater clarity than did the biblical authors, the distinct personhood of the *Logos* and the Holy Spirit, and the relation of these persons to each other and to divine substance comes to be elaborated in terms of a doctrine of the Trinity, this development is accepted. It reflects what Schoonenberg describes as an move from "reality" towards God. A second affirmation, however, must follow this first, namely that this understanding of the distinct personhood of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is valid not just of God in Godself, but is valid of God in God's activity in the economy of salvation. This move from God to the world is itself based on a prior move from reality to God: it does not have another root or source.

Coffey's description of the place of the "economic" Trinity solves some of the difficulties that arise from the *vice versa* of Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, such that it is arguably the true sense of Rahner's *vice versa*. The immanent Trinity is not simply identical to the economic Trinity, inasmuch as it transcends the events of the economy of salvation. In Coffey's approach, this danger is avoided. The sense of Rahner's *vice versa* is clarified: the affirmation that what has been acquired in terms of ontological understanding of the economic data (the "immanent Trinity") is valid as an understanding not just of the immanent Trinity as detached from the economy of salvation, but also as a true interpretation of the economy of salvation

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itself. Among the things affirmed in this way is the abiding significance of what is understood about God's absolute transcendence, which is well expressed in various ways in the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity."

Christians have long assumed that when the New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit descending on Mary (Luke 1:35), it is the third person of the Trinity that is intended.[401] Christians have not – as Berkhof, Lampe and Haight imply that they should – understood the Holy Spirit here as God *as such* apprehended in his action in the world. The advent of historically sensitive readings of the literal meaning of biblical texts suggests that the spontaneous understanding of the Holy Spirit as third divine person should be revised. This presents a new issue for theology. David Coffey responds to this issue by showing how acceptance of the fruits of historical research need not mean that one cannot also assert the validity of the spontaneous understanding of these texts. In specifying that trinitarian theology moves from the biblical data to theologies of the "immanent Trinity" and thence back to the economy, Coffey offers a critical grounding for what Christians have always done, though uncritically.

4. Relativising the Psychological Analogy

The claim that Spirit Christology might be thought of not just as a "mode of access" to the "theology of the Trinity" but indeed as the "best" mode of access[402] is bold not just because of the role that it gives to Spirit Christology, but also because it promises an alternative access to the theology of the Trinity than the traditional one: the psychological analogy for the Trinity.[403] Before concluding this chapter, it

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[401] That this position is usually assumed, rather than explicitly stated, is demonstrated, for example, in the entirely christological rather than pneumatological application of the Council of Constantinople's deployment of Luke 1:35 (he was "made flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary"). See Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit," 67–68. This is all the more surprising, given the pneumatomachian controversy.

[402] The issue of it being the "best" mode of access is dealt with in the next chapter.

[403] Coffey points to other recent theologians who take New Testament statements about Jesus rather than the "psychological analogy" as a point of departure for trinitarian theology: Moltmann,

is perhaps appropriate given the dominance of the psychological analogy in the "classical" approach to comment on Coffey's benign neglect of this "mode of access." Given the dominance of the "psychological analogy" in the Western tradition, the rapidity with which it has been displaced over the last few decades comes as something of a surprise. Ormerod, who laments what he perceives as the widespread erosion of the classical tradition of the West, acknowledges that:

> [a]part from a few who continue to operate within a broadly Thomistic tradition such as Bernard Lonergan ... and Anthony Kelly ..., it is hard to find a major author who takes the psychological analogy seriously.[404]

In Ormerod's view, much of the difficulty lies in the fact that contemporary thinkers no longer appreciate the rich heritage of thought that the psychological analogy communicates. Rather than recognising the full import of the analogy, contemporary thinkers have tended to demote it. Rahner writes that the "psychological analogy:

> postulates from the doctrine of the Trinity a model of human knowledge and love, which either remains questionable, or about which it is not clear that it can be more than a model of human knowledge as finite. And this model it applies again to God ... it becomes clear too that such a psychological theory of the Trinity has the character of what the other sciences call an 'hypothesis.'[405]

Jüngel, Mühlen and von Balthasar. All of these, however, Coffey classes as "Paschal Mystery" theologians. Coffey distances himself from these approaches in Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 105–150. Coffey's principal objection to these theologies is not the prominence they give to the "paschal mystery," but rather the penal substitution interpretation that they bring to it.

For a general introduction to recent interest in the "paschal mystery" as a key to trinitarian theology, see Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology*; Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology".

[404] Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 18.

[405] Ormerod quotes here from Rahner, *The Trinity*, 117–118. The text is shortened by Ormerod. See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 86. This point is illustrated in Coffey's treatment of the change in analogy from the early Thomas to the later Thomas, where it appears that Thomas has altered the terms of the analogy to suit beliefs about the Trinity itself. See Chapter Two of Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*.

See also the comment of Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity*, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1999), 284.

> What, in Augustine, only had an illustrative character, became a systematic criterion of later theological thought, with Anselm and in Thomism. This view reflects a profound knowledge of pychological domains, and thereby tries to have access to the divine Mystery. It is an essentialist vision which, from the outset, moves from the vision of the One God to elaborate a doctrine of the Trinity.

We find here echoes of what we have seen Coffey put forward. The psychological analogy appears

Coffey follows Rahner:

> One respect in which I have not been very traditional is my stance on the "psychological analogy" of Western, particularly Catholic, trinitarian theology, whereby the processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father are understood in terms of the divine knowledge and love, respectively. Eastern theology is similarly critical on this matter. I note with satisfaction that Rahner's theology has been said to be rather "Eastern" in this regard, but, I have to admit, I pay even less attention to the psychological analogy than he does.[406]

This is not to say that he does not recognise good points in the analogy:

> It is not that it is wrong or without value. I concede that exploring on the basis of the "image of God" the correspondence of the human to the divine spirit as revealed in the doctrine of the Trinity can provide a powerful stimulus to Christian life authentically grounded in and ordered to God. It can also explain various things about the Trinity, for example, why there are three, and only three, persons.

But ultimately he regards the analogy as inadequate to the task of theology:

> But I see it, in all its forms (including the Lonerganian), to be no more than an illustration of the Trinity and therefore to lack the status of a theology properly so called. This is because in my view it does not have sufficient scriptural warrant and because methodologically its starting point is not the appropriate one, namely the New Testament statements about Jesus and the Spirit as emissaries of the Father.

He goes so far even as to present the psychological analogy as a wrong turn. He writes,

> Though the psychological analogy goes back to St. Augustine, blame for the turn taken by Western Catholic theology in this regard can hardly be laid at his door. Of the fifteen books of the *De trinitate*, the first seven are devoted to the mystery of the Trinity in itself, particularly to its scriptural revelation in terms of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, while the question of the image of God in human beings is reserved for the last half of the work, from book 8 to the end.[407]

Despite this evidence, I would suggest caution about simply identifying Coffey's work here with the general rejection of the psychological analogy lamented by Ormerod. It is not enough to claim that he impatiently sets aside a tool that has served

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to represent an essentialist orientation in Western theology, one that – in Coffey's view – needs to be balanced with the mutual love model of the Trinity.

[406] This and the quotations below come from Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 4. Coffey perhaps overstates his distance from the Western tradition on this point, inasmuch as in his earlier work he had attempted to use the psychological analogy in relation to questions of "ascending" theology.

[407] See Ibid.

the Western tradition with some success up until recent times when, for whatever reason, it lost whatever communicative value it once had. Rather than saying that Coffey rejects the analogy, it would be more accurate to say that he *relativises* it. For Coffey, it is but one model for understanding the Trinity. In keeping with his general approach, of which we have seen a number of manifestations, he regards the traditional approaches in trinitarian theology as achievements of the past not simply to be set aside, but rather to be assumed into a more complete and satisfactory synthesis.

Coffey's basic move in relation to the psychological analogy can be understood, therefore, not therefore primarily as criticism of the analogy itself, but a call to set it in context. This context is given by his distinction of the question of "descending" theology that comes from the Johannine-inspired *Logos* Christology and the question of "ascending" theology that is based on the synoptic "Spirit Christology." The psychological analogy serves the function of explaining how one God can be three persons without this plurality damaging Christian monotheism with an *intra*personal analogy suited to that task.[408] It is not at all suitable to the task of accounting for how three persons can be one God, a question for which an *inter*personal analogy is more suited. The source of this *inter*personal analogy, for Coffey at least, is none other than the scriptural evidence for a Spirit Christology, evidence surveyed in Chapters One and Two above.[409]

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[408] It does this, however, at a cost. Coffey writes that the analogy: "has difficulty in maintaining the status of the Word and the Spirit precisely as persons, not inferior but equal to the Father in all things. They appear to be only expressions or products of an original and single divine mind, to which alone the status of persons really belongs." Ibid., 47. On the matter of whether the term "person" applies more appropriately to God as such or to the three divine persons, see Ibid., 66–83. where Coffey concludes that although the use of the word "person" is to be maintained (differing here from Rahner and Barth), it should also be used of the absolute personhood of God as such.

[409] Coffey's development of an *inter*personal approach to the Trinity is not in itself unusual. Hunt reports: "Eschewing the Augustinian-Thomistic intrapersonal psychological analogy, most contemporary theologians have turned to an interpersonal psychological analogy, a social model, in an attempt to render the mystery of our faith in the Trinity in meaningful and effective ways for our times." Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith*, 40. What is distinctive in Coffey's approach is the link he proposes to Spirit Christology, the fact that he does not deduce a "social" model from the theology of the "immanent" Trinity and the framework he offers for relating the traditional approach with the newer "interpersonal" one.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the methodological framework Coffey offers for his position that Spirit Christology offers a "mode of access" to trinitarian Spirit Christology. In setting out this framework, I have not dealt directly with the impact of Spirit Christology on trinitarian theology itself, nor with the question of why it represents the best "mode of access." These tasks are left to the next chapter.

By way of conclusion I offer three final observations about how Coffey intends the term "immanent Trinity," observations that will set the stage for the work of the final chapter.

1. The first comment is that by moving from the biblical data about the economy of salvation to a conclusion about the Holy Spirit in the "immanent Trinity," Coffey self-consciously follows what he calls an "ascending" methodology.[410] There is nothing about an "ascending" methodology in itself that rules out the possibility of a doctrine of the "immanent Trinity." Historically, the development that led to thought about the "immanent Trinity" followed an "ascending" pattern: the starting point was the economy of salvation, mediated by the biblical witness, and on this basis the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" was "inferred" from the biblical data over a period of four centuries.[411] This point is worth making, since at times discourse about the "immanent Trinity" can be taken as indicating a commitment to a "descending" theological method.

2. The second point relates to the place of a doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" in trinitarian theology as a whole. As set out above, Coffey holds that the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" need not be seen as an "end point" in theology. The idea that the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" might be such an "end point"

[410.] The usage of the term "ascending methodology" here is the ordinary one, where one begins with the data of the economy of salvation ("below" according to the metaphor) and moves towards statements about God ("above" in the metaphor). This clarification is needed, because in the discussion above the term "ascending" is also used in a sense specific to Coffey.

[411.] Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 195.

is an assumption shared both by those in favour of theology of the "immanent Trinity,"[412] as well as by those who read this development as the "defeat" of the doctrine of the Trinity.[413] Coffey, in contrast, holds that theology of the "immanent Trinity" should neither be thought of as the beginning nor as the end of the itinerary of theological development, but rather as a stage halfway along this itinerary. This stage is important, but only acquires its full function when it points towards a "return" to the economy of salvation.

3. The final point is perhaps the most significant in terms of the focus of the current study. Whereas it is perhaps customary to assume that talk of the "immanent Trinity" is univocal, for Coffey, to speak of the theology of the "immanent Trinity" is not to speak about a *single* theological construct. Coffey holds that there can be a plurality of theologies of the "immanent Trinity," reflecting the plurality of New Testament christologies. This plurality is reflected in the fact that Coffey presents the need to talk of *two models* of the immanent Trinity: the *procession* model and the *bestowal* or *return* model. These are the topics to which we now turn.

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[412] Because in it they see, for example, a deeper penetration of God's self-revelation in the economy of salvation.

[413] Contemporary theology is sometimes tempted to think of theology of the "immanent Trinity" as something that moves theological reflection away from the economy of salvation and away from its soteriological moorings. The use of the term "defeat" in relation to the doctrine of the "immanent" Trinity is associated particularly with Catherine LaCugna, but she acknowledges D. Wendebourg as originator of this metaphor. See LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 18.

5. The Two-Model Approach to the Trinity

1. Introduction

This final chapter deals with issues that arise in the passage from the "biblical" Trinity to the "immanent" Trinity. These arise precisely because "classical" trinitarian theology developed from but one part of the biblical data, that suggesting *Logos* Christology. As a result, "classical" trinitarian theology is not well-equipped to accommodate certain implications of synoptic-inspired Spirit Christology. This chapter looks at Coffey's attempt to rework the theology of the "immanent" Trinity in such a way that neither the data of *Logos* Christology, nor that of Spirit Christology needs to be marginalised. Coffey's approach involves the positing of *two* models of the "immanent" Trinity.

A word of caution: the fact that this final chapter deals with the theology of the "immanent" Trinity should not be taken as indicating that Coffey's theology flourishes at the level of the "immanent" Trinity. As stated, Coffey sees theology of the "immanent Trinity" as the *middle* stage in a three-stage itinerary of thought. Preceding it on this itinerary is the stage he calls the "biblical Trinity," which he presents as the starting point for trinitarian theology in the epistemological order. Reflection on the "biblical Trinity" leads by an "immanent dialectic of thought"[414] towards a theological reflection on God *in se,* to a theology of the "immanent

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[414] For more on this idea see above at p. 35. The "dialectic of thought" is "immanent" in the sense indicated in the cross-referenced passage. The word itself does not imply a direct reference to the "immanent" Trinity, though – perhaps confusingly – the process does lead there.

Trinity," where theological statements about God, although they are ultimately based on the revelation of God in the economy of salvation, are expressed in terms prescinding from the economy of salvation.[415]

If the theology of the "immanent Trinity" takes a theoretical distance from the "economy of salvation," however, it does so only provisionally. Theology of the "immanent Trinity" should not be thought of as an end in itself, but as a stage that prepares for an enriched return to reflection on the economy. The results of reflection at the level of the "immanent Trinity" are brought to bear on the interpretation of the economy of salvation. This "return" to the world provides for a better understanding of God's operation in the economy of salvation.

In Coffey's conception of trinitarian theology, this third stage is where the trinitarian understanding, acquired in thinking about the "immanent Trinity," is brought to bear on soteriology, on the themes of grace, of ecclesiology, of the sacraments, and to the question of the work of the Spirit in other religions, a topic of urgent interest in contemporary theology. The pertinence to Christian life of trinitarian belief is best expressed at the level of the "economic" Trinity.

That said, the middle stage, that of the "immanent" Trinity is important. Among the reasons for its importance is that traditionally trinitarian theology spoke primarily of the "immanent" Trinity. In Coffey's view, if it is not possible to accommodate the implications of Spirit Christology at the level of the "immanent Trinity" then any attempt to apply it in relation to the issues mentioned above will be in doubt. Coffey wishes, on the one hand to be faithful to the doctrinal and – as far as possible – to the theological heritage that contemporary theology inherits

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[415.] This "prescinding" from the economy of salvation is, thus, ontologically and not epistemologically motivated.

The starting point for any theological discourse about God must be the economy of salvation. By an "ontological" prescinding from the economy of salvation, I mean the attempt that theology makes to "purify" its language from direct application of the story of Jesus to an understanding of God *in se*. The most obvious example would be the death of Jesus. A divine person cannot be said to die. Theology of the "immanent" Trinity has the function of purifying language about God from the earthbound categories of time and space, so as not to reduce Christian faith to mythology or poetry.

while, on the other hand, also wishing to explore the new terrain opened up by Spirit Christology. These two impulses stand in tension with one another at the level of the "immanent Trinity."

That there is such a tension should not surprise us. We have already seen, in Chapters One and Two, that Coffey's Spirit Christology contrasts in a number of ways with the "classical" christology, a contrast largely due to the dominance of *Logos* Christology in the tradition. We have also seen, in Chapter Three, that his approach to the Holy Spirit as "mutual love" of the Father and the Son differs significantly from the classical statements of this doctrine: methodologically, in taking the story of Jesus in the economy of salvation as its starting point, and systematically, in its emphasis on the properly "mutual" character of this love. In Chapter Four we noted another area of tension between "classical" approaches and Coffey's proposal: advocates of the "classical" approach resist what they see as the misguided and misleading idea of "starting" trinitarian theology with the economy of salvation. Since discussion of this point often returns to the seminal expression of this "new" and "dubious" starting point found in Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, we looked at Coffey's clarification of some of the issues surrounding Rahner's *Grundaxiom*. There is undoubtedly a tension between the two methods of access to the Trinity.

In all of the above cases, a dialogue implicit or explicit with various aspects of "traditional" or "classical" theology has been centre-stage. In the current chapter, the same dynamic will be reproduced: the trinitarian theology suggested by Coffey's Spirit Christology stands in tension with "classical" theology not just in the ways alluded to above, but also in relation to a number of key issues of properly *trinitarian* thought. Since these issues arise in the context of "immanent Trinity" theology, it is there that Coffey must face them.[416]

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[416] It is important not to confuse the terms "classical" and "traditional," with the term "immanent Trinity." It is true that traditional trinitarian theology focused extensively and often exclusively on the "immanent" Trinity. It is not true as a consequence that all theology of the "immanent" Trinity is to be thought of as either "classical" or "traditional." The theology of the "immanent" Trinity that Coffey proposes, to give an example, systematically goes beyond "classical" or "traditional" theology.

2. Areas of Tension

Before evaluating solutions, we must illustrate problems. There are two key areas where the trinitarian theology suggested by Coffey's Spirit Christology appears to be in conflict with the "traditional" or "classical" trinitarian theology of the "immanent" Trinity. These are (1) the *taxis* and (2) the *filioque*.

(a) The Taxis

In "classical" trinitarian theology, of both East and West, a central feature is the idea that there is an "order" or *taxis* among the divine persons, not an order in time, but an order of origin. Based on Matthew 28:19, this order is Father ⟶ Son ⟶ Holy Spirit.[417] The "ascending" Spirit Christology-based theology proposed by Coffey, however, *appears* to offer a rival order. We see this in two ways. Firstly, think of Coffey's reading of the anointing of Jesus. Here the Holy Spirit is understood to be somehow prior to the *Logos* in the Incarnation.[418] Secondly, think of Coffey's understanding of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love" of the Father and the Son.[419] Here the Holy Spirit is somehow thought to be *between* Father and Son. Coffey's Spirit Christology, thus, *appears* to demand an alternative *taxis*: Father ⟶ Holy Spirit ⟶ Son.[420]

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[417] This traditional taxis has been accorded a privileged place in both East and West. Basil's defence of this *taxis* is the standard reference. Basil writes:

> One must avoid those who confuse the order the Lord imparted to us, as men openly fighting against piety, who place the Son ahead of the Father and set the Holy Spirit before the Son. For it is one's duty to maintain unchanged and unharmed the order that we received from the same discourse of the Lord saying, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." *Epistula* 125, 34.

Coffey recognises the importance of the order: for both East and West it is, he says, "sacrosanct." See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 324.

[418] See Chapter One above.

[419] See Chapter Three above.

[420] In reality, the *taxis* suggested by Coffey's Spirit Christology would be more properly depicted as Father ⟶ Holy Spirit ⟶ Son ⟶ Holy Spirit ⟶ Father. For this part of the discussion, however, we focus on the first part of this *taxis*.

Coffey is, of course, not the only one to raise the issue that the economy of salvation appears to offer an alternative *taxis*. That the adoption of the economy of salvation might lead to a challenge to the traditional *taxis* is stated, for example, by Yves Congar: "[i]f all the data of the incarnation were transposed into the eternity of the Logos, it would be necessary to say that the Son proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit – *a Patre Spirituque*."[421] Hans Urs Von Balthasar speaks of an "inversion" of the *taxis* in the economy of salvation.[422]

Before coming to Coffey's own solution to this issue, we should recognise the range of possible conclusions that one might draw from this datum of the economy of salvation. On one extreme we might place authors who conclude that this very difficulty is itself proof that the economy of salvation cannot be considered a reliable guide in trinitarian theology. In a 2006 article,[423] for instance, Dennis Jowers proposes to test Rahner's *Grundaxiom* by looking at how one might apply the axiom to the New Testament accounts of the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. He recognises the problem outlined above: it *seems* that alongside the traditional *taxis* there is another *taxis*. Jowers argues, however, that the *Grundaxiom* itself offers no resources for adjudicating between them. Jowers argues that, given Rahner's self-proclaimed desire to remain faithful to church teaching, Rahner and presumably those who follow Rahner's basic project here face an intractable impasse. The only way beyond this impasse, argues Jowers, the only way to have a criterion for deciding between these alternative *taxeis* is that to accept some form of

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[421.] Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 16.

[422.] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theological Dramatic Theory*, Theo–Drama, vol. 3, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 183–191. Coffey refers to this passage in footnote 71 in Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 119.

[423.] Dennis Jowers, "A Test of Karl Rahner's Axiom, 'the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and Vice Versa'," *The Thomist* 70, (2006): 421–455. This author has also published a book length study of the Rahner's axiom: Dennis Jowers, *Karl Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom: 'the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and Vice Versa'*, (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

"verbal" understanding of revelation. But if this is the only way to proceed, says Jowers, then clearly the *Grundaxiom* cannot offer an adequate guide in trinitarian thought. He writes:

> one cannot discern the intra-Trinitarian order of origins simply by transposing a τάξις one encounters in the economy of salvation into the immanent Trinity. In order to discern the order of origins, rather, one requires additional information as to the significance of the various τάξεις – information the economy of salvation seems ill-suited to provide. To the extent that the identification of the intra-Trinitarian order of origins as Father – Son – Spirit is integral to Rahner's own filioque Trinitarianism, Rahner's *Grundaxiom* and the economy of salvation, considered together, constitute an inadequate basis for a practicable and, by Rahner's standards, orthodox Trinitarian theology.[424]

Jowers' thus argues that one faces a difficult choice: either abandon the traditional *taxis* or revert to a "verbal" understanding of revelation.[425]

Jowers indirectly illustrates here how changes in the theology of revelation tend to point towards changes in trinitarian theology. Not wishing to see the latter, Jowers calls for a reversal of the former. Let Jowers' position stand as an example of one possible approach to the matter at hand: an approach that allows the theology of the "immanent" Trinity impose a shape on our reading of the data of the economy of salvation.[426]

[424.] Jowers, "A Test of Karl Rahner's Axiom, 'the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and Vice Versa'," 454.

[425.] In defence in his view that one should revert to a "verbal" understanding of revelation, Jowers writes that:

> the most plausible alternative source of information about God's inner being, it seems, is Scripture and/or tradition (traditiones) conceived of as a body of statements revealed by God. If one accepts our conclusions, then, consistency dictates that one either abandon any recognizably orthodox doctrine of the Trinity or acknowledge the existence, in written and/ or oral form, of inspired testimony: testimony that supplies information as to the character of God's eternal being otherwise inaccessible to non-beatified human beings. Ultimately, therefore, our critique of Rahner's Grundaxiom constitutes an indirect argument for a high and relatively supernaturalistic conception of divine revelation. (iv)

Thus:

> we intend to challenge the notion that one can, with the aid of Rahner's Grundaxiom, derive the doctrine of the immanent Trinity merely from God's self-revelation in act. It seems both more plausible and more orthodox to trace human knowledge of the Trinity ultimately to a cognitive and at least mediately verbal revelation of God. (vi)

Both quotations are taken from Jowers, *Karl Rahner's Trinitarian Axiom: 'the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and Vice Versa'.*

[426.] We already know that Coffey will not take this approach, as it runs directly counter to Schoon-

Other theologians have taken what can be regarded as the opposite approach, their reading of the data of the economy of salvation leading them to revise the "classical" *taxis* of the "immanent Trinity," so as to bring it into line with the economic data. Here I cite the examples of Leonardo Boff[427] and Thomas Weinandy.[428]

Boff sees the traditional *taxis* and the associated *filioque* as evidence of hierarchical thinking in relation to God. He argues that we should also have a *Spirituque taxis*: the Son is begotten *ex Patre Spirituque*. This idea has the merit of representing the New Testament data suggesting an involvement of the Holy Spirit in the coming into human existence of the Incarnate Son. For Boff, this does not mean that the *filioque* should be abandoned. His argument intends to bring "balance" to this theological matter.[429]

Thomas Weinandy's theology comes close to Coffey's on a number of points. This is not the place to attempt a comprehensive comparison. It will have to suffice to affirm that the basic reasoning exemplified in Weinandy's presentation is similar to that found in Coffey. Like Coffey, Weinandy shares the basically Rahnerian project of starting with the economy of salvation and ascending to conclusions about the Trinity *in se*. Both look to the biblical data to learn how the Son and the Holy Spirit relate in the economy of salvation, and hold that this can tell us about how the second and third divine persons should be understood in the "immanent Trinity." Their theological proposals appear so close, indeed, that Ormerod thinks he can treat them as one on the matter of the interpretation of this question of the *taxis*. This is a mistake. They clearly differ on precisely this point, as we shall see.

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enberg's principle to which he subscribes, though in a modified form. See above p. 160f.

[427] See his Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 204–206.

[428] Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*.

[429] In support of this position Boff cites Bolotov, Evdokimov and Moltmann. The principle that Boff formulates is that everything in God is triadic, that there should be no non-invertible talk of dependence or cause, that everything should be "*Patreque, Filioque, Spirituque*." See Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 145–147.

Like Coffey, Weinandy pays particular attention to the biblical data about the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit and explores what this might mean for the "immanent Trinity."

Setting aside the similarities between their respective arguments, we note that a rather distinct set of issues underlies Weinandy's project. On one level, Weinandy's work is motivated by the attempt to give a theological basis for the experience of "baptism in the Spirit" that he and others in Pentecostal and Catholic charismatic circles report.[430] This experience explains in part a defining concern manifested in Weinandy's theology: the concern that the Holy Spirit be understood as *active,* since he thinks it is only when the Holy Spirit is understood as active that He can be understood as "person."[431] The theological tradition has suffered, Weinandy thinks, because it has not given account of the active role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. The failure to give such an active role to the Spirit is partly due to the fact that, according to Weinandy, both Eastern and Western tradition have been prevented from arriving at a satisfactory account of the Holy Spirit because of their failure to shake off the philosophical legacy of "emanationist sequentialism." As Weinandy presents it, the theological tradition failed to recognise and appropriate the legacy of Athanasius, whom he regards as having successfully negotiated the danger of emanationist sequentialism by means of a startling interpretation of the Nicene *homoousios.* For Weinandy, Athanasius thought of God as a simultaneous non-sequential act of the Father bringing forth the Son and the Spirit. This achievement was not, unfortunately, appreciated by the tradition following him, not even by the Cappadocian Fathers. Theology today, however, Weinandy believes, should return to Athanasius' insight, overcome the emanationist models that de-personify the Holy Spirit, and return to and appropriate the theology of Athanasius. Thus:

[430.] Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship,* ix.

[431.] The issue of the "activity" of the Holy Spirit in the "immanent Trinity" is of key importance. It has often been claimed that Western tradition recognises only a "passive" Holy Spirit, and that this is the cause of its "weak" pneumatology. Weinandy sees in this issue the core of difference between his and Coffey's proposal. It is.

A proper understanding of the Trinity can only be obtained if all three persons, logically and ontologically, spring forth in one spontaneous, nonsequential, eternal act in which each person of the Trinity subsistently defines, and equally is subsistently defined by, the other persons.[432]

God *is* this eternal perichoretic generation and spiration.[433] In view of his expectation that a trinitarian person can be understood when we can recognise a particular role, function, or distinctive activity to that person,[434] Weinandy feels obliged to affirm that the alternative *taxis* suggested in the economy of salvation is also true of the "immanent" Trinity. Weinandy summarises his position as follows:

> That the Father begets the Son in or by the Holy Spirit. The Son is begotten by the Father in the Spirit and thus the Spirit simultaneously proceeds from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten. The Son, being begotten in the Spirit, simultaneously loves the Father in the same Spirit by which he himself is begotten (is Loved).[435]

For Weinandy, the Spirit defines (he coins a verb: the Spirit "persons") the Father and Son as Father and Son.

In using terms like "nonsequential" and "simultaneous" Weinandy is ruling out what he regards as the traces of emanationism in trinitarian thought. He does not, however, wish to suggest that there is no order. There is an order, he thinks, and it is the same order that we have seen resulting from the "ascending" biblical data: Father → Spirit → Son → Spirit → Father. There *is* a *taxis*, but it is not the *taxis* of traditional trinitarian theology.[436]

A range of theologians, in conclusion, recognise the issue of reconciling the economic *taxis* with the traditional *taxis* of the "immanent" Trinity. Congar, Von Balthasar, Jowers, Boff, Weinandy, Coffey and others have all noticed and com-

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[432] Ibid., 14–15.

[433] For Weinandy, the genius of this Athanasian breakthrough failed to enter effectively into the tradition such that from the time of the Cappadocians onwards there is a reversion to emanationist sequentialism. See p. 13. In the West emanationist sequentialism came to be reaffirmed as a result of the adoption of Aristotelian epistemology and its application in the psychological analogy of the Trinity.

[434] "By giving the Holy Spirit his proper trinitarian role we more easily recognise his personal ontological depth as a distinct subject." Ibid., 17.

[435] Ibid.

[436] Coffey thinks that Weinandy therefore proposes a *Spirituque*. See Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 335.

mented on the fact that once one takes the economy of salvation as a starting point for trinitarian theology, an alternative *taxis* emerges. The question is whether this *taxis* applies to the "immanent Trinity" and if so, how?

Coffey's readers might expect him to propose something akin to the reworked *taxis* that Boff and Weinandy offer.[437] How he faces this issue will be dealt with below. First, however, a brief word on the associated matter of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit: the debated *filioque* question.

(b) The Filioque

In Chapter Three above I have already said something about the *filioque*. There the context was Coffey's approach to the theme of the Holy Spirit as "love." In that chapter we saw that he presented it as a middle position between an "essentialist" or "common love" approach to the Holy Spirit and the "personalist" approach that he thinks to be suggested by the "ascending" "synoptic" data.[438] Here we return to the *filioque* in its more familiar context: the ongoing debate between the Eastern and Western traditions over the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. This debate is central to our discussion, as I will now briefly show.

A first point to observe in discussion about the *filioque* is the centrality of the issue of the relation of the "economy of salvation" to the "immanent" Trinity. In expressions of Eastern dissatisfaction with the *filioque*, the relation between the economy of salvation and the theology of the "immanent" Trinity often arises as an area of difference. The central text in this regard is John 15:26, a text often invoked

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[437] Ormerod thinks that he does. He lists Coffey alongside Boff, D'Costa and Weinandy in "moving towards" a *Spirituque*. See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 74. One might ask what idea of theological development is concealed in this accusation of "moving towards" something. One finds it repeatedly in Ormerod's writings. He appears to think that any deviation from what he understands to be the "classical tradition" is some kind of erosion, or "moving towards" one or other heresy. Criticising such a diverse group of theologians with the vague charge of "moving towards" something is, I think, unfair. In Coffey's case, for example, he specifically states his allegiance to the traditional *taxis*, a point to which Ormerod should at least allude, even if he finds it unconvincing.

[438] See above p. 126f.

in Western arguments for the *filioque*:[439] "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." On the basis of this text, both East and West agree that the Son has a role in sending the Holy Spirit from the Father. The issue on which the two traditions differ is whether this temporal and economic sending has any implication for the understanding of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. In the Western tradition, the manner of the mission is taken as revealing the eternal "procession." Thus, the involvement of both the Father and the Son in sending the Spirit is taken as reflecting the involvement of the Son in the Spirit's eternal procession. In the Eastern tradition, in contrast, we cannot conclude from this economic sending that the Son is involved in the *ekporeusis* (= procession)[440] of the Spirit.[441] Whether this position is to be understood as cause or effect of Eastern resistence to the *filioque* (I think it is better to think of it as effect), the fact remains that the degree of correspondence between the economy of salvation and the "immanent" or Eternal Trinity is stronger, at least on this point, in the Western than in the Eastern tradition.

(c) *The Question*

Bringing these matters into dialogue with the outlines of Coffey's Spirit Christology as outlined above, we are now in a position to state the problem that

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[439] It is not the only important text invoked in this connection by the Western tradition. Of equal importance are those text that refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6) and the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7).

[440] Great energy has been spent in recent times on the effort to distinguish the implications of the Greek word *ekporeusis* and the more general Latin word *processio*. In my judgement too much has been made of this distinction, especially by authors like Garrigues who attempt on this basis to argue for the complementarity of the Eastern (Garrigues says Cappadocian) and Western (Garrigues says Latin-Alexandrian) traditions. His arguments, although they have found expression in the 1995 Vatican Clarification on the *filioque* have failed to convince all scholars of either the soundness of their patristic readings or their faithfulness to the Western doctrinal positions enunciated at Lyons and Ferrara-Florence.

[441] This does not mean that we cannot conclude anything from the economic co-sending for the "immanent Trinity." Theologians like Staniloae distinguish an eternal relationship between the Son and the Spirit and the implication of a "relation of origin." It is thus possible to argue that the Spirit "rests" eternally on, or is "reflected" eternally by the Son without concluding that the Son therefore has a part in the origination of the Spirit. See Eugene F. Rogers, ed., *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 247–260.

Coffey's two-model solution is designed to answer. Chapter One above discussed Coffey's Thesis A, a theological interpretation of the biblical data suggesting that the Father loves Jesus and that this love is the Holy Spirit, the interpretation was that in the Eternal Trinity the Father loves the Son, and this love is the Holy Spirit. This, however, appears to be in contrast with the Western idea of an eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father *and* the Son (*filioque*), since here the Spirit is the love by which the Son is generated.

Look, now, at Chapter Three's "pneumatological conclusion:" the Holy Spirit is said to be the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son. Here, in contrast to what has just been stated, drawing on "Thesis A," the Son is somehow *before* the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is spirated as the "mutual love" of Father *and* Son.

The problem is that the *taxis* implied by Spirit Christology appears to contradict the *filioque.* According to "Thesis A" the implied *taxis* is Father ⟶ Spirit ⟶ Son. According to the "pneumatological conclusion," instead, the implied *taxis* is Father ⟶ Son ⟶ Holy Spirit. There is, in brief, a basic tension between Thesis A and the pneumatological conclusion.

3. Coffey's Solution: Two Models of the Trinity

Coffey takes both these related issues seriously. In order to address the apparent conflict between them he develops the two-model approach to the "immanent" Trinity.[442] This, in turn, is based on a distinction between "two schemas" of the biblical Trinity, the "mission" and the "return" schemas. It is time to introduce these.

(a) Two Schemas of the Biblical Trinity

Throughout this study, I have invoked a distinction that Coffey shares with other theologians, the distinction between the Johannine and the synoptic christologies in the New Testament. Now I introduce another distinction between the "mission" and the "return" schemes of the "biblical" Trinity. The reader might ask whether these two ways of categorizing the pertinent New Testament data are not simply different ways of stating a single distinction. They are not. In the first case, the distinction is framed in terms of different ways of understanding Jesus Christ as such: this distinction is christological in intent. In the case of the "mission" and "return" schemas, instead, the difference is not between two different approaches to the person of Christ. The difference is between two different phases in the unfolding story of Christ and the Spirit in the economy of salvation. The distinction between the two schemas is trinitarian in intent, and is therefore more suited to offering a guide to trinitarian theology.

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[442] In 1982, Coffey stated, in relation to the *filioque,* that a synthesis between the Eastern and Western positions could be found, but not in a formula, but "in the mysterious and ultimately inexpressible being of God himself." This is not obscurantism, but a recognition that the poles of unity and diversity in God can only ultimately be reconciled in God. See Coffey, "The Teaching of the Constantinopolitan Creed on the Holy Spirit," 73. This remains his basic position. In later writings, however, he applies the two-models approach to the question in ways that reflect the contours of the two possible starting points of divine unity and the distinction of persons. What emerges with the two-model account is not ultimately a "formula," but a way of thinking about the different questions ("ascending" and "descending") that human intelligence can bring to the mystery of God.

The "mission" scheme refers to those texts that speak of Jesus and the Spirit as sent by God. The "return" scheme refers to those texts that speak of a "return" of Jesus in the Spirit to God. I will say a brief word on each of these, before showing their relevance to the questions indicated above.

The "mission scheme" presents the Son and the Holy Spirit as having been *sent* into the world to fulfil God's plan for the world. Given the *pro nobis* emphasis of the New Testament, it is not surprising that we find that mission (or sending) comes to be a dominant image used in the description of the relationship of Jesus and the Spirit to the Father. Coffey summarised the mission scheme in the following terms:

> the Father sends Christ his Son to be the Savior of the world, and after death Christ sends the Holy Spirit from the Father to perpetuate his saving presence and work in the Church and in the world.[443]

According to the "mission" scheme of the biblical Trinity, where the matter of "sending" is in focus the following order emerges: Father sends Son, Christ sends Holy Spirit from Father.[444] This biblical datum (together with Matthew 28:19, of course) underlies the traditional *taxis*.

Alongside the "mission" schema, Coffey argues, we should also recognise another schema of the Trinity in the New Testament data: the "return" schema. This refers to those narrative elements in the New Testament that focus, not on the *origin* and *sending* of Jesus and the Spirit, but on his *return* in the Spirit to the Father.

[443.] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 34. There are also texts that speak of a sending of the Holy Spirit directly from God, such as John 14:26, Gal 4:6. For Coffey, there is no need to think of there being two sendings, but rather one sending with two coordinated sendings. In the Gospel of John this sending is presented as taking place primarily on the cross (John 19:30, but see also John 20:22), while in the Lucan literature it is positioned after the ascension at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). The sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ is the sacrament of the invisible sending by the Father.

[444.] That Jesus is sent, be it noted, need not of itself imply that Jesus necessarily pre-exists as a divine person for the biblical writers. An ordinary human being could be presented as sent by God to achieve some purpose, as were the prophets, for example, or Cyrus of Persia. In the Gospel of John, however, there is the implication of some form of pre-existence. Coffey's reading of this Johannine understanding of pre-existence has been introduced above. See p. 36f.

References to the Son sending the Holy Spirit are found in the Gospel of John 15:26, 16:7, and 20:22, but also in the Gospel of Luke 24:49, and in Acts of the Apostles 2:33. It is not necessary to conclude from these texts that the Holy Spirit was not sent by God prior to the Jesus event, but only that now the Spirit is being sent in a new way through the work of Christ. See Coffey, "The Spirit of Christ as Entelechy".

His mission is completed by a return in the Spirit. The return scheme is, Coffey writes, "fleshed out in the Gospel by the Incarnation, life, redemptive death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, Word of God and Son of Man."[445] The New Testament indeed presents Jesus as returning to the Father not just in general terms through New Testament references to his life of obedience to the Father's will, but also more explicitly in those places, particularly in the Fourth Gospel, where Jesus plainly speaks about returning to the Father. The ascension of Jesus in the Lucan writings can be understood in this way too: as a return.[446] Coffey's general reading of this return of Jesus to the Father, under the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is presented in Chapter Two above.

The point of speaking of a "mission" schema and a "return" schema is to draw attention to the narrative *articulation* of sending and return. The two schemes are articulated according to an *exitus–reditus* pattern. This pattern, says Coffey, is not at all unbiblical. It is already suggested, Coffey believes, by the logic of what is written in Isaiah 55:10–11. There we read:

> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out of mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

The word which is sent must accomplish God's purpose, and then return. Taking up the symbol of the word that goes out of the mouth of God, and accomplishes its purpose returning to its source, the Johannine author himself structures his gospel in terms of mission and return.[447]

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[445] Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 36.

[446] In relation to ordinary human beings, the question of whether return is an appropriate image might also be raised, but can be solved by appeal to the fact that all human beings come from God by creation, and have departed from primordial communion with God through sin. The question of what happens with ordinary human beings is a question that for Coffey pertains to the "economic Trinity," that is, in theology's move beyond the stage of "immanent Trinity" talk to reflection on how belief in God as Trinity impacts on our understanding of redemption.

[447] For this observation on the structure of the Gospel of John, Coffey refers us to M.–E. Boismard, *Le Prologue De Saint Jean*, (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1953), 108, 129, 179.

(b) Two Models of the "Immanent" Trinity

Coffey believes that these two biblical schemas, those of mission and return, lend themselves to different accounts of the "immanent Trinity." Distinguishing these two models of the "immanent Trinity" is the key to Coffey's solution to the problems sketched earlier in this chapter. Corresponding to the "traditional" or "classical" theological approach is what Coffey calls the "procession" model.[448] In places, he calls it the "distinction" model, since it responds to the questions of "descending" theology. It mirrors the "mission" schema in the New Testament at the level of the "immanent Trinity."

Complementing and completing the "procession" model, Coffey proposes a second model: the "return model." In his earlier writings, he experimented with other terms: "bestowal" model[449] and "mutual love"[450] model. By finally settling on the

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[448] The distinction of two models of the Trinity is found in different forms from as early as his 1979 book. Of the procession model he says that it does not necessarily offend against Schoonenberg's principle, but it applies only to "descending" Christology.

> Provided that theology does not make the blunder of moving from God to the world in so far as the discovery of new material is concerned, legitimate and useful purposes remain for a Trinitarian model whose correctness is independently certain, e.g. to impart form to material which otherwise would remain relatively unordered, and thence to provide illustration of the necessary consistency of God in his inner being and his saving intervention in the world. Thus, while we know from revelation that the Incarnation is the union of the divine Son with the humanity of Christ, and that grace is in the first instance the union of the Holy Spirit with human persons, our knowledge receives new order and intelligibility from the fact that we can invoke the principle of the consistency of God and hence see the Incarnation as precisely the prolongation into the world of the procession of the Son in the Trinity, and grace as the prolongation of the procession of the Holy Spirit. The model of the Trinity used here may be called the 'procession' model because it grasps the Trinity in terms of two ordered processions, viz. that of the Son from the Father and that of the Holy Spirit from the Father and (or through) the Son. Obviously, it lends itself to application only to descending Christology and its implied theology of grace, which is the familiar scholastic theology.

See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 2–3.

[449] Referring to the Father's "bestowing" the Spirit on the Son and the Son's "bestowing" the Spirit on the Father. Chapter Two of Coffey's 1979 book provides an extended argument for the need for this second model. See Ibid., 11–32.

[450] Referring to the fact that the mutual bestowal of the Spirit is itself love: the "love" of Father and Son. In order to distinguish between the idea of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love," an idea that we have seen Coffey attribute to Augustine, and the particular implication that Coffey himself draws from this pneumatological conclusion for trinitarian theology, he speaks of the "mutual love theory" (of the Holy Spirit) and the "bestowal model" (of the Trinity). See, for example, Coffey, "The Holy

term "return," he gives the earlier emphases a clearer function: that of more clearly showing the articulation of the themes that concerned "classical" trinitarian theology with the themes that he draws from Spirit Christology, following the *exitus–reditus* pattern mentioned above.

Whereas the "procession" model deals with the outbound or "centrifugal" movement by which the Son and Spirit are understood to be distinguished from the Father. The "return" model deals with the inbound or "centripetal" movement by which the distinct divine persons move back towards unity with God.[451] Clearly, the ideas of outbound and inbound, drawn from the "mission" and "return" ideas in the bible, are used only analogously of the "immanent Trinity." Nevertheless, they capture the sense of the two types of questions that trinitarian *theology* asks: the (descending) question of "distinction" and the (ascending) question of "unity."[452] In order to address questions of distinction, the "descending" data of scripture is to be invoked and should be systematised as the "procession" model of the Trinity. In order to address questions of unity, questions that only become possible once distinction has been recognised, the "ascending" data of scripture is to be invoked and should be systematised as the "return" model of the Trinity. These two models of the "immanent Trinity" are best understood in relation to one another. At this stage we are in a position to show how this two-model approach helps Coffey engage with the issues of trinitarian *taxis* and the *filioque* raised above.

(c) Applying the Two-Model Approach

Coffey's general strategy is that we carefully distinguish our questions, our resources, and our answers to questions. On a simple level, this means that while we are concerned with questions of "descending" theology, we should expect the an-

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Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 228.

[451] The images of "centripetal" and "centrifugal" movements are found throughout Coffey's work. See e.g. Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 12, 38; Coffey, "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," 470.

[452] For notes of Coffey's use of the terms "descending" and "ascending" in relation to questions of "distinction" and "unity" see above at p. 109f.

swers to be forthcoming from engagement with the resources of "descending" theology. If, instead, we ask the questions of "ascending" theology, we should engage with the resources of "ascending" theology. In moving from the "biblical Trinity" to the "immanent" Trinity, we can expect two kinds of outcome depending on which type of question and which resources we are drawing on. The "procession model" is suited to asking the question of how one God can be three persons. The "return model" is suited to questions about how God is "one."

The "return model" is designed, as stated, to deal with "ascending" questions relating to the unity of divine persons. Specifically, however, the need for a "return" model comes from the need to reconcile the results of Spirit Christology with the "classical" model. Although I have noted above the areas of tension, areas that Coffey himself recognised, these should perhaps be stated once again at this point.

Chapters One to Three above yield an "ascending" Spirit Christology resulting in a pneumatology of the Holy Spirit as "mutual love." The *taxis* implicit in this "ascending" data (Father ➞ Holy Spirit ➞ Son) appears to be in conflict with the traditional *taxis* (Father ➞ Son ➞ Holy Spirit). This is the first problem.

The second is that the procession of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, a position we can call Coffey's *filioque,* appears not to be reconcilable with the "ascending" *taxis*, since the Holy Spirit emerges there as third, from the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Viewed this way, the second problem is the problem of the internal coherence of Coffey's thought.[453]

One might expect Coffey to simply state that one *taxis* informs the "procession model" and the other informs the "return model." This would be a simple enough solution, and it would give his proposal some advantages over those of Boff and Weinandy, inasmuch as it would at least give a place for expressing commitment to the traditional *taxis* and the *filioque* in the "procession" model, while allow-

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[453] All of these questions are pertinent to the matter of moving forward the East/West debate on the matter of the *filioque*, but Coffey's answers can only hope to play a constructive role if his solutions prove to be internally coherent.

ing for space to relax that commitment in the "return" model. As it happens, however, he does more than this in showing how the two models are *articulated*, how the first is related to the second, how the second depends on the first, how the second completes the first. We look now at how he argues these points, taking the idea of God as "love" as the dynamic that leads from the first model to the second, and how the second model is the completion of the first.

(d) From Self-Love to Mutual Love

Chapter Three above distinguished between two types of love, "common love" and "mutual love." Understanding the Holy Spirit as "common love" was generally attempted in the West within the parameters of the psychological analogy, the first procession being understood by analogy with self-knowledge, the second by analogy with self-love. Understanding the Holy Spirit as properly "mutual love" involves, at least for Coffey, building on the economic data suggesting an identification of the Holy Spirit with the mutual love of the Father and the Son.[454] The "common love" issue called for an *intra*subjective analogy, the "mutual love" approach builds on *inter*subjective narrative.

This distinction can now be taken up in the context of the relationship between the "procession" and the "return" models. I begin by showing how the idea of "love" operates in the "procession" model (the model that was developed in "classical" theology), and then how it operates in the "return" model (the one that Coffey develops).

The purpose of the "procession" model is, as we have seen, to account for the *distinction* of divine persons. We should begin, then, with the one God, the Father, the "source" of the Trinity. This is not yet the full trinitarian understanding of the

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[454] A different issue is to the fore in Coffey's 1979 book. There he is advancing an argument for the priority of the "notional" plane over the "essential" plane in establishing the "formal reasons" of the two processions. There is no direct reference there to the data of the "economic" data, and much of the argument is presented in terms of a type of deductive reasoning that the current study has attempted to avoid. Nevertheless, Coffey's argument there is worth comparing to the line of reasoning that this study highlights. See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 23–31.

unity of God, it is merely the starting point, a starting point that historically gave way to a more "trinitarian" understanding of God's unity. Coffey illustrates the movement from one to the other, as follows.

The Father generates the Son. This generation is understood as "love." This "love" cannot have the Son as its object since the Son does not yet (to use the unavoidable metaphor of time) exist.[455] Neither can this "love" be the Holy Spirit, since according to the traditional *taxis* the Holy Spirit comes third. Since, however, this "love" cannot be thought of as the "love" of the Son nor as the "love" that is the Holy Spirit, this "love" can only be the "love" of self. This is a first movement in the "procession" model: the generation of the Son as the self-love of the Father.

As a result of the above, the Father and Son both now "exist," but not yet (again, time is a metaphor) the Holy Spirit. The next movement is that the Son in response "loves" the Father. The responding "love" of the Son is different, however, inasmuch as it need no longer be self-love. In this responding "love" there is "already" a plurality of persons, so the "love" can be understood as "mutual" and therefore as productive of the Holy Spirit.[456]

This much is Coffey's exposition of the working out of the "procession" model. All of this is possible within the limits of "classical" theology. In this presentation, the traditional Eastern concern for the primacy of the Father is accommodated in the first statement. This presentation also follows the traditional *taxis*.

There are, however, limits in the "procession" model. In its presentation of the *filioque* (the second statement, here interpreted as mutual love), it appears to under-

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[455] In the following presentation the language of "first" and "next" is unavoidable. It is of course analogical. It reflects an order not in time, but an order in relationship.

[456] Coffey cites the view of John Cowburn that the Holy Spirit is the "objectification" of this mutual love, but has also argued that although this view is correct, it is not necessary to state it. He uses the term "objectification" in Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 49; Coffey, "Questio Disputata: Response to Neil Ormerod and Beyond," 905; Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan," 862. He claims that it is not necessary in Coffey, *Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?: Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, 53.

mine the primacy of the Father, and therefore to confuse the Father and the Son by involving the Son in the production of the Holy Spirit. The other limit is that it cannot integrate the data of Spirit Christology, since in the procession model, following the traditional *taxis,* the Spirit comes after the Son, and not *vice versa.*

It is with his "return" model that Coffey makes his unique contribution, at least as far as discourse on the "immanent Trinity" is concerned. He suggests that *subsequent* to this distinction of persons, *subsequent* to the completion of reflection on the "procession" model, a new question arises, the question of how the three divine persons are nevertheless "one." The questions of "descending" theology lead, therefore, to questions of "ascending" theology. God who is distinct as three persons must nevertheless also be understood to be one.

Here again, the matter of "love" is central. Because the starting point is now the fact that there are three distinct divine persons, we are now in a position to say that the Father loves the Son and that this love is the Holy Spirit. This was not possible with the "procession" model. This second model places the Spirit *between* the Father and the Son. We can say that the Son returns this love to the Father and this love is the Holy Spirit. We can say these things *now,* because unlike in the case of the "procession" model above where the issue was how to explain distinction, here we have no such difficulty, because the distinction of persons has become a *datum* from the "procession" model. The answer to the question of how the three divine persons are "one" is thus: they are one because the Father and the Son love one another and their mutual love is the Holy Spirit. This is not "oneness" in any straightforward way; it is *trinitarian* oneness. Although Coffey does not spell it out, this trinitarian unity is presumably to be understood in terms of a perichoretic and ekstatic love by which the Father and Son are made one by the *vinculum amoris* (the Holy Spirit). If so, this trinitarian understanding of divine unity is coherent with the "return" model, however uncomfortably it might sit in the "procession" model.

Because these two models are articulated such that the second is only possible after the first, Coffey is able to state more clearly than can Weinandy how the tradi-

tional *taxis* still applies. The traditional *taxis* requires that the Father be first, the Son second and the Holy Spirit third. This *taxis* is preserved, Coffey thinks, in the "memory" of the origination of Son and Spirit as described in the "procession" model. Although the "love" of Father and Son is "mutual" it nevertheless preserves the "memory" of the order in which the divine persons were generated and spirated. This is not as unusual an idea as it might sound: Coffey thinks that this can be readily understood if we look at the analogy of any relationship of mutual love. If two people are bound together in a relationship of mutual love, it is true that their mutual love is such precisely because it is mutual: each loves the other simultaneously. Nevertheless, in an *inter*personal relationship of this sort, there is the "memory" of the one who was first to love. Although the love is now mutual, at one stage it was not, and one of the partners loved first. Even as it is "mutual," the "memory" of this first love persists.

The "return" model is designed to resolve the areas of tension mentioned above. Coffey's stated ambition is not to offer a definitive explantion of these matters, which would at any rate be impossible, but rather to demonstrate that Spirit Christology may indeed be accommodated with "classical" trinitarian theology, even as it moves beyond its limits. His objective is to show that the two are related dialectically.

Let us summarise the outcome of this second model. The purpose of this second model is the systematic accommodation of the data of "ascending" Spirit Christology. This is preserved, because at this second stage the Spirit can be said to be the "love" of the Son, since at this stage both Son and Spirit already "exist." Coffey is not claiming that the Holy Spirit is involved in the generation of the Son; he is stating that in the "return" model, that is, in "ascending" theology, the Holy Spirit can be understood to be the Father's love of the Son. From this point of view, next, the love of the Father for the Son is understood not as "self-love," as in the "procession model," but as "love" of the other. Thirdly, the *filioque* is preserved, but is more clearly now understood as the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son,

since the first love is no longer the self-love, but is the Father's love of the Son.[457] Fourthly, the primacy of the Father in the eternal procession of the Spirit is preserved.

This last point is perhaps the most subtle in Coffey's solution. The primacy of the Father is preserved in a traditional sense at the level of the "procession" model, but in rather a unique sense at the level of the "return" model. It is preserved there because in the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son, the Father first "loves" the Son and the Son's "love" is a response. In the "return" model, both "loves" are the Holy Spirit, but the Father's "love" is *remembered* as first. Hence, Coffey argues, we find a sense in which the Holy Spirit comes from the Father first. In the "procession" model, the Father comes first, as source of both Son and Spirit. In the "return" model, by contrast, the Father and the Son love one another and the Holy Spirit proceeds as "mutual love." In so doing the memory of the primacy of the Father is preserved. This, holds Coffey, is the sense of Augustine's famous *principaliter*.

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[457] Thus, Ormerod is simply incorrect to state that Coffey relativises the *filioque*. See Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, 16. Weinandy, in contrast, considers him to be a "strong supporter" of the *filioque*. See Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, 70. In Coffey's theology, the *filioque* is asserted as true in both the procession model, and – as mutual love – in the return model.

4. The Articulation of the Two Models

I have stated a few times that the two models are not merely juxtaposed but are "articulated." The "procession" model leads to the "return" model, which not only complements it but also completes it. Underlying this view of the relation of the two models is the relation of the two New Testament schemas, "mission" and "return." There, in functional and *pro nobis* terms, the Son and the Spirit are sent into the economy of salvation, not however to remain there, but in order to draw created beings back into communion with God. There is an outgoing (*exitus*) and an ingoing (*reditus*) movement, the one ordered to the second in which it finds its purpose and completion.

The same pattern is replicated in trinitarian theology. First theology must understand the distinction of persons, and here the "procession" model serves. Then theology must understand the unity of persons thus distinct, and here it is the "return" model that serves. The "procession" model represents theology's attempt to understand the Trinity *in fieri*, that is *in formation*, in the origination of the divine persons. The "return" model that Coffey proposes represents the reflection not on why there are three divine persons, but how to talk about their relations. He speaks, thus, of the Trinity *in facto esse*, the Trinity as *constituted.*[458]

Some readers might wonder whether Coffey is not here needlessly complicating matters. I would argue that, while it is true that his approach is complex, it is no more complex than one might expect given the fact that he intends to accommodate the results of Spirit Christology in a way that coheres with, though it goes beyond, the "classical" approaches to the Trinity. The "classical" approach in both its Eastern and Western forms is expressible with the "procession" model. This "model" did not, as we have seen, make space for the theological implications of Spirit

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[458] See above at p. 99 for Coffey's christological use of this distinction. Coffey finds an early version of such a distinction applied to trinitarian theology in Augustine. See Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, 7. Coffey finds an echo of this distinction in the mysterious phrase used by Garrigues "in a trinitarian manner" repeated in the 1995 Clarification.

Christology, and it gave rise to the difficult question of the *filioque*. When Coffey attempts to bring these impulses to bear on trinitarian theology, he finds that they cannot be simply engrafted onto the "classical" model. Rather than simply offering an *alternative* model, one that would be in tension not just with the traditional *taxis* and the Western *filioque*, Coffey finds in this two-model approach a way to articulate the concerns of the "classical" tradition and the impulses of Spirit Christology.

An important point that he makes with this account is that the "return" model is the properly "trinitarian" one. The question of how the divine persons came to be distinct, the "descending" question, might even be thought of as *not yet* a fully trinitarian question, since it is concerned with establishing the possibility of God being triune in the first place. This line of questioning is of course important, if Christian theology is to be seen as monotheistic and rationally coherent. Nevertheless, this is not the type of question that the New Testament itself, as a whole, is best designed to answer.

A more fully trinitarian reading of the New Testament, in contrast, addresses not only the *in fieri* questions, but also the *in facto esse* questions. If trinitarian readings of the New Testament confine themselves to questions about how the one God comes to be three, then of necessity the range of texts of interest will be quite limited. They will concentrate on the themes of the pre-existence of the *Logos*, the conception of Jesus, his anointing, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. If, on the other hand, trinitarian theology assumes that God is three persons, it can move on to other questions: the questions of "ascending" theology, the questions of the Trinity *in facto esse*.

Both sets of questions are equally valid, but as Coffey makes clear, they should be carefully distinguished. In response to the concern that Coffey has complicated matters by offering these two models, I would counter that he has done nothing other than recognise and expose the complexity of the work of trinitarian theology. Beyond this, he has offered a biblically based *exitus–reditus* pattern for the articulation of these questions. If trinitarian theology has traditionally concen-

trated its efforts on the *exitus* stage, Coffey argues that it might now attend to a more comprehensive set of questions: both *exitus* and *reditus*, both "procession" and "return."[459]

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459. "Now whereas outreach does not necessarily imply return, the converse is not true: return does imply and involve outreach. Hence a trinitarian model based on outreach texts, i.e. on Logos Christology, will be partial, whereas one based on return texts, i.e. on Spirit Christology, will be comprehensive." Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 325.

5. Towards a Trinitarian Soteriology

In what remains of this final chapter, I wish to argue two concluding points. The first is that Coffey's two-model approach to the Trinity, and his approach as a whole, offer important stimuli towards an exploration of the soteriological implications of the church's trinitarian belief. The second is to show that the root of these soteriological implications is to be found in what must, in the final analysis, be judged not just a "thoroughgoing" Spirit Christology, but a "thoroughgoing" *trinitarian* Spirit Christology.[460]

The first point may be approached by way of an observation on Coffey's views on the purpose of revelation. In brief, God's revelation is such that it is only properly understood when it contemplates not just the "fact" of God's triunity, not just the "return" of Christ to the Father in the economy, but also the return of ordinary human beings as "sons [and daughters] in the Son" to the Father. Revelation is completed when there is not just a "communication" of God to human beings, but a "self-communication" that is received and produces its aim in human beings. As we will see, for Coffey, this aim is the *assimilation* of human beings as sons and daughters in the Son into the return of love by Jesus to the Father.

There is, to expand on this point, an order in God's action in the world and, consequently, in God's revelation. First God creates. Then God saves. Using the scholastic vocabulary of causality, Coffey charaterises the first movement, creation, as a work of "efficient causality."[461] There are two important things to be noted

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[460] The term "thoroughgoing" is borrowed from Roger Haight. For Haight, a "thoroughgoing" Spirit Christology "seems to eliminate Logos as a symbol designating both the discrete 'person' or distinct 'mode of being' in the Godhead and incarnate in Jesus. Bluntly put, can one still have a doctrine of the trinity if one adopts a thoroughgoing Spirit christology?" See Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 468. Bluntly put, Coffey claims that we can.

[461] The idea that grace should be understood primarily in its "uncreated" dimensions, according to "formal" rather than "efficient" causality, is perhaps the deepest structure in Coffey's theology, one that Coffey takes from Rahner but develops in his own way. A particularly important point, one on which I have not expanded, given the focus of this study, is that "efficient" causality is the "deficient" mode of "formal" causality. A study on the evolution of Coffey's theology would show how this insight underlies many of the distinctions that structure Coffey's thought. For more on this see

about "efficient causality": (1) that the result of "efficient causality" is something *other* than the cause; (2) that in working by "efficient causality" the three divine persons work as one. As long as God's action in the world is understood in terms of efficient causality, the three divine persons remain indistinguishable.[462] As revelation (we can perhaps recall the idea of "natural revelation" here), this provides human beings with an understanding of God *ab extra*. From the resulting point of view "outside" God, human beings have no access to the inner distinctions by which the persons are distinct. By creation there is a "communication" of God, not yet a "self-communication."

In the order of God's action and consequently revelation, the second moment brought about by the Christ event (Incarnation and grace) goes beyond "creation" and is a work of "formal" causality. Coffey's use of the category of "formal causality" is guided by Rahner's innovative exploration of the benefits of restoring a focus on the uncreated dimensions of grace, dimensions that he thought better described as works of "quasi-formal" causality.[463] Such distinctions between works of God by *efficient* causality, and works of God by *formal* causality, between creation and assimilation, between communication and self-communication reflect, Coffey argues, basic structures in the biblical narrative. These structures are the biblical schemas of "mission" and "return." The second moment is different from the first in that: (1) the result of "formal causality" is some sort of "assimilation" of the creature to the Creator; (2) the distance between Creator and creature is overcome such that although the three divine persons continue to work as one, human beings are now able to distinguish their proper functions.

Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit"; Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*; Del Colle, *Christ and Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective.*

[462] Of course, theology has happily spoken of the Trinity while also limiting in principle the ability of the world to distinguish the trinitarian persons by anything but inner-trinitarian means. This was possible as long as some form of verbal revelation was contemplated. Today, however, the difficulty of demonstrating that the biblical authors indeed directly intended to teach a doctrine of the Trinity makes such an approach impossible. Hence the timeliness of Coffey's intervention.

[463] Coffey is happy to drop the "quasi" from Rahner's formulation, thinking that its intent is already covered by the analogical nature of all theological discourse.

In the previous chapter, we noted how "classical" theology formulated the axiom according to which the grounds for distinguishing the divine persons are strictly inner-trinitarian.[464] As a result of this second moment, these grounds are made available to human beings by means of the "two modalities" of the self-communication of God: the Incarnation as the "communication" of the Son, and grace as the "communication" of the Spirit. Human beings, as a result of this "self-communication" of God, pass from contemplating God *ab extra* to contemplating God *ab intra*.

Coffey's Spirit Christology offers a new perspective on the *ad extra* and *ad intra* distinction. We have already seen above how this distinction determined a certain reluctance in "classical" trinitarian theology to take the economy of salvation as a starting point. The roots of this distinction go back at least to the fourth century, to the so-called "Arian" controversy. By refusing Arian subordinationism, or any kind of emanationism that would blur the transcendence of God and the divine status of the *Logos*, Athanasius and his followers posited a theoretical distinction between God and world that suggests a kind of dualism that brings both benefits and deficits to theological imagination.[465] In that controversy, the best way of refuting the Arian position was to push the distinction, and show that the Son must be on the "Creator" rather than the "creation" side of the ontological chasm that separates one from the other. The outcome of this debate, as illustrated in various ways above, was the affirmation of "descending" *Logos* Christology as the dominant motor in trinitarian theology. A definitive moment in this process came with Chalcedon's christological formula, which Coffey sees as cementing the problem of the "wedge": the ontological chasm between Creator and creature is brought to the heart of the hypostatic union. The Eternal *Logos* is Creator and the humans are creatures.

[464.] See p. 142 above.

[465.] See above for commentary on how Coffey adapts Rahner's transcendental christology so as to overcome the deficits in such dualistic approach to the God-world relationship: p. 79f.

If we try to apply too easy an understanding of this distinction, appealing to dualistic God-world, Creator-creature schemas then acceptance of the "classical" axioms will lead us to conclude that properly speaking we can know nothing of God's Triune being from the economy of salvation, since the economy of salvation appears to stand on the created world side of any such dualism. As human beings, we would thus be confined to experience of the *ad extra* dimensions of God's activity, and as creatures be precluded from any knowledge of the inner-trinitarian distinctions. If this is how we understand the *ad extra/ad intra* distinction, then indeed there would be little point in approaching the "ascending" data of scripture for new insights into the Triune God. Much of the plausibility of Coffey's theology, however, depends on his challenge to the supposed equivalence between the *ad intra/ad extra* distinction, on the one hand, and the Creator/creature distinction, on the other.

This challenge comes, as we have seen, from the development of a trinitarian Spirit Christology. As illustrated above, Coffey adapts the idea of the *enhypostasia*[466] so as to speak about the Holy Spirit's sanctification of the human nature of Jesus. To put it simply, the human nature of Christ remains a created reality, but is now understood as being a created reality brought to the limits of its possibility such that it becomes a created reality proper to God: a theandric humanity. For Coffey, such a retrieval of Spirit Christology is possible in contemporary theology because of the contribution of Karl Rahner's transcendental theology.[467] This manoeuvre allows Coffey to introduce a vitally important nuance into the *ad extra/ad intra* distinction by means of his notion of "assimilation."

By "assimilation" Coffey intends the process by which God works to overcome any simple dualism between Creator and creature, by assimilating creatures into God's own life. The first and paradigmatic instance of this assimilation into the

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[466] I have registered some doubts about the wisdom of this choice of word, but the intention should be clear.

[467] See above at p.79.

Life of God is that of Jesus. The second and dependent instance is the assimilation of human beings by grace into this Life. The bible contains both "mission" and "return" schemas. So, Coffey reasons, should biblically based theology.

Coffey accepts the "classical" trinitarian axiom stating that God works as one *ad extra*,[468] but introduces a vital nuance into its application in the case of Jesus, and therefore also of those who become by grace sons and daughters in the Son. He distinguishes the act of creating the human nature of Jesus from those of sanctifying it and of uniting it with the person of the Eternal Son. Just as God acts as one in creating the world, God acts as one in creating the humanity of Jesus. But in sanctifying this human nature and in uniting it with the Eternal Son God goes beyond a strictly *ad extra* action. There are thus both *ad extra* and *ad intra* dimensions to the hypostatic union. Coffey writes:

> How are we to understand the Incarnation as proper to the Son and at the same time including a work of God in the world common to all three divine persons? In so far as it is a work of God in the world, the Incarnation must be a work of divine power and an instance of creation. Therefore, it is the creation of the humanity of Christ that is the work of all three persons. There is nothing new about this; it is the traditional answer. But as a work proper to the Son, the Incarnation must be by the same act assimilation (or assumption) of the sacred humanity into the Trinity so that it is united to the Son alone.[469]

The relationship between the *ad extra* dimension and the *ad intra* dimension are explained, once again, with the metaphor of "outward" and "inward" motion. Coffey pictures first a dynamic "outward" movement, the creation of the human nature, followed by a dynamic "inward" movement, the sanctification of that nature and its hypostatic union with the Son. This *exitus–reditus* pattern is implicit, Coffey thinks, in any act of self-communication, even self-communication between ordinary persons:

> The one act, which is essentially inward-drawing, has inbuilt into it a prior outward-moving aspect. It is the same with any interpersonal act. For instance, when I address a friendly word to some other person, the first thing that happens is that my word passes from me to him, but the end result is that the other is drawn into the ambit of my own person, and so communication takes place. Augustine saw this clearly in regard to the Incarnation

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[468] See above at p. 142.

[469] Coffey, "A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit," 235.

and expressed it in the succinct phrase *ipsa assumptione creatur*, literally, "it is created by the assumption itself."[470]

In dependence on this paradigmatic case, Coffey sees human beings drawn into the life of God by the action of the Holy Spirit in grace as sons and daughters in the Son. Coffey has devoted a great part of this career to justifying this interpretation of what happens in grace.[471] Highlighted here is how this understanding of grace impacts on the understanding of the axioms of the "classical" Western tradition.

If we accept the validity of such talk of assimilation, then for Coffey the trinitarian axioms (that suggest that the works of God *ad extra* are as one, and the persons can only be distinguished on inner-trinitarian grounds), no longer determine our mode of access to the Trinity. They are relegated to a similar status as the idea of "pure nature" in Rahner's theology: a theoretical *Restbegriff*. *Logos* Christology, as it was used in "classical" theology stressed the distinction between the case of Jesus and the case of ordinary human beings in such a way that trinitarian theology itself was unable fully to appropriate the manifestation of the *ad intra* distinctions in God. Spirit Christology, Coffey holds, by opening theological reflection to the parallels between the sanctification of Christ and the sactification of ordinary human beings, overcomes this impasse.

The question of whether there is a way of relating and reconciling the very different outcomes of these two approaches is answered by Coffey in his development of the "return" model of the Trinity. At the beginning of Chapter Four, I recorded Coffey's opinion that Spirit Christology was not only *a* mode of access to the Trinity, but that it was the *best* mode of access to the Trinity. It is the *best* mode of access, because it approaches the mystery of the Trinity not just for an understanding of how the three divine persons are distinct, but for an understanding of how the Trinity is a mystery of salvation. For Coffey, salvation is not a matter of knowing that there are three divine persons, but of being drawn into the trinitarian

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[470.] Ibid.

[471.] References to various Coffey and to Del Colle.

life of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit in grace, by which we are made "sons and daughters in the Son." Coffey's Spirit Christology leads, thus, to a trinitarian soteriology: the "economic Trinity."

Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to examine a particular trajectory within the theology of David Coffey, a trajectory that begins with Spirit Christology and ends with his proposed reformulation of the doctrine of the "immanent" Trinity, a reformulation allowing for a new and richer appropriation of the biblical data. As I have presented it, this is not the end of the itinerary: for Coffey this new and richer appropriation of the biblical data is the "economic Trinity" and it is there that trinitarian theology flourishes. As Coffey presents it, theology is both cyclical and ascending: "cyclical" in its constant return to its economic and biblical starting point; "ascending" in its ever more complete appropriation of the revelatory significance of that starting point. This conclusion illustrates these general qualities of Coffey's theology by means of an overview of this study's findings.

1. Coffey's Spirit Christology

I began, in Chapter One with an examination of Coffey's claim that the New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit with the God's love for Jesus (= Thesis A), and that Jesus thereby becomes Son "in humanity." Here Coffey draws especially on the biblical theme of the anointing (including not only the baptism texts, but also Romans 1:4, Acts 10:38 and Luke 1:35 which bring the anointing to the very beginning of his human existence). I showed how these biblical data led Coffey to propose an account of the coming into existence of Jesus as the Son "in humanity" that

gives priority to the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of that humanity. Coffey, as we saw, sees this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as somehow logically prior to the assumption of that humanity by the Son.

I noted the contrast here with "classical" christology. The classical view, built especially on Johannine *Logos* Christology, and took the Incarnation of the *Logos* as the primary explanation of the divine status of Christ. The theme of the sanctification of Christ, where it appears, was thought of as "accidental." Coffey, instead, shows that the New Testament also supports an inversion of this classical order, with the sanctification "first" and the "assumption" second.

The first chapter set this proposal in the context of a contemporary movement in theology towards a revival of an ancient form of christology: Spirit Christology. I took three representatives of this contemporary movement, Hendrikus Berkhof, Geoffrey Lampe and Roger Haight, and outlined how these theologians draw a mistaken lesson from contemporary theology's turn to history by falling into a biblical archaism[472] suspicious of any genuine development in doctrine. Theirs was characterised as a historically-motivated post-trinitarian Spirit Christology.

Coffey was found to have points in common and points of contrast with these post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists. Like them Coffey's discourse is shaped by the results of more recent historical scholarship. Unlike them, he was found to avoid the "archaism" into which they stray. Like them, Coffey proposes a Spirit Christology. Unlike theirs, Coffey's is intended as a *trinitarian* Spirit Christology. The key differences between trinitarian Spirit Christology and post-trinitarian Spirit Christology are: (1) the former thinks of the Holy Spirit as a distinct divine person while the latter does not, and (2) the latter counter-poses *Logos* Christology and Spirit Christology as alternatives, while the former (as expressed by Coffey, at least) does not. In this first chapter, the "cyclical" and "ascending" character of theology are illustrated. Coffey assumes the church's trinitarian faith, but "returns" to the biblical witness to the economy of salvation to retrieve elements formerly obscured. Rather

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[472] See note 121 on p. 48 for Lonergan's use of this term.

than pitting the results of this retrieval against the positions of classical christology, Coffey makes clear his intention to effect a synthesis between the new perspective emerging in his work and previous perspectives. Although Coffey does not make significant use of the term, it is appropriate to conclude that he intends to proceed by "sublation."[473]

Chapter Two above completed the introduction to Coffey's Spirit Christology in itself. For Coffey, Spirit Christology does not confine its attention to the adoption of the biblical symbol of Spirit in the explanation of the divine element in Jesus but also contemplates the entire data about the life, death and resurrection of Christ found in the New Testament. Chapter Two looked at how Coffey reads this life, death and resurrection as a response of love by the Son "in humanity" to the initiating love of the Father. Coffey argues that the New Testament supports an interpretation of this response of love on the part of Jesus as itself the "Holy Spirit," expressed now through the human nature of Jesus. There is in this response of love of the Son "in humanity" an "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit. This response of love is understood at once as love of Jesus for God, but also as love of Jesus for human beings, since it is by loving his fellow human beings that Jesus as human being gives

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[473.] The noun "sublation" comes from the Latin noun "sublatio," derived from "sublatus," the past participle of the verb "tollere" (= to take away). This Latin word would not offer us any help in understanding Coffey's theological style were it not that its English descendent was taken as the standard translation for a German word "aufhebung" as used in the thought of G.W.F. Hegel. The German term "aufhebung," in turn, is drawn from the verb "aufheben" meaning to raise something up. Apart from physically raising something, as used by Hegel it has two opposite connotations. It can mean to "remove" or "destroy" something. It can also mean, paradoxically, to "preserve" something.

It was probably this very ambiguity of the term that made it suitable for Hegel, for it could express something of his dialectical reading of history, where "lower" stages are "removed" or "destroyed," and yet they are "preserved." All three of these dimensions, the "raising," the "destruction" and the "preservation" are combined in the one term: "aufhebung."

In turn Lonergan finds this term suitable to express the dialectical rhythms of his own transcendental theology. In his *Method in Theology*, in the chapter on "Dialectic," Lonergan says that he himself uses the term in Rahner's sense, rather than Hegel's (p. 241):

> what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.

Lonergan's reference to Rahner is Karl Rahner, *Hörer Des Wortes*, (Munich: Kösel, 1963), 40. For commentary by Lonergan on how he distinguishes his own thought from that of Hegel, see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, (Philosophical Library, 1968), 421–423.

incarnate expression to his love of God. These two expressions of Jesus' love for God are one, since Jesus is in his mission to his fellow human beings obedient to the will of his Father.

Chapter Two also looked at the basis that Coffey identifies in transcendental theology for the interpretation of the "ascending" New Testament data about Jesus as the primary instance of such an "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus grows and learns, and throughout his life, his human nature is ever more perfectly sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It thus becomes ever more perfect as an instrument for the Son's human response of love for God. This process of sanctification, by which the human nature of Jesus comes to be the ever more perfect instrument of the Son's human love of God and neighbour, finds its culmination in Jesus' death on the cross. This high point of Jesus' life of obedience to God's will and self-sacrifice for the good of his brothers and sisters is also the moment in which the Holy Spirit is given to the church, the moment in which the "proper" mission of the Spirit begins.

The key term in Coffey's reading of the coming into existence of Jesus and of the conduct and meaning of his life, is "love." This "love," expressed ever more perfectly through the human nature of Jesus, is interpreted as itself the Holy Spirit "incarnate." Coffey admits that the scriptural evidence for this identification of Jesus' love is sparse but he presents what evidence there is as an adequate basis for his claims. Chapter Two, in brief, discussed the position I have called Thesis B: the theological position that the New Testament grounds a reading of the life of Jesus as a response of love by the Son "in humanity," the expression of the "Holy Spirit."

This Spirit Christology was found to have some features that distinguish it from, on the one hand, classical christologies and, on the other hand, from post-trinitarian Spirit Christologies. Among its more obvious advantages, Coffey's Spirit Christology was shown to offer a way of more fully appropriating the New Testament data than either of these two rival accounts. Thus, while the "classical" approach developed a Johannine-inspired *Logos* Christology obscuring the constitutive role of the Holy Spirit, the post-trinitarian Spirit Christologists erred in the

opposite direction, so emphasising Spirit Christology that the Johannine-inspired *Logos* Christology, and the traditional expressions of trinitarian theology that grew from it, were endangered. Coffey's theology was found to aim at a more balanced appropriation of both. It emphasises the importance of a new appropriation of the Spirit Christology data of the New Testament, but does so in a way that carefully avoids tipping the pendulum too far to the other side as to obscure *Logos* Christology.[474]

Beyond the formal advantages to Spirit Christology, Coffey's approach was found to encourage greater attention to the humanity of Jesus, not in itself but as it is transformed by the Holy Spirit. The humanity of which Coffey speaks is not the inert humanity of much christology but the sanctified humanity of the Incarnate Son. The classical distinction between Christ "in his humanity" and Christ "in his divinity," at least in theological discourse, tended to appeal to the "human nature" of Jesus to explain aspects of Christ's human existence that could not be directly attributed to a divine persons, aspects like hunger, thirst, suffering, doubt, death and so on. In Coffey's construction the human nature of Jesus becomes symbol not of limit, but of transcendent possibility, since for Coffey the humanity of Jesus is rendered "theandric" by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In arguing in this direction, Coffey draws on Rahner's transcendental theology, and portrays Christ's humanity as humanity at the very limit of its possibility. He goes so far as to introduce a new concept, one worthy of further study: the notion that Christ's divinity *is* this humanity thus sanctified and brought to its limit. While the divine person remains essentially beyond our understanding, this "divinity" (i.e. this divinised humanity) is the proper first object of our christological attention. Perhaps the issue of the divine "person," recognition of which is somewhat lacking in Coffey's theology, should be dealt with at a second level of discourse, so that we begin with ex-

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[474] In one respect he does appear to be incompletely successful in doing this: in his appreciation of the function in "classical" christology of the term "person." His willingness to speak of an inversion of the *enhypostasia* may be defensible, but his engagement with the problems that this raises is cause for concern.

ploration of the sanctification of the humanity and rise to interpretations about the divine person of the Eternal Son who remains subject, but not the first object of theological reflection?

Approaching matters from this point of view, from the "sanctification" of the human nature of Jesus, Coffey was seen to open here a bridge to discourse about grace.[475] While the current study was not directly concerned with the theme of grace, at various points the relationship of Coffey's Spirit Christology with his theology of grace was alluded to. It was with Coffey's attempt to address criticisms about "fragmentation" in the Catholic theology of grace, drawing especially on Rahner's exploration of the uncreated dimensions of grace, that he began his publishing career. A longer and more comprehensive treatment of Coffey's theology would probably take his early work on grace as a major focus. As far as this study is concerned, I pointed to the fact that in Coffey's theology what happens with the human nature of Christ under the action of the Holy Spirit is essentially the same as what happens to ordinary human beings when the gift of the Holy Spirit is *given*.[476] The anointing of Jesus is the source and explanation of the gracing of human beings. In the history of theology attempts to draw on grace as an explanation for what happens in the case of Jesus were viewed with suspicion. In Coffey's theology, the relationship is inverted such that grace is understood by analogy with what happens with Jesus: the anointing of Jesus offers the template for understanding grace. The gift of the Holy Spirit binds the two together, with the case of Jesus being the primary instance, and grace understood in the light of this primary instance. Adoptionism is avoided and the role of the Holy Spirit in both cases is clarified.

[475.] It is important to specify that it is from "this point of view" that a bridge opens here to the theology of grace. If this study had attempted a offer an account of the evolution of Coffey's thought, or had adopted a consistently "epistemological" order in the presentation of its materials, the matter of "grace" would come first before Spirit Christology. This would be expected, because in an important sense it is only as a result of the experience of grace that human beings are in a position to attempt christology in the first place.

[476.] Again, the distinction between the "offer of grace" and the "gift of grace" is a nuance not quite necessary to the current study. This distinction recalls Rahner's distinction between the "supernatural existential" and "grace" as such. This theme is developed especially in Coffey, "The Whole Rahner on the Supernatural Existential".

This study focussed on Coffey's Spirit Christology, and did not directly pursue the role of the Holy Spirit sanctifying our human nature and bringing it into union with the person of the Son, such that we become by grace "sons and daughters in the Son." Nevertheless Coffey thinks that such discourse is a properly trinitarian matter, and is dealt with in his theology of the "economic Trinity" which follows on his work on the "immanent Trinity." The "return" model is the trinitarian systematisation of Coffey's Spirit Christology and resulting theology of grace.

Before coming to Coffey's trinitarian theology proper, I should note some areas of difficulty that arose with Coffey's Spirit Christology. While in my view these do not ultimately invalidate his attempts, they may nevertheless represent obstacles to the reader's appropriation of these.

The first of these relates to Coffey's use of the biblical data. While his Spirit Christology does offer a way by which we may retrieve certain traditionally obscured dimensions of the this data, one might note that in its rhetoric, at least, it is perhaps too schematic. If classical theology relied too heavily on the Johannine *Logos* Christology, Coffey's theology may be subject to the charge of making too great a use of the dialectical relationship between Johannine christology and synoptic christology. The whole complex of New Testament christology is not captured in this dyad, nor are either the Johannine or the synoptic christologies themselves reducible to the *Logos* or Spirit explanations of the divine element in Jesus that they offer. Coffey knows this, but often his language suggests a more schematic view than the data itself would warrant. Chapter Two shows how Coffey opens the discourse up, beyond the coming into human existence of Jesus as Son, to a consideration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is important. But here the contrast between Johannine and synoptic christology is not at all clear. One might wonder, further, how the christologies of Paul, Hebrews and other New Testament writings fit in. Although Coffey draws on quite a range of New Testament texts, at times he writes as though the contrast between Johannine and synoptic gospels were indeed key to the appropriation of the whole biblical witness.

Although Coffey does not make it explicit, the above tendency to reduce the plurality of New Testament christologies to two is best understood once we know that the perspective adopted is not simply that of New Testament christology as such. The perspective adopted is, rather, that of a theologian of our time looking back at the historical appropriation of New Testament christologies. Seeing that *Logos* Christology exercised a controlling function in later theology, Coffey's concern is primarily to argue towards a retrieval of Spirit Christology. He does this from an avowedly trinitarian perspective. This trinitarian perspective must be recognised since it is only from this point of view that one will fully understand his isolation of *Logos* and Spirit Christologies. Within the New Testament itself there are a whole range of christologies that are not specifically mentioned: scholars continue to discuss and classify Son of God christologies, Son of Man christologies, Messiah, Eschatological Prophet, Servant of God, Parousia christologies, Exaltation christologies etc. The decision to isolate two from the whole range of New Testament christologies is explained by the perspective that Coffey adopts, which is that of the church's trinitarian faith, for which the biblical symbols of *Logos* and Spirit are affirmed to stand for the second and third divine Persons respectively. Thus, while Coffey's approach to the New Testament data can be said to be firmly historical, his focus is nevertheless guided by questions arising from trinitarian theology.

Is this focus anachronistic? I would argue that it would be if this particular focus were unacknowledged, if it suggested an uncritical "reading" of trinitarian problems back into the texts. Fortunately, Coffey does not do this. Instead, what he does is bring trinitarian questions to texts that do not in their "literal" meanings contain answers. This practice of bringing trinitarian questions to biblical texts acknowledged not to have been written with a developed doctrine of the Trinity in mind is one that Coffey explains at some length. In brief, historically-minded biblical criticism demands that we do not anachronistically claim that biblical authors meant more than can be established by the tools of contemporary scholarship. Hence, scholars usually argue that there is no directly trinitarian discourse in the bible. In view, however, of the fact of development of doctrine throughout Christi-

an history, we are in a position to consider how certain dimensions of the biblical texts were developed in later interpretation. Biblical texts were, in fact, taken up and read in a directly and explicitly trinitarian sense. For Coffey, the fact that some of these later meanings themselves acquire the authority of the church's official magisterium means that these can then be classed as "authentic interpretations." These are thenceforth regarded as non-negotiable in theology, even where they demonstrably go beyond the "literal meaning" of the biblical texts. While the historically-minded theologian does not impose such later interpretations on the reading of the biblical texts themselves, it is nonetheless possible to argue that there is a plausible "basis" for such later interpretations in the biblical texts. The task of the theologian is to attempt to indicate the "immanent dialectic of thought" leading from one to the other.

This is, to be sure, a complex line of argument, but no more complex, I argued, than the reality it intends to explain. It is, I conclude with Coffey, perfectly possible to read biblical texts in both ways, once with a concern for the "literal" meaning, and a second time in a way informed by questions arising from later reflection. This is, in practice, the dynamic that Coffey calls "returning" to the economy of salvation. As I mentioned above, the view of the theology that emerges from Coffey is "cyclical" and "ascending." He returns to the biblical data with questions arising from trinitarian theology in order to discover aspects of that data that had not traditionally been recognised. In arguing for the assumption of these aspects, theology moves to a higher appropriation of the biblical witness. Thus it "ascends" by sublating the previous level in a higher synthesis. It asks "historical" questions, not in an archaist sense, but with an eye to the development of doctrine, both past and present.

Another set of challenges was found to lie in Coffey's attempts to show that certain proposals of his Spirit Christology have a background in the Fathers or the scholastics. This attempt is well-motivated, but not always successful. It is true that Coffey quotes rather widely from the Fathers and scholastics, and he advances

stimulating accounts of their writings. Whether these can always be shown to be accurate accounts of what those Fathers and scholastics intended, however, sometimes remains uncertain.

To give specific examples, the current study gave a brief account of the concern that I retain about Coffey's use of the patristic terms "enhypostasia," "communicatio idiomatum" and "theandric." Coffey adopts the peculiar position that these terms formed part of a patristic defence against a perceived rupture ("chasm," or "wedge") brought into the heart of the hypostatic union by the dominance of a *Logos* Christology.[477] Two problems arise with his treatment of these terms. Firstly, he has not provided an adequate demonstration of the claim that the problem of the "wedge" indeed motivated the adoption of these terms. To raise this question is not necessarily to query the existence of the problem of the "wedge," but rather to highlight a methodological concern. He should first have provided historical demonstration that this was indeed the concern of the authors in question before asserting that these concepts were designed to overcome it. The second problem is systematic, and apparently more serious. In his arguments for a role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the humanity of Jesus, Coffey in fact obscures some of the very questions that most readers think the above terms were historically designed to answer.

Take the example of the "enhypostasia." Coffey thinks that this was designed to address the problem of the "wedge." Most others think, rather, that this term emerged to address the need that emerged after after the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) to show how the human nature of Jesus, without itself being a person, was nevertheless not lacking since it was personal in the person of the Son. The key issue, therefore, lay in concern about the "person" in Jesus. When Coffey claims that the purpose of the "enhypostasia" was to be bring the two "natures" of Jesus into ontological communion, he omits any significant mention of the term "person." But the reality represented by this word, i.e., the need to account for the "one and the same" in Christ was the very issue under consideration. The relation-

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[477.] See above at p. 84f.

ship of the two natures, even if this relationship is thought of in terms of an actual ontological communication between the natures, such as Coffey suggests with his reading of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the theandric nature and the *enhypostasia*, cannot fulfill this function.

At this point, we note a similar weakness in Coffey's theology to that of Nestorius: failure to attend to the theological function of the notion of "person." Given that Coffey's reading of these terms is so idiosyncratic, one could justifiably expect him to show why the generally accepted reading is incorrect. He does not. It is possible that, in relation to these issues, Coffey's reading of ancient texts is guided more by his own theological interests than by careful historical scholarship. That he is willing to de-emphasise the notion of "person" in order to discuss the impact of the Spirit on the human "nature" of Jesus is explained by the fact that the impact and benefit of Spirit Christology lies precisely there. His presentation is, however, at this point lacking in the sensitivity to traditional concerns that in most other instances is one of his strengths.

I do not regard these concerns as ultimately damaging to Coffey's central line of thought. It does not seem to me essential that every position in theology need be directly found in patristic or scholastic sources. It is perfectly possible, in my view, that genuine theological progress can be found in a theologian of our time, even if that progress is unprecedented and does not find patristic support. If Coffey's demonstration of the patristic background to some aspects of his theology is less than completely satisfactory, this need not in itself mean that his theology is unacceptable. I have not cited here many of the more successful attempts that Coffey makes to show a patristic background to his Spirit Christology in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, in Augustine and others. Ultimately, my judgement is that his case is more compelling when it is presented in terms of a dialectical advance beyond traditional theology than when it appeals to ancient sources and attempts to show continuity with the tradition.

I conclude that Coffey's experiment in Spirit Christology is notably successful on its own terms. The advantages cited above outweigh the challenges. Coffey offers, in my judgement, a plausible and compelling attempt at appropriating a greater range of biblical data than does traditional christology; argues carefully for the methodological necessity of a trinitarian reading of this data, and offers a promising way of relating christology with the theology of grace.

2. From Spirit Christology to Trinity

While Chapters One and Two introduced Coffey's Spirit Christology, Chapter Three took a more specifically pneumatological focus, discussing how Theses A and B together allow Coffey to advance the pneumatological conclusion: the Holy Spirit is therefore the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son. The "therefore" involved in this step marks an "ascending" move from the economy of salvation to a statement about the Holy Spirit *in se*. We saw that this "therefore" marked the path that Coffey adopts to arrive at this pneumatological conclusion as markedly different from that of "classical" trinitarian theology: Coffey's approach is explicitly inferred from the economy of salvation, rather than from the theology of the "immanent Trinity."

Coffey's particular approach to this matter was also shown to be "ascending" in another sense, one particular to Coffey. The Australian distinguishes, as indicated, between questions related to the *distinction* of divine persons and questions about the *unity* of divine persons (in his terminology these are the questions of "descending" and "ascending" trinitarian theology, respectively). This vocabulary will strike some readers as idiosyncratic, given the familiarity of these terms as they are commonly used in christology. I argued that this innovation in vocabulary is defensible. Coffey indicates one way in which the shift in recent christology from "descending" to "ascending" might be translated into the rather different concerns of trinitarian theology with its more complex set of questions.

The distinction between "descending" questions and "ascending" trinitarian theology was shown to be a central structure of Coffey's theological framework. Classical theology in both its Eastern and Western forms is "descending": it takes the *unity* of God as its starting point and enquires after the *distinction* of persons. Especially in its Western form, this theology has been concerned particularly to explain distinction in ways that did not damage the understanding of divine unity. The theology Coffey develops, in contrast, takes the *distinction* of persons as its assumption and enquires after the *unity* of persons. This he calls "ascending" theology, and it is clear that this can take place both before and after the middle phase in his trinitarian itinerary. There is, therefore, the "ascending" theology characteristic of the ascent towards the expression of the church's trinitarian faith. There is also, however, the "ascending" theology that comes in the light of, and subsequent to, the church's trinitarian faith. This second form of "ascending" theology is trinitarian "ascending" theology.[478]

In view of the "descending" form of "classical" theology, it was not surprising to note that the emphasis on the Holy Spirit as "love" characteristic of the Western tradition turned out to be an emphasis on the "common" love: the "love" by which the Father and the Son together "love" the world. In Coffey's trinitarian "ascending" theology, in contrast, the Holy Spirit was more clearly understood as the "mutual love" of Father and Son.

In discussing these matters, I found another regrettable example of Coffey's willingness to find answers to his questions in patristic sources without first demonstrating that those questions were indeed raised by the patristic sources themselves. This was the example of Coffey's claim for an Augustinian basis for the "mutual love" theory, as distinct from a "common love" theory. While this distinction is, in itself, illuminating, it seems to me that Coffey makes too much of the supposed Au-

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[478] There is thus an analogy between two distinctions: that between pre-trinitarian Spirit Christology and trinitarian Spirit Christology, on the one hand, and that between pre-trinitarian "ascending" theology and trinitarian "ascending" theology, on the other. The pattern of theology is ascending and cyclical, each moment sublating the previous one and bringing it forward.

gustinian basis for it.[479] It is not clear to me that Augustine himself intended to make such a clear distinction between these two ways of understanding the Holy Spirit as "love." If the African Father did intend to make this distinction, then why did he not make it clear or highlight its importance. I offered a reading, based on Coffey's own idea of the "descending" questions of theology and recent discussion among patristic scholars about the polemical context of Augustine's writings on the Trinity, that attempted to show why it was in fact unlikely that Augustine could have specifically intended to speak of the "mutual love" of the Father and the Son. Ultimately, however, the case would have to be settled on textual evidence, and I am unaware of any evidence that shows that Augustine himself intended this distinction.

The more general point that Coffey makes is more convincing than his attribution to Augustine of the common love/mutual love distinction. He argues that the affirmation of a "descending" form of theology, in the wake of pro-Nicene anti-subordinationism limited the ability of the traditional theology to take up that biblically-based economic data of the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Father. Attempts in the tradition at elaborating a properly "mutual love" pneumatology, such as that found in Richard of Saint-Victor were seen as interesting, but since they were presented in terms of metaphysical speculation rather than showing any explicit root in the biblical data they were deemed methodologically unacceptable from our point of view. Coffey's enterprise is, therefore, to restore the basis for a "mutual love" pneumatology in the economy of salvation. That basis he seeks in what I have described as Theses A and B. Whether such an attempt can be seen as valid and fruitful, in view of the tradition of trinitarian theology, was discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

[479.] In this Coffey is not, of course, unusual. The "mutual love" theory of the Holy Spirit is often attributed to Augustine. What aggravates the attribution in the case of Coffey is, however, the clarity with which he has set out the distinctions between "common love" and "mutual love," between "descending" and "ascending" theology. Once these distinctions are so clearly drawn, it is more difficult to use Augustine as a source for a properly "mutual love" approach to the Holy Spirit.

Coffey's general strategy, as introduced in Chapter Three, mirrors the one we saw in dealing with the relation between *Logos* and Spirit Christology. The concerns of "descending" theology are valid in themselves, but need to be complemented and completed by another style of questioning. "Ascending" theology, theology that takes the distinction of persons as it is given in the economy as its starting point is presented as necessary complement to "descending" theology. For Coffey, both "descending" and "ascending" theology take their point of departure from the scripture, and both allow for the traditional reading of the scriptural data. In the case of "descending" theology, however, the scriptural basis is largely found in the idea of the Incarnation, developed from the Johannine prologue, and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son also largely based on Johannine cues. The traditional development of these themes is found in the "classical" theology of the Trinity. "Ascending" theology too has its scriptural basis, not just in the idea of the "anointing" of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, but in the whole story of Jesus' conception, life, death and resurrection, all interpreted as taking place in the power of the Spirit. In Coffey's reading, the theme of the "mutual love" of God and Jesus is at the forefront.

As it happened, this scriptural basis is only weakly developed in the tradition of pneumatology or trinitarian theology in general. By indicating the theme of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of Father and Son, Coffey offers a path towards a new development of these scriptural data, as well as a way towards restoring a narrative basis for both pneumatology and trinitarian theology in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Such developments express the "cyclical" nature of theology, its "ascending" sublatory character.

Next, Chapter Four looked more specifically at a range of issues arising from the attempted move *from* statements about the economy of salvation *to* statements about God *in se*. In so doing, this chapter moved more explicitly into the matter of trinitarian theology as such.

215

In Catholic theology the standard formulation of the idea that one might move *from* statements about the economy of salvation *to* statements about God *in se* is found in Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom*. I looked at some of the resistance that continues to be expressed to Rahner's formulation by exponents of the "classical" approach. I illustrated the concerns of those who resist the method proposed by Rahner and his many followers with reference to standard features of the "classical" Western approach in trinitarian theology, showing how the doctrine of "common action" and the associated strategy of "appropriations" tend in their operation to close off any sustained appeal to the economy of salvation in trinitarian theology. The "psychological analogy" was found to serve the "descending" "classical" theology well in that it does explain a certain distinction of divine persons without damage to the divine unity. The psychological analogy, however, is an *intra*trinitarian analogy ill-suited to understanding the *inter*personal dimensions of the gospel narratives.

Against this background, Rahner's theology was taken as representing a break with tradition, and an innovation that has proved far more attractive to many. Rahner thought of the Trinity as a mystery of salvation, as the self-communication of God. Since the Triune God is revealed reliably in the economy of salvation, the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and *vice versa*. In practice, this axiom of Rahner has usually been taken up in recent theology as implying that we take the "economy of salvation" as starting point in trinitarian theology. The difficulties it raises, however, include the challenge of reconciling the results of this approach with those of the "classical" approach.

Coffey accepts the *Grundaxiom* stated in these general terms. He modifies it, however, in order to clarify certain issues, and to show the soteriological purpose of theology of the "immanent Trinity." He proposes replacing Rahner's two terms ("economic Trinity" and "immanent Trinity") with three terms ("biblical Trinity," "immanent Trinity," "economic Trinity"). The first term in Rahner's axiom, the "economic Trinity" Coffey proposes replacing with the term: the "biblical Trinity."

I argued that this term is, if understood correctly, more precise than Rahner's term. Rahner's "economic Trinity" is unclear and cannot serve in any rigorous way as a "starting point." If the biblical authors are judged not directly to offer a trinitarian understanding of terms like God, Father, Son, *Logos,* and Holy Spirit, then on what basis may we appeal to the "economic Trinity"? Coffey's answer is that it is not with the "economic Trinity" that we begin, but with the biblical data, since that is the shared and public source of all theology. This appears to me to be a simple statement of fact, and incontrovertible.

We read the bible, however, within the tradition of the church, and if we recognise the possibility of the development of doctrine we may also recognise truth in those later interpretations of the biblical data that characterised and shaped Christian thinking about God. This tradition of interpretation, however, has not managed to appropriate all of the important elements of the biblical witness. It has, for example, privileged the Johannine christology upon which the classical form of trinitarian theology rests. Coffey argues that we must return to the biblical text in order to retrieve previously obscured elements in that data. It is only by "returning" to the biblical data having thus acquired the doctrine of the Trinity that the economy of salvation can be read in trinitarian terms. But it is not the "economy of salvation" that can be so read, but primarily the bible itself. At that point it is better to speak of the "biblical Trinity."

The bible is the publicly available and shared source for testimony about the "economy of salvation." The church reads the bible through "trinitarian" eyes, and cannot do otherwise without detaching itself from the tradition of interpretation.[480] Coffey's talk of the "biblical Trinity" expresses a rich sense of the complex hermeneutics demanded in contemporary appropriation of the bible, exemplifying, once again, his "cyclical" and "ascending" sublatory view of the theological task.

[480.] As noted above, this does not mean that the theologian should not read biblical texts with the tools of historical study. If he or she reads it as a historian, the "literal" sense will come to the fore. If he or she reads it as a theologian, it is likely that the *relation* of the "literal" sense to later theological developments will be in focus.

For Coffey, the Semitic authorship of the biblical texts leads us to prefer "functional" readings of the "literal" meaning of biblical texts. The spread of the gospel in the Hellenistic world, however, led to a translation in the interpretation of these biblical texts, such that they came to be expressed in the "ontological" discourse typical of that cultural context. Eschewing biblical archaism, Coffey interprets this translation from functional language and thought-forms to ontological language and thought-forms as a net *gain* for theology. Among its benefits is the possibility it offers of developing discourse about God *in se*, rather than simply God *pro nobis*. Thus is born the theology of the "immanent Trinity": a reflection on the conditions of possibility for the "economy of salvation." The theology of the "immanent Trinity" is a form of thought about the data of the "biblical Trinity" that ensures the preservation of a proper sense in theological discourse of the freedom and transcendence of God, and allows for the ordering of the "knowledge" of God we acquire from the bible.

For Coffey, the theology of the "immanent Trinity" does not form an end in itself. The thought that it might represents one of the more unfortunate developments in the history of trinitarian thought. Understanding God as though God can be best understood without reference to the economy of salvation means overlooking the altruistic character of God's love, which is precisely what God's saving action demonstrates. To suggest that God can be best understood when we theoretically exclude that which is most significant to human beings would be to go against God's salvific plan expressed especially in the Incarnation and in the outpouring of the Spirit.

Accordingly, Coffey posits that the doctrine of the "immanent Trinity" is relevant precisely when it effects a transition "back" to the economy of salvation. Coffeydoes not contravene Schoonenberg's principle that we must argue from the world to God and not *vice versa* because he places the "economic Trinity" third. What Schoonenberg's principle excludes is the introduction of extraneous material

(from philosophy for example). The God of the "immanent Trinity" from which one "returns" to the economy, in Coffey's schema, should be verifiably none other than the God based on the data of the "biblical Trinity" in the first place.

While Coffey adopts a positive attitude towards the emergence of a theology of the "immanent Trinity," he is attentive both to the point just made, the need to recognise the soteriological finality of "immanent Trinity" talk, and to the important matter of balance in theology of the "immanent Trinity." If the theology of the "immanent Trinity" emerged historically in a way that appeared to bind it particularly to a *Logos* Christology, that need not mean that it cannot now work on the matter of balancing that theology by exploring the implications of Spirit Christology. Clearly, Coffey will want to show how these implications do not simply destroy, but sublate the concerns of the "classical" tradition.

In brief, Chapter Four showed how Coffey's tripartite portrait of the itinerary of trinitarian theology addresses significant ambiguities in Rahner's formulation, but also shows the soteriological orientation of theology of the "immanent Trinity." Implicitly, it responds to some of the concerns raised by exponents of the continued hegemony of the "classical" approach, at least to the extent that it promises to sublate rather than destroy those concerns. I judge this attitude on Coffey's part far more helpful and potentially fruitful than that of theologians who proceed as though trinitarian theology proper only began when historical method affirmed itself in biblical studies.

Chapter Five, finally, looked at some particular issues surrounding the attempt that Coffey shares with many recent theologians to take the "economy of salvation" (mediated as the "biblical Trinity") as the starting point in trinitarian theology. The particular issues discussed here arise only when one attempts to do this in continuity with a theological tradition in its "classical form."

It is precisely Coffey's desire to place his Spirit Christology and trinitarian theology in continuity with the theological tradition, even while it is presented as an advance in that tradition, that leads to the development of the two-model approach

219

that occupied our attention in Chapter Five. Such a stance as Coffey's need not be assumed: one could certainly attempt to develop a trinitarian theology *ex novo* from the resources found in the bible, as Ormerod appears to suggest is the case with Coffey.[481] To do so, however, would mean having to re-engage with all of the issues faced by the great Councils, since these are implicitly raised by the scriptural source itself. One would not be certain in undertaking such an enterprise that one would indeed end up with something like the doctrine of the Trinity.[482]

David Coffey is determined, instead, to remain within the tradition of ecclesial thinking for which the doctrine of the Trinity represents a non-negotiable *datum*, but one that needs to be continually re-examined in the light of the "cyclical" and "ascending" return to the biblical ground from which it takes its departure. He does not view the tradition as a closed story, or as something that can be passed on only. For Coffey, thinking within the tradition allows for some fairly significant re-working at the centre of the traditional construct. One may "ascend" from one synthesis to a higher synthesis, an ascent in which the results of previous syntheses will be sublated rather than simply destroyed.

Accordingly, Chapter Five looked at certain issues arising from the attempt to relate the data of the "biblical Trinity" (especially, the Spirit Christology suggested by the synoptic gospels) to the "classical" theology of the "immanent Trinity." I focused on the matter of trinitarian *taxis* and on the debate between Eastern and Western tradition over the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. Coffey's theological agenda here was shown to be the effort to accommodate all of the various positions within a comprehensive framework. Thus, he wants to find a place for the "economic *taxis*" according to which the Holy Spirit also comes before the Son, but also for the traditional *taxis* of the "immanent Trinity" according to which the Son

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[481] See, for example, Ormerod, "The Goal of Systematic Theology," 47. See above note 56 on p. 24.

[482] The fact that a close reading of the bible does not automatically guarantee a properly trinitarian theology can be easily illustrated by sketching a history of theological efforts at attempting just such a reading and failing to reach a fully trinitarian outcome. This history would not begin with Arius and would not end with Roger Haight.

comes before the Holy Spirit. He also wants to find a place for both the Eastern tradition's insistence on the primacy of the Father as "cause" in the Trinity and its concern to ensure non-confusion of Father and Son, and for the Western tradition's position on the involvement of the Son in the eternal procession of the Spirit.

I showed how it was from these issues that Coffey developed his two-model approach to the Trinity. The first model he calls the "procession model" and it corresponds to the "classical" theology. In both its Eastern and Western forms, the basic objective of the "procession model" is to respond to the questions of "descending" theology. This model developed largely on the basis of a *Logos* Christology, and was found incapable of accommodating the implications of Spirit Christology. Coffey argued that another model was required to accommodate these implications. This model he calls the "bestowal" model, the "mutual love" model, or the "return" model. The theme of "return" is based ultimately on the biblical portrait of the life of Jesus as a return in the Spirit to the Father. Coffey's way of expressing the relation of the two models is elegant. "Mission" (or "Procession") is completed in "Return." *Exitus* is ordered towards *reditus,* descent towards ascent, and creation towards assimilation.

3. Upwards and Onwards

This study has not attempted to engage with all of David Coffey's theology, but it has indicated what I take to be its central trajectory. Once his theology has secured its economic starting point in the bible (a starting point to which one must return repeatedly, in order to capture ever more fully the profundity of the ascending dynamic implied in the mystery of the Anointing/Incarnation), once it has established its relationship of dialectical continuity with the traditions of trinitarian theology of East and West, it opens up multiple avenues of theological exploration.

Among these we might certainly list the theology of grace, the redemption, the church. One would also list, however, certain areas of particular interest in theology today, such as ecumenical theology and the theology of religions. Coffey's theo-

logy has attracted the interest of some evangelical theologians because of its strong pneumatology and the unexpected overlaps it shows with the theology of the revered American theologian Jonathan Edwards.[483] In relation to discussion of the debated question of the eternal procession of the *filioque,* Coffey's approach may still bear fruit (although it would need to be reformulated to respond more directly to the concerns of Eastern theologians).[484] Fortunately, however, Coffey has offered various stimuli that would help attempt such a refomulation, not least of which are his attempts to engage with various points from the theology of Gregory Palamas (not covered in the current study).

Another area, one of almost "burning" urgency among Catholic theologians is the area of the theology of religions. Coffey has indeed recognised the potential of the approach that he offers and has recently expressed it as a way of mediating between the concerns of Peter Phan (to take a prominent example), on the one hand, and the American Bishops Conference/Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the other.[485] Since the most basic issue raised in this debate is the relation of the

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[483] These overlaps are explored especially by Steven Studebaker. The latter is currently publishing a book on Coffey and Edwards. In the meantime, see Studebaker, "Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology"; Steven Studebaker, "Integrating Social and Augustinian Theories of Divine Person: A Proposal From the Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards and David Coffey," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 34–35, (2008): 3–19.

[484] Lewis Ayres in a review of Thomas Weinandy's comparable attempt at overcoming the *impasse* writes:

> I find it hard to believe that finding some sort of compromise solution to the question of the *filioque* will actually solve the theological disputes between East and West. Orthodox theologians have for many years (though I am not sure when this train of argument began: I suspect it is much more recent than we tend to imagine) argued that the *filioque* is a stumbling block because it has led to a whole host of other insurmountable theological problems and mistakes by the West – of modern theologians perhaps Lossky puts this argument most starkly. Until East and West are able to read each other's theological traditions both more charitably and with more historical accuracy the *filioque* remains the least of our problems.

See Lewis Ayres, "Review of 'the Father's Spirit of Sonship'," *Journal of Theological Studies* 50, (1999): 430–432. The point made by Ayres applies equally to Coffey: the resolution of the *filioque* issue will only take place within a much broader context, that of ecclesial reconciliation. In the meantime, this need not mean that fruitful theological innovation cannot make a vitally useful contribution.

[485] Coffey has published an article responding to theological issues underlying the debate over Phan's contribution. Peter Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue,* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004). Phan's book gave rise to a response from the Vatic-

222

Son and the Spirit in the economy of salvation, or more precisely the question of how to understand the Spirit working through other religious traditions, it is clear that the issues discussed in Coffey's trinitarian Spirit Christology are of deep interest.[486]

The current study does not directly engage with these various areas. It does however explore the *basis* for such an engagement. It has explored the central trajectory proposed in Coffey's theology and found that it might be judged both plausible and potentially fruitful. Further work on Coffey's theology might engage with some of the weaker points indicated above. It would do so, however, motivated by the great potential that Coffey's theology offers as a basis not just for the range of issues listed above, but more importantly for a trinitarian reconsideration of soteriology itself and the Spirit-guided dynamics of theology itself, unfolding through history.

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an and from the American bishops. Coffey's response is found in Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan". Coffey also discusses the question of religions set in the context of a cosmic pneumatology directed by entelechy towards the Christ event in Coffey, "The Spirit of Christ as Entelechy".

[486] Coffey writes that "The traditional theology is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough to solve the thorniest ecumenical and interreligious questions of the present time, namely, the *Filioque* the uniqueness of Christ, and the salvific validity of the non-Christian religions. For these it is necessary to range wider and invoke the mutual-love theology." Coffey, "Questiones Disputatae: A Trinitarian Response to Issues Raised By Peter Phan," 865.

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239

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