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AUTONOMY AND THE BONDS OF LOVE

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PREFACE

Autonomy and the Bonds of Love offers a new account of the Spirit. Augustinian pneumatologies view the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Critics of this pneumatological tradition wonder how, if the Spirit is a relationship between persons, the Spirit can also be a person, full stop?[1] One answer, I suggest, is that the Spirit is a *plural person*. (In what follows, I italicize first-person plural pronouns to denote plural persons.) According to the philosopher Bennett Helm, a group of friends can act together not just distributively, that is, as separate individuals all at once, but also corporately, that is, as one rational agent or plural person supervening on the friends.[2] A group can exercise such *joint autonomy* if and only if each of *us* (the group) so loves *our* (the group's) life together that *we* acquire first-person plural habits of thought and feeling that are irreducible to what I or you think or feel individually: *we* feel, each as one of *us*, determined to accomplish what matters to *us*, delighted when *we* accomplish it, irked when something stands in *our* way, and the like. I reject the allegedly binitarian implications of the bond-of-love tradition by arguing that the Spirit is a plural person.

My goal in making this argument is less to defend the truth of claims about the status of the Spirit in the eternal life of God and more to create a model that helps us think about human agency. Human beings are porous and fragmentary creatures.[3] We depend on caregivers we did not choose to help us grow into adults with minds of our own. Radical personal changes like marrying, parenting, or transitioning alter our sense of self; traumas rupture it. So how do we

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[1] Robert Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2.3 (1993): 296-304.

[2] Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[3] Judith Butler, *What World Is This? A Pandemic Phenomenology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 5, 43.

identify with our lives, seeing them as more or less having the shape we want them to have? What makes a human being a person—an agent with a self—rather than an epiphenomenon of ideology or tragedy? For many contemporary thinkers, the vulnerability of human beings is a condition of our autonomy, not a threat to it.[4] It is precisely in virtue of caring about people and things besides oneself, and so risking one's well-being on what one cannot control, that one comes to have an identity in the first place.[5] But how, exactly, does this autonomy-through-vulnerability work?

Christianity is teeming with conceptual resources that would be helpful for answering these questions, evocative images in which irreducibly social modes of agency build up rather than blot out an individual human self. Sin colonizes one's heart (Rom 7:17); the Spirit frees it (2 Cor 1:21-22). Believers are various members of a single body—hands, ears, eyes, feet—of which Jesus is the head (1 Cor 12:12-31). Yet few theological anthropologies explain why a human being is not a mere epiphenomenon of these social and cosmic influences. How could one figure out for oneself what one cares about with a mind possessed by sin or remade by the Spirit?

Currently, two disciplinary shortcomings prevent theologians from elaborating these images into an adequate conceptual framework for demystifying the agency of human individuals: scientism and pneumatological abstraction. That is, when theologians try to explain how, despite our intersubjective constitution, we each count as an individual agent with a separate self, they mistake a normative question for an empirical one and rely on debunked science—the mirror neuron theory of action—to answer it. Or they credit the Spirit's presence in

[4] See, for example, Kristine Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory: A Theological Account* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010); Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Hilde Lindemann, *Holding and Letting Go: The Social Practice of Personal Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[5] See, for example, the work of Harry Frankfurt, especially *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

communal rites with empowering individual believers to act freely, then pass over in silence the question of how the Spirit works through these rites. I describe these disciplinary shortcomings in chapter one.

My model of the Spirit, which I present in chapter two, moves the discipline forward by showing how the Spirit's indwelling a believer's heart enhances rather than undermines human autonomy. The Father's and the Son's mutual friendship eternally constitutes them as a plural person or Spirit to whom befriending humanity matters. Indwelling, then, is an expansion *ad extra* of God's friendship *in se*: God and a human being befriend one another and so constitute a plural person. In other words, indwelling means exercising joint autonomy with God. It instills in God and the believer a habit of feeling and acting for *our* sake that simultaneously sanctifies the believer (for in loving *us* the believer holds joint values with God) and expresses God's inexhaustible splendor in a new way (for in loving *us* God holds joint values with this unique human being).

The plausibility of the model is the sense it makes of a variety of theological phenomena, including (a) how the *sensus fidei fidelis*, or a believer's instinctive feel for the truth, works, as I explain in chapter two; (b) what the agency proper to the body of Christ entails, as explain in chapter three; and (c) why personal immortality could be a coherent object of human hope despite the ubiquitous human trait of psychological discontinuity that makes Christian eschatology so puzzling to analytic philosophers, as I explain in chapter four. That said, I do not explore the implications of this model for Christology. As critics of Augustinian pneumatologies never tire of saying, the Spirit has been undertheorized in Western theology largely because Christology has overshadowed it. Theologians begin with Christ, and by the time they get to the Spirit, there is nothing left for the Spirit to do. By reversing this order, I have built a model of the

Spirit that sheds light on a number of theological loci, including ecclesiology (chapter three) and eschatology (chapter four).

At the same time, my model of the Spirit is of wider philosophical import. *Autonomy and the Bonds of Love* addresses a philosophical debate about the relationship between personal identity and friendship: friendship does not presuppose a narratively continuous self on the part of each friend; rather, friendship creates an alternative, non-narrative ground of personal identity, namely, the virtuosity or muscle memory that a lifetime of feeling and acting for *our* sake inculcates in each of *us*.[6] Furthermore, as I use plural person theory to develop a new model of the Spirit, I use my model of the Spirit as a thought experiment to resolve philosophical difficulties in plural person theory: How does the collective agency proper to friendships (where an intimate love links a few individuals in a non-fungible bond with one another) differ from that proper to institutions (whose members feel non-intimate respect for one another in their fungible role as fellow practitioners of a form of life)? What forms might collective heteronomy take? How does a plural person resist them?

Cumulatively, the following chapters tell a non-confessional story about what friendship is, why autonomy requires vulnerability, and how different types of collective agency work. I thus employ an innovative methodology: trinitarian theology as a thought experiment. Most theologians use the trinity in one of two ways. Some argue that the doctrine sets the pattern for how human beings should relate to one other; others see it as a set of rules for talking about God's actions in the economy of salvation without contradicting the oneness of God's immanent

[6] For the basic contours of the philosophical debate, see Marya Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival: A Refinement and Defense of the Narrative View," in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Daniel Hutto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 155-178; and Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio* 17.4 (2004): 428-452.

being. Instead of using the trinity as a political ideal or an exegetical principle, I use it as a conceptual metaphor for analyzing human autonomy.

When scientists cannot describe something directly or exhaustively (like atoms), they rely on analogies (an electron surrounds the nucleus of an atom like a cloud) to theorize the phenomenon in question (atoms as fuzzy quantum probability clouds). Similarly, philosophers construct metaphorical models to analyze normative concepts—as in Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates defines justice in the human soul by first assuming some isomorphism between (visible) cities and (invisible) souls, then constructing an abstract model of a just city, and finally drawing conclusions about the (more elusive) soul from his claims about the (easier to grasp) city. Theologians use metaphorical models too: when the Gospels speak of God as a mother hen (Matt 23:37, Lk 13:34), or Gregory of Nyssa speaks of God as a friend,[7] they help us understand the ineffable through the tangible and familiar.[8]

There is disagreement within each of these fields about the truth of such models: Do models "reflect" reality, as *critical realists* would have it? Or are models just "heuristic fictions," as *instrumentalists* maintain?[9] On one level, modelling the Spirit as a plural person is a theological exercise in critical realism, telling a story about what human participation in the divine means, how human friendship with God works, and why affirmations of God's unconditioned creative agency need not conflict with affirmations of human autonomy—a story that will interest Christians who regard trinitarian statements as veridical first-order descriptions of God, as well as scholars who wish to understand such Christians. On another level, though, it is a thought

[7] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: HarperOne, 2006) 132.

[8] Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

[9] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 101, 133.

experiment—and just as the usefulness of thought experiments about human fission for analyzing the concept of personal identity does not depend on the empirical possibility of human fission, so, too, the usefulness of my pneumatology for analyzing autonomy does not require the empirical reality of God, the Spirit, or the trinity.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SPIRIT AS BLACK BOX

Introduction

For many contemporary theologians, the vulnerability of human beings is a condition of their autonomy, not a threat to it. In the words of one theologian, vulnerability opens human beings up to "the love and care of others"—which is to say, to "transformation," wholeheartedness, and "glory" no less than to "suffering."[1] But how (to quote another) do these finite dependent creatures "identify with" their lives, seeing them not as "something imposed upon or merely happening to" them, but as having "the shape" they want them to have?[2] What makes a human being a "person" rather than "an epiphenomenon thrown up by the implacable structures of language" or ideology or tragedy?[3] How, exactly, does human autonomy-through-vulnerability work?

Christianity is replete with conceptual resources that would be helpful for answering these questions—evocative images of shared agency in which an outside agent lodges in and acts through a human individual without overriding that individual's agency. For example, a Christian is called to work out their salvation even as God is always already working in it (Phil 2:12-13). Jesus "lives in" a believer Gal (2:20). Divine power perfects a believer's own faculties like a flame heating iron.[4] Sin colonizes one's heart (Rom 7:17). The Spirit frees one's heart (2 Cor 1:21-22). Believers are various members of a single body of which Jesus is the head (1 Cor 12:12-31).

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[1] Kristine Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory: A Theological Account* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 2.

[2] Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1, 25.

[3] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015),78.

[4] Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 83.

Nevertheless, contemporary theological anthropologies have yet to elaborate these images into an adequate conceptual framework for theorizing human vulnerability and human autonomy as interconnected rather than opposite. Two main problems stand in the way of such an elaboration. First, theological accounts of how, despite the social constitution of human persons, a human being counts as an individual agent with a separate self tend to mistake a normative question for an empirical one and hence to rely on debunked science—the mirror neuron theory of action—to answer it. Second, theologians often credit the Spirit with empowering individual believers to act freely, then pass over in silence the question of how the Spirit accomplishes this work. In this way, they construct black-box pneumatologies: accounts of the Spirit that, like a black-box explanation in science, describe the effects of the Spirit without explaining the mechanism of action. In this chapter, I describe these disciplinary shortcomings to motivate my own constructive pneumatology in chapter two. I close with a discussion of Karl Barth's reconciliation of human freedom and divine grace. The Spirit figures prominently in Barth's reconciliation, but Barth is notoriously laconic about how, exactly, the Spirit reconciles human freedom and divine grace. I suggest that Barth's pneumatology nevertheless furnishes clues for working out this reconciliation—clues that I will develop in subsequent chapters.

A warning about terminology. In what follows, I use the terms *self* and *person* interchangeably. In subsequent chapters, I will have more to say about what I mean by *self* and *person*. But I want to stipulate at the outset that one should not take my use of these terms to refer to any mysterious substance. In addition, I want to note that the conceptuality of personhood I develop in this dissertation is one that applies to human and divine persons alike. It is rooted in Richard of St. Victor's dogmatic treatise on the trinity, which proposes a notion of personhood that applies to human and divine personal identities alike: a person, says Richard, is an

irreplaceable *someone* who particularizes a generic *something*—in the case of human beings, humanity; in the case of the divine identities, divinity.[5] Thus, my use of the terms *person* and *self* in the following chapters avoids projecting anachronistic notions of interiority and self-consciousness onto the trinity that would contravene Christianity's credal affirmations of monotheism. For now, though, it will suffice to read my use of *self* and *person* as meaning something like an irreducible center of practical concerns. As for *autonomy*, it would be a mistake to read in my use of this word any suggestion of causal independence or freedom from constraint. On the contrary, following broadly neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian lines of thought, I take *autonomy* "to consist precisely in being constrained by norms," so that one answers not "merely" "to what is" (causes) but also "to what ought to be" (reasons or values). Moreover, it is a capacity that human beings develop through, not in spite of, their dependence on others, for mastering a social practice (such as music composition) makes new modes of individual expressive freedom possible for a human being (the proliferation of new genres of music and new musical works within these genres).[6]

1. Scientistic Theological Anthropologies

As an example of the propensity for scientism in contemporary theological anthropology, consider the work of Susan Eastman, a biblical scholar who reads Paul constructively—or, as she puts it, for "a theological interpretation of his letters that engages deeply and creatively with issues in today's world," and more particularly, "in the service of a theological interpretation of

[5] Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity*, trans. Ruben Angelici (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 4.1, 141-142; 4.4, 144; 4.5, 145-146.

[6] Robert Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16.3 (1979): 187.

Paul's anthropology."[7] Frustrated by the opposition between individualistic and communal soteriological frameworks in Pauline studies, Eastman wants to "grant the continuity of the body with its surroundings yet resist the claim that therefore there is no self."[8] She argues that, on Paul's view, a human being is "porous" and "vulnerable,"[9] "socially and cosmically constructed in relationship to external realities that operate internally as well,"[10] and nonetheless an individual self with agency. Witness Paul's descriptions of *indwelling*: various external agents take up residence inside Paul and act in him, including sin, Jesus, and the Spirit; yet Paul "continues to speak in the first person singular … as the subject of his own actions" through it all.[11] The human individual is thus a salient theological category for Paul, even if Paul lacks a word that means *person*.[12] One theological riff on the question of why a human self is not epiphenomenal, then, goes like this: If, as Paul suggests, social and cosmic agents lodge in and act through one, why does one nevertheless count as an individual agent in one's own right? How does one figure out what one cares about or deliberate about what to do with a mind possessed by sin (Rom 1:28) or remade by Jesus (Gal 2:20)? In short, to quote Eastman, "What kind of agency is implied and exercised by a self that is not solely self-determining?"[13] This is "the puzzle of Pauline participation and identity," as she calls it.[14]

Eastman solves the puzzle by recasting Paul's anthropology in terms of experimental psychology and neuroscience. She leans on a landmark psychological study from the 1970s indicating that newborns imitate the facial expressions of their caregivers: "an interpersonal

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[7] Susan Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 24, 184.
[8] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 12.
[9] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 11
[10] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 8.
[11] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 12.
[12] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 33.
[13] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 9.
[14] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 8.

dance" supposedly precedes "the development of language or the capacity for abstract thought."[15] In addition, she borrows from the neuroscientific theory of mirror neurons, according to which the same motor neurons "fire" for an "actor" and an "observer," uniting them "in a shared cognitive experience."[16] For Eastman, these findings show two things: (a) that the "the second-person standpoint"—where *I* address, and am addressed by, another as *you*—marks the "starting point" for the development of a human self;[17] and (b) that such "mimetic interaction" constitutes a person as an ever-changing "system of self-in-relation-to-another" throughout their lifespan.[18] In sum, a human person is not "self-directing," "self-contained," or "continuous," but rather "always in process," "constituted and remade interpersonally at the ground level," as their "relational matrices or networks" change.[19] Eastman interprets Pauline anthropology "through a second-person hermeneutical lens,"[20] explaining indwelling as a mirror neuron story: God enters human relational systems as Jesus, setting off a chain of mimetic interactions that, "like infant imitation," completely reconstitutes the identity of the disciples, Paul, Paul's converts (and so on), in each case replacing a toxic system-of-self-in-relation-to-sin with a new system-of-self-in-relation-to-God.[21] Just as the second-person relation between caregiver and neonate (in which the two smile and coo at one another) sets off "cognitive and emotional developments" in the baby,[22] so God's "mimetic assimilation to the human condition" sets off social and spiritual

[15] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 67, 66.
[16] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 69.
[17] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 149.
[18] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 144.
[19] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 64, 173, 146, 160.
[20] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 180.
[21] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 168.
[22] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 67.

changes in Jesus's followers.[23] In this way, Eastman proposes a theological concept of the human person as a "self-in-relationship."[24]

Two problems make Eastman's proposal for demystifying the agency of porous and vulnerable selves untenable. One, the science behind Eastman's second-person hermeneutics has flimsy support. Subsequent research has failed to replicate the findings of the neonatal imitation study, and empirical studies refuted mirror neuron theory long before Eastman's writing on the self-in-relationship, as a neuroscientist has pointed out in response to Eastman's work.[25] Two, if one (a) defines human persons in terms of the second-person standpoint and (b) defines the second-person standpoint in terms of specific human behaviors, it follows that (c) one excludes human beings who cannot perform the defining behaviors from the category of human persons.

These are not abstract concerns. It is largely thanks to the flimsy science of the second-person standpoint that (as I have shown elsewhere) Christian theologies often dehumanize autistic people.[26] For example, in texts that Eastman cites to support her second-person hermeneutics,[27] Andrew Pinsent and Eleonore Stump, following a predominant behavioral scientific theory of autism, explain autistic difference (difficulty with eye contact and social cues) as an inability to occupy the second-person standpoint (a deficit in experiencing oneself as a self and in seeing others as selves). This theory (I argued) is unfalsifiable, ergo untestable: its

[23] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 149.

[24] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 160.

[25] Michael Spezio, "Reframing Paul's Anthropology in Light of the Cognitive Sciences: Exercising Care in Interdisciplinary New Testament Scholarship," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40.4 (2018): 494-502. For Eastman's response to Spezio's criticisms, see Susan Eastman, "Divine Love and the Constitution of the Self," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40.4 (2018): 524-537.

[26] Olivia Bustion, "Autism and Christianity: An Ethnographic Intervention," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85.3 (2017): 653-681.

[27] Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2010). See Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, xvi, 15, 71, 83.

proponents assume that, when an autistic person describes their self-experience, their testimony is missing the appropriate underlying self-reflexive mental state that a neurotypical person's testimony would have; but the conceptual content of one's mental state is knowable to another only if one communicates that content. In other words, nothing to which a scientist can point warrants the distinction between real neurotypical self-experience and ersatz autistic self-experience. Still, Pinsent and Stump take the theory for granted, explicating the concept of faith in a personal God (where a believer feels God's presence) by contrasting it with autism (erroneously understood as an incapacity for such feelings). They thus exclude autistic people from the category of Christian faithfulness. Joanna Leidenhag has also noticed this problem, tracing it back to the so-called "turn to relationality" in twentieth-century theology, where Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and John Zizioulas, following Martin Buber, identified "a capacity for I-Thou relationships" as constitutive of human personhood.[28] Eastman acknowledges that making "relationality" central to personhood presents such a "danger."[29] Yet, to explain the "the intersubjective constitution of the self with other believers,"[30] Eastman uses the very science that promotes an unfalsifiable theory of autism as—and here I quote a book that Eastman cites favorably and frequently—an incapacity for "intersubjective experience," which is to say, a "deficit in" the sort of experience that "is vital for developing a self."[31] Eastman's concept of the self-in-relationship thus runs counter to her aim of resisting "any criterialism about qualifications for being a person."[32]

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[28] Joanna Leidenhag, "The Challenge of Autism for Relational Approaches to Theological Anthropology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 23.1 (2021): 111, 113.

[29] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 179.

[30] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 173.

[31] Peter Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought: Exploring the Origins of Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 205, 204. See Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 2, 15, 25, 39, 74, 76, 77, 78, 81, 93, 98, 109, 123, 168, 173.

[32] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 178.

Even though such conceptual inadequacies pervade theology that tries to draw on empirical findings for its concept of the human person, Simeon Zahl argues for the "constructive power" of using "concepts from the study of social psychology" in theological anthropology[33]—with the caveat that theologians should build their concepts of the human person on "social psychological research that makes more modest claims" than the neuroscientific research Eastman cites, "claims that are more established in part because they are easier to study empirically."[34] Two considerations animate Zahl's proposal of this "empirically-informed" methodology. The first is pneumatological: if the Spirit moves "in the real world, in real bodies, liberating people from concrete fears, circumstances, and sufferings," then the Spirit should have "practically recognizable" and psychologically testable "effects" on human desire, Zahl reasons.[35] Theology, then, should couch the Spirit's work in experiential rather than metaphysical language. Zahl's second consideration relates to the debate between individualistic versus communal soteriologies: to fault individualistic soteriologies for producing self-absorbed Christians, as some theologians do, is to draw inferences from the beliefs people ostensibly hold to their behaviors. For Zahl, such inferences render theology subject to "experiential analysis" and "empirical study." Hence, Zahl encourages theologians to turn to psychological research as they ask whether one can plausibly "expect" a particular Christian doctrine "to result in" a "practically recognizable" difference in a believer's behavior.[36] In a nutshell, Zahl advises theologians to become better readers of primary scientific literature.

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[33] Simeon Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism: Relationality and Social Cognition," *Modern Theology* 37.2 (2021): 360, 359.

[34] Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 356, 360.

[35] Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 233.

[36] Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 343.

I share Zahl's unease about abstract pneumatologies (on which more below). But an empirical approach cannot get theology closer to demystifying the agency of human individuals, for agency is a normative, not an empirical, phenomenon. Indeed, Zahl's suggestion that one can expect the conceptual resources of a religious tradition to show up in empirically notable ways, such that researchers could test the behavior-shaping effects of belief in a specific doctrine, is doubtful. Such tests not only imply that propositional attitudes can double as physical causes—that, in other words, mental states like believing, hoping, or knowing (which contain meanings about their objects and are thus normatively constrained by truth conditions) can give rise to spatiotemporal events like muscle contractions (which are not about anything). They also imply that researchers can reliably isolate the relevant causally efficacious proposition in any instance of ostensibly religious human behavior. Even taking for granted that propositions double as physical causes (which has not been established) and that philosophers and neuroscientists can explain this doubling (they cannot), researchers would effectively have to treat their informants as completely self-transparent in their stated reasons for acting.

But the fact remains that the kind research Zahl encourages theologians to undertake would need to be able to link a teleological chain of abstract reasoning (conceptually contentful beliefs) to a nonteleological sequence of material cause and effect (conceptually contentless neuronal firings and muscle contractions) without merely redescribing the former in terms of the latter; for whether such a redescription picks out the same thing is precisely the question that is at stake.[37] And there is "nothing" an affirmative answer to this question "could look like"; "nothing

[37] This is the so-called amazingly hard problem of mental causation. For an elegant summary of arguments relevant to the point I have just made, see Dan Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), especially chapters two and three.

could count as explaining" how conceptually contentful reasoning "*really* consists in" a non-conceptual physical event that "*causally intervenes* in the world."[38] That is because advancing or accepting any such physically reductionist explanation would require exactly those normatively constrained concepts that are supposedly eliminable on the reductionist view. Put another way: By simply entertaining the question of whether a redescription of reasoning in "exhaustively causal terms" picks out the same thing, one acts as if the answer is no, showing "a responsiveness to reasons as such."[39] Thus, it is plausible to think that one's *taking something to be true* is irreducible to *neuroelectrical events*, with the result that the relationship between one's beliefs and one's behaviors resists properly scientific description.

In the same way, human agency resists properly scientific description. Questions like, "What kind of agency is implied and exercised by a self that is not solely self-determining?"[40]—or, How does one figure out for oneself what one really cares about if sin possesses one's mind or Jesus remakes it?—concern what I have just called one's responsiveness to reasons as such. More specifically, they are questions about the structures and strategies of normative practical reasoning, that is, the logical forms that one's considerations for doing *this* rather than *that* can have. To be sure, such considerations are "practically recognizable" (to put it in Zahl's terms)[41] inasmuch as one (for example) voices them aloud, or another tries to infer them from what one ends up doing. But they are not (as Zahl would have it) empirically targetable (on the grounds that I rehearsed in the previous paragraph).[42] Therefore, demystifying human autonomy requires conceptual analysis. Zahl nevertheless encourages constructive theologians to look to empirical

[38] Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 105, 108 (emphasis in the original).
[39] Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*, 112-113.
[40] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 9.
[41] Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, 233.
[42] Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 343, 345, 346, 350, 352, 355, 356, 360.

psychological research for this conceptual analysis. For him, "concepts from the study of social psychology" will "give" constructive theologians a "more precise account of" human agency.[43]

Zahl's proposal, then, gets the methodological relationship between constructive disciplines and empirical ones exactly backward. Typically, scientists generate new scientific hypotheses by repurposing concepts from literature, religion, sport, and the like as metaphors to help them track physical phenomena. These conceptual metaphors (as many scientists and philosophers of science have noted)[44] play an integral role in the process of scientific discovery in roughly the following way. Metaphors suggest innumerable dimensions of comparison: "Juliet is the sun" invokes (among other things) warmth, sustenance, the primary source of brightness in life, and Juliet's easterly position relative to Romeo. Accordingly, when a scientist proposes a conceptual metaphor for some physical phenomenon (a gas as a group of randomly moving billiard balls) with one dimension of the analogy in mind (motion), scientists can explore remaining dimensions of the analogy (billiard balls collide nearly elastically) to see if they are borne out (using the known mechanics of billiard balls to make predictions about gas molecules).[45] Conceptual metaphors thus give scientists a shared provisional vocabulary for ongoing inquiry into physical phenomena that elude direct observation or conclusive explanation. But scientists *presuppose* these concepts when they ask empirical questions; they do not *analyze* the coherence of the concepts themselves. For example, to make "testable hypotheses" about "social information processing," the psychologists cited by Zahl presuppose concepts like

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[43] Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 359.

[44] See, for example, Mary Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966); Rom Harré, *The Principles of Scientific Thinking* (London: Macmillan, 1970); Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Alan Lightman, "Metaphor in Science," in *Science and the Human Spirit* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 49-64; Antje Jackélen, "What Theology Can Do for Science," *Theology and Science* 6.3 (2008): 287-303.

[45] Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science*, 8-10, 30; Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 114-115; Jackélen, "What Theology Can Do for Science," 295.

"relational schemas," "maps," and "scripts," defined as a person's "organized" mental "representations" of salient patterns in their past interpersonal experiences.[46] These psychologists have repurposed concepts from geography and theatre as metaphors to help them observe how human beings interpret information about their social interactions. For them, the task is not to analyze these concepts, much less to pick out the logical structure of agency. Yet research-guiding metaphors can mislead scientists (as when Herbert Spencer applied the biological concept of natural selection to economics and sociology)—which is why Andrea Sullivan-Clarke, a philosopher of science, recommends that scientists "admit the critical contributions of" outsiders to their discipline "whenever they rely on metaphor to guide their practice."[47] All this to say, advising theologians to "draw on scientific work as a set of concepts, models, and distinctions for thinking about" how a human individual is not a mere epiphenomenon of their indwelling agents or social environments, as Zahl does,[48] not only incorrectly identifies normative practical reasoning as empirically testable. It also construes the methodological relationship between science and theology as the reverse of what it should be, for constructive theologians (with their hermeneutic expertise) could help scientists (who lack comparable hermeneutic training) craft and critique their research-guiding conceptual metaphors.[49]

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[46] "Relational Schemas and the Processing of Social Information," *Psychological Bulletin* 112.3 (1992): 462, 467-468. This use of "schema" as a psychological term of art originates with the neurologist Henry Head, *Studies in Neurology* vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 605-606, via the psychologist F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1932), 199-202.

[47] Andrea Sullivan-Clark, "Misled by Metaphor: The Problem of Ingrained Analogy," *Perspectives on Science* 27.2 (2019): 164.

[48] Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 346, 360.

[49] I am not alone in suggesting this. See, for example, Jackélen, "What Theology Can Do for Science," 291-297; and Sarah Coakley, *Sacrifice Regained: Reconsidering the Rationality of Religious Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36-37.

2. Black-Box Pneumatologies

My goal in the chapters that follow is to construct a non-individualist account of the person that demystifies the practical reasoning of porous and vulnerable selves without making relationality an ableist criterion of personhood. I agree with Zahl that any such account built out of Christian materials should include the Spirit in a practically recognizable, albeit not (as I have just explained) empirically targetable, way. Yet herein lies the second problem with contemporary theological anthropologies when it comes to thinking human autonomy and human vulnerability as interconnected rather than opposite: they credit the Spirit's presence in communal rites with empowering individual believers to act freely, but they pass over in silence the question of how the Spirit works through these rites.

This silence about *how* the Spirit works is so common in contemporary pneumatology that theologians have begun to refer to the Spirit as theology's black box. Kimberley Kroll and Joanna Leidenhag point out that, within systematic theology, pneumatology suffers from *the problem of thirdness.* That is to say, because *Spirit* is such a vague name in contrast to the concrete identities of Father and Son, theologians either devolve into impersonal abstractions when they discuss the Spirit, or they allow other more concrete theological loci, such as Christology or ecclesiology, to eclipse the doctrine of the Spirit. Whether theologians fall into abstraction or allow other doctrines to take precedence over the Spirit, the questions that dominate their discussions are *What is the Spirit* and *Where is the Spirit*, questions that simply do not arise about the other members of the trinity. Kroll and Leidenhag observe that theologians prioritize these *what* and *where* questions over the question of *how* the Spirit does that which theology usually attributes to the Spirit, namely, uniting believers to God and transforming believers into the image of

Christ. So, for example, theologians might say that love is *what* the Spirit is, yet never discuss *how* the Spirit pours the love of God into human hearts. This silence on the question of how the Spirit does such work creates what Kroll and Leidenhag call *the black box of the Spirit*. A black box is a device whose "inputs and outputs" are observable but whose "internal workings," that is, the mechanisms or processes that yield its outputs, "remain unknown." As Kroll and Leidenhag put it, "when theologians are unsure as to how to think of God in relation to *x*, *y*, and *z*," they "proclaim vigorously, 'It is *through* the Spirit that *x*,' or 'The Spirit *in* me testifies to *y*,' or 'It is *by* the Spirit that *z*.'" But theologians do not explain the mechanics of the pneumatological *through*, *in*, or *by*. Instead of providing "constructive pneumatological doctrine," theologians leave these prepositions empty and unspecified. Thus, the Spirit is reduced to a kind of black box holding "much—dare we say *all*—theology together."[50] The Spirit as black box "functions as the place-holder for all the mysterious theological moves one makes when working out God in relation to Godself and God in relation to" God's "creation."[51] With respect to the question of how the Spirit empowers human believers to act freely, examples of black-box pneumatologies abound. I will discuss a few pertinent examples: three contemporary theologians (Frank Macchia, David Kelsey, and Volker Rabens) followed by Karl Barth on the relationship between divine grace and human freedom.

Frank Macchia deems "modernist" accounts of the "autonomous self" a "delusion," while insisting that soteriology needs a concept of "the self-in-relationship."[52] By Macchia's lights, the fallen world poses two basic threats to human personhood: a temptation to self-sufficiency, which

[50] Kimberley Kroll and Joanna Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit and the Problem of Thirdness," in *The Third Person of the Trinity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 38.

[51] Kroll and Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 40.

[52] Frank Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 269.

alienates the self from others, cutting off those social connections that expand one's sense of self; and a temptation to rely too much on others for one's sense of self, which assimilates the self into others, undercutting the "freedom from which" one can love another "unconditionally."[53] God's salvation of humanity is at once individual and communal in that the Spirit enables human believers "to resist either alienation from or assimilation into" one another, "opening them up" for "genuine" community.[54] But Macchia says nothing about *how* the Spirit opens a human believer up.

David Kelsey adds that (on the one hand) a human believer's faith is "not learned autonomously in solitary self-discipline," because "a purely private language of Christian faith" is impossible: the Spirit mediates faith to an individual believer through a faith community's "traditions of speech and action," which is to say, through "socially established cooperative activity" that forms the believer's "wants, preferences, values, and ways of construing" themself.[55] Yet human believers are (on the other hand) "unsubstitutable" in their "personal identities," capable of acting freely "in the power of the Spirit," and so "accountable in their onliness, one by one," for their actions.[56] For Kelsey, *how* the Spirit empowers human believers to act freely resists explanation, because the Spirit works eschatologically, not historically, transcending the human standpoint.[57]

Similarly, in a study of Paul's pneumatology, Volker Rabens argues that the Spirit empowers human believers at the level of the individual as well as the community: the Spirit

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[53] Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 269.

[54] Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 270, 271.

[55] David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 355, 342, 395. This claim anticipates the pneumatology that Kevin Hector constructs in *Theology Without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[56] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 343, 342.

[57] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 456.

confers different spiritual gifts on different individuals, who must use these gifts cooperatively for the purpose of growing closer to God and one another.[58] Therefore, a Christian community's "corporate identity as children of God … cannot be played off against the notion of the individual."[59] But Rabens finds it "difficult" "to fathom" the "mechanics" of "Spirit-designed intimate relationships" that "transform and empower people."[60] It is exactly these mechanics that I explain in the chapters to follow. If theology opens the black box of the Spirit, it can show that an individual human self is not a mere epiphenomenon of the social and cosmic realities that shape it.

Perhaps nowhere is the problem of allowing a black-box pneumatology to stand in for constructive theological explanation more evident than in contemporary readings of Karl Barth on the relationship between divine grace and human freedom. Contemporary theologians aiming to reconcile human freedom and divine grace frequently turn to Karl Barth for help.[61] Indeed, on their interpretation of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, noetic breakthroughs like conversion are (a) warranted by the grace of divine revelation alone yet also (b) a function of one's own noetic work—namely, trusting God's self-application of human concepts and conforming one's concept-use to God's. However, on Barth's account, this work of trusting/norming requires the Spirit to open one up and judge one's God-talk continually, which raises the question of *how* the Spirit

[58] Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 242.

[59] Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, 235.

[60] Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, 131; cf. Zahl, "Beyond the Critique of Soteriological Individualism," 340.

[61] See, for example, Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 125-142, 260-261; and Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 8.

opens one up without overriding one's reason. And Barth is frequently interpreted as prohibiting inquiry into the *how* of the Spirit.[62]

Barth's insistence that human faith is at once warranted by grace alone and a function of the believer's own mental effort looks like an epistemological paradox. Only God grants fallen human minds the power to know God.[63] Yet in knowing God, one retains one's noetic autonomy—one "make[s]" God's values one's "own"[64]—so much so that God commands (*gebietet*) one to give one's own self-expressive account (*wiedergeben*) of God to others.[65]

Barth's exposition of the seeming paradox is as follows. On the one hand, human knowledge of God cannot be a "product" of human cognition.[66] To suggest otherwise would presuppose an inherent similarity between God and God's creation—an *analogy of being*—on the basis of which human believers could infer things about God from looking at the world or into themselves. This style of reasoning about God reduces the Creator to an adducible "datum" in a series of creaturely data (sea, gravity, tide, wavelength, God, fluid dynamics, engineer, …).[67] The reality is that an "irrevocable otherness" separates Creator from creation.[68] Accordingly, human knowledge of God depends on "a miraculous work of the divine good-pleasure."[69] God in Jesus enters creation,[70] the Spirit opens the believer up "to receive" Jesus's "disclosure,"[71] and grace

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[62] George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 167; cf. George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 207-212.

[63] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter *CD*], 14 vols., ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), I/1, 109; II/1, 200; IV/2, 123.

[64] *CD* I/2, 859.

[65] Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (hereafter *KD*), 14 vols. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), II/1, 224.

[66] *CD* IV/2, 126.

[67] Barth, *CD* I/1, 162.

[68] Barth, *CD* II/1, 189.

[69] Barth, *CD* II/1, 184.

[70] Barth, *CD* II/1, 200.

[71] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 126.

impresses the believer's conceptual/linguistic incapacities into God's service.[72] In other words, "God alone" deserves the "credit" for rendering human thinking and speaking about God "true."[73] But on the other hand, the type of knowledge at issue requires mental effort on the part of human believers: it is the familiarity (*Erkenntnis*) and acknowledgement (*Anerkennung*) proper to a loving relationship,[74] a deep *understanding of* rather than a mere *knowledge that*—in a word, intimacy (*Vertraulichkeit*).[75] Thus, although the "miracle" of knowing God is not a "product" of human cognition,[76] neither does it abrogate, abolish, or alter "human cognition as such."[77] It entails neither hypnotism,[78] neither a "magical transformation" nor a "supernatural enlargement" of human reflective capacities.[79] Rather, God's self-revelation to human believers "takes place within the order of all human perception."[80] It involves the same social and mental processes on which the human reception of information ordinarily depends.

In sum, the *Church Dogmatics* at once attributes one's "awakening … to conversion" to "the omnipotence of God" and refuses to theorize one's dependence on grace as one's being determined by an alien cause—"like a spar of wood carried relentlessly downstream by a great river."[81] What entitles Barth to maintain simultaneously that (a) God alone deserves the credit for one's knowledge of God, because God alone grants one's "incapable" reflective capacities the

[72] Barth, *CD* II/1, 190, 199, 201.
[73] Barth, *CD* II/1, 213.
[74] Barth, *KD* II/1, 200-287.
[75] Barth, *KD* III/3, 323.
[76] Barth, *CD* I/1, 246.
[77] Barth, *CD* II/1, 181.
[78] Barth, *CD* I/1, 238-241; I/2, 266.
[79] Barth, *CD* II/1, 212.
[80] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 120.
[81] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 559, 578.

power to know God;[82] yet (b) in knowing God, one retains one's noetic autonomy—so much so that God commands one to give one's own self-expressive account of God to others?[83]

According to leading interpreters of Barth, his answer involves three steps.[84]

First, on Barth's view, God's freedom originates in Godself. Consequently, God can be moved, determined, and conditioned only by Godself,[85] on God's "own free initiative."[86] It is incorrect, then, to say that divine freedom in principle diminishes creaturely freedom, for such a claim presumptively places a condition on God's freedom.[87] It is better to say that God can allow Godself "to be directly affected or determined by what the creature does," as one commentator puts it, "so long as the creature's effect on God is part of the complex creative intention by which God determines Godself."[88] Moreover, the freedom that originates in Godself is the love-in-freedom of trinitarian being, which is to say that God in Godself gives Godself lovingly to others without losing God's freedom.[89] Therefore, God's loving gift of Godself to human creatures reflects, rather than diminishes, God's freedom. So, Barth reconciles divine grace with human freedom, first, by means of a doctrine of God that makes human noetic autonomy consistent with divine grace.

Second, the specific complex creative intention by which God determines Godself in a way that removes any conflict between divine grace and human freedom is, according to Barth,

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[82] Barth, *CD* II/1, 199.

[83] Barth, *KD* II/1, 224.

[84] For my summary of Barth's answer, I rely on Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988); John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 151-178; *Bruce* McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 167-200; Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics*, 125-147; and Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

[85] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 41.

[86] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 46.

[87] Barth, *CD* III/3, 130.

[88] Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, 97.

[89] Barth, *CD* II/1, 322.

God's decision from all eternity (as it were) to elect humanity for a covenant with Godself by giving Godself, in/as the God-human Jesus, to humanity.[90] For Barth, Jesus is both the object of election (or the *elected* human in whom God elects humanity) and the subject of election (or the *electing* God who eternally wills to be God-for-us).[91] In addition, Jesus remains fully human and fully divine in each of these capacities. This removes the conflict between divine grace and human freedom in two respects. One, because Jesus remains fully divine in his capacity as the *elected* human, the person who suffers the judgment of God on humanity's behalf is not merely human. On the contrary, God rejects Godself: God eternally determines not to have any mode of being apart from God's abandonment of Godself to torture for humanity's sake.[92] Ergo, Jesus's giving himself up to death on a cross "is the 'image of the invisible God.'"[93] It confirms God's very essence.[94] Divine grace, then, is characterized not by "autocratic self-seeking" but by "self-giving."[95] Two, because Jesus remains fully human in his capacity as the *electing* God, "the man Jesus is not a mere puppet moved this way and that by God."[96] Rather, Jesus freely chooses himself for God and for humanity. In doing so, Jesus "awakens" humanity "to genuine individuality and autonomy," a real freedom to "elect God in return."[97] To put it another way:

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[90] Barth, *CD* II/2, 94-194.

[91] Barth, *CD* II/2, 102.

[92] Leading interpreters of Barth disagree about whether God's eternal determination to elect humanity *constitutes* or *reflects* God's triunity (i.e., whether election is logically prior to the trinity or not). McCormack advocates the former position. An example of the latter is Paul Molnar, "Can the Electing God Be God Without Us? Some Implications of Bruce McCormack's Understanding of Barth's Doctrine of Election for the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 49.2 (2007): 199-222. This debate need not detain us, though; what matters for my purposes is simply that God has never had, nor will God ever have, any mode of being other than God-for-us, a point that holds either way, as Kevin Hector has shown, "Immutability, Necessity, and Triunity: Towards a Resolution of the Trinity and Election Controversy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65.1 (2012): 64-81.

[93] Barth, *CD* II/2, 123.

[94] Barth, *CD* II/2, 168; IV/2, 346.

[95] Barth, *CD* II/2, 178.

[96] Barth, *CD* II/2, 178.

[97] Barth, *CD* II/2, 178-179.

Jesus's life of prayer and surrender to God for the sake of redeeming humanity realizes true human autonomy; human believers realize the same true human autonomy when, following Jesus's example, they prayerfully obey God's command to love other human beings. So, Barth reconciles divine grace with human freedom, second, by means of a doctrine of election that makes God's abandonment of Godself to perdition central to the concept of divine grace, and Jesus's election of himself for God and for humanity central to the concept of human freedom.

Third, Barth's revision of the traditional *analogy of attribution* shows what human freedom looks like in practice.[98] In a traditional analogy of attribution, a feature proper to one object is ascribed derivatively to a second object. (For example, *health* is proper to horses; moist, pink gums and solid, round manure are *healthy* in that they are signs of a horse's health; and equine medicine is *healthy* because it conduces to a horse's health.) Traditionally, then, the analogy of attribution invokes the logic of the analogy of being, where one can infer something about a causally prior object from a causally dependent object. (Hasan Minhaj's sparkling and poignant stand-up routines, say, make me think that God must be similarly, if more excellently, delightful.) But Barth rejects the possibility of an intrinsic similarity between God's being and creaturely being (as we saw a moment ago). For that reason, he revises the analogy of attribution to replace analogies of being with an *analogy of faith*: one can know God, not by virtue of an "inborn" or "acquired" human "property,"[99] but by virtue of God's love—that is, God's revelatory and redemptive relationship with one. God in Jesus enters creation,[100] the Spirit opens one up,[101] and God thereby graciously lifts one—incapable reflective capacities and all—into relationship with

[98] Barth, *CD* II/2, 237-243.
[99] Barth, *CD* I/1, 244.
[100] Barth, *CD* II/1, 200.
[101] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 126.

God.[102] Just as Jesus makes human sinners righteous, so, too, he shows them how to think and talk about God.

Barth's revision of the analogy of attribution suggests that epistemic justification of a human believer's own distinctive understanding of God has the same basic structure as soteriological justification by grace through faith: I have to trust the promises about my salvation that God makes to me in Jesus; likewise, I have to trust that the way God uses human concepts to refer to Godself reveals something true and nontrivial about God, which means that I must obediently treat God's concept-use as normative for my own.[103] (Jesus likens himself to a mother hen protecting her chicks from a fox,[104] for instance, providing the standard of true patience, comfort, and shelter by which I judge how other uses of these concepts measure up.) Trusting God's self-application of human concepts—and conforming my own concept-use to God's—will not give me a fixed standard by which to warrant my beliefs or judge my concept-use permanently, though, Barth says. Nor does God's self-revelation via Jesus infuse human reflective capacities with a permanent power to know God, such that humanity could keep on knowing God, even apart from God's ongoing dealings with us. Quite the opposite: finite human believers encounter God in the changing sphere of history, and the meaning of a concept shifts as humans apply it in new contexts. As a result, the work of trusting/norming that God enlists (*anfordern*) human believers to do is sundry and never-ending[105]—requiring the Spirit to keep judging the God-talk of human believers; and believers, to reassess continually whether their God-talk measures up to the Spirit's judgment. So, Barth can claim, third, that (a) God alone deserves the

[102] Barth, *CD* II/1, 213-214.
[103] Barth, *CD* II/1, 239.
[104] Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34.
[105] Barth, *KD* II/1, 246.

credit for my knowledge of God, yet (b) I retain my noetic autonomy, because (a) the intimate relationship with me through which God reveals Godself to me (or revelation-relation for short) would not exist without God's initiating and sustaining it, yet (b) I must infer how the Spirit would have me think and speak about God in a particular context.

In a nutshell, Barth's answer to the question of how a human believer's noetic breakthroughs can be a function of the believer's own mental effort even though they are warranted by grace alone is, according to scholars of the *Church Dogmatics*, that (1) God's unconditioned freedom does not necessitate human unfreedom, so (2) Jesus, at once the subject and the object of election, enables one to choose freely to obey (3) God's mandate to conform one's God-talk to the Spirit's appropriation of human concepts. This answer is not yet complete, however, for the simple reason that it says relatively little about how the Spirit empowers believers to act freely. Trusting God's self-application of human concepts, conforming one's own concept-use to God's, receiving and responding to God's love—all of this, on Barth's analysis, requires the Spirit to open the believer up and continually judge the believer's God-talk.[106] But *how* does the Spirit open believers up without overriding human reason? And *what* entitles one to claim that the Spirit has opened one up?[107]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described two disciplinary shortcomings that have kept theological anthropologies from offering an adequate account of human agency and human personhood. First, when thinkers like Susan Eastman and Simeon Zahl ask how it is that selves who are not

[106] Barth, *CD* IV/2, 126.

[107] Hector does answer these questions in *Theology without Metaphysics*, albeit by putting Barth aside and turning to Schleiermacher: see p. 260.

self-determining nevertheless exercise agency, they mistake a normative question for an empirical one and rely on debunked science—the mirror neuron theory of action—to answer it. Second, thinkers like Frank Macchia, David Kelsey, Volker Rubens, and Barth devolve into pneumatological abstraction. They credit the Spirit with empowering human believers to act freely, then pass over in silence the question of how the Spirit so empowers believers.

By the lights of at least one scholar of the *Church Dogmatics*, the antinomy at the center of Barth's reconciliation of divine grace with human freedom—that human freedom depends on the Spirit's continual gift of grace—should remain "unresolved."[108] George Hunsinger warns against looking in Barth for "some principle that could render the How? of divine and human relatedness in mutual freedom comprehensible."[109] Trying to fit Barth's pneumatology into a "unified conceptual scheme" for the purposes of resolving the antinomy "will only result either in a false determinism" (emanationism) "or a false libertarianism" (synergism).[110] In short, on Hunsinger's reading of Barth, the miraculous work of the Spirit on the human believer defies description.[111]

To be sure, Barth *does* advise reticence about the human reception of the Spirit, on the grounds that describing it risks making the human side of the revelation-relation, rather than God's, the basis of a believer's trust in God.[112] On my reading, though, Barth does not prohibit such description altogether so much as he argues that it should follow certain rules. For Barth, "having" the Spirit means basing one's "confidence" on God Godself, not on one's "having God."[113] Therefore, "paradoxically enough," one can "understand" the revelation-relation "only

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[108] Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 302.
[109] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 214.
[110] Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 167, 302; cf. 163-165.
[111] Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 166.
[112] Barth, *CD* I/1, 465.
[113] Barth, *CD* I/1, 462.

in its divine aspect," not its human aspect: if one thought one understood how the human side of redemption works, one could use that understanding to certify human claims to the Spirit, replacing "the difficulty of faith" with a "sight" for which human believers must wait until the eschaton.[114] The *Church Dogmatics* recommends rules for keeping human talk about the Spirit in line with this eschatological deferral: one should not speak too speculatively about the Spirit;[115] one should take care never to treat the Spirit as identical with the human believer who receives the Spirit;[116] one may speak "non-eschatologically"—in the indicative mood—about the Spirit's work;[117] about the human reception of the Spirit, however, one may speak only in the subjunctive or optative mood.[118] Barth's rules for Spirit-talk accord with his general rules for statements about the relationship between divine grace and human freedom: neither confuse them, nor speak of them as competing or cooperating with one another, nor credit the "possibility" of one's knowledge of God to oneself.[119] All of this is to say, Barth advises caution, not silence, with respect to describing the Spirit's work on the human believer.

Furthermore, Barth himself brings the Spirit under a unified conceptual scheme—one that, I will argue in the next chapter, does supply a principle for getting clearer on the *how* of divine and human relatedness in mutual freedom, for getting closer to resolving the antinomy at the center of Barth's reconciliation of divine grace with human freedom, and (ultimately) for showing how such porous and vulnerable creatures as human beings exercise autonomy.

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[114] Barth, *CD* I/1, 462-463.
[115] Barth, *CD* I/1, 459.
[116] Barth, *CD* I/1, 454, 462.
[117] Barth, *CD* I/1, 464; IV/1, 649-650.
[118] Barth, *CD* I/1, 464-465. Thus, when Barth says that theologians can "give only a penultimate and not an ultimate answer" to the question of the Spirit's "How" (*CD* I/2, 233), I take him to be pressing the eschatological and optative/subjunctive character of any statement about the human reception of the Spirit, not to be ruling out such statements. I read Barth's comments about Spirit-talk at *CD* IV/1, 649-650 in the same way.
[119] Barth, *CD* I/1, 199-200.

Following Augustine,[120] Barth characterizes the Spirit as the *vinculum amoris*—the "togetherness," "communion," "bond of peace," "love," or "intra-divine two-sided fellowship" that Father and Son share.[121]

Kroll and Leidenhag would say that it should come as no surprise that Barth is guilty of having constructed a black-box pneumatology, for on their estimation, the Augustinian bond-of-love tradition of the Spirit "exemplifies the problem" of thirdness. As they understand it, the bond-of-love tradition sees the Spirit "not beside the Father and the Son as in a threefold repetition but … *of* the Father and the Son, derivative of them and *abstracted* from them into a transferable or shareable substance."[122] Father and Son get to be full-fledged lovers and givers; the Spirit is simply love and gift. Theorizing the Spirit as the relation between the Father and the Son makes the Spirit a personal identity within the Godhead in a completely different way than the other two divine personalities, say Kroll and Leidenhag: "unlike the Father and the Son, who are *defined* by their relations, the Holy Spirit simply *is* their relation and therefore cannot be the same kind of thing as the Father and the Son."[123] Because Augustine was mainly interested in the question *What is the Spirit*, not *How does the Spirit work*, "the Spirit is reduced" within Augustine's theological system "to a type of stuff" or "relation." The Spirit is "neither personal nor fully divine" but a "mere abstraction."[124] So reduced, the Spirit can easily stand in for actual theological explanation whenever questions concerning God's relation to creation come up: "one could just insert the term *spirit* for the relation and avoid thinking about how the Holy Spirit, being God, is in relation.[125]

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[120] Barth, *CD* I/1, 470.
[121] Barth, *CD* I/1, 469, 483; I/2, 241; II/2, 740; IV/3, 760.
[122] Kroll and Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 39 (emphasis in the original).
[123] Kroll and Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 39-40 (emphasis in the original).
[124] Kroll and Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 39-41.
[125] Kroll and Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 40.

Contrary to Kroll and Leidenhag, I show in the next chapter that Augustinian accounts of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son actually provide a principle for getting clearer on the *how* of divine and human relatedness in mutual freedom—a principle for picturing what it would look like to rely continually on the Spirit's gracious judgment for one's understanding of God without either ceding one's noetic autonomy to the Spirit or merely projecting oneself onto the Spirit. In short, not only can one appeal to the bond-of-love tradition to explain in concrete terms how the Spirit is a person in exactly the same sense as the other divine identities. One can also use this pneumatological tradition to explain the inner workings of the Spirit and thereby to render the relationship between grace and freedom—and by extension the agency of human beings in general—unmysterious. What's more, it is possible to construct a non-individualist account of personhood and autonomy on the basis of the bond-of-love tradition without making scientistic or ableist concepts such as the second-person standpoint necessary conditions of personhood and autonomy.

Onward, then, to my own constructive pneumatology.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SPIRIT AS PLURAL PERSON

Introduction

This chapter offers a new account of the Spirit. Augustinian pneumatologies—including those of Peter Lombard, Richard of St. Victor, Jonathan Edwards, and Karl Barth—characteristically view the Spirit as the *vinculum amoris* (or bond of love) between the Father and the Son. Many contemporary theologians blame this tradition for the supposed "poverty" of Western theological reflection on the Spirit.[1] Some of these criticisms can be easily dismissed: that the tradition is insufficiently biblical,[2] or that it depicts God as insular.[3] Yet an intractable problem remains: if the Spirit is a relationship between persons, how can the Spirit also be a person?[4]

Whether God is a trinity or a binity of persons matters to critics of the bond-of-love tradition for good reason. The Spirit lifts human believers into the trinity (says Lombard),[5]

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[1] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 107. See also Bernd Hilberath, "Identity and Self-Transcendence: The Holy Spirit and the Fellowship of Free Persons," *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. Bradford Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001) 265–266.

[2] Colin Gunton argues that the bond-of-love tradition lacks scriptural support, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 30-55. But the biblical scholar Susan Eastman finds a precursor of the bond-of-love tradition in Romans, "Oneself in Another: Participation and the Spirit in Romans 8," *"In Christ" in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael Thate, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Constantine Campbell (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 103-25.

[3] Colin Gunton criticizes the *vinculum amoris*—repurposing an argument from the very dogmatic treatise in which Richard defends it—for failing to introduce a third party into the trinity who could interrupt the *égoïsme à deux* of Father and Son, *Theology through the Theologians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 105-128. Gunton's criticism is thus guilty of *corrective projectionism*, a theological error described by Linn Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (London: Routledge, 2016). Cf. Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity*, 3.11-20, trans. Ruben Angelici (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 125-133. Robert Jenson argues similarly that, without the Spirit, the dynamic between the Father and the Son would devolve into a power struggle, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 [hereafter *ST*] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 146-161

[4] See (e.g.) Robert Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2.3 (1993): 296-304.

[5] Peter Lombard, *The Sentences Book 1: The Mystery of the Trinity*, 1.10.2.3, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007), 60.

thereby instilling holy dispositions in them (Edwards adds).[6] Attributing this work to an impersonal power, rather than a person who loves freely, mischaracterizes grace as a causal process that happens to one, like skin cells repairing DNA damage after a sunburn, rather than God's unwavering commitment to one; it makes the Spirit the first step in this sequence of cause-and-effect; and it invites worries about which subsequent steps lead to one's salvation: one can either passively observe one's fading sunburn, or one can stimulate the healing process with expensive serums. Depersonalizing the Spirit is a problem, in other words, because it encourages works-righteousness.[7]

In the following pages, I argue that the Spirit is a *plural person*, a special kind of real and irreducible group agent supervening on close friends. My goal in making this argument is less to defend the truth of claims about the status of the Spirit in the eternal life of God and more to create a model that helps theologians think about how the Spirit works in the economy of grace.[8] Ironically, critics of the bond-of-love tradition allege that it leaves the economic Spirit without much of a job—namely, informing humanity about Jesus's more important task of saving humanity.[9] On the contrary, my model explains not only what the Spirit does (the Spirit indwells human beings, regenerates them, and incorporates them into the trinitarian life) but also how the Spirit does it (through friendship with them).

To call my pneumatology a model is not, of course, to find it untrue. Theologians, like scientists and philosophers, use models to interpret the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar—as when Anselm speaks of God as a feudal lord, or Catherine of Siena speaks of the Spirit as a wet

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[6] Jonathan Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 197.

[7] Robert Jenson, "The Holy Spirit," in *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 125-134.

[8] Hence, I will not discuss the *filioque* controversy.

[9] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 116-118.

nurse.[10] I share Sallie McFague's critical realism about the truth of such theological models: all models are incomplete and relative, but a good model discovers something about reality that prior models obscured, providing a new conceptual scheme that illuminates further dimensions of the human experience of God's love.[11] My pneumatology succeeds if it accomplishes these things.

The argument has five parts. In part one, I describe the difficulty of maintaining the Spirit's personhood within the constraints of the bond-of-love tradition. Part two outlines a resource for solving this problem: plural person theory. In parts three and four, I develop this solution into a new model of the immanent and economic Spirit, respectively. Part five traces out some ecclesiological implications of the model.

But first, a warning about the type of claims I make in what follows and the standards to which they are (and are not) liable: My argument is constructive. I therefore move seamlessly and unapologetically between various exponents of the bond-of-love tradition—premodern (Augustine, Lombard, Richard), early modern (Edwards), and modern (Barth)—building my model of the Spirit from clues in their work. And while I care about doing justice to this tradition, I do not concern myself with questions of authorial intent or historical context. Instead of trying to get Augustine-as-subject-matter right (or Barth, and so on), I prefer to get Augustine's subject matter right (and Barth's, and so on). Nor, then, do I linger over the differences between these thinkers, such as the preoccupation with divine simplicity that drives Augustine to model the trinity on the human mind, versus the preoccupation with divine beauty that inclines Edwards to a social model of the trinity. I construct a new model of the Spirit out of overlaps between their

[10] Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 292.
[11] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 137-144.

approaches to satisfy my own preoccupation with *divine non-competitiveness*, the idea that intimacy with God enriches rather than erodes human agency, and that the closer a human creature's relationship with their creator is, the brighter that creature's haecceity shines.[12] One could thus accept my model as an adequate pneumatology without accepting it as an adequate reading of the bond-of-love tradition, just as one could accept it as an adequate reading of the bond-of-love tradition without accepting it as an adequate pneumatology.

1. Where the Spirit Went

"Whence are you bringing in upon us this strange God?"

—Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 31, "On the Spirit"[13]

The Spirit puzzles Christian theologians. To Augustine, the puzzle looks something like this: God is one being, three persons. Three biblical characters who freely relate to one another, each in a unique and irreducibly personal way, are one divinity who indivisibly interacts with the world, creating, redeeming, and indwelling humanity from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (as the old trinitarian formula goes). Yet as God acts inseparably in the economy of salvation, God reveals to human beings something of God's triune life, bringing each of the three characters to the fore at a different point in the divine-human drama of salvation history. Hence, in scripture, only the Father sends the Son into the world (1 Jn 4:14), disclosing that only the Father begets the Son in God's triune life. God-talk, then, permits two kinds of predication. On the one hand, *substantial* properties describe God's being, meaning theologians may ascribe them

[12] Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 2-9.

[13] *The Theological Orations*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Hardy and Cyril Richardson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 194.

to all three persons: God is simply great, not three great beings. A *relational* property, on the other hand, distinguishes one of the personal identities from the other two, meaning theologians may not ascribe such a person-defining property to the trinity: neither Father nor Spirit is begotten, so a theologian cannot call the trinity *Son*; neither Son nor Spirit begets, so a theologian cannot call the trinity *Father*. The puzzle is that, according to scripture, "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24), ergo theologians may call the trinity *spirit*—but *Spirit* also names a personal identity in the trinity. What distinguishes the Spirit relationally if the trinity is spirit substantially? It is like trying to specify three irreducibly personal roles in a partner dance: lead, follow, and dancing. What could differentiate *dancing* from the other roles, given that the *lead* and the *follow* are dancing together?[14]

Augustine recommends the following answer: Unlike the names *Father* and *Son*, the name *Spirit* betokens no identifying relation of origin. Scripture, though, describes this biblical character as the Father's and the Son's gift to humanity (Acts 8:20), the living river of God's love that regenerates believers (Jn 7:37-39), carrying them into the triune life itself (1 Jn 4:16). That the gift of this loving healer (Rom 5:5) comes not only from the Father (Jn 15:26) but also from the Son (Jn 20:22) attests to the Spirit's personal identity within God's triune life: the Spirit, given rather than begotten, is the Father's and the Son's mutual love. Using a name for this personal identity that also applies to Father and Son therefore makes sense, Augustine concludes. In the Spirit's case, a substantial predicate may double as a relational one, because *dancing* commits *lead* and *follow* to a gift unmistakable for either giver, a communion so unspeakably joyful that onlookers cannot help but join in.[15]

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[14] Augustine, *The Trinity*, 5.1-7.12, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2015), 189-236; and and Augustine's Letter 11, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), 228–230.

[15] Augustine, *The Trinity*, 5.12, 199; 15.27-49, 421-441.

Augustine's answer worries theologians from East and West alike. To this day, Eastern Christianities reject it. If (as Augustine claims) the Spirit originates from the Father as well as the Son, the uniqueness of the Father's role as the originator of the other characters is compromised. Augustinians can get around this difficulty (Eastern thinkers note) only by attributing the Spirit's origin not to the Father and Son as unique persons but to their common being—which means construing the Spirit not as a gift but as an epiphenomenon of an impersonal process.[16]

Western critics, for their part, object that Augustine's answer gives the Spirit no "personal distinctiveness."[17] It remains unclear to them how *dancing* is not merely interchangeable with *lead* plus *follow*. The most trenchant version of this criticism comes from Robert Jenson. "How," Jenson wonders, "can the Spirit be the love between the Father and the Son and still be a personal identity along with the Father and the Son?"[18] If (says Jenson) theologians can identify the triune persons only by relations of origin, then theologians cannot tell the Spirit apart from the others, for "a son of a father anyway subsists as other than the father" (and vice versa), whereas "the spirit of someone does not anyway subsist as other than someone."[19] On Jenson's telling, the problem comes to a head in Barth's theology, which portrays God's part in the divine-human salvation-historical drama "as eternally actual in God."[20] Barth's system thus removes the gap between God-in-Godself and God-with-humanity. As a result, interpretation of the immanent trinity governs analysis of God's triune economic activity to a greater degree than Western theologies usually allow—an approach wherein any fuzziness about who the immanent Spirit is leads to fuzziness about what the economic Spirit does. Because Barth follows

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[16] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 57-58.

[17] Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 51.

[18] Jenson, *ST*, 158.

[19] Jenson, *ST*, 148.

[20] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 299.

Augustine's obnubilating interpretation of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son,[21] the Spirit disappears in Barth's analysis of the salvation drama. In short, on Jenson's reading of Barth's theology, Father and Son address one another from all eternity as *someone*, signing a pact together to love Jesus in the same way they love one another; the Spirit is their pact, *something* rather than *someone*, not a signatory like them. That Barth sees the immanent Spirit as the eternal principle on which the Father and the Son commit themselves to Jesus rather than one of the persons so committed effectively prevents him from assigning the economic Spirit a prominent role. Barth instead renders the Spirit an impersonal capacity of the other characters—the power with which the Father raises the Son,[22] or the power with which the Son unites the Christian community to himself.[23] "How," Jenson asks, "is the Spirit at once one who has power and that power itself?"[24]

One could reply with Eastern theologians that the Spirit ought to stay anonymous—that (to quote Eugene Rogers) theologians like Jenson "seek to know too much," for the Spirit's facelessness is a "virtue" rather than a "flaw." The virtue (Rogers contends) is twofold. For one thing, human persons are fundamentally opaque to one another—they elude reduction "to a function or formula," and they experience the "very attempt" at such explanation as an "insult." The Spirit is therefore "inaccessible not because" the Spirit "*lacks* the qualities of a person" but "because" the Spirit "*has*" them. For another thing, appreciating the Spirit's anonymity is an

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[21] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter *CD*], 14 vols., ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), 1/1, 470.

[22] Barth, *CD* 4/3.2, 502.

[23] Barth, *CD* 4/3.2, 759.

[24] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 304. Nor does Barth's preference for referring to the trinitarian identities as modes rather than persons get him off the hook—for, as Jenson explains, Barth "nevertheless speaks freely of the personal immanent intercourse of the Father and the Son," while "the Spirit is condemned by" Barth's Augustinian approach "to remain a *modus* only," 301-302. For a favorable assessment of Barth's mode-talk, see Bruce McCormack, "Trinity," *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth*, ed. Paul Dafyyd Jones and Paul Nimmo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 227-245.

apophatic practice that, purifying the mind, leads one to the only place where one can experience the Spirit's personhood—into God's triune life itself.[25]

Jenson dismisses this sort of reply as "mere resignation."[26] Rather than simply declaring the Spirit's relation of origin anonymous, Jenson's solution to the problem of the Spirit's personhood is to throw out relations of origin altogether and distinguish the triune personal identities narratively, inferring these intra-trinitarian narrative relations from the "plot lines" of the Gospels.[27] What Jenson comes up with is a veritable docusoap, a season of *Real Housewives of the Trinity* in which a stepmother Spirit empowers an emotionally distant father to show his kid more affection: the Spirit (writes Jenson) "liberates" the unfathomable Father "from himself" and teaches the Father "to be fatherly" and to love his Son "actively"; the Spirit helps the Son recognize that his Father is not just the deity's inscrutable origin but also an "available and loveable Father."[28] Jenson identifies the Spirit, in other words, as the divine person who intentionally "liberates Father and Son to love each other."[29] The trouble with this solution is that, in tasking the Spirit with fixing the Father's and the Son's "deficient" love, it projects human fallibility onto the trinity.[30]

Nor does the Eastern solution advocated by Rogers succeed. My aim in this chapter is to construct a pneumatology that illuminates further dimensions of the human experience of God's love. Accordingly, I sympathize with Rogers's claim that one can experience the Spirit's personal

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[25] Eugene Rogers, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 27, 24, 53-54 (emphasis Rogers's), 28, 46. For another recent defense of the Spirit's anonymity, see Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 227–232.

[26] Jenson, *ST*, 148.

[27] Jenson, *ST*, 158.

[28] Jenson, *ST*, 156, 158.

[29] Jenson, *ST*, 156.

[30] Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 75. Jenson's solution is thus an instance of what (as I noted above) Linn Tonstad terms *corrective projectionism*.

identity only by entering God's triune life through intimacy with the Spirit. But neither this intimacy nor, consequently, the Spirit's personhood completely resists characterization. After all, when human persons deal with one another, they give one another some inkling of who they are. A pattern emerges—not exhaustive, occasionally deceptive, nevertheless distinctive. What's more, loving a human person typically involves discovering the pattern of their personal identity at increasing granularity, which is to say (with apologies to W. H. Auden) intensity of attention.[31] And it involves refreshing one's sense of their personal identity when they change (as human beings tend to do) rather than scrupulously emphasizing their opacity. It is not much different with the Spirit, and despite all the arguments against the bond-of-love tradition, there are intimations within it of why. Below, I clarify and expand on these intimations with the aid of plural person theory, the philosophical insight that the mutual love between friends is not merely an interpersonal connection, but a person.

I need a rough-and-ready account of personhood as it applies to individuals, though, before I can explain why friendships count as persons, too. And to resolve the problem of the Spirit's personhood via a theory about human personhood, I need a plausible account of personhood that fits human beings and the trinitarian identities alike. For most contemporary theologians,[32] such considerations rule out nineteenth-century expressivist theories of interiority, according to which a person consists of a ghostly inner dimension (a center of immediate conscious experiences) plus an external dimension that communicates the inner ghost (through speech and action). Positing three such centers of consciousness in the Godhead is tantamount to

[31] W. H. Auden, *The Complete Works of W. H. Auden: Prose and Travel Books in Prose and Verse 1926-1938*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 43.

[32] For an exception, see Gisbert van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism: A Discussion of Some Recent Theological Criticisms," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.3 (2014): 347.

tritheism. Expressivist theories also misconstrue human personhood. Identifying a human being's so-called real self with their inner episodes, these theories turn human beings inside out. In actuality, one can know one's own inner states only from the outside in, so to speak, using public concepts.[33] Furthermore, the self to whom certain thoughts and impressions appear as *mine* is not itself one of these inner episodes; neither is it the totality of these episodes; nor is it a highlights reel thereof. Like an eye and its visual field, the self is a condition for the possibility of the mineness of one's consciousness, not an item that shows up within it. It is a transcendental dimension, not an inner dimension symbolized by an external one.[34] Thus, as Phillip Cary points out, one knows one's closest friends not by piercing through their outer shells to their "inmost" ghosts (there are no such ghosts), but by "letting" oneself "be the object of a lifetime of" their "loving."[35] Likewise, human beings know God not by piercing through the economic skin to the immanent self, but by experiencing God's love. To put all this in terms of the bond-of-love tradition: Whatever being drawn by the Spirit into God's triune fellowship might mean, it cannot mean plumbing the fathomless depths of the immanent trinity. Before I can continue, then, I need a non-expressivist conceptuality of personhood suitable for describing human individuals as well as the trinitarian identities.

One such defensible and sufficient option, the conceptuality I use in the pages that follow, has its roots in the bond-of-love tradition, specifically, in Richard of St. Victor—an admittedly Kantified Richard (or Victorine Kant). Richard's dogmatic treatise on the trinity defines a *person*

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[33] This is one upshot of the Myth of Jones with which Wilfrid Sellars kills the Myth of the Given in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[34] This is one way of reading Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, 5.631-5.641, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1974), 57-58; cf. J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 185–198.

[35] Phillip Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner," *The Thomist* 56.3 (1992): 396, 399.

as an absolutely unsubstitutable *someone* (as opposed to a fungible *something*),[36] a unique *who* (rather than a generic *what*) with their own values, loves, preferences (and so on).[37] Persons come in two kinds, human and divine.[38] Every *someone* particularizes that *something* or *what* which is common to their kind: for human persons, humanity; for triune persons, divinity. *Humanity* is finite, dependent, and composite, consisting of a "corporeal" element and an "incorporeal" one,[39] or (put in a more Kantian vein) an empirical level of description (physical causality) as well as an ineliminable normative one (the logical space of reasons).[40] *Divinity*, by contrast, is infinite, unoriginate, and non-composite.[41] One does not have to understand *what* divinity is to know *who* God is, any more than one needs a medical understanding of human anatomy to befriend a human being.[42] But by Richard's lights it should be clear that worrying about tritheism is a category mistake, for on his analysis of personhood, the number of *somethings* particularized by *someone* (on the one hand) and the number of *someones* who particularize *something* (on the other) are logically independent.[43] A human *someone* particularizes two *somethings*: the normative element and

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[36] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.7, 147-148. I gloss Richard's notion of *incommunicable existence* or *incommunicable property* as *absolute unsubstitutability*, a term from David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 387-391. Human beings are (in principle) *substitutable* with respect to roles they fill (e.g., teacher, surgeon, actor), but (always) *unsubstitutable* with respect to their individual identities (i.e., the unequivocal sense in which a particular human being's life can be ascribed only to them). Richard's *incommunicable existence* sounds expressivist, but it means something more like *absolute unsubstitutability*.

[37] This is my way of construing Richard's "individual existence of rational nature," or "singular mode of rational existence," *On the Trinity*, 4.23-4.24, 164-165.

[38] Richard sets aside the theatrical origin of the term *person* (where it meant the mask actors wore to represent characters in a play), together with its use in early trinitarian discourse (as a metaphor for the triune identities). Instead, he offers a constructive definition of *person* that balances the "technical" theological use of the word with the "common" or "unlearned" use (which by Richard's time had lost its theatrical connotation and could refer to a human being *simpliciter*)—thus providing an account of personhood applicable to human beings as well as the trinitarian identities, *On the Trinity*, 4.1, 141-142; 4.4, 144; 4.5, 145-146.

[39] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.10, 149-150.

[40] For an elegant defense of the ineliminability of the normative, see Dan Arnold, *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 48-115.

[41] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.16, 155-156.

[42] Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism," 399-400.

[43] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.8-4.9, 148-149.

the empirical element. Three divine *someones* particularize the selfsame *something*: the Father "possesses" divinity "by," "from," or "according to" paternity; the Son, according to filiation; and the Spirit (as I argue in this chapter), according to friendship.[44] Put another way, "three characters are one God."[45]

Richard's conceptuality of personhood strikes me as especially compelling, not just because it renders human and divine personhood explicable in non-expressivist terms, but because it does so without excluding any human beings from personhood. Richard, that is, treats *person* as a practical concept the significance of which arises in a community of recognition. When one sees a blurry shape in the distance, Richard writes, one asks "*what* is that," and the appropriate answer is on the order of *barn*, *tumbleweed*, or *smoke*; but if the shape approaches near enough for one to see it is a human being, one always asks "*who* is that," never "*what*," and the appropriate answer is on the order of "Matthew or Bartholomew."[46] Simply put, in their concrete dealings with one another, human beings regard one another as someones rather than somethings. All someones are persons, so all human beings are persons—not only neurotypical adults, but also infants, young children, patients in comas, and human beings with severe cognitive disabilities. To insist otherwise locates personhood in the wrong place, in a generic *what* (rationality or self-consciousness) rather than a unique *who* (Matthew or Bartholomew, say, whether they particularize humanity in an eminently rational way or not).[47]

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[44] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.19, 158.

[45] Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 22. Richard need not have set aside the "ancient literary analysis" with which early Christians interpreted the Gospels while developing a trinitarian conception of God; his view is consistent with it.

[46] Richard, *On the Trinity*, 4.7, 147 (emphasis Richard's).

[47] Regarding the claim that all human beings are persons—which deserves more attention than I can give it here—see Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference Between 'Someone' and 'Something*,' trans. Oliver O'Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 236-248. I briefly revisit this claim in chapter four, section two.

This, then, is roughly how I will use the words *person* or *self* in my pneumatology: an absolutely unsubstitutable someone with a say, however nascent or diminished, in defining what matters to them—with, that is, a capacity for *autonomy*. This usage explains why a doll is not a person and the child who loves it is: the doll does not particularize humanity or divinity; it is a replaceable piece of porcelain or plastic on which the child can project preferences but which lacks any preferences of its own.[48] With this concept of personhood at my disposal, I can now outline plural person theory, a resource for establishing the Spirit's personhood within the constraints of the bond-of-love tradition.

2. Plural Person Theory

To fault bond-of-love pneumatologies for dissolving the Spirit's personality in God's impersonal substance assumes that terms like *person*, *self*, or *autonomy* apply only to individuals. A single human being is a person, an absolutely unsubstitutable someone with a say in their identity. But the idea that two or more human beings could together be one absolutely unsubstitutable someone is just a metaphor (so the assumption goes), a legal fiction that (e.g.) gives companies the right to free speech. By the same token, if love is the generic divinity particularized by each triune personality (1 Jn 4:16), then trying to identify one of those personalities as the love between the other two cannot get a theologian far. However, the philosopher Bennett Helm argues that this individualist assumption gets personhood wrong.

[48] One could, however, expand this account to include non-human animal and synthetic kinds of personhood—an expansion that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Helm's theory warrants more explanation than I can provide in this chapter. The following outline, though, should suffice for rethinking the *vinculum amoris*.[49]

On Helm's analysis, the preconception that a person must be an individual prevents philosophers from adequately explaining what Aristotle calls a *friendship of virtue*, or what Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman (describing their own friendship) call a *big friendship*—an intimate yet expansive bond in which two or more human beings make one another into "another self" as they "tell a joint story about" the kind of life they value living together, co-create this life, and thus feel "inextricable" from one another.[50] Philosophers tend to describe friendship in passive terms—as a mirror revealing one's character or a lockbox containing one's secrets.[51] But the reciprocal, dynamic, and enduring emotional attachment typical of big friendship indicates to Helm that a group of close friends can feel emotions, form judgements, value things, define and revise those values, and act as a group not just *distributively*, that is, as separate individuals all at once, but also *corporately*, that is, as a *plural person*, a nonmetaphorical and irreducible agent capable of *joint autonomy*. (I italicize first-person plural pronouns in what follows to denote plural persons.) According to Helm, close friends forge such a plural person, distinct from their individual identities, when each of *us* loves *us* in the manner of self-love, determining the kind of life worth *our* living, reliably sensing what matters to *us*, and pursuing it for *our* sake, the same way an individual figures out their own priorities and tries to measure up to them not least because they value the irreplaceably particular person they are. Helm argues, in

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[49] My outline of plural person theory in this section relies heavily on Bennet Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), as well as Bennett Helm, "Plural Agents," *Noûs* 42.1 (2008): 17–49.

[50] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a30-33, trans. W. D. Ross, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol 2., ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1843; Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman, *Big Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 41.

[51] For examples of such accounts, see Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 255-261.

other words, that loving oneself is key to being someone with a say in defining what matters to one, and that getting clear on the role of self-love in the personhood and autonomy of individuals also clarifies how a bond of love between multiple individuals can be a real person.

To begin, then, with individual persons: their agency characteristically involves emotions and desires, not just goals and strategies for achieving them, Helm notes. Hence, a chess-playing computer like Deep Blue employs only true-false reasoning (is Be5 a legal move?) and means-end reasoning (will Be5 lead to a win?), but a person like Gary Kasparov additionally employs reasoning about import (is chess fun? why does winning matter? should I retire?).[52] Something has import to one if one reliably responds to it with certain conceptually interlinked emotions, desires, and judgments suggesting one finds it worth one's attention and action—if, that is, one feels (or would feel) the relevant emotions, has (or would have) the relevant desires, and does (or is ready to do) the relevant actions, in actual (or counterfactual) situations affecting it. So, if I care about my prayer plant (for example), I will place it in bright indirect sunlight, mist it regularly, desire to keep my cat from eating it, and feel delighted when its leaves fold up at night, pleased when it grows, sad when it droops (and so on); the plant (in Helm's terminology) is the *focus* of a pattern of *felt evaluations* and *evaluative judgments* on my part. Consistently failing to feel, desire, or do what the relevant circumstances call for would, then, discredit my belief that I care about the plant (although an isolated failure, like static in a mostly clear radio broadcast, would not). Likewise, reasoning about import involves a practical mastery of what matters, not a discursive understanding of it, so caring about something does not presuppose the ability to articulate that care, and the focus of one's cares can remain implicit in the pattern of emotions and desires

[52] This example is not meant to rule out the possibility of a computer that reasons about import and therefore counts as a person.

constituting its import to one (similar to how one can take a basic derivative without being able to explain what calculus has to do with real life or why its rules work).

Of the things that have import to one, some are more central to who one is, meaning one finds them indispensable to the kind of life worth one's living. With respect to these deeper *personal values*, the structure of practical reasoning about import differs slightly: the focus of the pattern of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments constituting one's personal values is ultimately oneself. More simply, a commitment to the import of such values is a commitment to one's personal import. Thus, I might not care very intensely about owning houseplants, while I might view writing and rock climbing as central elements of the kind of life worth my living. In that case, whatever I feel, desire, believe, or do for the sake of writing or climbing, I also feel, desire, believe, or do out of solicitude for my well-being as *this* person, a writer and a climber, which is to say, as part of loving the irreplaceably particular self I am. That the pattern of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments structuring personal values is reflexive, only subfocused on the values yet ultimately focused on oneself, is evident from the degree to which one's sense of self is at stake in any emotions belonging to the pattern—such as (to continue my example) feeling pride when I write a fine poem (or regret when I procrastinate) and self-assurance when I choose to climb a new route (or self-doubt when I bail). Each pattern of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments constituting a personal value marks a specific element of the kind of life worth one's living. But all such patterns, because of their common focus on oneself, connect in a wider coherent network of priorities that (static notwithstanding) constitutes one's *evaluative perspective* or personal identity. Therefore, one does not sense the import of a single personal value in isolation from whatever else one values. Rather, whether putting off my writing calls for guilt, or taking on

a new climbing project calls for stoke, depends on the context of these values in my overall evaluative perspective.

Indeed, loving oneself—upholding one's identity as *this* person—requires figuring out how to proceed when one's multiple values put conflicting demands on one's attention: Do I take a break from climbing to meet a writing deadline? Do I temper my long-term writing goals to make more time in my life for climbing? One settles such conflicts within one's evaluative perspective. Of course, as one encounters new things to care about (including values that imply one was previously wrong about what is important in one's life), one's evaluative perspective evolves. What ties this evolving network of priorities to the same person is self-love: the ongoing (often implicit) practical reasoning that at once creates and reflects the import one has to oneself. One's personal identity is thus (to use Helm's analogy) like a house that one is constantly remodeling according to an evolving blueprint. And the apparent circularity of Helm's account, where personal identity depends on self-love, is not vicious but holistic, since in a developing person, the capacity for autonomy or defining what matters (on the one hand) and the reflexive patterns of emotions and desires constituting an identity (on the other) emerge simultaneously. So much by way of explaining Helm on individual personhood and autonomy. I have spent considerable time unpacking these concepts so I can dispel the assumption that a person must be an individual, for (as I will now show) what is relatively uncontroversial at the level of individuals is also true of certain groups, namely, big friendships.

Among such friends, patterns of emotions, desires, and judgments with a common focus on *us* interlink in a network of priorities constituting a joint personal identity, Helm contends. *Our* love of *us* transforms some of what each of *us* cares about individually into things *we* care about for *our* sake, such that each of *us* reliably senses the import of these things, not from separate

individual evaluative perspectives, but from one joint evaluative perspective in which *we* determine the kind of joint life worth *our* living. Each of *us* tells and answers to *our* story (and sees the rest of us as telling and answering to *our* story) out of solicitude for *our* well-being as *this* plural person. Neither the (ongoing) joint story nor the (evolving) joint self precedes the other: as *we* grow closer, *our* capacity for joint autonomy and the reflexive patterns of emotions and desires constituting *our* identity emerge simultaneously and holistically (again, static notwithstanding). That said, a plural person's reasoning about import, like an individual's, involves a practical mastery of what matters, not a discursive understanding of it. Consequently, the self-love that ties this evolving network of priorities to the same plural person does not require keen powers of articulation. *Our* love of *us* is implicit in the interlinking patterns of emotions, desires, and actions that at once create and reflect the import *we* have to each of *us*. For example, as the *Confessions* recount, Augustine and a few "like-minded" friends, including his mother Monica, "made a holy agreement to live together." During this time, Augustine and Monica grew so close that "there had been but one life, woven out of mine and hers." *Our* affection for *us* instilled in *us* a joint sensitivity to what would conduce to *our* well-being or harm it: *we* felt disappointment when war foiled *our* plans to return to Hippo, joy when *our* "colloquy" on "the eternal life of the saints" turned into a joint mystical experience of it, discontent when *our* beatific vision ended and "*we* left the first-fruits of *our* Spirit captive there." Crucially, the joint evaluative perspective from which a plural person senses the import of things does not destroy anyone's individual evaluative perspective. A plural person's members are also individuals with lives outside the friendship. Part of *our* evaluative perspective is *our* joint sense of the place of this plural person in each member's life relative to their other priorities. A member of a plural person might even feel one way about something by their own lights and at the same time feel differently about it by *our* lights—as did

Monica, who on her own "no longer" took "pleasure" in any of life's meretricious "charms," including her colloquy with Augustine, yet as one of *us* felt *our* joy in it. Monica's individual evaluative perspective calls for world-weariness, which she expresses to Augustine; *ours* calls for excitement, which she also displays in this scene, panting and sighing as one of *us*. Joy, here, is a joint emotion, *ours*, not hers.[53] The upshot is that a plural person is irreducible to the individuals on whom the plural person supervenes.

A friendship need not be exceptionally harmonious to count as a plural person, just as an individual need not be exceptionally unified to count as a person. No individual person is always at one with themself; their multiple values put conflicting demands on their attention (as I explained above). That these conflicts take place in a single skull does not necessarily make resolving them any easier than it would be for a plural person. Witness Augustine's raging argument with himself over his carnal desires.[54] The operative question for whether a group of friends counts as a plural person, then, is not how frequently they face conflicts, but how they resolve them. Do they bargain from separate evaluative perspectives and seek one-by-one to maximize what is good for *me*? Or do *we* grapple with different interpretations of what matters to *us* until *we* find what feels right for, or meshes with, *us*? A plural person does the latter, settling conflicts in essentially the same manner as an individual person, within one joint evaluative perspective, through joint autonomy. For example, Sow and Friedman—the aforementioned coiners of the term *big friendship*—together form a plural person who values "shine theory" ("I don't shine if you don't shine") and "stretching" (adapting at the group-level to changing circumstances). For years, Sow and Friedman told a joint story about *our* being "low-drama" and

[53] Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.10.23-26, trans. Maria Boulding, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2012), 226-229 (emphasis mine).

[54] Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.5.10-8.12.28, 192-206.

"too big to fail." But Sow, a Black Nigerian, "often" became "a foil for" Friedman, a white American, "to learn about difference." Friedman's obliviousness to the toll this asymmetry took on Sow strained *our* intimacy. Sow and Friedman eventually saw the "hubris" of *our* too-big-to-fail attitude; went to couples therapy to save the friendship; figured out that *our* conflict-avoidant "low-drama ethos" hurt *us*; and revised *our* joint values to an outlook more conducive to *our* flourishing. "Many of the things that bonded *us* in the beginning had twisted to become points of weakness that now threatened *our* friendship," Sow and Friedman write.[55] Accordingly, what makes a plural person like Sow and Friedman cohere as an irreducible agent is neither *our* valuing this or that, nor *our* harmony, but rather *our* self-love, a deeply felt and absolutely unsubstitutable attachment motivating each of *us* to ask jointly what will help *us* thrive. That a plural person is absolutely unsubstitutable as well as irreducible is clear from what breakups or deaths can do to *our* surviving members. Augustine, after the death of an unnamed friend with whom he was "another self," "one soul in two bodies," describes it this way: "I had become a great enimga to myself."[56] *We* once figured out what mattered to *us* as part of loving *our* irreplaceably particular self; I no longer have *our* lights to steer by.

To sum up, a big friendship is a plural person capable of joint autonomy, and plural persons meet the criteria of personhood from §1: *we* develop into an irreducible and irreplaceable someone with a say over *our* identity. Plural persons are thus every bit as real as their individual counterparts. They even have a personal naming system, if famous big friendships—Chesterbelloc,[57] the VanderQuigs,[58] KathNiel[59]—are any indication.

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[55] Sow and Friedman, *Big Friendship*, 70, 90, 130, 163, 167, 168 (emphasis mine).
[56] Augustine, *Confessions*, 4.4.7-4.7.12, 96-100.
[57] George Bernard Shaw's name for G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc (Catholic literary collaborators).
[58] Courtney Vandersloot and Allie Quigley (wives and WNBA teammates).
[59] Kathryn Bernardo and Daniel Padilla (a Filipino loveteam).

It will not do to object that the human barriers of skin and skull, across which no streams of consciousness flow, make a joint self impossible. This objection depends on the expressivist identification of one's so-called real self with one's inner episodes. But (as I showed in §1) this theory turns human beings inside out. Any person, individual or plural, identifies their felt evaluations from the outside in, using public concepts. In both cases, the same type of reasoning about import stitches these emotions and desires into one personal identity. Nor will it do to insist that plural person theory necessitates implausibly rosy friendships. Human plural persons, like individuals, often exercise autonomy to ruinous effect. For example, of the two friendships that were for Augustine a joint self, only his friendship with Monica was upright; he remembers the other as idolatrous.[60] Nor, finally, will it do to object that a friendship could only be intimate enough to merit talk of a joint self if some form of heteronomy—like codependency or enmeshment—were present. This objection assumes that social constraints always limit personal freedom. But submitting to such constraints (years of gymnastics training) can make new modes of expressive freedom possible (adding an eponymous skill to the *Code of Points*). And the reflexive constraint of loving something or someone just is autonomy. Objecting that intimacy causes heteronomy merely assumes an individualist conception of autonomy. Not only does befriending someone make new modes of plural agency (or acting as one of *us*) possible; close friends acquire an additional capacity for joint autonomy (or defining what matters to *us*). Shaping one another into another self extends rather than undercuts the autonomy of close friends.

[60] I have illustrated plural person theory with nonfictional examples to appease the worry that Helm's theory (as one critic puts it) "seems to make true friendship nearly impossible," Erica Stonestreet, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (22 June 2010): https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/love-friendship-the-self-intimacy-identification-the-social-nature-of-persons/.

All this to say, the assumption that the terms *person*, *self*, and *autonomy* apply only to individuals unduly limits the kinds of identity and the modes of agency available to human beings. It has also kept theologians from exploring the creative potential of the *vinculum amoris*, to which I now turn.

3. The Immanent Spirit

My goal in rethinking the *vinculum amoris* is to provide a new conceptual scheme for illuminating the human experience of God's love. Probing the immanent trinity is peripheral to this goal. Again, if one could comprehend *what* divinity is—that simple and sempiternal *something* particularized by three divine *someones*—it would be as irrelevant to knowing *who* God is as comprehending my sister's internal organs is to my knowing her. God *in se* is, however, unknowable to human beings, not in the manner of an inmost ghost, but the way an eye is unknowable to its visual field: the creator in whom human creatures live, move, and have their being is infinitely ontologically close to them, the condition for the possibility of their existence, not an item that shows up within it. More germane to my goal, then, is the economy of grace, where God assumes creaturely forms and perforce occupies the kind of distance from others that creaturely existence involves and that, contrary to expressivist theories of interiority, enables human beings to encounter God.[61]

Yet a brief discussion of the immanent Spirit is in order. Plural person theory cogently explains Augustine's insistence that the Father's and the Son's joint gift is not something but someone who also gives no less than God's own self.[62] It explains how there can be three

[61] Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism," 403.
[62] Augustine, *The Trinity*, 15.36, 428.

irreducibly personal roles in a partner dance—how in God's perichoretic life *dancing* is not the same as *lead* plus *follow*. The Spirit can be the mutual love of the Father and the Son and still—or precisely therefore—be a personal identity alongside them because the Spirit is a plural person.

Modeling the Spirit as a plural person removes any binitarian tints from Barth's picture of God-in-Godself. A critic like Jenson describes Barth's picture as two eternal signatories (Father and Son) of an everlasting pact (Spirit) to love Jesus. Where Jenson sees an impersonal pact, plural person theory finds the joint evaluative perspective of a plural person. The resulting picture looks more like this: From all eternity, the love between two "independent" divine modes of being constitutes a third equally independent joint divine mode "over against them."[63] The "autonomy" peculiar to this third divine mode is joint autonomy,[64] which "cannot result from" either of the other modes "alone," nor from their "co-operation," but is wholly *ours*.[65] In other words, the Father's and the Son's friendship eternally forms one *us* or Spirit whom Father and Son love and to whom Father and Son each therefore feel answerable as one of *us*.[66] And what matters to *us*, from before all time, is actively including the human being Jesus (and Jesus's fellow human beings) in *our* bond.[67] Barth is wrong, then, to say that "even if the Father and the Son might be called 'person,'" the Spirit "could not possibly be regarded as the third 'person.'"[68] The Spirit is a plural person who commits God-in-Godself to being God-for-humanity.

My model also reconciles psychological analogies for the trinity (Augustine) with social ones (Jonathan Edwards). Psychological analogies preserve God's oneness but risk modalism. If, as Augustine has it, the trinity resembles the mental life of a human individual—where memory,

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[63] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 468.
[64] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 487.
[65] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 486.
[66] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 480.
[67] Barth, *CD* 2/2, 104-105.
[68] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 469.

understanding, and will are one mind, not three—then God seems to be one person accomplishing different tasks at different times.[69] Social analogies affirm the plurality of personal identities in God but risk tritheism. If, as Edwards has it, the "friendship" that "subsists eternally and necessarily between the several persons in the Godhead" resembles a "society or family," then there seem to be three Gods.[70] Plural person theory combines the appeal of both analogies into a single account of the trinity as distinct centers of mind (*I* and *thou*, Father and Son) and one irreducible center of mind (*us*, Spirit).

Theologians criticize the bond-of-love tradition for making the Spirit lesser. Does my reconstruction of the tradition make the Spirit too much—more special or more of a person than the other trinitarian identities? On the one hand, Edwards might approve of such an overcorrection. According to him, the Spirit "governs" God's "heart," "wholly influences both the Father and the Son in all they do," and "sustains" their "character and honor."[71] On the other hand, an individual person and a plural person are (as I explained in §2) persons in exactly the same respect: each is an absolutely unsubstitutable someone who figures out what matters to them and upholds their identity as part of loving themself. So, a plural person is no more (or less) a person than *our* individual members. And plural person theory glosses the Spirit's governing and influencing and sustaining the Father and the Son as *our* joint autonomy, *our* love of *us*, an attachment that neither obliterates nor exhausts Father or Son. My model of the Spirit is thus no overcorrection.

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[69] Augustine, *The Trinity*, 10.17-19, 300-302.

[70] Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 557; Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity*, 135.

[71] Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity*, 147.

Kathryn Tanner suggests an additional sense in which the bond-of-love tradition makes the Spirit lesser. By attributing the Spirit's origin to the Father (who begets the Son and spirates the Spirit) and the Son (who also spirates the Spirit), the tradition attributes a property to the Father and the Son that the Spirit apparently lacks: the power to "give rise to another" divine person. As Tanner sees it, this imbalance of divine properties implies that the Spirit is "not fully divine." Maintaining the equality of the trinitarian persons, Tanner reasons, requires that any divine property be either a "general divine quality" (a substantial property that all three persons have) or a "distinguishing characteristic" (a relational property that only one person has). Attributing a property to two allegedly slights the third. But this reasoning is illogical. As soon as a theologian names a person-defining property possessed by one (the Son's filiation, say), they have thereby named a complement property possessed by the other two (the Father's and the Spirit's non-filiation). That the Father and the Spirit share the property of non-filiation is no slight against the Son's divinity. Hence, Tanner is incorrect to insist that "if" the Father and the Son share "the power to generate another" "then the Spirit should share it too" on pain of being lesser. It is no use rejoining that complement properties do not count as properties; there is no special reason why they should not.[72]

Plural person theory provides a further response to Tanner, one that bridges the Spirit's immanent identity and economic work: deification. For many exponents of the bond-of-love tradition, "becoming a Christian means" (to quote Joseph Ratzinger on Augustine) "becoming" the Spirit's "mode of being."[73] Augustine says that through the Spirit the whole trinity inhabits a

[72] Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 188-189.

[73] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine," *Communio* 25 (1998): 327.

human believer's heart.[74] Lombard says that a human believer loves God thanks to the same Spirit who binds the Father and the Son to one another in love.[75] Edwards (citing 2 Peter 1:4) adds that the Spirit thus makes the saints "partakers of" God's "very Deity," "so" uniting with their "human faculties that," in the "exercise" thereof, "God does all" and the saints "do all."[76] Barth, too, says that a human believer participates in God (*teilnehmen*, *Teilnahme*) insofar as the Spirit draws the believer into the freeing and bold and intimate friendship between the Father and the Son.[77] For these thinkers, in short, the Spirit indwells human believers, regenerates them, and brings them into God's triune *koinonia*, all without erasing the difference between creator and creature, deity and deified, partaken and partaker. Modeling the Spirit as a plural person explains how the Spirit conforms humanity to divinity such that the former participates in the latter the way a jewel participates in the light passing through it—not disappearing in it but reflecting and refracting it distinctively (Edwards).[78] It explains why being quickened by the Spirit means moving oneself, not being God's marionette (Barth).[79] In a nutshell, what it means for the Spirit to indwell and regenerate and draw a human believer into God's triune life is for God and the believer to befriend one another and develop into an irreducible plural person who determines—within a joint evaluative perspective, out of solicitude for *our* well-being as *this* irreplaceable self—the kind of life worth *our* living. Therefore, contrary to Tanner's analysis, the Spirit does generate divine persons: the numerous plural persons whom God forms with God's numerous human friends.

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[74] Augustine, *The Trinity*, 15.33, 425.
[75] Lombard, *Sentences*, 1.17.1.2, 88.
[76] Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity*, 194-195, 251.
[77] Barth, *CD* 3/3, 285-288; *CD* 4/2, 800; *CD* 1/1, 480. Cf. Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 51; and Joseph Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 83.
[78] Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, 442.
[79] Barth, *CD* 4/2, 800.

4. The Economic Spirit

I said at the outset that critics worry with good reason about whether the bond-of-love tradition depersonalizes the Spirit. If the Spirit is an impersonal power, rather than a loving person, then indwelling, regeneration, and deification are not hallmarks of a believer's free relationship with someone who calls, illumines, convicts, and sanctifies, but stages of a causal process that happens to a believer, like skin cells repairing DNA damage after a sunburn. Such a conception of the Spirit encourages anxiety about how best to cooperate. Should I passively observe my fading sunburn? Could I speed up the healing process with serums? In short, critics worry that the *vinculum amoris* leaves a believer susceptible to obsessing over their own spirituality instead of trusting the Spirit's unwavering personal commitment to them.[80]

Lombard and Edwards are adamant that the Spirit is not a causal power. Lombard writes that a human believer loves God thanks to the same Spirit who binds the Father and the Son to one another in love (as I showed in §3). Yes, the Spirit enkindles a believer's passion for God.[81] But Lombard is clear that the Spirit does not "cause" love; the Spirit "is" love.[82] Similarly, Edwards locates the Spirit's influence on believers not in the physical realm of cause-and-effect, but in the social and normative space of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments. The Spirit, weaning believers from sin and conforming their hearts to the gospel, is not so much a physician administering a drug as a cross between an English teacher inculcating an enthusiasm for Shakespeare and a coach instilling confidence.[83] The Spirit renews and sanctifies through self-communication and relationship. Believers who before could only speculate about God's grace

[80] Jenson, "The Holy Spirit," 134.
[81] Lombard, *Sentences*, 1.17.4.1, 91.
[82] Lombard, *Sentences*, 1.17.3, 90.
[83] Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses 1730-1733*, ed. Mark Valeri, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 17 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 423-424.

now know the gracious God tangibly—the difference between reading a description of honey and actually tasting honey.[84] The Spirit regenerates believers, then, not by making the believer the object of God's causality, but by loving the believer and—like a teacher or coach who creates a safe environment for their mentees to take risks—initiating a relationship in which actively loving God elicits new thoughts and feelings from the believer. True, the Spirit acts causally "upon inanimate creatures," moving on the face of the waters (Gen 1:2), just as the Spirit has an "extrinsic" neuroenhancing effect "upon" the "unregenerate," occasionally stimulating their "conscience." But Edwards is clear that the Spirit lives "in" a believer, "uniting" with their "soul" like another self.[85]

Modeling the Spirit as a plural person is one way of affirming with Edwards that the Spirit acts in the personal and normative space of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments rather than the impersonal realm of physical causes. Plural person theory also makes sense of Edwards's claim that God does not do "some" of the Spirit's work and the believer "the rest." Instead, "*we*"—the plural person or Spirit whom God and the believer become—"do all."[86] That is, the Spirit is an expansion *ad extra* of God's friendship *in se*. The Father's and the Son's mutual friendship eternally constitutes them as a plural person or Spirit to whom befriending humanity matters. In the economy of salvation, God befriends the believer: *our* love starts to light up certain things that are salient for *us*, transforming some of *your* and *my* individual responses to import into joint values *we* hold for *our* sake, new first-person plural habits of thought and feeling. In other words, patterns of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments with a common focus on *us* interlink in a personal identity that is not partly God's and partly the believer's, but wholly *ours*—a joint

[84] Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, 413-414.
[85] Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, 411.
[86] Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity*, 251 (emphasis mine).

evaluative perspective from which each of *us* reliably feels, desires, and does what *our* Spirit calls for in the relevant circumstances (notwithstanding occasional failures on the believer's part). *Our* love of *us* "perfect[s]" the believer "more and more" (for in loving *us* the believer holds joint values with God) and "communicates" God's inexhaustible "fullness" in a new way (for in loving *us* God holds joint values with this unique human creature).[87] The Spirit's work is therefore not an extrinsic causal force determining a human believer like the moon determines the tides. It is not heteronomy but joint autonomy—in a word, love.

This model also sharpens Barth's picture of "the freedom of the friends of God,"[88] wherein God freely decides, from before all time, to invite human beings into *our* Spirit. The form in which the Spirit "opens" a believer "up" to God is the bond of friendship between God and the believer that likewise opens God up to the believer.[89] Put differently, God makes Godself answerable to the plural person constituted by God and the believer. *Our* Spirit opens God up to new human concerns—as in Abraham's argument with God about Sodom (Gen 18:16-32), or Moses's arguments with God about Israel (Ex 32:14, 33:1-3, 14; Deut 9:13-29), or the Syrophoenician woman's argument with Jesus about the Gentiles (Mk 7:24-30). But God does not limit God's concerns to God's friendships. Rather, *our* Spirit opens believers up to "a definite" divine "commission in the world," namely, to act in ways that, nourishing *us*, also nourish "creation as a whole"—as in the conversions of Lydia (Acts 16:11-40) and Paul (Acts 9:1-19).[90] God thus freely imposes on Godself the constraints of love under the conditions of a finite, contingent, and temporally extended world—constraints that include seeing the embodied and

[87] Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, 442-443.
[88] Barth, *CD* 3/3, 285.
[89] Barth, *CD* 1/1, 450-451.
[90] Barth, *CD* 3/3, 287.

historically situated concerns of God's human friends as God's own to the extent that they implicate *our* flourishing. As a result, constituting a plural person with God erases neither one's idiosyncrasies nor the particular contexts in which one befriends God; and befriending God does not necessarily require one to forsake what matters to one about, or thanks to, these contexts and idiosyncrasies. Instead, from all eternity, God chooses, "without abandoning the helm for one moment,"[91] to exercise joint autonomy with all manner of human believers—to become so many absolutely unsubstitutable plural persons who jointly develop *our* identity. Insofar as every human believer is "unique and irreplaceable,"[92] God thereby expresses Godself "in continually new forms,"[93] telling new joint stories; insofar as God is "eternally rich,"[94] each believer, conforming *my* desires to *our* Spirit, expresses the divine plenitude in a distinctive way. From before all time, God has a notional idea of future contingents pertaining to this plenitude. But God-for-us knows the splendor of God-with-us only once *we* particularize it—akin to the difference between speculation and a sense of the heart (Edwards),[95] or between the morning and evening knowledge that angels have of God's creation (Augustine).[96] God, then, eternally determines to be Godself through God's friendships with human believers. In deifying, God confirms God's deity.

Barth's version of deification—grounded as it is in God's freedom—preserves the creator-creature distinction. Edwards's version adduces God's self-love. In creating the world, Edwards writes, God makes Godself, not creation, God's "last end." God values the world for God's own sake, out of "infinite love to" and "delight in" Godself.[97] Yet God also sees Godself as incomplete

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[91] Barth, *CD* 3/3, 285.
[92] Barth, *CD* 3/2, 271.
[93] Barth, *CD* 2/1, 314.
[94] Barth, *CD* 3/4, 16.
[95] Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses*, 413-414.
[96] Augustine, *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2006) 4.39, 4.48-49, 5.36, 263-265, 269-270, 294.
[97] Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, 436.

without the world; it no less expresses God's "own complete self" than branches and leaves complete a tree. Ergo, God's making Godself God's last end, and God's acting for creation's sake, must not be "opposite parts of a disjunction."[98] Plural person theory clarifies Edwards's argument. Recall (from §2) that a pattern of emotions, desires, and judgments constituting a personal value is only subfocused on the value, and ultimately focused on oneself. That is, one's sense of self is at stake in such values. One tries to live up to them out of solicitude for one's well-being as *this* particular person. Creating is one of God's personal values, says Edwards. It is central to God's conception of Godself. God's corresponding felt evaluations and evaluative judgments are therefore only subfocused on creation and ultimately focused on Godself. God creates, in other words, as a part of loving the irreplaceably particular self God is. Or, better: the friendship between the Father and the Son is a joint self or Spirit for whom the only kind of trinitarian life worth living includes at least two things, expressing the divine plenitude in creation and incorporating human creatures into the trinitarian life. It is out of love for *our* triune life as *this* particular plural person, the Spirit, that God decides to include humanity in *our* Spirit. Thus, from all eternity, God's commitment to constituting more plural persons with human believers is only subfocused on these "abundantly diffused" "emanations" of the economic Spirit and ultimately focused on the "infinite fullness" of the immanent Spirit.[99] Or so goes another approach to preserving the boundary between deity and deified within a theology of divinization.

God's self-love also explains how the economic Spirit can diffuse a multiplicity of such emanations without rendering the Spirit multiple. If God's reasons for creating and deifying are focused on the immanent Spirit, then the Spirit's wildly abundant economic form—as so many

[98] *Ethical Writings*, 439-440.
[99] *Ethical Writings*, 438-439.

plural persons—stays true to the Spirit's immanent form. God always stays true to Godself in God's friendships with human believers. This splendor spreads out to a dazzling eschatological wholeness of which God's human friends catch glimpses—as in Jesus's high priestly prayer (Jn 17:20-21).

So far, I have characterized the economic Spirit in abstract terms. But modeling the Spirit as a plural person also makes sense of existing Christian practices. For example, as Tanya Luhrmann's ethnography of a Chicago Vineyard church suggests, American evangelicals experience their faith as friendship with God. These Christians read prayer manuals and hear sermons that instruct them to interact with God as they would with their closest human friends. They schedule regular *quiet times* to hang out with God in which they not only talk to God, but also tease God, giggle with God, scream at God, and listen for what God might have to say. The discipline of quiet time trains evangelicals to perceive God's voice in their own streams of consciousness. Reading the Bible becomes a dynamic two-way conversation that evokes new meanings from the text as God responds directly to the believer. Evangelicals thus develop what Luhrmann calls a *participatory theory of mind*. This phenomenon shows up in other Christian traditions, too. Quakers call it *living in the Light*; Catholics call it *Ignatian contemplation*. For such Christians, distinguishing God's thoughts from one's own is a skill that improves with practice. Mastering it gives the believer something like Edwards's sense of the heart. One of Luhrmann's informants compares this transformation to finally meeting God after years of being pen pals. Another describes it as being the Spirit's "conduit." Believers "allow" the Spirit "to move through" them "to act on behalf of God."[100] Modeling the Spirit as a plural person explains the

[100] T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (Vintage: New York, 2012), 258-259.

structure of practical reasoning that these real Christians are using: God and the believer shape one another into another self for whom a certain kind of joint life is worth living.

5. A New and Wider Self

To kick-start my pneumatology and get some of my theoretical apparatus up and running, I have restricted my comments on the economic Spirit to a narrow, idealized case: friendship between a human being with their wits about them (to put it in the awful parlance of Anglo-American philosophers) and God. Real life is much more complicated. For example, as most Christian theologies would have it, a human being does not encounter (much less befriend) God in isolation. Where is the church in all of this?

Jenson concludes his criticism of Barth's pneumatology with an ecclesiological gesture that might seem like my turn to plural person theory. Citing Joseph Ratzinger, Jenson considers locating the Spirit's personhood and agency in the "new and wider self" of the church.[101] The Spirit, as the agent of the Father's and Son's unity, would on such an account draw human beings into the divine unity by knitting them together as one collective ecclesial self and making that wider ecclesial self the irreducible subject of the verb *I believe*. Ratzinger explains: "Faith is essentially a joint belief with the church as a new and wider self. The *I* in the expression *I believe* is no longer my old *I*, withdrawn in itself; it is the *I* of the *anima ecclesiastica*, that is to say, the *I* of one in whom the whole community of the church expresses itself."[102] Ratzinger doubts that such a conception of faith "really" conflicts with "Reformation" theologies.[103] For him, this new and

[101] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303.

[102] Joseph Ratzinger, *Eglise, Œcuménisme, et Politique*, trans. Philippe Jordan, Phillip-Ernst Gudenus, and Beat Müller (Paris: Fayard, 1987), 173 (translations mine). Because what interests me presently is Jenson's constructive use of Ratzinger, not a consideration of Ratzinger's ideas on their own terms, I use the same French translation of Ratzinger that Jenson cites.

[103] Ratzinger, *Eglise, Œcuménisme, et Politique*, 172.

wider self to which the Spirit binds one in faith is but the Pauline "*I* yet no longer *I*" of "the encounter with Jesus." A faith that gives one "a new subjectivity in communion with" Jesus thereby incorporates one into Jesus's body, the church: one receives one's *I* anew "in the *we* of the communion of saints."[104] Jenson (a Lutheran with Catholic leanings) adopts this ecclesiological conception of the Spirit's personhood in his own systematic theology: "the Spirit finds his *I* in the Son just insofar as the Son is the *totus Christus*, insofar as the Son includes and is included in his community. And the Spirit him*self* is nothing other than the Freedom that occurs in these relations."[105] Jenson thinks, in other words, that the Spirit's "personality" is that of a collective agent[106]—the *totus Christus*, or (as a reader of Augustine explains) the "new spiritual entity" that the Spirit "brings … about" by metaphysically uniting Jesus and his church into "one" body of which Jesus is the head.[107]

Barth could not countenance such an answer to the question of how the Spirit is personal, Jenson wagers. Maintaining the Spirit's personhood and agency within the constraints of the bond-of-love tradition by locating the Spirit's self in the new and wider self of the church would entail an ecclesiology too Catholic for Barth: "if the Community between the Father and the Son were himself an *agent* of their love, immanently and economically"—a person rather than a principle—"then the church, as the community inspirited by this Agent, would be the active *mediatrix* of faith, in precisely the way demanded by Catholics and resisted by Protestants in every chief dialogue."[108] Not to mention, identifying the Spirit's personality with the *totus Christus* would

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[104] Ratzinger, *Eglise, Œcuménisme, et Politique*, 173.
[105] Jenson, *ST*, 160-161.
[106] Jenson, *ST*, 160.
[107] J. David Moser, "*Totus Christus*: A Proposal for Protestant Christology and Ecclesiology," *Pro Ecclesia* 29.1 (2019): 6, 9.
[108] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303 (emphasis Jenson's).

invite ascriptions of divinity to the church, a no-no for Barth.[109] Jenson concludes that, because Barth would not countenance such a solution to the problem of the Spirit's personhood, his commitment to conceptualizing the Spirit in terms of the bond-of-love tradition leaves him with no other option than denoting the Spirit "invariably by impersonal terms" like "power," "activity," and "capacity."[110] To be sure, "Catholic commentators" do find in the *Church Dogmatics* "many" approximations "to Catholic patterns of thought," but Barth remains on Jenson's diagnosis a practical binitarian—which Jenson sees as "the last resistance" of Barth's "Protestantism."[111]

I am less interested in the biographical question of whether anything like a plural person *avant la lettre* would have been conceivable to Barth than in the conceptual question of whether modeling the Spirit as a plural person entails a Catholic (or broadly episcopal) ecclesiology—a possible upshot of Jenson's commentary on Barth. I submit that it does not. Or (more exactly) one *could* derive a Catholic ecclesiology from my pneumatology, but theological consistency *does not require* it. What I mean to show, in other words, is that my pneumatology is compatible with a range of ecclesiologies: Catholics and Protestants alike could find stuff of worth in it.

To show why, I must first describe a key difference between my solution to the problem of the Spirit's personhood and the one Jenson entertains. Namely: the new and wider self of which Ratzinger writes and to which Jenson alludes is not a plural person. Certainly, theorizing the church as a collective person is a standard theological move: Dietrich Bonhoeffer does it in

[109] Ian McFarland, "The Body of Christ: Rethinking a Classic Ecclesiological Model," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7.3 (2005): 226.

[110] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303, 304.

[111] Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303.

Sanctorum Communio;[112] Hans Urs von Balthasar does it in *Spouse of the Word*.[113] But if (as I argued in §1 and §2) a person is an absolutely unsubstitutable someone with a capacity for autonomy—with, that is, a say in determining what matters to them as part of loving the irreplaceably particular self they are—then the standard move can ascribe personhood to the church only figuratively, for the church is too diffuse to meet this condition of personhood.

That last point is worth elaborating. Jenson's (and Ratzinger's) new and wider self cannot be a plural person, because the joint autonomy in virtue of which a friendship is a person cannot be scaled up to a group as large as a parish (let alone the *totus Christus*), where (to quote Margaret Gilbert) "many members will be strangers to one another."[114] The basic motivating force in a plural person—what makes a plural person cohere as an irreducible agent—is an intimate love that renders a few individuals absolutely unsubstitutable in one another's estimation: *our* affection for *us*—a bond to which each of *us* contributes (and sees the others as contributing) irreplaceably—reliably lights up certain things as desirable to *us*. Thus, a plural person cannot change its individual membership without losing its identity as the particular plural person it is. But human finitude would preclude all 4,900 parishioners of Holy Name Cathedral, or all 8,500 members of Trinity United Church of Christ, from knowing one another deeply enough to become non-fungible objects of one another's love (*mutatis mutandis*, the *totus Christus*). So, although in communal worship they could display *collective effervescence*—spreading to one another the type of pre-conceptual affective contagion that Durkheim attributes to ritual[115]—they could not in any setting display the type of conceptually interlinked felt evaluations, or joint emotions and joint

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[112] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, trans. Richard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[113] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spouse of the Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 143-192.

[114] Margaret Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 99.

[115] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 207-241.

desires, indicative of a plural person with a reliable sensitivity to what matters to *us* in *our* unsubstitutable particularity. Simply put, all 4,900 or 8,500 (or innumerable) souls could not share with each other all at once the intimacy required to link them in one gargantuan bond of friendship. Instead, a group of such magnitude can act corporately (as opposed to merely distributively) only if its members recognize the group's right to act on their behalf (by, say, reciting the Nicene creed at mass) and the group has a procedure for discerning the group's intentions (like the two-thirds qualified-majority rule of a papal conclave) as well as protocols for enacting them that encourage honesty and cooperation among individual members (like anonymous nominations).[116] Because of these communal norms, a group that welcomes indefinitely many members maintains its identity as the particular corporate agent it is when new members join or old ones leave (whatever deference a Catholic owes the current pope qua pope, for example, they owe also to former and future popes qua pope). The basic motivating force in this kind of collective agent—what makes it cohere as an irreducible agent—is the non-intimate respect that members feel for the group's form of life and for fellow members in their fungible role as upholders of that form of life.[117] The institutional sociality characteristic of such a *community of respect* cannot bind all members to one another in the sort of unscripted and enduring emotional attachment necessary for each of *us* to have equal say over the contours of *our* identity such that the group develops a truly joint self. Hence, even though a community of respect can exercise agency at the group-level (pursuing goals that matter to the group), it cannot exercise

[116] Christian List and Philip Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For an alternative model of ecclesial agency, see Joshua Cockayne, "Analytic Ecclesiology: The Social Ontology of the Church," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7 (2019): 100-123. I discuss Cockayne's alternative in chapter three.

[117] Bennett Helm, *Communities of Respect: Grounding Responsibility, Authority, and Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

autonomy at the group-level (defining and revising what matters to *us* as part of loving *our* irreplaceably particular life), in contrast to a plural person.[118]

The distinction between plural persons and communities of respect that I have been describing matters for at least three reasons. First, for Jenson, the Spirit's personhood is the *totus Christus*. But the *totus Christus* (somatic metaphor notwithstanding) lacks the absolute unsubstitutability and the capacity for autonomy that characterize persons. Consequently, when it comes to the problem of the Spirit's personhood, Jenson's model of the Spirit as the new and wider self of the church only gets as far as personhood in a metaphorical sense. My model of the Spirit as a plural person, by contrast, makes it possible to say something much stronger about the Spirit's personhood, that is, to talk about the *vinculum amoris* as a person in a literal sense.

Second, Jenson reads Lombard and Edwards as likewise uniting the *totus Christus* in one wider self.[119] Thus, according to Lombard, the Spirit "inflames" one "to love God and neighbor" and "conjoins all the good angels and all God's servants in the bond of holiness."[120] And thus, for Edwards, "in this also eminently consists our communion with the saints, that we drink into the same Spirit … in which they are all united; 'tis the bond of perfectness by which they are one in" God.[121] If Jenson's reading of them is right, they are wrong, since the *totus Christus* is too diffuse to meet the criteria of a joint self. In terms of plural person theory, though, a sounder reconstruction of their point would go like this: God forms many absolutely unsubstitutable plural persons with many human friends. But God always stays true to Godself (as I put it in §4). So, there is some overlap in the values of these plural persons. For instance, in each case, *our* intimacy (or

[118] In chapters three and five, I take up the related question of how many members a group can have and still behave as a plural person.

[119] Jenson, *ST*, 149.

[120] Lombard, *Sentences*, 1.17.4.1, 1.17.1.3, 91, 89. Cf. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 8.12, 255.

[121] Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity*, 130.

friendship-love) commits *us* to respect (or neighbor-love) for all creatures, angelic as well as earthly. The sameness of the Spirit into which all the saints drink is that of constancy or trustworthiness rather than uniformity or fusion.

Third, my pneumatology could accommodate a variety of ecclesiologies, including bottom-up traditions (like Quaker process) as well as top-down ones (like Catholic polity). So, for example, it provides a conceptual framework for understanding the Quaker experience of a *gathered* or *covered* meeting for worship—that is, an occasion of unprogrammed *waiting worship* in which the worshippers, stilling their minds and silently waiting for the Spirit's prompting to speak extemporaneously, feel especially keenly their connection with one another and God.[122] What could the Spirit's influence mean in this context? Each Quaker, having developed through the discipline of waiting worship something like the Christian participatory theory of mind that Tanya Luhrmann observes in American evangelicals, attends inwardly to God, discerning with God what matters to the specific plural person God and this human being have formed over the course of many such meetings.[123] *Our* joint evaluative perspective would presumably include a commitment to Quaker ministry, or helping others experience that of God within them, too. As part of loving *us*, then, *we* care about the spiritual condition of others in this meeting, be they Quakers, non-Quaker regular attenders, or newcomers. Accordingly, *we* wordlessly determine how to act on behalf of *our* Spirit here and now: whether to pull others into "rivers of living water" by speaking from *our* experience (Jn 7:38) or by deepening the expectant silence that

[122] My descriptions of Quakerism rely on *Faith and Practice* (McNabb: Illinois Yearly Meeting, 2020).

[123] The meeting therefore includes multiple human/divine plural persons; the meeting is not itself a plural person. Quakers call themselves uppercase Friends. But the worshippers at any given Quaker meeting might not know one another well enough to count one another friends in the lowercase sense. Moreover, Quaker meetings will open their doors to as many newcomers as their meetinghouse safely accommodates. Early Quakers even worshipped outside to accommodate meetings as large as a thousand people. See Geoffrey Plank, "Quakers, Indigenous Americans, and the Landscape of Peace," in *Quakerism in the Atlantic World, 1690–1830*, ed. Robynne Rogers Healey (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021), 182.

makes such spoken ministries possible. Should a Quaker so speak on *our* behalf, a newcomer might sense in the message an invitation to friendship with God. A Quaker or regular attender might sense therein a more limpid expression of something they saw only hazily before. Or they might feel the words as a knife cutting open their heart and trimming off parts that conflict with what the Spirit requires.[124] This account of Quaker practice is one way of describing how one's friendship with God (the plural person that God and a human believer constitute) includes other human believers and their friendship with God (other plural persons that God constitutes with other believers).

Alternatively, the pneumatology I have sketched in this chapter could be fleshed out along Catholic lines to show how one's friendship with God includes other human believers and their friendship with God, for the pneumatology just as easily explains the Catholic notion of the *sensus fidei*—that is, the spiritual intuition by which a Catholic, whether part of the laity or the hierarchy, can reflexively (a) tell if a teaching or practice they encounter harmonizes or jars with Christian truth, (b) distinguish adiaphora from what Catholic faith requires, and (c) improvise a more fitting witness to the gospel in response to new cultural and historical circumstances.[125] Magisterial teaching likens the *sensus fidei* to the intimacy of friendship: the feel a believer has for Christian truth resembles a friend's knack for anticipating "what delights or disappoints" their friends (as Sr. Sara Butler puts it).[126] My pneumatology literalizes this analogy. Church doctrine classifies the *sensus fidei* as a meta-virtue underlying all the cardinal and theological virtues in a

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[124] Margaret Fell, "The Testimony of Margaret Fox," in *Quaker Writings: An Anthology, 1650-1920*, ed. Thomas Hamm (New York: Penguin, 2010), 44-49.

[125] See the International Theological Commission's "*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church" (2014), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

[126] Sr. Sara Butler, "*Sensus Fidei*: Chapters One and Two," International Theological Commission, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_butler-sensus-fidei_en.html.

faithful Catholic: it is the shape of fortitude and hope in (say) a Polish priest holding mass in the woods to evade the communist police; or the instinct for love and justice in (e.g.) an American journalist urging the archdiocese of New York, on the basis of Catholic social teaching, to pay their gravediggers a living wage. The Spirit infuses this meta-virtue in a believer and opens their heart to a holier way of life and higher insight into the faith. How might this infusion, this opening, happen? The form of practical reasoning proper to a plural person is (as I hinted in §2 and §4) virtue—a perceptual capacity, developed through loving *us*, by which the friends reliably sense threats or boons to *us* and spontaneously curb the former or pursue the latter.[127] A Catholic acquires the *sensus fidei*, then, through friendship with God. This friendship might begin with infant baptism or the rite of Christian initiation of adults; it deepens with ongoing liturgical and devotional practice. Hymns, the eucharist, confession, *lectio divina*, Ignatian exercises: these rituals inculcate a distinctive yet uncodifiable outlook in a Catholic that enables them to recognize instinctively the behavior *our* Spirit calls for in any situation.

Such Quaker and Catholic versions of my pneumatology alike resolve a seeming problem with my account: how to tell when talk of what matters to *us* (where the plural person includes God and a sinful human believer) is the Spirit's work, and when it is idolatry masquerading as a believer's joint evaluative perspective with God. Needless to say, on account of human finitude and sin, a believer will not always get the requirements of *our* Spirit right; nor will the believer always be able to detect all on their own any conflicts between what they think *we* stand for and what actually conduces to *our* flourishing. In both ecclesiologies, though, a community helps its members discern the truth and vice versa.

[127] John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62.3 (1979): 331-350.

For example, anyone present in a Quaker meeting for worship may experience the Spirit's prompting them to speak (in the manner I described above). One can test one's experience of the Spirit against such vocal ministries. Because truth does not contradict truth, or (as I put it earlier) God stays true to Godself in each of God's friendships with human believers, incompatible experiences call for further discernment about whether one has merely projected one's own ego onto the Spirit. In addition, a Quaker *meeting for worship with a concern for business* makes decisions affecting the meeting only if there is unity among all present regarding the action at issue: members listen deeply and prayerfully to one another until a *sense of the meeting* emerges, that is, a collective recognition that this action is God's will for the meeting. But suppose a Quaker in attendance, discerning with God what matters to *us*, sees the action as out of step with divine guidance. They might, then, determine that what *our* Spirit requires of them in this situation is to *stand in the way*, or state their opposition to the proposal and their unwillingness to let the meeting decide in favor of it, in which case the Quaker and their meeting have a shared obligation to continue discerning God's will.

Similarly, for Catholics, the *sensus fidei* comes in two forms, one personal (the *sensus fidei fidelis*), the other communal (the *sensus fidei fidelium*). Neither reliably tracks the truth without the other. On the one hand, thanks to the *sensus fidei fidelis*, a lay Catholic without theological training can detect heterodoxy: if their bishop preaches heresy, *our* Spirit should prompt them to dissent from their bishop. Moreover, thanks to the *sensus fidei fidelium*, the laity's conviction about a doctrinally undefined topic can shape the development of Catholic teaching. Occasionally the laity collectively senses the truth of something while the magisterium remains divided about it.[128] On the other hand, agreement among the faithful (*consensus fidelium*) or unanimity of clergy and

[128] So it was with the immaculate conception and Mary's assumption.

laity on an issue (*conspiratio pastorum et fidelium*) is the criterion by which a believer tests the deliverances of *our* Spirit for authenticity.

But either way—whether a human believer befriends God and tests the deliverances of *our* Spirit in a bottom-up or a top-down ecclesial community—two things follow from my pneumatology regarding how one discerns the truth. First, because (as I just argued) personhood does not scale, plural persons and communities of respect help their members discern the truth in non-equivalent ways: the former through personal intimacy, the latter through impersonal respect for communal norms. Each therefore offers a different kind of check on error. In a plural person, the love *we* feel for *our* absolutely unsubstitutable *us* links each of *us* viscerally to reasons for reassessing *our* values whenever one of *us* reinterprets what conduces to *our* well-being. So, if *we* value *our* involvement in a certain community of respect, and I begin to feel as one of *us* that some of the community's practices are harming *us*, my voicing this concern should motivate each of *us* to reconsider, from *our* joint evaluative perspective, the place of these practices in *our* life—as when the Catholic biblical scholar Luke Timothy Johnson came to support with "passionate conviction" the full inclusion of gay people in the church's life after his gay daughter and his gay students showed him that his prior beliefs "helped to create a world where" they "were treated cruelly."[129] A community of respect lacks the emotional closeness necessary for such an exercise of joint autonomy. If a member of a community of respect finds some of its practices harmful, that member cannot simply rely on the community's feelings toward them to prompt a communal reassessment of the practices in question. Rather, the very procedures that make a community of respect a corporate agent make the communal reassessment of its practices a slower and chillier affair—as when in the early 1700s the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting censured

[129] Luke Timothy Johnson, "Scripture & Experience," *Commonweal* 134.12 (15 June 2007): 16.

or disowned members who publicly demanded that Quakers stop enslaving Black people before the clerk found a sense of the meeting that enslavement was wrong.[130]

Second, because (as I argued in §4) the human grasp of God is a function of human friendships with God in the changing sphere of history, distinguishing truth from error or Spirit from idol does not aim at a fixed target but at a living God who is "always doing a new thing" for the sake of the many plural persons God constitutes with human believers (Isa 43:19). Such discernment requires one to take the particularity of God's human friends, the inexhaustibility of God, and the consequent plenitude of divine immanence into account. It demands of all human believers their inquisitive receptivity to the surprises of the wildly abundant Spirit and their trust that this plenitude does converge on one source. Moreover, as it comes indefinitely closer to that source, such discernment must continue indefinitely, drawing on wisdom from multiple communities of respect that span generations as well as varieties of belief, expertise, and social location. In sum, any point on the long timeline of theological inquiry—or on the shorter timeline of one believer's life—represents a provisional grasp of God's unfolding splendor.

Conclusion

For many contemporary theologians, bond-of-love pneumatologies depersonalize the Spirit and obscure the Spirit's work in the economy of salvation. However, on the basis of some clues from the bond-of-love tradition, I have developed a new model of the Spirit as a plural person who indwells, regenerates, and deifies human believers through friendship with them.

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[130] Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* (Philadelphia: Quaker Press, 2009), 18-19. This is not to deny that human friendships buckle under the force of structural oppression (cf. the example of Sow and Friedman in §2). Neither a plural person nor a community of respect is immune from error. I explore this point further in the next chapter.

According to my somewhat idealized model, the bond of love between the Father and the Son eternally constitutes them as the Spirit, a joint personal identity irreducible to the others. What the Spirit cares about from before all time is making humanity part of *us*. Thus, out of love for *our* triune life as *this* particular plural person, the Spirit, God freely decides from all eternity to include humanity in *our* bond of love. The Spirit's acts of indwelling, regenerating, and deifying are, then, expansions *ad extra* of God's friendship *in se*: God and a human being befriend one another and thereby constitute a plural person who, instilling joint habits of thought and feeling in each of *us*, at once sanctifies the believer and expresses God's inexhaustible splendor in a new way. This model illustrates the principle of *divine non-competitiveness*: the deeper the intimacy between a human creature and their divine creator, the more distinctly themself that creature becomes, like a jewel aglow in sunlight.[131] To be sure, one might wonder where Christ went. But—as critics of the bond-of-love tradition never tire of saying—pneumatology has been undertheorized largely because Christology has overshadowed it. Theologians begin with Christ, and by the time they get to the Spirit, there is nothing left for the Spirit to do. By reversing this order, I have been able to build a model that can shed light on a number of theological loci, including ecclesiology (about which I say more in the next chapter) and eschatology (to which I turn in chapter four).

[131] Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*, 3; Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, 442.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SPIRIT AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Sylvia Rivera—drag queen, trans woman, co-founder of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries—describes her experience of moving from New York City to the quiet suburb Tarrytown this way: "Of course, you get the first strange looks. Ain't bothering me. Next thing, you become friends with everybody. I feel that I have liberated a lot of people just by living here in the suburbs, just by being myself. Just by being a campy queen. And they appreciate. They really do."[1] Rivera's description points to the potentially emancipatory power of friendship. But to take particular experiences like Rivera's and universalize them in a general theory of friendship as a practice of liberation—a temptation to which theories of friendship frequently succumb—is to paper over the fragility of this relational form. To be sure, that friendship can take place outside institutional frameworks like marriage does give it creative potential: with neither a marriage license to structure the relationship's expectations, nor the guiding cultural scripts of romance, friends have to improvise. But the unscripted and noninstitutional nature of friendship also means that "when things get hard, it's socially acceptable to abandon" one's friends "with no explanation whatsoever," as the friends Ann Friedman and Aminatou Sow write in a memoir of their relationship.[2] Indeed, Sylvia Rivera left the city for the suburbs in the first place because she felt "betrayed" by the white middle-class gay cis men alongside whom she fought for queer rights in the early 1970s.[3] The kind of pain Rivera describes—where a more

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[1] *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*, directed by David France, 2017, Netflix, https://www.netflix.com/title/80189623.

[2] Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman, *Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 95-96.

[3] *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*.

socially powerful friend disappoints their minoritized friend in a friendship-ending way—is a recurring theme in the historical archives of friendship.

I concluded the last chapter with a relatively idealized ecclesiological story about the role plural persons might play in their communities of respect. To wit, the intimate identification at issue in a plural person or friendship (on the one hand) and the non-intimate identification at issue in a community of respect or group agent such as a professional society (on the other) give their members different kinds of non-instrumental reasons (respectively) for caring about and acting as one of *us*: a felt attachment to specific individuals that renders them irreplaceable to one another, versus respect for communal norms that circulate among indefinitely many fungible others. Because (on one hand) the basic motivating force in a plural person is an unsubstitutable emotional attachment between friends, the members of a plural person have grounds for continuing to love *us* even if the individual friends undergo changes in certain of their identifying features or reveal features previously unknown to the rest of *us*. The felt attachment itself constitutes these grounds. Once a deep friendship has developed, and each of *us* feels a close personal connection to the others, then *we* tend to figure out whatever else *we* care about on the basis of *our* felt attachment to *us* and not the other way around.

In this chapter, I look at messy archival realities to tell a less idealized story about how these two types of corporate agents might work together in an inclusive ecclesiology. I further explore the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect, the different kind of check on error each offers, and the advantages and shortcomings of each with respect to redressing social and structural harms. The story has three parts. The first part dips into the historical archives to show that the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect is more complicated than the idealized story I told in chapter two for the purpose of getting my

pneumatology up and running. Given the limits of friendship as a resource for liberation—and given the fraught history of opposing church and Spirit—the ramifications of plural person theory for ecclesiology are worth further exploring. In part two, I draw on insights from disability studies to show what can go wrong when analytic theologians try to construct inclusive ecclesiologies using only (a) a black-box pneumatology and (b) the standard accounts of group agency in analytic philosophy. The third part revisits (and revises) plural person theory, which Helm originally developed in response to inadequacies in the standard accounts of group agency. I clarify the difference between plural persons and communities of respect by reading it through the lens of Ramzi Fawaz's distinction between friendship-as-queer-form and the rhetoric of care that has become increasingly prominent in contemporary queer social movements. I apply Fawaz's insights about the limits of social movements and the promise of friendship to ecclesiology, concluding that seeking to model an inclusive ecclesiology once and for all is a misguided impulse.

1. Spirit versus Church—a Misleading Distinction?

At the end of the previous chapter, I began to theorize the agency proper to the body of Christ. Toward that end, I made a distinction between *plural persons* and *communities of respect*. A group as large as the body of Christ can count as an irreducible group agent—one whose members can act corporately, as opposed to merely distributively, to achieve goals proper to the group. I called a group agent of such magnitude a community of respect, borrowing a term from the philosopher Bennett Helm.[4] I claimed (in a departure from Helm's theory that I will

[4] Bennett Helm, *Communities of Respect: Grounding Responsibility, Authority, and Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

elaborate on in §2 and §3 as well as in chapter five) that no such group can meet the conditions of plural personhood: an absolutely unsubstitutable someone who figures out what matters to *us* and upholds *our* joint identity as part of loving *us*. That is to say, the kind of corporate agency that a group as large as the *totus Christus* could achieve is a different mode of collective agency than that proper to plural persons. More precisely: a group as large as the *totus Christus*, or a single Christian denomination, or even a smaller group that in principle welcomes indefinitely many members, such as a Catholic parish or a Quaker meetinghouse, cannot exercise joint autonomy at the group-level. Such communities of respect maintain their identities as the particular group agents they are (e.g., Catholic, Quaker) through communal norms that circulate among people who may be strangers to one another yet who respect one another in their fungible role as fellow practitioners of a form of life. Because they remain open to indefinitely many members, they can act corporately only if the community has a set of procedures and protocols in place (e.g., Catholic polity, Quaker business method) for recognizing the authority of a subset of the group (e.g., the Magisterium, a Quaker meeting's Ministry and Counsel) to define the group's goals and carry them out.[5] The institutional sociality characteristic of communities of respect precludes their forming a plural person. Plural persons, loving *our* particular *us*, act from conceptually interlinked joint emotions and desires, a phenomenon that strangers and even mere acquaintances cannot achieve.

I concluded from this distinction that, from an ecclesiological perspective, plural persons and the communities of respect they inhabit have different roles to play with respect to the discernment of truth. On the one hand, if a plural person's joint values include participating in a

[5] Christian List and Philip Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

certain ecclesial community of respect, and one of *us* starts to experience some of the community's practices as harmful, the rest of *us* have visceral reason to reassess the place of this community in *our* joint life. Regardless of what the plural person ends up deciding, *our* process of discernment looks quite different from that of a community of respect: *we* do not bargain across multiple evaluative perspectives; *we* reflect within *our* joint evaluative perspective, feeling for what meshes with *our* sense of *us*. Here I gave the example of Luke Timothy Johnson, the Catholic biblical scholar who publicly denounced traditional Catholic teaching on sexuality after his daughter and several students came out to him as gay.[6] A community of respect is simply too diffuse for the kind of emotional intimacy needed for such a joint exercise of autonomy. The procedures and protocols in virtue of which a community of respect can achieve group agency make revising the group's norms when members challenge them a slower—and often less humane—process. Here I gave the example of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which infamously censured or disowned members who publicly demanded that Quakers stop enslaving Black people before the meeting reached clearness that enslavement was wrong.[7]

Plural persons and communities of respect, in other words, provide non-equivalent checks on error: personal intimacy versus impersonal respect for communal norms. Suppose *we* are a group of friends who historically have jointly cared about attending a church together that will not perform gay marriages. Insofar as friendship is (as Helm himself puts it) "grounded in the friends' mutual caring for each other" (making the friends' other joint values secondary to this felt attachment to one another), when one of *us* comes out to the others as gay and for that reason proposes *we* attend instead another church that affirms gay couples, the rest of *us* have reasons,

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[6] Luke Timothy Johnson, "Scripture & Experience," *Commonweal* 134.12 (15 June 2007): 16.

[7] Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* (Philadelphia: Quaker Press, 2009), 18-19.

albeit (again) defeasible ones, for accepting that revision of what matters to *us*.[8] Because (on the other hand) the basic motivating force in group agency is not a felt attachment to an irreplaceable person, but rather the group's respect for its norms and for the indefinitely many fungible members who answer to these norms, when one experiences the prevailing norms of one's community of respect as disrespectful to one (as a gay Catholic might experience the Church's teachings on sexuality), one cannot just rely on the community's feelings toward one (as one might in friendship) to provide an overriding claim against the communal principles or practices in question. *We* need to be convinced that staying true to what *we* jointly stand for requires *us* to reject these disrespectful principles and practices—a "sustained journey of training" *our* "imagination towards a massive recasting of concepts," as James Allison describes it, that takes place on an unlevel playing field and can be agonistic, piecemeal, and, if no one else agrees with one's interpretation of what *we* jointly stand for, alienating.[9]

One could easily take what I have just said regarding these non-equivalent checks on error to mean that being part of a plural person is a superior check on moral error. For it does seem that shaping one another into a joint self gives some friends epistemic access to what it is like to experience moral wrongs that they would not otherwise have—as in the aforementioned example of Luke Timothy Johnson. In this respect, friendship has perhaps unfairly received a bad rap from some theologians and philosophers. Kierkegaard, for example, sees in friendship's "preferential love" a barely concealed narcissism that clashes with Christianity's universal neighbor love.[10] The irreplaceable particularity of friendship does indeed fund a moral partiality.

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[8] Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Social Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 285.

[9] James Allison, *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 209.

[10] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 55.

Simply put, friends "care more about what befalls" one another "than about what happens to strangers."[11] *Our* felt attachment to *us* gives *us* a strong motivation "to advance" *our* interests rather "than those of strangers." By some accounts, friendship's partiality extends to the epistemological. Sarah Stroud, for example, argues that "friendship requires epistemic irrationality," insofar as being a loyal friend demands (and disposes) one to interpret "a damning story about a friend" more charitably than one would a damning portrait of a stranger, regardless of the evidence—a "differential" doxastic practice that can "lead" friends "into a distorted conception of reality."[12] If my sketch of the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect is correct, though, friendship's moral partiality can be epistemically and ethically enriching, for in the moral psychology of a plural person, a change in what one friend thinks or feels gives the other friends (defeasible) reasons they would not otherwise have to change their minds or hearts accordingly. (I say that it *can be*, not that it *is*, because such changes of mind or heart could just as easily go in an unethical direction, giving the friends reasons for turpitude they would not otherwise have. Witness Augustine's "lur[ing]" a friend to whom he was "another self" from Christianity into Manichaeism.)[13] Or, better: the joint identity that my friend creates with me (in valuing with me certain things for *our* sake and pursuing with me a life together that reflects *our* values) connects each of *us* viscerally to (defeasible) reasons for changing *our* mind or heart corporately when one of *us* sees in a new way what conduces to *our* flourishing and so proposes a redefinition of "the kind of life worth" *our* "living together."[14]

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[11] Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship," *Ethics* 116.3 (2006): 498.

[12] Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship," 518, 503.

[13] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2012), 4.4.7, 96; 4.6.11, 99.

[14] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 286.

Human epistemic finitude makes this kind of first-person plural attunement to the preconditions of *my* and *your* and *our* well-being inaccessible to strangers. But friendship affords the friends felt insider knowledge of what it takes for certain human beings to flourish. In this respect, friendship matches John McDowell's notion of virtue: a "reliable sensitivity" to the "behavior" a particular situation calls for amounting to a "perceptual capacity."[15] To be sure, other relationships similarly afford deeply felt knowledge of what it takes for certain human beings to flourish. Caregiving, for one, can instill in the caregiver a perceptual capacity that reliably lights up certain things that are salient for the role—like immediately noticing any sharp objects at or below a height of thirty inches when parenting a toddler. Yet the mutuality of friendship instills in the friends a reliable sensitivity to *our* needs distinct from the second-person perceptual capacities that pastors, therapists, doctors (and the like) acquire.[16] For a thinker like Kierkegaard, such first-person plural attunement might suggest that friendship boils down to selfishness.[17] I argue otherwise. For (*pace* Kierkegaard) friends are not *identical to* one another: they are not one big *me*.[18] They *identify with* one another: *our* plural self is an intimate unity that supervenes on *my* and *your* differences. It is this unity-in-difference that makes friendship epistemologically rich. Hence, the churchgoers in the example above do not need a massive recasting of concepts to tell them why they should at least consider attending a different church with their newly out friend. Each of them can feel in the first-person plural the stakes of saying no. And even though one of the friends identifies as a romantic minority while the rest do not—making their friendship an asymmetrical cross-group friendship in which the friends have

[15] John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62.3 (1979): 332.
[16] For an argument to the contrary, see Cocking and Kennett, "Friendship and Moral Danger," 283.
[17] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 56.
[18] With apologies to C. D. Wright.

unequal access to social power—their deep emotional attachment to one another levels the playing field in a way that eludes the non-intimate institutional sociality of group agents: when *we* experience threats to *our* joint identity (conflict, hurt, a major life change), *our* love of *us* impels all of *us* to hear each one of *us* out. This is not to deny that institutions like militaries, trade unions, or religious denominations influence how their members do friendship; it is only to suggest that proper to deep friendship's distinctive rational structure is a resource for qualifying such influences: the potential of joint autonomy for enriching the moral imagination of a plural person and its members. In other words, when a minoritized individual experiences the prevailing norms of their community of respect as disrespectful, friendship's plural mode of self-expression allows for a countervailing normative trajectory. All of this indicates that friendship has a more salutary role to play in the life of a church than Kierkegaard allows.[19]

More needs to be said, however—not least because there is a creeping romanticism in the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect as I have so far articulated it. Theories of friendship tend to emphasize the liberatory or radical potential of this non-institutional relational form.[20] But the friendship archives present a different picture. For example, as Brenna Moore points out in a study of a twentieth-century global network of Catholic friendships, "sometimes bonds of friendship," far from realizing their countercultural

[19] Or (what amounts to the same thing) that there is a type of friendship which is compatible with Kierkegaard's critique of preferential love. See John Lippitt "Cracking the Mirror: On Kierkegaard's Concerns about Friendship," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 61.3 (2007): 131-150; and Natalia Mirandiuc, *The Goodness of Home: Human and Divine Love and the Making of the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chapter five.

[20] Especially accounts of friendship from queer theory. So, for example, Ramzi Fawaz describes friendship as "a relation founded in mutual dialogue, the ability to negotiate differences, and the possibility of being seen and heard, not simply as you are but as what you might be or become," "a wild and anarchic social relation that discloses new aspects of the gendered and sexual self through continual dialogue with an impassioned interlocutor," "potentially anarchic, an expected eruption of affective energy that underwrites connections which exceed the bounds of existing ideologies, identities, and familial obligations," and "a creative practice of freedom," *Queer Forms* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 337, 338, 340, 348.

values, "simply embody the inequalities of the world, problems" that are "too big for friendship alone to solve."[21] As Moore's study indicates, this is especially true of friendships involving white people. There is a liberal fantasy that interracial friendships can dismantle structural racism. But, as Moore's study makes plain, the very same white liberal friends who vocalized such ideals often "made real mutuality and genuine affection impossible" in their interracial friendships.[22] Moore tells the story of Claude McKay, a Jamaican writer of the Harlem Renaissance. McKay "artfully pointed out the fantasies so many white people had of friendship."[23] And whereas he "rhapsodized on the almost mystical pleasures of Black male friendship,"[24] he described interracial friendship as merely surfacing rather than solving "the problem of racial inequality."[25] In his memoir, McKay attests that racism "can destroy even the most devoted friendship." He recalls how his liberal white friends, in the "happy ignorance" of their "white privilege," would invite him to a restaurant without first making sure it served interracial groups. After so many "insults," McKay began to decline their invitations. And how did these white friends respond? Far from reassessing the place of fine dining in *our* joint evaluative perspective—a response that plural person theory would expect from a healthy friendship—they "resented" him.[26]

Nor is the is the romanticism of the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect as I have described it limited to matters of structural oppression. A look into the archives of friendship also suggests that Kierkegaard's suspicions about the dangers of a preferential love like friendship for the Christian life might not be entirely off the mark. Moore's

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[21] Brenna Moore, *Kindred Spirits: Friendship and Resistance at the Edges of Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021), 229.
[22] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 182.
[23] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 5.
[24] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 174-175.
[25] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 181.
[26] Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 107.

study focuses on a global network of twentieth-century Catholic thinkers who in one way or another rejected liberal modernity and prioritized spiritual friendship as a mode of religious experience. This network cut across lines of race, class, nationality, sexuality, gender, and even faith. It included such figures as Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, the queer Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, the gay (albeit heterosexually married) French scholar of Islam Louis Massignon, the French mystic and political activist Simone Weil, and the above-mentioned Claude McKay. Moore writes that she "initially saw this network's nonconformist, nonfamilial forms of love as emancipatory and exciting." The friends she studied seemed committed to "a kind of love so much wider than the replicative, the heteronormative, the narrow." But the "deeper" she "dug" into their lives, the more "disturbing" their "idealized love" looked to her.[27] Their love was not so "expansive" as it was "heartbreaking," insofar as they ignored the needs of their parents, their partners, their siblings, and their children in favor of sustaining—and being "sustained by"—this "global network of spiritual friendship."[28] Massignon told one of his spiritual friends that spending time with his wife and children felt like having his face eaten by a rat.[29] While the Maritains and Gabriela Mistral enjoyed a deep and intimate spiritual friendship, which Mistral referred to as "the supernatural group,"[30] Mistral seems to have neglected the only child she raised.[31] All of this is to say, according to plural person theory as I have so far outlined it, the intimacy of plural personhood should be epistemically enriching in a way that provides a check on moral error for the reasons I described above. It seems that plural persons might therefore have a salutary role to play for the ecclesial communities of respect in which they participate. But

[27] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 21.
[28] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 21-22.
[29] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 21.
[30] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 45.
[31] Moore, *Kindred Spirits*, 22.

real life is more complicated than this idealized theoretical framework, as Moore's archive indicates.

In the context of a discussion about pneumatology and ecclesiology, there is an additional kind of creeping romanticism in the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect as I have so far drawn it. If (a) the form in which the Spirit opens human believers up is the bond of friendship through which God and the believer form a plural person, and if (b) institutions like churches are (generally speaking) too diffuse and not intimate enough to meet the conditions of plural personhood, then (c) it would seem to follow that the church is simply not the Spirit. The distinction between plural persons (as the locus of authentic direct experience of God) and communities of respect (which ground their practical reasoning about import in impersonal communal norms) seems to carry on an anti-institutional thread that runs throughout Christian history. This thread is especially vivid in the early modern era, when mystics like Julian of Norwich, magisterial reformers like Luther and Calvin, humanist reformers like Erasmus, radical reformers like Thomas Müntzer and Sebastian Franck, and heretical Catholic movements like the *alumbrados* in Spain or the *spirituali* in Itality in various ways and to varying degrees prioritized experience, affect, and the Spirit over doctrine, cognition, and ecclesial authority.[32] Indeed, the Reformation created a hermeneutic crisis of authority in which, as Joseph Ratzinger puts it, "the Spirit is considered almost in contrast to the established Church."[33] Once Luther came along and argued for a reform of doctrine, not just a reform of abuse, the problem of who has the authority to define doctrine arose. And it was because the Reformers needed to safeguard authority that a

[32] Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 212-213.

[33] Joseph Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine," *Communio* 25 (1998): 334.

controversy about how to define doctrine became a controversy about the Spirit. Before Luther, the established church was the locus of the Spirit. One knew one had the Spirit just insofar as one remained within the church's bounds of orthodoxy, for God promised the Spirit to the church. Luther, by contrast, argued that one can test whether one has the Spirit by reading Scripture, which he described as self-interpreting.[34] For magisterial reformers, in short, scripture provided a measure for the veracity of a believer's claims to illumination by the Spirit. Thinkers like Müntzer and Franck propounded a more extreme version of this pneumatological orientation. For these Spiritualists, the Spirit itself was the ultimate authority. Müntzer saw Luther—for whom Scripture, not Spirit, was the ultimate measure of truth and way of testing or discerning the Spirit—as having counterfeit faith.[35] Franck went even further than Müntzer: in his 1531 "Letter to John Campanus," Franck argued that the Spirit is neither in the church, nor in any visible sacraments, nor even in Scripture. Rather, the Spirit is dispersed all over the world, even among pagans. There will be no particular visible location of the Spirit until the church is reconstituted upon Christ's second coming. According to Franck, until then one would have to lean on direct illumination by the spirit, not on any outward material or institutional authority.[36]

Catholic opponents of these heretical and reform movements argued that neither the weak magisterial form nor the radical pietistic form of these claims was coherent. Appealing to scripture as a test for the validity of one's claims to illumination by the Spirit does not solve the hermeneutic crisis of authority, these Catholic opponents argued, for (a) the church predates Scripture (i.e., the church as led by the Spirit decided which texts were Scripture and which texts were apocryphal); and (b) Scripture admits of multiple interpretations—it is not, in fact,

[34] Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*, 88.
[35] Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*, 238-241.
[36] Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*, 250-255.

completely self-interpreting, such that to claim to test the Spirit against Scripture leads to an infinite regress of (non-ultimate) authorities. There is simply no interpretive bedrock to which a reformer could appeal to guarantee that they have the authority of the Spirit. Nor does appealing to the Spirit as the source of one's authority over against scripture settle the hermeneutic crisis of authority, for to appeal to illumination by the Spirit is to make a circular argument. How could one be certain one has the Spirit? Where is the Spirit? Who is guaranteed to have the Spirit? The problem with adducing the Spirit as one's source of authority is that a claim to the Spirit ultimately rests on a claim to a certain experience of possessing the Spirit. Not every believer has the same experience of the Spirit. Not everyone experiences the Spirit as disclosing the same thing or even compatible things.[37] Ratzinger develops these counter-reformational arguments in a reading of Augustine's pneumatology. "Today the 'official Church,' or the 'empirical Catholic Church,' is looked upon as the antithesis of 'spirit.'" As Ratzinger's explains, "Augustine would have denied" this "opposition" between "*pneuma*" and "institution," says Ratzinger. This is in part because "the idea that the Spirit only appears in discontinuous and occasional eruptions of self-educated groups" cuts against the Augustine's conception of the "fundamental activity of" the "Spirit" as "unifying love entering into abiding." The established church is thus for Augustine and Ratzinger "the house of the Spirit, visible and 'empirical,' in the sacraments and in the word." It "cannot be divided up into 'spirit' and 'institution.'"[38] The church is on Ratzinger's analysis "a creation of the Spirit," "the body of the Lord built up by the *pneuma*," in which "the *pneuma* forms" human believers "for '*communio*,'"[39] the Spirit's "mode of being."[40] Is theorizing the

[37] Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*, 131-207.
[38] Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*," 334.
[39] Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*," 332.
[40] Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*," 327.

economic Spirit as friendship—an exclusive relationship that is not indefinitely scalable in the way that institutions are—incompatible with a Catholic ecclesiology, in contradistinction to my arguments at the end of chapter two? Does my model of the Spirit reduce the Spirit to the "discontinuous and occasional eruptions" that Ratzinger describes?[41] Was Robert Jenson right about Barth after all when he argued that a robust bond-of-love pneumatology requires a Catholic ecclesiology?[42]

For now, I note only that calling the church *the house of the Spirit*, as Ratzinger does, is not the same as calling it *the Spirit* full stop. In what remains of this chapter, I further clarify the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect by asking what ecclesiology looks like within the framework of plural person theory. How might these two types of corporate agents fit together within an inclusive ecclesiology?

2. A Problematic Model of Ecclesial Group Agency

The sorts of questions I am addressing in this chapter are typically taken up by philosophers of religion and analytic theologians, especially those working on liturgy. And when philosophers of religion and analytic theologians ask what the agency proper to the body of Christ entails, they restrict their discussions to the standard accounts of group agency within analytic philosophy, which include those of Raimo Tuomela,[43] Margaret Gilbert,[44] John Searle,[45]

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[41] Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*," 334.

[42] Robert Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2.3 (1993): 303.

[43] Raimo Tuomela, *A Theory of Social Action* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1984).

[44] Margaret Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[45] John Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," *Intentions in Communication*, ed. Phillip R. Cohen, Martha E. Pollack, and Jerry L. Morgan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 401–15.

Michael Bratman,[46] as well as Christian List and Philip Pettit.[47] As Bennett Helm has pointed out, these standard accounts are lacking, for they seek to describe too diverse a set of social phenomena and therefore cannot capture the differences between, say, a short-term demonstration qua group agent and a centuries-long religious tradition qua group agent. Moreover, they are "ill-suited to making sense of friendship," says Helm, for they "largely ignore a crucial dimension of our social lives—our emotional attachments to each other."[48] The fact that the standard accounts of group agency ignore interpersonal emotional attachments means that they cannot account for what I referred to in chapter two as *the rationality of import*—that which distinguishes a person from a mere agent. Recall the difference between Deep Blue and Gary Kasparov. The scope of Deep Blue's exercise of practical reasoning is restricted to the instrumental: Is Be5 a legal move? A grandmaster like Gary Kasparov can also reason about import: Am I still having fun here? The standard accounts of group agency do not address the basic components of the rationality of import: felt evaluations and evaluative judgments, or the intersecting rational patterns of emotions, desires, judgments, and acts that at once create and reflect a person's values in a holistic network or evaluative perspective. On Helm's telling, the standard accounts cannot even really make sense of agency at the group level. For, as Helm sees it, genuine agency requires the agent to care about the ends that the agent pursues, and making sense of an agent's caring requires some talk of the rationality of import. These standard accounts then only characterize "plural goal-directedness," the kind of goal-directedness characteristic of computers without cares, like Deep Blue.[49] I leave this distinction between agency and goal-

[46] Michael Bratman, *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[47] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*.

[48] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 261.

[49] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 261-262.

directedness to the side. For my purposes, what matters is that the standard accounts of group agency (a) leave felt evaluations and evaluative judgments out of the picture, and (b) seek to describe too broad an array of social phenomenon—from strangers going on a walk, to marriage, to multinational corporations—and therefore cannot make sense of the different capacities available to friendships and churches qua corporate agents. Nevertheless, philosophers of religion and analytic theologians continue to try to make sense of corporate agency within an ecclesiological context by appealing to these standard accounts of group agency—particularly those of Bratman and Pettit.[50]

In addition to the inadequacies Helm attributes to the standard accounts, it is worth noting that Bratman's account in fact rules out the possibility of group agency. That is to say, Bratman is not a realist about group agents. Of the "special social glue" that binds people together when they collaborate on a project such as building a house (or singing in church), Bratman says: "we do not need … a further practical concept that goes beyond the resources of … individual planning agents" to explain this "mutual responsiveness" or meshing of intentions. "I think we can say what else is involved in this special social glue—including its distinct normativity—without appeal to yet a further, conceptually primitive, and non-reducible practical social relation of the sort that Gilbert has in mind in her talk of 'joint commitment'" or Helm has in mind in his talk of plural persons.[51] For Bratman, then, multiple people can exercise *shared agency*, meaning (essentially) that members can cooperate, each taking for granted that the others

[50] Examples include the following: Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Acting Liturgically: Philosophical Reflections on Religious Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 56-77; Joanna Leidenhag, "For We All Share in One Spirit: Charismatic Gifts and Church Unity," *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 4.1 (2020), 64-87; Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 135-144; and Joshua Cockayne, *Explorations in Analytic Ecclesiology: That They May Be One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[51] Michael Bratman, "Shared Agency," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Philosophical Theory and Scientific Practice*, ed. C. Mantzavinos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58.

have the same intention as they do. But Bratman insists that a group cannot form an irreducible agent at the group-level.[52] Shared agency is distributed (not corporate) agency. Thus, when a theologian says something to the effect that speaking in tongues "is an act of shared agency between" a human believer and the Spirit,[53] they are actually making a much more anodyne claim about the Spirit's economic work than my argument in the previous chapter that God and a human believer can constitute a new plural person in the Spirit, which essentially boils down to a defense of deification. And thus, a theologian cannot marshal Bratman's work in support of a model of the church or a denomination or the body of Christ as a group agent over above the sum of its individual members.

Hence, Joshua Cockayne, an analytic theologian, sees shared agency as an inadequate model of the agency proper to the body of Christ. An act of shared agency, as I just explained, involves the coordination of individual member-level intentions. It is, in other words, an aggregate of individual intentions, not a group-level intention irreducible to the member-level. Because shared agency theorizes collective action as the meshing or interlocking of so many individual intentions, to describe liturgical action in terms of shared agency would, Cockayne observes, effectively "exclude many individuals" who lack the capacity for forming such coordinated intentions "from contributing to the actions of a church's worship,"[54] such as "young children, some elderly individuals, and some neuro-atypical individuals."[55] According to Cockayne, a more properly inclusive ecclesiology requires a model of collective agency in which every worshipper is "an equal contributor." Shared agency models of the liturgy are, says

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[52] For more on this point about Bratman, see Tracy Isaacs, *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 36.

[53] Leidenhag, "For We All Share in One Spirit," 79.

[54] Joshua Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," *Res Philosophica* 95.3 (2018): 461.

[55] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 460.

Cockayne, like an orchestra in which not everyone plays an instrument. A better model of the "church's acting in worship" would "be one that not only integrates those with neurological and physical differences into the work of church, but also includes them as a constitutive part of a church's actions in worship."[56] In short, Cockayne argues that for an adequate account of the agency proper to the body of Christ, one needs a model of collective agency as corporate agency, not distributive or aggregative agency. So far, so good.

But Cockayne sticks to the standard accounts of corporate group agency as he tries to construct an inclusive model of group liturgical action. In what remains of this section, I will look closely at Cockayne's model to show what can go wrong when a theologian leaves caring and the emotions out of their account of ecclesial group agency. Simply put, by failing to distinguish between the kind of small-scale intimate corporate agency characteristic of a plural person, on the one hand, and the kind of indefinitely scalable group agency proper to an entire community, Cockayne's model of liturgical group action is only able to get as far as a meager inclusivity that winds up privileging the temporarily able-bodied and the neurotypical no less than a shared agency model like Bratman's does. Cockayne builds his model of liturgical group agency by "focus[ing] only on the List and Pettit account" of group agency.[57] To show why Cockayne's analytic ecclesiology is liable to the problem I have just identified, then, I first need to explain List's and Pettit's account.

The first thing to note is that the definition of agency that List and Pettit use to develop their account of group agency is, in fact, one that leaves out caring, valuing, and the emotions. Something counts as an agent for them if it has representational and motivational states and it

[56] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 463.
[57] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 464.

can act on these states. A representational state depicts the world; a motivational state prompts action. Such states need not rise to the level of personal beliefs or values, however. A robot that is programmed to detect and eliminate dirt on the ground but that has neither feelings about, nor the capacity to reflect on the worthiness of, this pursuit would on List's and Pettit's view count as an agent.[58]

Note, additionally, that in defining agency List and Pettit are not inquiring into the nature of personhood and whether groups could count as persons with the capacity to exercise autonomy, that is, to reflect on their values and feelings and to assess the worthiness of their goals and actions. They are not investigating corporate autonomy; they are investigating corporate agency. List and Pettit do argue that some groups count as persons, but their conception of personhood differs from the Victorine notion of being someone with a say over one's identity that I described in the last chapter, and it differs from Helm's notion of persons as agents who try to live up to their values as part of loving themselves. List and Pettit define a person along forensic and performative lines as an agent that effectively participates in a social or legal sphere of obligations: "one knows what is owed to one, and what one owes to others, and one is able and willing to pay one's debts or to recognize that censure or sanction are reasonable in cases of failure."[59] Put another way, if an agent can "assume suitable obligations and entitlements, responsibilities and rights, under accepted conventions," then that agent qualifies as a person, according to List and Pettit.[60] They conclude from this that group agents—from religious denominations to countries to multinational corporations—count as institutional persons, as opposed to biological ones like human beings. List and Pettit explicitly point out that group

[58] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 21.
[59] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 173.
[60] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 174.

persons lack the very features constitutive of personhood as Helm and Richard of St. Victor define the concept. Citing Helm, they write that "group agents are not flesh-and-blood persons. They are pachydermic and inflexible in various ways, and lack the perceptions and emotions of human individuals"—perceptions and emotions that, I would add, plural persons are capable of, too.[61]

So, in virtue of what can a group as large as the Catholic Church or ExxonMobil function as one irreducible agent, capable of acting corporately (as opposed to distributively)? I said above (§2.4 and §3.1) that, to count as an agent, a group must have a set of procedures and protocols in place (e.g., the sacraments and rites through which individual Catholics publicly profess their faith in the institution) for recognizing the authority of a subset of the group (e.g., papal conclaves, theological commissions) to define the group's goals and carry them out (through, e.g., the papal conclave's two-thirds qualified majority rule). List's and Pettit's more general explanation goes like this. The agency of a human individual "depends wholly" on neurobiological "subsystems" of a certain "configuration." Similarly, the agency of a synthetic individual, such as a robot or a computer program, depends wholly on "the configuration and functioning" of nonbiological subsystems (code, silicon). The agency of a group also depends on the configuration and functioning of certain subsystems, namely, "the organization and behavior" of the group's members.[62] Through this organization and behavior, the group is able to process and act on its representational and motivational states, its beliefs and goals, in a rational way. There are a number of structures a group could use to organize its members into an agent, that is, to determine and enact the group's attitudes. These structures range from

[61] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 176.
[62] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 4.

dictatorships to qualified or weighted majority voting.[63] Regardless of the structure employed by the group, individual members fall into one of two roles: *authorizing* or *acting*. Individual members who play an authorizing role accept the group's "claim to speak and act for" all of its members. So, for example, "if the group is a trade union," authorizing members simply accept the union's "right to negotiate in one's name as a member." Authorizing members of a church accept the church's "right to speak for one's religious beliefs."[64] As Joshua Cockayne himself notes in his reading of List and Pettit's model, authorizing members of a church qua group agent are members of the group agent, "yet their own actions and intentions play no role in the actions of that group."[65] By contrast, members of a group agent who play an acting role act "in full awareness for the pursuit of the group's ends."[66] A group formally licenses its authorizing members to authorize the group to act on their behalf: for example, members of a union meet the conditions of membership and pay their union dues; members of a church go through the requisite rites for inclusion in the church, such as baptism or confirmation. Likewise, acting members of a group agent "must be licensed by the group … to act on its behalf."[67] Membership in a group agent requires that one play at least one of these two roles, authorizing or acting, with respect to the group's attitudes and actions. List and Pettit point out that group agency in the context of hierarchies, such as certain religious denominations and commercial corporations, thus involves asymmetrical levels of activity on the part of the membership. "Ordinary believers" do not have as much of a say in what happens within a hierarchical church organization as do "priests and bishops"; "ordinary workers" cannot "authorize a commercial company in the

[63] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 48-49.
[64] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 35.
[65] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 466.
[66] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 35.
[67] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 35.

manner of shareholders and directors."[68] It is this discrepancy—between so-called ordinary believers whose "own actions and intentions," as Cockayne puts it, need not play a role at all "in the actions of the group"—that makes Cockayne's effort to ground an inclusive ecclesiology in List's and Pettit's model of group agency rather astonishing and ultimately unsuccessful, as I will now show.

Cockayne centers his account of the corporate agency of churches on an Anglican ecclesiology, wherein baptism is sufficient for membership. Since Anglican churches baptize infants as well as the profoundly intellectually impaired, Cockayne reasons, an Anglican account of group agency would be more inclusive than ecclesiological models requiring intellectual assent for membership, or models built on a conception of shared rather than group agency. As Cockayne puts it, "any baptized individual should be considered a part of a church's actions in worship," just as any worker would be "considered a part of the trade union's industrial action."[69] This is a problematic and misleading analogy, however, because a worker pays dues and decides to picket with their union; infants and the profoundly cognitively impaired, though, cannot sign up to be baptized. On the Anglican group agency model that Cockayne proposes, any baptized individual present in worship, whether they can cognitively endorse the relevant beliefs or take part in the relevant rituals, would count as part of the liturgical action. The authorizing role that members play would in this case be a bit more complex than what List and Pettit describe, Cockayne notes: the parents of baptized infants and the neurotypical community surrounding the profoundly intellectually impaired would authorize the church to speak for these members. Infants and the profoundly intellectually impaired would not themselves be playing an

[68] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 36.
[69] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 468

authorizing role.[70] So long as they are a member of a church through baptism, "a neuro-atypical individual can be represented in worship by those who take an active role, even if it is not possible for such an individual to take an active role" themself.[71]

On Cockayne's analysis, then, if the agent of liturgical acts is a whole church, irreducibly, and if that church includes neurodivergent members, then they, too, "count as a part of the church's worship," whether or not they see themselves as "contributing."[72] Neurotypical members "authorize" church "authorities" "to speak on behalf of" themselves and their neurodivergent fellow members, rather like a company authorizes a CEO to make decisions that "are counted as actions of the" company.[73] The church authorities, in turn, "licens[e] the actions" of neurodivergent members "as contributing to" group "worship," "even" if "those" members cannot "intentionally contribute."[74] A church hierarchy simply has to put the right decision-making structure in place to license the actions of individuals "who might not intend or be aware that their actions contribute to the group's acting."[75] Cockayne views such licensing on the part of church authorities as similar to a "government department" that licenses an "expert" to guide the government's thinking on a particular issue[76]—for, Cockayne writes, "profoundly disabled individuals" have special spiritual abilities that give them "an important role to play in shaping the actions and beliefs of the wider [church] body."[77]

Cockayne's account of ecclesial inclusivity rooted in group agency makes for a meager inclusivity, though, in three respects. First, anyone who is not a fully grown adult with their wits

[70] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 469.
[71] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 472.
[72] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 471.
[73] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 468-469.
[74] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 474.
[75] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 474.
[76] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 473.
[77] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 474.

about them is not actually part of the collective intention and action happening in worship. Neurotypical adults are authorizing the church to extend an authorizing role to infants and neuro-atypical members as a courtesy. Cockayne's model thus designates neurotypical Christians as the proxy agents of neurodivergent Christians. Cockayne intends his model to be more inclusive than a model of shared agency, wherein only those members of a church who could, for instance, actively participate in the collective singing of hymns would count as part of the liturgical action. But if the agency extended to infants and the neurodivergent is only a courtesy agency, then it is hard to see how Cockayne's model does much better than the shared agency approach to theorizing group liturgical action.

Second, Cockayne's model makes for a meager inclusivity insofar as it deploys an ableist disability-as-special-ability trope that construes the value of neurodiverse worship not in terms of what neurodivergent Christians want but rather as a benefit to neurotypical Christians. The logic here is extractive: the church can derive spiritual insights from its neurodiverse members, who have "a heightened sense of spiritual awareness" and so can "lead" neurotypical members "to a heightened awareness of the presence of God."[78] This strategy for valuing disability—to read it as a special or heightened conduit to the divine—effectively maintains a preference for ability. For as Cockayne subsumes disability under theological categories in order to attach a positive meaning to it, he constructs a disability-as-spiritual-ability narrative—a narrative that values disability by transforming it into ability. And to value disability by transforming it into ability is to devalue disability as such. Not only that, but by comparing the role of neurodiverse Christians in liturgical action to the role of an expert panel reporting to a government agency,[79] Cockayne

[78] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 473.
[79] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 473.

theorizes ecclesial inclusivity in terms of the usefulness of these Christians to their neurotypical co-religionists. Theologizing about disability in this way ultimately, then, perpetuates what scholars in disability studies variously term "the ideology of ability"[80] or "compulsory able-bodiedness" [81] or, simply, *ableism*. One cannot simply "dwell with disability"; one has to make it useful.[82]

The third and final problem with Cockayne's attempt to ground an inclusive ecclesiology in group agency is that a black-box pneumatology holds Cockayne's model together. As I explained in chapter one, a black-box pneumatology is any pneumatology that attributes to the Spirit certain crucial spiritual effects without explaining how the Spirit accomplishes those effects. Like a black box, the Spirit's "outputs" are clear enough, while the Spirit's "internal workings"—who the Spirit is, how the Spirit works—"remain unknown."[83] For Cockayne's black-box pneumatology, the Spirit's outputs are a unified *totus Christus* to which one may ascribe corporate agency. Cockayne wants to argue that the group agency proper to churches is somehow different from that proper to other institutions, like companies and trade unions, thanks to the Spirit: "a certain kind of divine action involved in corporate worship distinguishes it from other social structures."[84] A church meets the conditions of agency at the group-level, Cockayne argues, partly because of the Spirit's "mysterious" and "supernatural" work.[85] Cockayne likens the Spirit's role in unifying the group agency of a church that includes neurotypical as well as

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[80] Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 8.

[81] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 9.

[82] Eliza Chandler, "Cripping Community: New Meanings of Disability and Community," *No More Potlucks* 19 (2012): 69.

[83] Kimberley Kroll and Joanna Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Spirit and the Problem of Thirdness," in *The Third Person of the Trinity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 38.

[84] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 471.

[85] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 474.

neurodivergent members to a model of group agency from List and Pettit in which there is no joint intention on the part of the members. List and Pettit give two examples of such a model: bee colonies and terrorist cells. A bee colony (List and Pettit explain) performs as a "simple group agent" despite no intentional awareness at the level of individual bees: "they coalesce into a group agent" through "simple signals" that they have developed via evolution. A terrorist organization can also operate as a group agent without any joint intention among its individual members if the organization is broken up into a "cellular network" that promotes group-level goals of which only "a few coordinators" are aware. No individual cell would have any awareness of the group-level goals; the coordinators would not seek "their intentional acquiescence in the arrangement."[86] Cockayne compares the Spirit's role in ecclesial group agency to that of a bee colony or a terrorist leader. As he puts it, "the work of the Spirit might be seen to operate much like the biological impulses of the individual bees, or the instructions of higher-level terrorist commanders." I say that this is a black-box pneumatology because the analogies here do nothing to specify how exactly the Spirit does its unifying work. The bee analogy invites a sense of magic: supernatural impulses unify ordinary believers who have no conscious awareness of how their individual ecclesial practices fit into larger group-level liturgical actions. The terrorist cell analogy remains silent about how the Spirit issues its instructions across cells. Cockayne says only that the Spirit "somehow" unites a multitude of liturgical actors into one group agent "even if there is no sense of corporate action" among the liturgical actors.[87] Cockayne scales this model of ecclesial agency up to the *totus Christus*: thanks to the Spirit's "unseen mysterious role in uniting the acts of participants' worship,"[88] "the *whole* Church" exercises "a kind of supernatural agency" at the

[86] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 33.
[87] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 470-471.
[88] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 472.

group-level.[89] Cockayne's silence about how the Spirit works makes for a meager picture of ecclesial inclusivity in that it leaves inclusivity in a state of complete eschatological deferral—an object of God's terrorist commander knowledge, not part of the felt experience of human believers in their disconnected cells. Not to mention, Cockayne's silence about the Spirit's work cannot differentiate the Spirit's unifying work from that of any impersonal chief administrator of a non-intimate organization (presidents, prime ministers, dictators, directors of terrorist cells).

3. The Spirit as Queer Form

It should be clear from the previous section that, if one values inclusivity, a better model of ecclesial group agency is needed than what analytic ecclesiology has been able to come up with using only the standard accounts of group agency. My own view is that, with respect to an inclusive model of the agency proper to local churches, Christian denominations, and the body of Christ, my pneumatology—rooted as it is in plural person theory—can do better than analytic ecclesiology has so far done. But there remain two problems standing in the way of such an achievement.

First, plural person theory as Bennett Helm has so far articulated it to some degree misses the distinctive type of collective agency that friendship affords. The theory ascribes essentially the same irreducibly communal structure of practical reasoning to plural persons, where an intimate friendship links the members in an unsubstitutable bond with one another, as it does to communities of respect, group agents whose members feel a non-intimate love, or recognition respect, for the group's form of life as well as for one another in their fungible role as fellow practitioners of that form of life. That is to say, Helm treats the difference between plural persons

[89] Cockayne, "Inclusive Worship and Group Liturgical Action," 471.

and communities of respect as a difference in content, not form. For him, the structure of practical reasoning at play in plural persons and communities of respect is essentially the same. Treating them as the same, however, eclipses the difference that intimacy makes to practical reasoning. And it makes it difficult to sort out how intimate collective agents and non-intimate ones could fit together in an inclusive model of corporate ecclesial agency. Second, there remains the related problem of idealizing friendship as a liberatory relational form, or asking friendship to do too much, to bear too much of the burden, of redressing structural harm in communities of respect. Or, to put it in the idiom of ecclesiology, there remains the problem of opposing the Spirit and institutions, of treating the Spirit as a person who moves completely outside of institutions.

In this section I address both problems as a propaedeutic to an inclusive model of ecclesial group agency. I first refine Helm's distinction between plural persons and communities of respect, showing why they are best understood as different types of practical reasoning, not the same type with different content. To get a clearer sense of how, in spite of the limits of friendship as a means of addressing structural harm, plural persons and communities of respect might fit together in an ecclesiology, I then compare this refined version of the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect to queer theorist Ramzi Fawaz's distinction between friendship and the care work central to contemporary social movements.

To begin, then, with plural person theory. Though Helm does not put it this way, a community of respect is simply a non-intimate version of the interpersonal rationality of import characteristic of plural persons. That is, a community of respect, like a plural person, displays a collective rationality of import "that cannot be reduced to what has import to each" member

"individually."[90] Just as friendship commits one to feeling on behalf of *us* (the plural person) emotions that consistently line up with the import *our* joint goals have to *us*, regardless of what one feels individually, so, too, membership in a community of respect commits one to reacting to any of *us* (the community) with trust, gratitude, and esteem (or distrust, resentment, and contempt) in accordance with whether each of *us* keeps (or breaks) the norms of the community *we* care about, even if one has first-person singular reasons (or first-person plural reasons from a rival community of respect) not to value this community's "joint understanding of its practices" (as, for example, a queer Catholic might).[91] Helm writes that "to feel" such reactions "is to feel as one of *us* the import to *us* of our fellow members and these norms."[92] It is to participate in a rational pattern that shows up at the group-level, a pattern of attitudes that Helm refers to as the community's joint evaluative perspective.[93] As I showed in the previous chapter, Helm defines a plural person in the same way: the friends "each care as one of *us*" about *our* "well-being"—as defined by *our* "joint evaluative perspective"—and "it is the import *we* have to *ourselves* that makes intelligible" *our* feeling and acting on attitudes like irritation with (or gratitude to) one of *us* "for not upholding" one's "responsibilities as one of *us*" (or for "notably satisfying them").[94]

Thus, as Helm presents it, the main difference between a plural person and a community of respect is that in the case of a community of respect, the focus of a member's communal values is the community, whereas in the case of a plural person, the focus of *our* personal values is *us*, the friendship.[95] Helm gives a different name to the rational pattern of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments constituting a community of respect: whereas the rational pattern is "person-focused"

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[90] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 145; cf. Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 279, 287.
[91] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 145, 233.
[92] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 210, emphasis mine.
[93] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 144.
[94] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 271, 280.
[95] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 230-237.

in the case of plural persons, it is "character-oriented" in the case of communities of respect.[96] Despite the difference in nomenclature, the basic form, as I just explained, is the same. Helm has not (thus far) made such a connection between his account of plural persons and his account of communities of respect. But that Helm's theory effectively ascribes the same structure of practical reasoning to plural persons as it does to communities of respect meshes with a comment Helm makes in his first discussion of plural person theory: "plural agency is, I believe, at the heart of enduring interpersonal relationships such as, paradigmatically, friendship, as well as at least some larger groups of people that work together for a common good."[97] That for Helm a plural person is a community of respect and vice versa is also borne out by the size variation within Helm's examples of communities of respect: the Catholic Church, the LGBTQ+ rights movement, a professional society such as the American Philosophical Association, an academic department, a club, a family, even (crucially) a friendship.[98]

Helm's own description of communities of respect, then, differs from the way I briefly characterized the concept at the end of the previous chapter. As should be clear from what I said there, joint ownership of an evaluative perspective—what amounts to a joint personal identity—is not an indefinitely scalable phenomenon. Intimacy—which renders friends irreplaceable to one another—is necessary for forging such a joint personal identity. Impersonal respect of the sort that holds a community of strangers together is not enough to render the community a person, a plural someone with a joint say over *our* identity. When plural persons exercise joint autonomy over our identity, they are responding to a felt attachment to *our* particular *us*. The friends do not

[96] Helm, *, Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 286; Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 231.
[97] Helm, "Plural Agents," 18.
[98] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 21, 211, 233. Helm makes a passing comment to the effect that a friendship could count as a community of respect before stating that "much more would need to be said to integrate that earlier account of plural agency with the present notion of a community of respect" and setting the matter aside (104).

seek to maximize what matters to *me*; *we* seek *our* flourishing. *Our* emotional commitment to *our* life together takes priority. To be sure, a small subset of a community of respect could be appointed by the community to determine the best interpretation of what matters to the community. The Supreme Court of the United States or the International Theological Commission of the Catholic Church might be examples of this. (Or a small subset of a community of respect could break away from the community, giving itself the authority to reinterpret the community's norms.) But the entire community of respect cannot all at once exercise joint autonomy. Not all members can feasibly have equal say over the community's norms. To revise its norms, a community of respect requires procedures and protocols by which some members authorize other members to play an active role. All of this is to say, Helm's concept of a community of respect is not a scaled-up plural person, as his own account seems to suggest. Rather, a community of respect is more like a group agent as described by List and Pettit.

What is the greatest number of members a group can have and still behave as a plural person? Jo Freeman, a feminist organizer, observed in the 1970s that whenever an informal feminist group grew to more than 15 members, small subgroups of friends would develop, leaving those outside these cliques effectively powerless to set the group's agenda. At that point, ensuring equality among members would require the group to put formal procedures in place, meaning a democratic structure with fungible roles.[99]

So much by way of refining Helm's conception of communities of respect. To get a clearer sense of the different things that plural persons and communities of respect might

[99] Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader*, ed. Dark Star Collective (Oakland: AK Press), 68–75.

accomplish vis-à-vis an inclusive ecclesiology, I want to compare this distinction to Ramzi Fawaz's contrast between friendship, on the one hand, and radical social movements, on the other, particularly the discourse of care or mutual aid that has become increasingly central to these movements. Fawaz contrasts the intimate, experimental, non-ideological, and open-ended quality of friendship with the dogmatism of movement politics to argue that asking "feminist and queer movement ideologies … to provide a safe place of indefinite belonging" or a "blueprint for universal belonging, social uplift, and collective freedom" is not just asking too much of them; it is a category mistake.[100] I argue that unpacking the difference between plural persons and communities of respect in terms of the opposition between friendship and care work as Fawaz describes it can helpfully temper theology's expectations of the church as a site of utopian inclusivity.

Fawaz characterizes social movement politics, and in particular "the feminist, queer, and trans* social justice projects, and the organizing spaces they create," as "deeply *unfriendly* places" despite the "extraordinary sites of community building and care" that they achieve. Such social movements value "universal inclusion, collective uplift, mutual recognition, and the dismantling of oppression," yet precisely in upholding these values, Fawaz observes, social movements make intimacy and friendship difficult for the fellow movement workers trying to achieve them. That is because social movement discourse tends to be "rife with moralizing, political purity tests, surveillance and policing of behavior and speech, backbiting, and group cliquishness."[101] Ironically, the very social movements that seek to build a more habitable world for minoritized identities wind up alienating their activist membership by (a) asking who is "the most politically

[100] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 355, 339.
[101] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 349.

progressive," (b) dogmatically enforcing "rigid predetermined categories of identitarian belonging," and (c) seeking "an absolute and unimpeachable set of rules on how to properly pursue a progressive life,"[102] "a comprehensive set of rules or ethical instructions that could finally secure us against the contingencies of all categories of gender and sexual being."[103] In other words, movement politics cohere around an ossifying set of orthodoxies about what counts as progress that is decidedly ungenerous toward the messy surprises of real life: "there exists a will" within movement spaces "to produce *new* norms of conduct, both salubrious ones that enable the flourishing of feminist and queer life, but also prohibitive ones that seek to abolish or forestall potential missteps on the road to liberation."[104] As an example of such ungenerosity, Fawaz points to the prevalence of "canceling as a tool of ideological policing" among "queer, feminist, and trans* social justice" advocates.[105] In their attempt to preempt harm, movement spaces end up stifling difference rather than making space for it. They create a "punitive" and "defensive" and "recriminatory" culture among their membership rather than a liberating one.[106]

The trend of social movement politics to enforce group unity around a set of calcifying norms is especially damaging in its contemporary form for two reasons, says Fawaz. First, movement spaces see their primary goal as redressing all wrongs and eliminating harm, rather than opening up new forms of being and belonging. Social movements are increasingly a form of care work in that the movements see themselves as primarily "aimed at remediating systemic harm."[107] Therefore, second, radical social movements attempt to subsume all of human social

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[102] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 364 (emphasis Fawaz's).
[103] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 339.
[104] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 339.
[105] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 353.
[106] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 350.
[107] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 353

experience within the framework of the movement. Because social movements understand their project to be "ameliorating structural and interpersonal harm,"[108] rather than imaginatively rethinking gender and sexuality, participants in these movements take the purpose of politics to be making "up for lack at all levels of human experience," from the personal to the structural. The rhetoric of care "function[s] hegemonically as a framework that cannibalizes all other forms of relating within and without social justice movements."[109] Put another way, individual participants in these movements are encouraged "to reframe all their intimate relationships, including interpersonal bonds with friends and family, as mere local expressions of wide-ranging systemic inequalities."[110] Fawaz calls this complete reframing of one's life "*alignment*, whereby all the political, social, and cultural variables of one's life must perfectly line up to produce a seamlessly progressive ideological structure." Alignment is a problematic ideal, says Fawaz, because it results in a "dogmatic narrowmindedness" that "limits" one's "capacity to see the value of multiple, competing, and even contradictory visions of gender and sexual freedom in the creation of a more just world."[111] Alignment, that is, makes it difficult for movement participants to see the rich conceptual possibilities in works of art that are slightly at odds with the movement's orthodoxies. The only hermeneutic metric that matters becomes "a singular political metric of presumed liberal progress."[112] Worse, the ideal of alignment "in contemporary social justice circles" robs friendship of its transformative power. When social movements subject friendship to "the logic of care," Fawaz argues, they reduce an otherwise creative and unpredictable relational form to "a rigorous standard of harm reduction." And trying to

[108] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 338.
[109] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 351.
[110] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 352.
[111] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 356.
[112] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 357.

eliminate the possibility of harm ahead of time by holding friendship to the standard of harm reduction only ends up eliminating the possibility of being transformed through encounters with difference and disagreement.[113]

Fawaz, then, contrasts the creative freedom of friendship with the stifling ideological unity of contemporary queer and feminist social movements. If these social movements suffer from "the temptation to identify a singular or all-encompassing ideological system … that could account for, adjudicate, and resolve all the potential conflicts and disagreements of gender and sexual existence,"[114] friendship "exceeds the bounds of existing ideologies," is rooted in "contingent criteria" that "equal participants" mutually negotiate, and therefore offers much richer possibilities of creative freedom than movement politics.[115] If social movements calcify "once flexible conceptions of gender and sexual identity" into rigid "shibboleths," friendship is "world-opening."[116] For, Fawaz explains, friendship is "fundamentally non-ideological, not operating under a rule or program, but a creative practice of freedom."[117] Fawaz sees friendship as based on a "trust" that transcends "presupposed group belonging, ideological commitments, or shared interests." Rather, friendship grows out of the "making and keeping of promises in relation to immediate, contingent circumstances."[118] Friendship, unlike care work, does not concern itself with "redressing structural harm."[119] Instead, friendship involves "mutual dialogue, the ability to negotiate differences, and the possibility of being seen and heard, not simply as you are but as you might be or become."[120] That is to say, friends give one another the space to grow

[113] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 358.
[114] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 338.
[115] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 340.
[116] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 339.
[117] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 348.
[118] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 341.
[119] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 344.
[120] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 337.

together. They hold one another through personal changes. They help one another figure out what they think about the world. They forgive one another. Friendship, in short, involves mutual transformation. Unlike social movement spaces, "friendship … is a deeply unpredictable space of experimentation."[121] Where social movement spaces seek unimpeachable rules, "friendship can never function as the application of a rule," for it requires the "mutual creation and continual renegotiation" of the friends as (to put it in the idiom of plural person theory) each of *us* continually asks what matters to *us* throughout the ever-changing circumstances *we* face. And where social movements make "cosmic commitments to ensure a utopian future for a vague political collective (oppressed people everywhere)," friendships make "promises" that "are local, intimate, and open to revision."[122] Friendships thus amount to what Fawaz calls a *queer form*: not a list of rigid rules, but "launching pads for flights of the imagination" about human life, "provisional outlines that allow" the friends to "conceive" new ways of living together,[123] an "endlessly rich archive."[124]

As an example of the difference-bridging, cosmopolitan nature of friendship-as-queer-form, Fawaz cites the "lifelong friendship" between Randy Wicker, a white gay cis man, and Marsha P. Johnson, a Black trans woman and co-founder with Sylvia Rivera (whom I mentioned in the opening of this chapter) of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. The fact that their friendship was rooted in "temperament, taste," "a sense of humor," and "basic chemistry" rather than "any presumed group allegiance or ideological program" meant that it could withstand the vagaries of movement politics. Such a friendship can provide a respite from the

[121] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 352.
[122] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 354.
[123] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 342.
[124] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 366.

disappointments of movement politics as well as a resource for developing the "emotional resilience" necessary to participate in them.[125] It can create a shelter for the friends to thrive in even as the "once-thought-permanent social and political identities" and "ideals" of movement politics dissolve,[126] and provide "equipment for living past the moment" such movements "disappear."[127]

In sum, friendship as Fawaz describes it offers much more than the mere redressing or prevention of harm. Where social movements, with their logic of care, are "predicated on a lack that must be redressed," friendship "begins with the plenitude or creative capacity of two people to engage in mutually transformative exchange."[128] Moreover, the harm-reductionist values of contemporary social movements are friendship's death-knell. As Fawaz puts it, "the need for friendships to model ideological structures of unity often signals their death, substituting political purity for productive interpersonal discord, blind loyalty for loving honesty, recognition for mutual transformation, and frankly, mind-numbing dullness in place of friendship's special brand of hilarious, ribald, juicy surprise."[129] Paradoxically, the unruliness and flexibility of friendship make it a richer and more durable resource for coping with an oppressive world than the movements that seek to articulate rules for eradicating oppression. It is precisely because friends do not primarily practice friendship as a means of eradicating structural harm, but rather as a way to make life more pleasurable, that friendship can open up an imaginative space in which the friends are able to take risks, change in surprising ways, and "disclose new aspects of reality" to one another.[130] The point here is not that friendships are always halcyon, nor that friendships

[125] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 346.
[126] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 337.
[127] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 345.
[128] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 352.
[129] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 355.
[130] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 358.

can solve systemic oppression, but that friendships, by having modest aspirations that pertain to a limited, local set of circumstances, actually enrich their participants in more far-reaching ways than movement politics can.

The lesson that Fawaz takes away from all of this is that it is a category error to ask radical social movements to provide a "blueprint for universal belonging, social uplift, and collective freedom."[131] In other words, the very aspiration "to eliminate trauma, negativity, or psychic pain from the lives of their participants" is what makes movement spaces so unfriendly; "the internecine punishing tendency of contemporary social justice projects is an effect of … the very expectation that one must be cared for by 'the movement,' an expectation that breeds bad blood, disappointment, and blame."[132] When participants expect these movements to "function as a rule, essential identity, norm, or dictum" that could redress past harm and prevent future harm, they are not merely expecting too much; they are asking for the wrong thing, effectively creating the sort of punitive culture that, far from preventing harm, lays the foundations for yet more harm. They "fundamentally misunderstand what" social movements "are meant to accomplish." Instead of seeing "the contingent promises of feminist and queer social movements as ironclad agreements that could or should secure a future free of hurt, trauma, or violation," participants ought to see them as places to wrestle with "productive uncertainty." And instead of looking for a forever home in these movements, participants should see them as temporary "by design,"[133] for no one movement, no single ideology, "can, or necessarily should, carry the weight of all" one's "political aspirations at once."[134] It is "inevitable" that identitarian "movement

[131] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 339.
[132] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 351.
[133] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 355.
[134] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 358.

ideologies" will fail "to make good on their utopian aspirations." Their "binding categories" cannot "provide a safe place of indefinite belonging." So, Fawaz concludes, queers, feminists, and their allies should look for home in queer forms, in "relationships that might endure beyond all ideologies, identities, and categories," namely, in friendships, in "the surprising encounter with others who shift the ground beneath one's feet."[135] Rather than aspiring to the fantasy of a movement ideology that could cure all ills for all time, Fawaz argues, queers and their allies should aspire to live their lives as queer forms: to contribute to the "endlessly rich archive" of friendships that future generations of queers and their allies might look to for models to argue with as they make their own way in the world. As Fawaz tells his students, who tend to approach life from a care-work, movement-centered mindset, "Don't forget that one day you too will be someone else's … queer form, a picture in their mind of what they could be or become—you'll want to leave them shapes rich in hope and possibility, not only … the prison of your moralizing judgments."[136] The proliferation of friendships-as-queer-forms offers onlookers outside the friendships so many models for imagining new ways of being.

What does Fawaz's distinction between friendship-as-queer-form and the rhetoric of care in social movements have to do with plural persons and communities of respect, or with the theological question I am asking in this chapter about the relationship between the Spirit and the church?

First, Fawaz's opposition between friendship-as-queer-form and social movement politics lines up with the refined version of the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect that I began to sketch at the end of the last chapter and clarified in this chapter. The scale

[135] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 355.
[136] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 366.

of movement ideologies—the impossibility of achieving intimacy at such scale—is one way of thinking about why they cannot offer the same rich transformative possibilities that friendship affords. Fawaz's analysis of the difference between friendship and movement politics helpfully illustrates the epistemic benefits of friendship without idealizing it. Fawaz is clear that friendship does not offer a magical cure for structural harm. What it offers is the demand for improvisation. Because friendship takes place outside institutional supports, one simply cannot be in a friendship without making contingent promises and trusting that each of *us* will continue to be there for *us*. So, to apply Fawaz's analysis to the questions I asked in the first section of this chapter: friendship might not offer a superior check on moral error, inasmuch as systemic oppression has socialized people to be terrible friends to one another, as examples like Claude McKay's liberal white friends make painfully apparent. But the contingent, local, and improvisational nature of friendship means that it can offer a different check on moral error, one that offsets the dogmatic and totalizing and universalizing impulses of communities of respect.

Second, with respect to the question of how plural persons and communities of respect might fit together—or, how the Spirit relates to the church—I think there is an important lesson in Fawaz's analysis for theologians seeking an inclusive ecclesiology. To reframe Fawaz's insight theologically: No single ecclesial model can, or necessarily should, carry the weight of all one's aspirations for inclusivity all at once. The desire to construct a blueprint for an inclusive church—or a blueprint for an inclusive model of group ecclesial agency—is just as wrongheaded as the desire among contemporary radical social movement participants to have a blueprint for universal belonging. Given human finitude and particularity and contingency, the construction of such a model can only backfire, becoming a confining hegemonic framework that unduly restricts the evolution of new ways being as human believers explore new conceptual possibilities

in response to ever-changing circumstances. This means that friendship does have an especially vital role to play in the life of the church—not because friendship is immune to structural harm, or because friends can do an especially good job of calling out harmful churches or bad theologies, but rather because friends offer a diversity of queer forms to live by, provisional models of faith and hope for future believers to reflect on as they seek to shape their own conceptions of faith and hope.

In short, the Spirit—the many plural persons God constitutes with God's many human friends—is an archive of queer forms. Consequently, believers ought to live with a reflexive awareness of the fact that their own friendship with God is part of this archive and could serve as an example to help future believers in their pursuit of the faith. Fawaz's injunction is no less crucial in the context of the Christian life than it is in the context of queer liberation. To repeat that injunction: "one day you will be someone else's queer form, a picture in their mind of what they could be or become—you'll want to leave them shapes rich in hope and possibility."[137] Or, to put Fawaz's point in Karl Barth's idiom, God repeatedly makes Godself answerable to new friendships with new human believers through whom God opens Godself up to a new set of concerns. Given that each of God's human friends is "unique and irreplaceable" and finite[138]—and that God is "living" and "eternally rich"[139]—God's teeming "immanence" will be "expressed in continually new forms" as God and new human believers constitute new plural persons.[140] Each of these friendships reveals something distinctive of the inexhaustible God. For that reason, every believer is called to noetic autonomy, "bidden" (*geboten*) to describe their own

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[137] Fawaz, *Queer Forms*, 366.

[138] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter *CD*], 14 vols., ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), III/2, 271.

[139] Barth, *CD* III/4, 16.

[140] Barth, *CD* II/1, 314, 320.

understanding of God to others without succumbing to intellectual bullying or precipitously dismissing other perspectives.[141] What Fawaz calls an archive of queer forms, an ethics of "flexibility and openness," Barth would call formed reference, a theological ethics of "prophetic" or "practical casuistry."[142] Because the living God befriends particular human beings in particular situations, no human believer may settle on one interpretation of divine command once and for all.[143] Instead, each of God's human friends must treat the historical record of God's numerous particular friendships with human believers—the Spirit's archive of queer forms—as a "formed reference" for discerning what matters to *us* at any particular moment.[144]

To be clear, this does not mean that the Spirit is the opposite of the church, or that *pneuma* is the opposite of institutions. It simply means that no church is the only place one can find the Spirit's queer forms. Nor does anything I have said require a Protestant approach to ecclesiology. What is Roman Catholicism, after all, if not a wildly rich archive of queer forms?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced out some ecclesiological implications of the constructive pneumatology that I presented in the previous chapter. I described what can go wrong when analytic ecclesiology seeks a universal model of inclusive ecclesial belonging rooted in the standard accounts of group agency. I refined plural person theory, clarifying the difference between plural persons and communities of respect. I then showed that the desire to construct an inclusive model of the agency proper to indefinitely scalable communities of respect—including

[141] Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, 14 vols. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), *KD* II/1, 224.
[142] Barth, *CD* III/4, 9.
[143] Barth, *CD* III/4, 11.
[144] Barth, *CD* III/4, 18-30.

local churches, denominations, and the body of Christ—is misguided, however well-intentioned. A more productive approach to ecclesiology leaves the search for a definitive mode of inclusivity aside, centering instead on the economic proliferation of the Spirit as an archive of queer forms, so many plural persons who offer a formed reference for figuring out what matters (or ought to matter) to *us*, presently.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPIRIT AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

Introduction

In the *Confessions*, Augustine perceives his temporal extension as a strain on his coherence as a person. Human beings live in "the flux of time," rocked by "tempestuous changes," their "thoughts" "torn to fragments." How can the "multifarious" fragments of such a life add up to a single person, one and the same over time?[1]

Augustine's description of a time-scattered mind anticipates the modern philosophical problem of personal identity, or the difficulty of establishing that a present human being *x* and a future being *y* are the selfsame person in a mental rather than an exclusively biological sense. Why do the persistence conditions for persons matter? What difference does it make whether the episodes of an individual human life add up to a single psychologically continuous self? For one thing, it is hard to see how, without a diachronically stable self, one could experience one's life as anything other than "merely happening to one," much less identify with one's life.[2] Autonomy, in other words, seems to presuppose personal identity over time: one recognizes one's volitions as the volitions one wants insofar as they fit into a larger story about what one values, that is, insofar as they are self-expressive.[3]

Indeed, narrative theories of personal identity—according to which "what makes" one "the same person" over time is that one sees one's "present experiences and actions" as fitting

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[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2012), 11.29.39, 310.

[2] Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1, 11.

[3] Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 20; Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 57-66. For a relevant discussion of the connection between freedom and character in Schleiermacher's reading of Kant, see Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism*, 76-80.

into "an ongoing story" with explanatory links to one's "experienced past and anticipated future"[4]—have enjoyed widespread support from philosophers as well as theologians.[5] "Having" such a "narrative" "provides the phenomenological unity of consciousness over time that constitutes personal survival and generates person-specific capacities such as" autonomy, the philosopher Marya Schechtman explains.[6]

But narrative theories of personal identity face challenges, not least of which is that some adult human beings neither experience nor implicitly organize their lives as an ongoing story. The philosopher Galen Strawson notes that some individuals (including him) have a "temporal temperament" or "time-style" that predisposes them neither to experience events from their past as having happened to the same "inner mental presence or self" that they are now, nor to have the "sense that" the same self "will be there in the future."[7] These individuals tend not to "construe" their lives "as a narrative."[8] Thus, "on the strong form of Schechtman's view," Strawson notes, "I am not really a person."[9] By Strawson's lights, however, his "episodic" and "non-narrative" (as opposed to "diachronic" and "narrative") temperament "is one normal, non-pathological form of life," "one way to flourish."[10]

Narrative theories of personal identity also present a theological difficulty. If, as Schechtman claims, one's "autonomy" is a function of one's weaving one's life into a "narrative

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[4] Marya Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival: A Refinement and Defense of the Narrative View," in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Daniel Hutto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 165, 162.

[5] See, for example, Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism*, 6-17; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Marya Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[6] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 167.

[7] Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio* 17.4 (2004): 431, 433, 434.

[8] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 440.

[9] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 447.

[10] Strawson, "Against Narrarivity," 432-433.

self-conception,"[11] and if narrative is (as one theologian puts it) a "structure" that links "disparate phenomena" into a "sense-making whole,"[12] what does that imply for trauma survivors? Human beings store traumatic memories somatically rather than narratively, in "images and physical sensations" that defy language.[13] Trauma research suggests that narrative approaches to healing trauma, which require survivors to relive traumatic memories as they try to fit these contextless flashbacks into a "cathartic" story, "can be traumatizing rather than healing" and so are not always advisable.[14] Indeed, because narrating one's traumatic experiences often retraumatizes survivors,[15] non-narrative somatic therapeutic modalities have largely displaced talk therapy as the first line of treatment for (complex) post-traumatic stress disorder.[16] Moreover, contemporary theologians suggest that making sense of suffering—a variety of theodicy—legitimates it and so diverts Christians from "absorbing" it in communities of care.[17] This suggestion raises the question of whether not only a generic capacity for autonomy but being a Christian in particular requires a narrative self-conception. Does Christianity, with its eschatological hope, favor diachronics over episodics and trauma survivors?[18] Must a good Christian life be lived narratively?

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[11] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 160; cf. *The Constitution of Selves*, 94. NB: Schechtman has since come to see the original strong form of her narrative self-constitution view as "guilty of conflating questions about the identity of the moral self with questions about the identity of" a legal person and thus "far too simple," see her *Staying Alive: Personal Identity, Practical Concerns, and the Unity of a Person* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 99, 102.

[12] Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism*, 6.

[13] Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 196.

[14] Peter Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1997), 10.

[15] van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 196, 232-249; Laurence Heller and Aline LaPierre, *Healing Developmental Trauma: How Early Trauma Affects Self-Regulation, Self-Image, and the Capacity for Relationship* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2012), 188-199.

[16] These modalities include Somatic Experiencing, the NeuroAffective Relational Model, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, and Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy.

[17] Stanley Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 49.

[18] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 436-437.

In this chapter, I develop the eschatological implications of my model of the Spirit as a plural person to argue that (a) a narratively cohesive self is not a precondition of autonomy, and therefore (b) an episodic temperament is fully consistent with a Christian conception of human flourishing. The Spirit of friendship who constitutes God and a believer as a plural person with a joint evaluative perspective holds the believer in the believer's identity; *our* love of *us* continually reveals God's inexhaustible splendor in ever-novel ways; and Christianity can be lived not only diachronically—as a story of creation, fall, and redemption with a beginning, a middle, and an end—but also episodically: as the grace that bubbles up in *our* unsubstitutable sensibilities, the *phronēma* of the Spirit (Rom 8:6).

The argument has three parts. In part one, I use the deliverances of my pneumatology to weigh in on the ongoing debate between Marya Schechtman and Galen Strawson concerning personal identity.[19] The two philosophers single out friendship as a test of their claims. Strawson argues that episodics have a gift for friendship despite lacking a narratively continuous self; Schechtman argues that a gift for friendship presupposes a narratively continuous self. I argue, using plural person theory, that neither philosopher has it quite right: friendship creates a perduring personal identity, albeit a continuous self that is non-narrative, rooted not in the reflexive ability to link up the fragments of one's life into a narrative whole, but in the virtuosity or muscle memory that a lifetime of feeling and acting for *our* sake instills in each of *us*.

In part two, I use this non-narrative ground of personal identity to make good on my claim in chapter two that the Victorine conception of personhood on which my pneumatology is based does not demand a neurotypical neurological profile on the part of human believers. I show how plural person theory furnishes a conception of personhood that is neither ableist nor

[19] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 156.

individualist—how it demystifies the practical reasoning of porous and vulnerable selves without making relationality an ableist criterion of personhood—by looking at the testimonies of evangelical Christians living with dementia.[20] My model of the economic Spirit (as the many plural persons God forms with God's many human friends) does not demand hyperrationality on the part of human believers; it does not exclude human beings who experience cognitive decline. Rather, it is one way of making sense of a recurring theme in these testimonies: that, as one woman living with Alzheimer's puts it, "It's a matter of knowing you're loved. And because feelings remain when facts are forgotten, it's possible for anybody with dementia, no matter what stage of their dementia, to know that they're loved and because God is God and it's not what I say but the Holy Spirit is alive and real God."[21] These Christians speak of the Spirit's holding them in their relationship with God, strengthening their feelings, speaking to them through their embodied memories (e.g., liturgy, prayer, singing), and thus preserving their identities as their autobiographical memories (i.e., their capacity to recall past events in chronological order) and their mental powers slip away.

In part three, I use my pneumatology to refute three philosophical arguments against the coherence of subjective immortality as an object of human hope: (a) that the ubiquitous human trait of psychological discontinuity makes subjective immortality impossible for human beings; (b) that, because the set of experiences desirable to one human personality is finite, the only eternal

[20] 'Tricia Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me: Experiencing Faith in Dementia* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2022); 'Tricia Williams, *What Happens to Faith When Christians Get Dementia: The Faith Experience and Practice of Christians Living with Mild to Moderate Dementia* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2021); Christine Bryden, "A Spiritual Journey into the I-Thou Relationship: A Personal Reflection on Living with Dementia," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 28.1-2 (2016): 7-14; Christine Bryden and Elizabeth MacKinlay, "Dementia: A Journey Towards the Divine: A Personal View of Dementia," *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 13.3-4 (2001): 69-75; Jennifer Bute, "My Glorious Opportunity: How My Dementia Has Been a Gift," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 28.1-2 (2016): 15-23.

[21] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 61.

life that could ever be available to human beings would be one drained of all desire;[22] and (c) that without temporal scarcity human beings would lose confidence in their ideas of value altogether.[23]

1. Must a Christian Life Be Lived Narratively?

The philosophers Marya Schectman and Galen Strawson have engaged in an ongoing debate over whether (a) a human being counts as a person if and only if their life evinces a narrative form; and (b) living one's life narratively is a requirement for living ethically and thus a requirement for human flourishing. Strawson says no.[24] Schechtman, who says yes, has softened her position in response to Strawson's criticisms of so-called narrative theories of personal identity.[25] But she maintains that a "clarified and refined version" of the narrative approach is the right way to think about human personhood, ethics, and flourishing.

On Schectman's clarified and refined version, which she calls *the narrative self-constitution view*, "we constitute ourselves as persons by forming a narrative self-conception according to which we experience and organize our lives." By "narrative self-conception," Schectman means that human persons are socialized into cultures that have a "background conception" of human selves as psychologically "continuing individuals." Human persons thus learn to experience their present not "as an isolated incident" but as "part of an ongoing story" in which the "experienced past" and the "anticipated future condition" the meaning of the present for them. To illustrate how such a temporally extended narrative self-conception might condition the meaning of the

[22] Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 82-100.

[23] Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[24] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 428-452.

[25] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 155-178.

present, Schectman gives the following examples: the difference between how one might experience one's work when one is anticipating a promotion or a vacation, versus how one would experience it in the absence of such perks; or the difference between walking up to one's own house versus a stranger's house; or the difference between coming home to one's loving family or coming home after a break-up. According to the narrative self-constitution view, "developing and operating with" the kind of narrative that structures these examples is what constitutes a person's identity and renders their "actions and experiences" theirs as opposed to someone else's.[26] For a narrative self-conception to count as successfully constituting one's personal identity, it must meet two conditions, says Schectman: the *reality constraint* (one's narrative self-conception must conform to the "basic character of reality," including how persons generally work) and the *articulation constraint* (one must be able to grasp the logic of questions about practical reasoning, such as "why did you do that," or "how did you get here," and be able to answer them).[27]

The philosophical worry that the narrative self-constitution view addresses is the Augustinian worry with which I opened this chapter: what are the "persistence conditions" for persons?[28] The narrative self-constitution view is meant to improve on theories of personal identity that make psychological continuity one of those conditions. Grounding personal identity in psychological continuity—the feeling that one is always the same person in a subjective sense, the same reflexively self-aware self, from one moment to the next—has been an attractive option for many philosophers. But it is an incoherent option: it is not clear that there is any reliable criterion by which to establish such continuity. It is not clear that there exists any condition the satisfaction of which would guarantee cross-time perdurance of whatever it is to be oneself in the

[26] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 162.
[27] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 163.
[28] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 164.

subjective (as opposed to deictic) sense. Constancy of character fails as a condition: even neurologically healthy human persons tend to exhibit significant changes in personality, values, and tastes over the course of a normal lifespan.[29] Nor does access to specific memories seem like a sufficient condition, for memories are information on which one can only ever have an objective, not a subjective, angle of view: remembering is not equivalent to occupying once again the same center of reflective self-awareness that formed the memories in the first place.[30]

Schechtman's defense of the narrative self-constitution view of personal identity is that it accomplishes what psychological continuity theories have tried and failed to accomplish, namely, accounting for four features of human life: moral responsibility, justice, prudence, and the desire to survive. In other words, one's narrative self-conception puts one in an "affective and practical" relationship to the past and future, not just a "cognitive" one, such that one is first-personally affected by what one has done or experienced in the past as well as what one hopes to do or fears doing in the future. This affective and practical relation, says Schectman, "provides the phenomenological unity of consciousness over time that constitutes personal survival and generates person-specific capacities such as moral responsibility."[31] Simply put, through a narrative self-conception, one first-personally appropriates one's past actions and experiences, making them one's own past in the present, thanks to one's felt sense of a connection to them; and this felt connection enables one to take moral responsibility in the present for one's past actions as well as to be a good friend to others (on which more in a moment).[32] By Schectman's

[29] Jordi Quoidbach, Daniel Gilbert, and Timothy Wilson, "The End of History Illusion," *Science* 339.6115 (2013): 96-98.

[30] This is true even for a person with an eidetic memory: should she choose to recollect all her memories sequentially, she would experience it as the equivalent of downloading her prior mental stream and watching a very long, poorly edited movie.

[31] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 167.

[32] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 173.

lights, the deeper one's felt connection to one's past, the better: one's life is "made richer and smoother through" the self-conscious "effort" to "influence the duration of" one's narrative self-conception by "stock[ing] up on" whatever "madeleines and tea" will "aid" in one's "recovering lost time."[33]

In a critique of Schectman's narrative self-constitution view, Strawson claims not to have such a felt connection to his past. As I explained in the introduction, he categorizes the human relationship to time in terms of two temperaments: *diachronics* who, as Schectman describes them, collect their madeleines and their tea, poring over scrapbooks and listening to nostalgia radio in an effort to establish the "moral or theme" of their life;[34] and *episodics* who, like Strawson himself, "have absolutely no sense of" their "life as a narrative with form," "have no particular tendency" to try to construct a life-narrative, do not experience their current self as the same self who was at the center of their remembered past when it occurred, and do not have a sense that their current self will be at the center of future experiences that are biologically continuous with the human being they are now.[35]

Strawson grants that this characterization of an episodic life is "significantly" different in "ethical and emotional form" from the kind of diachronic life that Schectman associates with personhood and moral agency.[36] But he insists that an episodic temperament, with its felt sense of psychological discontinuity from past and future, does not prohibit one's developing into a person with ethical sensibilities, nor does it make life less rich and smooth, as Schectman imagines it would; it is, rather, simply a different "way to flourish."[37] In keeping with the developments of

[33] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 176, 175.
[34] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 172.
[35] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 433, 430.
[36] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 431.
[37] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 433.

trauma research that I noted in the introduction, Strawson observes that successfully engaging in psychotherapy neither requires nor inculcates a narrative outlook: one need not experience oneself as psychologically continuous with one's past, nor be able to weave a unified narrative about how the self one was then is the same self one is now, to recognize that whatever happened to one's body and mind in the past will affect one's neurobiology in the present. "The key explanatory findings in psychotherapy," Strawson writes, "are often piecemeal in nature."[38] The salient question for psychotherapy sessions is not *how did I get here* but *how can I regulate my nervous system now* or *how can I relate more productively to what is actually happening in the present*.

In short, according to Strawson, episodic lives and diachronic lives are simply engaged in different ethical projects—and "the business of living well is, for many, a completely non-narrative project."[39] Indeed, Strawson wagers that an episodic temperament is an easier route to flourishing and living ethically. In contrast to thinkers like Alastair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, for whom the good life is a unified quest narrative, Strawson contends that "the best lives almost never involve this kind of self-telling."[40] Seeking a narrative and affective connection to as much of one's past as one can—the ideal to which Schectman remains "committed" even in the clarified and refined version of her narrative self-constitution view[41]—is for Strawson "more of an affliction or a bad habit than a prerequisite for a good life."[42] That is, the need for narrative psychological continuity in one's life amounts to a "mistaken" and "potentially pernicious" need

[38] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 448.
[39] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 448.
[40] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 437.
[41] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 176.
[42] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 450.

for "control."[43] Additionally, as Strawson sees it, seeking psychological continuity with one's past through narrative "risks a strange commodification of life and time."[44]

Strawson notes that many proponents of a narrative approach to personal identity, including MacIntyre and Taylor, have "religious commitments" or "forms of religious belief" that seem to favor a diachronic temperament over an episodic one.[45] Their assertion that pursuing the good life is a matter of seeking psychological continuity according to a narrative form is inextricably tied to their Christianity. To be sure, narrative is one of the major models of contemporary theological reflection and scriptural exegesis. For example, N. T. Wright has likened living a Christian life to living out the lost fifth act of a Shakespearean play: the first four acts (creation, fall, Israel, Jesus) provide an unfinished story into which Christians immerse themselves for the purposes of conforming their future to the story's narrative momentum.[46] If models like Wright's imply that living Christianly requires a believer to achieve some narrative psychological continuity among their past, present, and future selves, is this as it should be, theologically speaking? Does Christian practice ideally involve an effort "to maintain an affective connection to as much of" one's life as one "can?"[47] What might an alternative ground of personal continuity look like in Christians with an episodic temperament or time-style?

One way to settle these questions is by addressing the debate between Schectman and Strawson that I have just described. Each thinker tests the coherence of their claims by discussing friendship, arguing that their own position makes better sense of friendship than the other's. Strawson argues that episodics have no less "a gift for" friendship than their diachronic

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[43] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 447.
[44] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 450.
[45] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 437.
[46] N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative," *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32.
[47] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 176.

counterparts, for friendship "doesn't require any ability to recall past shared experiences in detail, nor any tendency to value them." One shows one's gift for friendship "in how one is in the present."[48] For Strawson, the example of Montaigne—who complains of a poor memory yet was "famous for his friendship with Etienne de la Boétie"—refutes the view that episodics "cannot really know true friendship, or even be loyal."[49] Schectman disagrees. For her, one's loyalty to someone else correlates directly with one's awareness of having a shared "history" with them.[50] Therefore (she argues) "true and loyal" friendship presupposes personal identity over time, narratively self-constituted. My own view is that neither thinker gets the relationship between friendship and personal identity quite right. Plural person theory—which (as I showed in chapters two and three) makes better sense of friendship than competing philosophical accounts of friendship and group agency alike—clarifies why. And in so doing, it shows that an episodic temperament is fully consistent with Christian flourishing.

What plural person theory makes clear about friendship and personal identity is this. It is not that episodics have a gift for friendship despite *lacking* a continuous self (Strawson); nor is it that a gift for friendship *presupposes* a narratively continuous self (Schectman). Rather, friendship *creates* a continuous self by means other than narrative as Schectman defines it (or MacIntyre or Taylor or Wright). In chapter two, I did describe the joint evaluative perspective proper to a plural person as a "joint story," borrowing language from Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman's memoir of their friendship.[51] However, I used *story* in a much looser sense there. By telling a joint *story*, I did not mean (nor do I take Sow and Friedman to mean) anything like what Schectman

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[48] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 450; cf. Galen Strawson, "Episodic Ethics," in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Daniel Hutto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106-114.

[49] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 449-450.

[50] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 173.

[51] Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman, *Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 41

means by *narrative*. That is, I did not mean that a plural person achieves phenomenological unity over time by seeking an affective connection to as much of *our* past as *we* can. I meant only that friends see themselves as jointly answerable to values that they hold in common, values that, I made clear, change over time: a plural person's personal identity, like an individual's, is similar to a house that one is constantly remodeling according to an evolving blueprint. Fundamentally, what makes a plural person the same over time is not that *we* seek a narrative connection to *our* past, appropriating past memories for *our* present—although for a particular plural person, stocking up on madeleines and tea might be part of *our* joint evaluative perspective. What ties this evolving network of priorities to the same person is, rather, self-love: the ongoing (often implicit) practical reasoning that at once creates and reflects the import *we* have to each of *us*. And this self-love need not be experienced or enacted as a narrative: it can be purely dispositional, for friendship attunes *our* sensibilities to *us*.

Here plural person theory adds a missing element to Strawson's account of episodic selfhood and the episodic's practice of friendship. Strawson remarks that, for an episodic, "the past can be alive in the present without being present or alive *as* the past." It can be alive, Strawson notes, "simply insofar as it has helped to shape the way one is in the present, just as musicians' playing can incorporate and body forth their past practice without being mediated by an explicit memory of it. What goes for musical development goes equally for ethical development."[52] In other words, "people can develop and deepen in valuable ways without any sort of explicit, narrative reflection, just as musicians can improve by practice sessions without recalling those sessions."[53] Plural person theory identifies Strawson's insight about the

[52] Strawson, 432 (emphasis Strawson's).
[53] Strawson, 448

dispositional, as opposed to narrative, quality of ethical development as one way of grounding a person's identity over time. A plural person's past is alive in the present in the way that a musician's years of practice are alive whenever they play: as virtuosity, as muscle memory. According to plural person theory, the virtuosity of friendship is one way of being a continuous self over time. Friendship, then, creates a perduring personal identity, but the perduring personal identity that friendship creates entails a dispositional attachment rather than a narrative self-conception.

I want to suggest that plural person theory also offers an alternative way to think about the persistence conditions of individual persons—more particularly, the persistence conditions of *oneself*. Membership in a plural person is one way that individual selves can survive over time. I mentioned above that psychological theories of personal identity over time cannot establish cross-time perdurance of a self. The philosopher Mark Johnston has argued that human persons track one another over time not via implicit persistence conditions but by offloading the cognitive labor of such identification onto material objects.[54] That is to say, when one runs into someone one knows, one's mind does not stitch multiple episodes or memories of that person together; it simply sees a more-or-less unchanging material object, that person's body, and draws an inference along something like the following lines: same body, therefore same mind, therefore same person. The point is that there is a substance, with its own power to persist over time, onto which one can offload the cognitive task of identifying the person as the particular person they are. What one cannot do, though, is identify oneself as persisting over time: there is no substance onto which one could offload this cognitive task. The self one is trying to pick out as the same over time when one wonders if one will be there at the center of certain subjective

[54] What follows is a non-technical (and hence quite simplified) version of Johnston's argument.

phenomenological experiences in the future is not one's body—it is the felt experience of being *me*. When one is looking for phenomenological unity of oneself over time, offloading simply does not work. Put another way, when one is offloading, one is not actually establishing sufficient conditions for personal survival; one is simply "relying on the ever-present power of self-maintenance, development, and persistence of salient substances."[55] So, to offload the task of identification onto one's body is effectively to bracket the question of whether one is the same in a subjective personal sense. Johnston offers this argument as part of a larger case against the coherence of resurrection as an object of Christian hope: to survive death, one would have to be able to identify one's heavenly self as the same self as—meaning psychologically continuous with—one's earthly self, which, given the incoherence of psychological continuity theories of personal identity, one cannot do. (I will come back to this question in section three.) I want to borrow and modify Johnston's notion of offloading to suggest that membership in a plural person makes available to one a kind of first-person plural offloading of one's own personal identity that could answer in an inexact yet satisfying way the question from Augustine with which I opened this chapter: How can the multifarious fragments of a human life add up to a single self?[56]

A plural person can hold the various fragments of its members' lives together without requiring that these fragments be stitched together into a grand narrative. I explained in chapters two and three that *our* joint identity—*our* emotional attachment to *us*—can connect each of *us* viscerally to reasons for changing *our* mind or heart corporately when one of *us* sees in a new way

[55] Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 59.

[56] I am not offering this argument as a counter to Johnston's arguments, but as one loose, non-technical, yet possibly satisfying way of approaching the question of one's personal survival over time. It is not a counter to Johnston's claims, for two reasons. First, as I explained, offloading doesn't identify persons over time; it is an imprecise inferential system that obviates the need to identify. Second, because plural persons, unlike individual human bodies, are not material substances, one could not offload onto them the way Johnston says that human minds offload identity questions onto other people's bodies.

what conduces to *our* flourishing. Similarly, when one of *us* experiences radical changes, *our* joint identity can help that individual hang together as a single perduring self. *Our* felt attachment to *us* does not immediately vanish just because one of *us* publicly transitions, or leaves a faith tradition *we* shared, or becomes a parent, or survives a trauma. My individual identity and *our* joint identity are mutually constituting in much the same way that the elements of a game (castling, catching a flyball) are intelligible only in the context of that game (chess, baseball)[57]—with the difference that I can be held in my personal identity by more than one plural person.[58] Plural person theory thus also shows why a Christian life need not be lived narratively—and how the faith can be accessible to episodics no less than diachronics. For example, I might no longer identify with the self I was when I converted; I might feel neither emotionally connected to that self, nor moved by the reasons that self took herself to have for converting. I might feel alienated from that self. I might even feel no obligation or desire to explain to myself and others why I feel that alienation. And yet—I might still love God, the faith, the church, my spiritual practices, and so on, in the present moment. My attunement to *us*, the plural person I form with God, could ground my identification with the faith. One's testimony, then, need not have a plot. A Christian need not feel obliged to conform the patchworked episodes of their life to the diachronic tropes of creation, fall, and redemption. Like the second nature of virtue, which simply silences reasons for acting unvirtuously, thus obviating the need to tell oneself a story about why one is acting as one is, one's testimony could bubble up episodically, as the grace of *our* unsubstitutable sensibilities, the *phronēma* of the Spirit (Rom 8:6).

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[57] Bennett Helm, *Communities of Respect: Grounding Responsibility, Authority, and Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44, 230.

[58] Here I borrow the idiom of human beings holding one another in their personhood from Hilde Lindemann, *Holding and Letting Go: The Social Practice of Personal Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Note, though, that my account of personal identity as rooted in the sensibilities of friendship differs from Lindemann's account of personhood as fundamentally narrative.

2. What Happens to a Plural Person When One of *Us* Has Dementia?

"This was Reverend Robert Davis's experience as he declined with Alzheimer's Disease and began to struggle with bible reading, prayer, and any feeling of God's presence. He heard Christ say 'stop your struggling. It is all right. I will hold you. Lie back in your Shepherd's arms and take my peace.'"

—Christine Bryden[59]

In the previous section, I suggested that membership in a plural person gives one a non-narrative means of hanging together as a single self despite radical changes. In chapter two, I suggested that plural person theory does not exclude human beings with cognitive disabilities from the category of personhood. In this section, I draw on 'Tricia Williams's qualitative study of evangelical Christians living with dementia to bear out these claims. Using the method of hermeneutic phenomenology, which takes the lived experiences of informants as the starting point for investigation of a topic, Williams interviewed eight evangelical Christians living in Southern England, four women and four men, each of whom had received a formal diagnosis of dementia.[60]

In the debate between Schectman and Strawson over narrative and personal identity that I addressed in the previous section, the question of who counts as a person is at stake. The conception of personal identity for which Schectman argues, rooted as it is in autobiographical memory, would seemingly place people living with dementia outside the categories of

[59] Bryden and MacKinlay, "Dementia: A Spiritual Journey Towards the Divine," 72-73.
[60] Williams, *What Happens to Faith When Christians Get Dementia*, 89, 93-94.

personhood and autonomy (indeed, Schectman says as much).[61] Strawson notes that Schechtman's view in its "strong form" would also exclude episodics like him from these categories.[62] But my account can accommodate human beings with cognitive impairments. In chapter two, I argued that to be a person or a self with autonomy is to be someone with a say in what matters to them—someone, that is, with a say over their own identity. The informants in Williams's study repeatedly affirm that, despite their memory loss, they continue to identify with their lives and define what matters to them, thanks to their relationship with God.

For example, Ron,[63] whom Williams describes as "further on" in his illness than the other informants,[64] puts it this way: "The joy of being born again is always there… I'll never lose that joy, but I have lost my memory."[65] Alice describes feeling supported by God through her symptoms: "With dementia, the layers come off, so we become more vulnerable … As a Christian, God accepts me as I am with all my mixed-up emotions, with all emotional unzipping."[66] "God is always with me," Alice says, "even when my brain falls apart."[67] She speaks of wanting to "do what I can in order to reflect" God's "glory in" her dementia.[68] Bill, too, reflects on how God—whom he affectionally refers to as "the Boss"—wants him to live with his illness.[69] Bill directly addresses God during his interview: "I just want to be a follower of you."[70] Rosemary shares that her connection to God has intensified as her cognitive powers have

[61] Schechtman, "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival," 161.
[62] Strawson, "Against Narrativity," 447.
[63] NB: The names of Williams's informants are pseudonyms. All ellipses in quotations of Williams's informants are from the original interviews and represent pauses in speech, not abridgements.
[64] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 108.
[65] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 63.
[66] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 61.
[67] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 32.
[68] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 126.
[69] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 57.
[70] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 43.

declined: "He will be with me… right to the end! Even if my… because my feelings are still as strong, if not stronger, as my mind becomes less intellectualized and able to… I shall be more filled with the feeling of the love of God… it's here… I can speak from experience not from some theory."[71] Rosemary feels that "the Spirit of God is always in me. Now I am always conscious of that, even if it's really bad."[72] Moreover, Rosemary trusts that God's memory of her will be enough as her own memory fades: "I just know that if I forget God, he's not forgotten me."[73] Jill speaks of "hear[ing] God through the Bible,"[74] of "know[ing] Jesus," and of "long[ing] to know him more in my illness."[75] Jess, responding to the question of whether she feels God's presence, exclaims, "Yes, I'm sure of that! And that's why the fact that I can't remember—my memory loss—doesn't matter."[76]

Despite their memory loss, these Christians remain someone with a say over their identity, expressing a felt attachment to God. Their testimonies suggest that, even as their fluency declines, they continue to have the participatory theory of mind that Tanya Luhrmann has identified as a hallmark of evangelical faith (and that I described in chapter two). That is, they perceive God as present in their own streams of consciousness.[77]

The testimonies of the Christians who participated in Williams's research also indicate that, as their autobiographical memories decline, they feel supported by embodied memories, including singing familiar hymns, joining in the liturgy, and receiving communion. As Williams puts it, "This embodied memory, in spite of our failing neurons, can sustain and prompt

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[71] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 47.
[72] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 43.
[73] Williams, *What Happens to Faith When Christians Get Dementia*, 169.
[74] Williams, *What Happens to Faith When Christians Get Dementia*, 147.
[75] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 117.
[76] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 107.
[77] T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (Vintage: New York, 2012).

moments of clarity for people living with dementia—even into advanced stages."[78] Ron, for example, describes attending church and being in the presence of other believers as an aid to his memory: "It's given me a memory which I haven't got, but by going to church, it has… it's there."[79] Rosemary describes singing hymns in similar terms: "I think it's what your memory has deeply taken in from the early days… as you're going through the dementia you come more and more, come back into… and it means more to you all those early influences are so."[80] Other Christians who have written about their experiences of living with dementia echo Ron's and Rosemary's descriptions. Christine Bryden describes how, despite "living outside this timeline, without the narrative of my life," her fellow believers hold her in her Christian identity during worship: "I can be held in this relationship and be part of our corporate communion with the divine," and "my spirit can be held in your fellowship."[81] Jennifer Bute writes of practices that she and her church friends rely on to accommodate her dementia. For example, if she forgets who they are, they will simply continue talking to her, describing their relationship to her in multiple ways, recalling various events, thereby "providing the rungs on the ladder to access my memory."[82]

These testimonies about the significance of embodied memories for Christians living with dementia bear out my claim that the virtuosity or muscle memory of friendship provides a non-narrative, dispositional ground of personal identity. The joint emotions proper to a plural person—whether the plural person in question is God and the believer with dementia, or the believer and their other Christian friends—can hold the believer in their identity as their

[78] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 29.
[79] Williams, *God's Not Forgotten Me*, 114.
[80] Williams, *What Happens to Faith When Christians Get Dementia*, 128.
[81] Bryden, "A Spiritual Journey into the I-Thou Relationship," 11-12.
[82] Bute, "My Glorious Opportunity," 16.

cognitive powers fade. In sum, what Strawson says of episodics seems to be true of these Christians with dementia: through their membership in a plural person, their past can be alive in their present the way a musicians' playing bodies forth their past practice.[83]

3. Is Subjective Immortality a Coherent Object of Human Hope?

What I argued in the previous two sections—that plural person theory furnishes a non-narrative ground of personal identity—has implications for the Christian eschatological imagination. One version of the Christian eschatological hope (to put it in terms of the Nicene Creed) looks for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Analytic philosophers have long puzzled over this hope, finding it incoherent for human beings. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider some of their objections to subjective immortality[84] as an object of human hope. I first offer somewhat technical philosophical rebuttals of their views, then conclude with a theological rebuttal, showing how my pneumatology responds to their concerns.

Consider the following three noteworthy defenses of the idea that subjective immortality is an incoherent object of human hope:

(1) Bernard Williams[85] argues that an immortal human person would inevitably grow permanently bored, because the set of experiences desirable to one human personality is

[83] The analogy, of course, has a literal resonance: musical memories remain in the brain longer than language and other memories. See, for example, Jörn-Henrik Jacobsen, Johannes Stelzer, Thomas Hans Fritz, Gael Chételat, Renaud La Joie, and Robert Turner, "Why Musical Memory Can Be Preserved in Advanced Alzheimer's Disease," *Brain* 138.8 (2015): 2438-2450.

[84] As opposed to 'objective immortality,' examples of which would be process eschatologies in which God remembers all of human history, including the actions and mental contents of every single person, but the reflective self-awareness of each person whose mental contents God remembers does not survive death. See, e.g., Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 346-351; and Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 110.

[85] Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 82-100.

finite. Williams wagers that most people will find it incoherent to hope for an eternal life drained of all desire. Call this *the boredom thesis*.

(2) Infinitely many new experiences could seem desirable to an immortal human person only if her personality changed proportionally. But such changes in personality render incoherent a mortal's hope that she herself live forever, because they remove her grounds for believing that the immortal person who lives on will in fact be herself, Williams maintains. Call this *the psychological discontinuity thesis*.

(3) Our mortality imposes temporal limits on us, forcing us to construct values to guide our decisions, says Samuel Scheffler.[86] Because immortality would obviate our need for values, immortal humans would lose confidence in evaluative notions altogether. Imagining immortality, then, means imagining an existence with neither human values nor human decisions in it. Similar to the boredom thesis, Scheffler holds that an eternal life stripped of all notions of value is an incoherent object of human hope; similar to the psychological discontinuity thesis, he holds that it is incoherent for human persons to hope to live on in ways that are not recognizably human. Call Scheffler's view *the axiological collapse thesis*.[87]

To point out the difficulties for these arguments against the desirability of human subjective immortality, I first need to specify what exactly the concept of human subjective

[86] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*.

[87] NB: Each of these three arguments assumes a version of subjective immortality in which human persons remain perpetually hale. In the interest of focusing on the desirability of living forever per se, the three arguments bracket the feasibility of actually achieving human immunity to senescence and death. Nor do the arguments speculate about the ecological and economic ramifications of such an achievement. Even if we could meet such issues, these arguments suggest, immortality would still make little sense as an object of human hope. Accordingly, my objections to the arguments bracket such considerations as well.

immortality entails for Williams and Scheffler. According to them, a state of affairs counts as the subjective immortality of a human person just in case it meets the following five criteria.

(a) One lives forever without the possibility of dying. Call this *the 'immunity to death' criterion* (or *the immunity criterion* for short).

(b) One forever meets whatever minimal conditions for one's continuing to be the same person in the subjective (as opposed to deictic) sense as one was when one was a mortal human person who desired immortality. In other words, one satisfies the conditions of whatever it is, not just to be *a* center of reflectively self-aware experience; rather, one is somehow recognizable to oneself as *the same* center of reflectively self-aware experience now and at all future times. Call this *the 'cross-time perdurance of whatever it is to be me in the subjective sense' criterion* (or *the me-ness criterion* for short).

(c) One has a justified practical belief that (a) and (b). Call this *the 'practical belief that I am immune to dying and that at all future times I will remain the same person in the subjective sense' criterion* (or *the belief criterion* for short).

(d) One is, and will remain throughout eternity, an organism belonging to the species *homo sapiens*. Call this the *species criterion*.

(e) One never loses one's confidence in ideas of value *simpliciter*, though one may change one's mind about the value of a particular pursuit, improvise a new set of values entirely, or discover that old values obligate one in new ways. No feature intrinsic to one's existence eradicates one's capacity to discern and pursue vocations. One remains responsive to reasons. Call this *the motivation criterion*.

These criteria are important for Williams and Scheffler because the philosophers wager that eternal existence would render incoherent a crucial part of what makes human experience recognizably human. For both of them, that crucial missing part of a recognizably human life concerns the motivation to act. Strictly speaking, the motivation criterion is not a necessary condition for human subjective immortality. Williams himself admits the possibility of "cold, withdrawn," and "stony" types who could perhaps tolerate a circumstance that,[88] to put it in Scheffler's terms, "undermine[s] the conditions of our valuing" anything at all.[89] But I take it that, for many if not most people, the motivation criterion would be a necessary condition of the *desirability* of subjective immortality.

I begin with Williams's psychological discontinuity and boredom theses. Williams defends his claim about the two intolerable outcomes of human immortality in the following way. For him, the minimal condition of being the same person in the subjective sense is "constancy of character."[90] By character, Williams means a combination of memory and desire in virtue of which a person tends to "engage in one sort of thing rather than another."[91] In other words, character, says Williams, decides whether a person has "one range of experiences rather than another."[92] So, by Williams's lights, an immortal person would either retain a "fixed character," in which it becomes unclear how she could have experiences sufficiently varied to elicit her enthusiasm for infinitely many years;[93] or else she would accumulate such "varied" experiences that we would have no reason to regard her life as the life of one and the same person.[94]

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[88] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 91.
[89] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 100.
[90] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 90.
[91] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 94.
[92] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 94.
[93] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 90.
[94] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 94.

Williams puts a face to each of these outcomes. In support of the psychological discontinuity thesis, Williams adduces the prophet Tiresias, who has so many varied experiences—including a seven-year stint as a woman—that, Williams contends, "he is not, eventually, a person but a phenomenon."[95] To support the boredom thesis, the scenario Williams analyzes is that of the protagonist of *The Makropulos Case*, a play by Karel Čapek (made into an opera by Leoš Janáček).[96] After drinking a life-extending elixir, a woman with the initials EM remains age 42 for 300 years.[97] Williams somewhat misleadingly describes EM's life as "unending" and "endless."[98] In fact, the elixir that EM drinks does not make a person immortal; rather, for 300 years, it keeps a person from aging.[99] As Williams himself notes, EM decides not to drink the elixir again and consequently dies.[100] After living at the same age for 300 years, EM grows irremediably bored, because "everything that could happen and make sense to one particular human being of 42"—that is, "all the sorts of things that could make sense to one woman of a certain character"—"had already happened to her."[101]

With respect to Tiresias and the psychological discontinuity thesis: While Williams is correct to highlight the me-ness criterion as an in principle unsatisfiable condition of the coherence of subjective immortality as an object of human hope, this objection is not a special objection to immortality. The same principle applies to the desire on the part of a young person

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[95] Williams, 94.

[96] Karel Čapek, *The Makropulos Case*, in *Four Plays*, trans. Peter Majer and Cathy Porter (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 165-259.

[97] In the play and the opera, EM is 337; or she remains 37 for 300 years. Williams, though, makes EM 342; that is, she remains 42 for 300 years.

[98] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 82, 83, 91.

[99] Indeed, much of the play concerns EM's battle to get her hands on the formula for the elixir so that she can take her next dose and live for another 300 years. The effects of the elixir are wearing off, and even though EM finds life boring, she wants to take the elixir again, because, as she puts it, "I dread death," Čapek, *The Makropulos Case*, 256.

[100] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 82.

[101] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 90.

to live to old age. A normal lifespan for humans as we exist now already accommodates fluidity of character, where character refers to the cluster of values, tastes, and personality traits in virtue of which a person "wish[es] to engage in one sort of thing rather than another," as Williams puts it.[102] I noted in section one that"people expect to change little in the future, despite knowing that they have changed a lot in the past," and "this tendency bedevils their decision-making." That is, people mistakenly "regard the present as a watershed moment at which they have finally become the person they will be for the rest of their lives," with the result that they "often make decisions that their future selves regret." For instance, "[y]oung adults pay to remove the tattoos that teenagers paid to get, middle-aged adults rush to divorce the people whom young adults rushed to marry, and older adults visit health spas to lose what middle-aged adults visited restaurants to gain." The researchers call this phenomenon "the end of history illusion."[103] If, as Williams suggests, so-called "constancy of character" is the best index of me-ness, then the end of history illusion reveals that my desire to live to 80 and my desire to live to $80x10^{303}$ are equally incoherent, for the objects of these two hopes both fail to satisfy the me-ness criterion. The difference is one of quantity, not quality.

What's more, as I also pointed out in section one when I characterized the incoherence of psychological continuity theories of personal identity, it is not clear that there is available to one any reliable criterion by which to establish that one is the same in the subjective sense from one moment to the next. More to the point, with respect to the coherence of desiring immortality, it is unclear that one could ever have good reason to anticipate that one will be the same person in

[102] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 94.

[103] Jordi Quoidbach et al., "The End of History Illusion," 96-98. The researchers speculate that people are subject to the end of history illusion because they "confuse the difficulty of imagining personal change with the unlikelihood of change itself."

the subjective sense at any future time. That said, human persons tend to regard their first-order experiences and second-order reflections as having a felt quality of "mineness." In other words, the fact that our mental acts are "integrated" and "smoothly available for further reflection," together with the qualia that attend our memories, gives us what Mark Johnston calls "a feeling of fit," the sense that my present mental acts "cohere with a dominant stream of mental life."[104] Considered from the vantage point of the present time *t*, the feeling of fit appears to have a determinate duration, one that surely differs from person to person: anecdotally, I can say that, for myself, it lasts at least as long as the time it takes for me to research and write a journal article; I have no feeling of fit, though, when I call up memories from my adolescence or my college years.

Say, for the sake of argument, that, for me, the feeling of fit lasts at most a year, so that at any time *t* I experience a feeling of fit with respect to *t* minus five minutes, *t* minus five days, etc., up to *t* minus a year. It would seem to follow that, if *t* stands for the present moment, I could also anticipate having a similar feeling of fit with respect to *t* plus five minutes, *t* plus five days, etc., up to *t* plus a year. That would perhaps make it reasonable for me now to wish to go on living for another year in a way that it is not reasonable for me to want to live forever or even to 80.

An image will clarify the point I am after here. Picture the mental stream of my life up to the present as a chain of 42 links, each representing a year. Cut any two non-adjacent links out of the chain—say, Olivia_{17} and Olivia_{28}—and hold them side by side. Now consider the hooked links of Olivia_{41} and Olivia_{42}. I want to suggest, based on the apparent limitations on how long the felt mineness of my experiences and reflections lasts, that even if we permit ourselves the fiction of cross-time self-identity, Olivia_{17} and Olivia_{28} are two discontinuous people in a way that

[104] Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 167.

Olivia$_{41}$ and Olivia$_{42}$ are not. The upshot of my suggestion is that, while I lack good reason to want at the present moment to live for another twenty, let alone a centillion, years, I may have good reason, in the form of the perdurance of the felt mineness of my mental acts, to want to live another year. On this logic, if a person continually opts to extend their life at intervals of whatever length accommodates the feeling of fit, then, in theory, a contingently endless life could be the result of a recurring hope, each iteration of which has a coherent object. Incidentally, such a state of affairs—deciding over and over again at intervals of *t* years whether to continue living for *t* more years—would be formally identical to the choice EM faces in *The Makropulos Case*.

Turning, then, to the boredom thesis: The gist of Williams's boredom thesis has to do with a distinction he draws between what he calls *conditional desires*, on the one hand, and *categorical desires*, on the other. A conditional desire is one that "I want only on the assumption that I am going to be alive,"[105] while a categorical desire is one that decides "the question of whether" to go on living or not.[106] Hence, an example of a conditional desire would be the desire to maintain oral hygiene: as long as one is alive, one will want to floss nightly and visit the dentist biannually, so as to prevent the inconvenience of tooth pain and tooth loss; but the prospect of maintaining oral hygiene would not itself be a reason to go on living.[107] By contrast, a categorical desire would be any desire that resolves "a rational forward-looking calculation of suicide" in favor of continuing to live.[108] The desire that "propels" a person "on into the future" after a rational calculation of suicide does not "operat[e] conditionally on" that person's "being alive, since it itself resolves the question of whether" that person "is going to be alive."[109] Of course, a person

[105] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 85.
[106] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 86.
[107] Cf. Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 88.
[108] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 85-86.
[109] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 86.

need not contemplate suicide for categorical desires to show up to her: as Williams notes, the question of whether one has a desirable life—i.e., a life replete with categorical desires—"is certainly transcendental in the most modest sense, in that it gets by far its best answer in never being asked at all."[110] Any desire that would cause one to resist death, on the grounds that one's death would make it impossible for one to satisfy that particular desire, counts as categorical: the wish to see one's children grow up, say, or the desire to finish one's novel.[111]

The gist of Williams's boredom thesis, then, is that constancy of character—i.e., just what it is, on Williams's account, to remain the same person in the subjective sense—makes the number of categorical desires that could occur to a person finite. Therefore, if one human person lives long enough, and she satisfies Williams's character-based me-ness criterion, she will eventually exhaust the whole range of categorical desires intelligible to her as such.[112] This is exactly what has happened to EM, on Williams's reading of *The Makropolos Case*.[113] Moreover, Williams wagers that it is not a "mere contingency" that EM's life "froze up as it did": it is not EM's particular character that is responsible for her irremediable boredom; rather, it is "enough, almost, that she has a human character at all."[114] The word "almost" registers Williams's openness to the possibility that, for one sort of character alone—an already cold, withdrawn, and

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[110] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 87.

[111] Cf. Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 89.

[112] Note, though, that this is not actually an objection to immortality per se, but to "any excessively long life," as Scheffler puts it, 91.

[113] Martha Nussbaum reads the opera differently. For her, "the opera itself provides […] reasons for "doubt[ing]" the boredom thesis, "especially when one bears in mind that we are dealing with Janáček, that deeply perceptive critic of his society's treatment of women." On Nussbaum's reading, EM is depressed "for a very specific reason," namely, that "she has been treated by men for 342 years as a mere object for their ego gratification." It is not excessively long life that has rendered EM detached, cold, and bored; it is, rather, having to deal with "an endless series of narcissistic creeps." The lesson of "The Makropulos Case" is "not that immortality is bad, but that [EM] needs to meet different men," and, more generally, "that relations between the sexes in Janáček's world were very unhealthy and needed to change," Martha Nussbaum, "The Damage of Death: Incomplete Arguments and False Consolations," in *The Metaphysics and Ethics of Death*, ed. James Stacey Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 39-40.

[114] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 91.

frozen character—immortality's "unending cold" might be a "less bleak" prospect than for persons with other character types.[115] So, for all but cold, frozen, detached types, an eternal life in which one remains recognizably oneself would be intolerable, Williams argues, because "categorical desire will go away from it," meaning that "I would eventually have had altogether too much of myself."[116]

One way of objecting to Williams's boredom thesis would be to interrogate his commitment to the notion of character as an index of sameness of selfhood. Character is the keystone of the boredom thesis: insofar as I have a character, my categorical desires will eventually run dry, because constancy of character delimits the number of categorical desires available to a person with a certain character. Thus, one could object to Williams's boredom thesis by pointing out difficulties for the concept of character as an index of me-ness, as I did in the previous section. Research indicates that character as Williams understands it—traits, tastes, and values in virtue of which a person engages in one range of experiences rather than another—changes considerably over the course of a normal lifespan for humans as we exist now. If changes in character come with changes in categorical desires, there is no reason to suppose that all categorical desire "will" definitely "go away from" a life, as Williams does.[117]

Another way of objecting to Williams's boredom thesis would be to accept constancy of character, but take issue with the claim that constancy of character delimits the number of categorical desires available to one person with a stable character. Martha Nussbaum takes this approach. Nussbaum finds Williams's treatment of immortality "less an argument than the expression of a particular temperament," what we might call the Williamsian temperament, the

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[115] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 91.
[116] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 100.
[117] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 100.

sort of lugubrious personality that grows sick of itself.[118] Nussbaum responds to Williams's expression of temperament in kind: the Nussbaumian temperament, by contrast, would find immortality "fun," "interesting," and "rich."[119] Whereas Williams anticipates growing sick of himself, Nussbaum anticipates enthusiastically "explor[ing] different professions seriatim," all "done in a Martha-ish way."[120] The weakness of Nussbaum's response is that it offers no grounds for resolving what looks like a mere "clash of human temperaments," as William James might have described it.[121]

I suggest a third approach to objecting to Williams's boredom thesis, one that, instead of interrogating Williams's claims about character, focuses on the role of categorical desire in Williams's account of human motivation. This way of objecting to the boredom thesis consists of two main points. One, it makes sense that categorical desire, as Williams defines it, would cease to provide an orientation for any immortal human—not because character delimits the number of categorical desires available to a person, as Williams suggests, but because immunity to death removes the very question that categorical desires decide, namely, the question of whether to go on living or not. So, while categorical desire might not "go away from" an extremely long life, it would by definition "go away from" an immortal life.[122] However, two, exhaustible categorical desire does not exhaust human motivation. Other sources of motivation orient humans now. One motivation in particular would provide immortal human persons with an inexhaustible orientation: duty.

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[118] Nussbaum, "The Damage of Death," 41.
[119] Nussbaum, "The Damage of Death," 40.
[120] Nussbaum, "The Damage of Death," 40.
[121] William James, *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 8.
[122] Williams, *Problems of the Self*, 100.

The analysis of duty in Kant's practical philosophy offers one way of thinking about why duty would provide immortal human persons with an inexhaustible orientation.[123] Immortal human persons would remain finite dependent rational beings, which is to say, intelligent creatures subject to some limitations. For instance, immortality would not render us omniscient; it would not infuse us with holy wills; nor would it remove from our lives the constraints of physical laws. In other words, as immortal human persons, we would still lack the power to author laws of nature or to mete out cosmic justice. As per the species criterion, we would continue to have physical sensation. Thus, the desire to remain warm would motivate us to construct and preserve reliable shelters from wind, rain, and snow, an activity that would require us to cultivate certain talents.[124] Likewise, even if we became complete scoundrels, the example of an honest, steadfast, benevolent person would still move us, inspiring in us the wish, however fleeting or subtle, to be free of the inclinations and impulses that have made hardened scoundrels of us.[125]

To put the point in the language of Kant's analysis of duty, all and only finite rational beings are addressees of imperatives: hypothetical imperatives, or rules of skill and counsels of prudence, which hold contingently and subjectively, which is to say, for a particular person with a particular goal in mind; and the categorical imperative, or the moral law, which holds necessarily and objectively, which is to say, for all and only finite rational beings.[126] Kant's point

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[123] My argument in the rest of this section leans on Candace Vogler's discussion of Kant's practical philosophy in *Reasonably Vicious* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009). I make no claim that the reading I invoke is the only reading of Kant, but simply that it is a plausible reading, one that serves as the source of an objection to the boredom thesis.

[124] This point renders it highly implausible that immortal humans would actually behave the way the immortals behave in Borges's short story "The Immortal," with complete disinterest in the effect of the elements on their bodies. See Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1962), 115.

[125] See *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:454-4:455.

[126] See *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:413-4:417; and the second *Critique*, 5:80-5:82.

is not to propose a new principle for moral deliberation.[127] Far from it, Kant maintains that the moral law is already obvious to "the most common human beings."[128] That is to say, ordinary, unphilosophical human beings do not need the categorical imperative to help them figure out how they ought to act.[129] Indeed, rather than a new moral principle, Kant's categorical imperative simply introduces a formula, a Pythagorean Theorem of morality.[130] The categorical imperative, then, is not a procedure for ethical deliberation but a formal account of what it means for a will, stripped bare of contingent features and particularizing content, to act from duty.

In short, Kant thinks that what it means for a will to act from duty would, formally speaking, remain the same across different finite rational species, even if the particularizing content of duties differs from one finite rational species to another. Thus, duty as a motivator travels meaningfully across radically different circumstances: the content of finite rational Martian duty would differ from the content of finite rational human duty if, for example, rational Martians reproduced asexually, and so had no duties with respect to parents, as we do. Nevertheless, the motivating force of duty per se would hold for both Martians and humans. Or, to give an example closer to home, if it turns out that, as many scientists believe, dolphins are in fact a finite rational species, then dolphin duties would exclude repaying a bank loan. But other,

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[127] In a footnote to his introduction to the second *Critique*, Kant responds to a negative review of the *Groundwork* to the effect that "no new principle is set forth in it but only a *new formula*." Kant replies that the reviewer "hit the mark better than he himself may have intended," for it was never Kant's intention to introduce a new principle: "who would even want to introduce a new principle of all morality and, as it were, first invent it? Just as if, before him, the world had been ignorant of what duty is or in thoroughgoing error about it," 5:8n, emphasis in the original.

[128] See the second *Critique*, 5:35-5:37.

[129] See the *Groundwork*, 4:454-4:455; and the second *Critique*, 5:43-5:44.

[130] As Kant puts it in the aforementioned footnote to his introduction of the second *Critique*: "whoever knows what a *formula* means to a mathematician, which determines quite precisely what is to be done to solve a problem and does not let him miss it, will not take a formula that does this with respect to all duty in general as something that is insignificant and can be dispensed with," 5:8n, emphasis in the original.

formally identical duties would hold, albeit with content particular to dolphin sociality. If, as Kant suggests, duty *simpliciter* travels meaningfully across the different circumstances of different species of finite rational beings, then we should expect duty *simpliciter* to travel meaningfully across changing circumstances within one finite rational species. Thus, we can reasonably expect duty to provide an inexhaustible orientation for immortal humans.

The philosophers Iain Thomson and James Bodington have tried to clinch Williams's boredom thesis with a probabilistic argument that involves two claims: (1) "[i]f it is possible for an event to occur, then even an extremely unlikely event is *certain* to occur, given infinite time,"[131] ergo, (2) we will grow "permanently sick" of things that once gave us pleasure, or else they will "become permanently unavailable to us."[132] In short, Thomson and Bodington propose a probabilistic model of eternity in which the fact that an event is possible implies that "it will *necessarily* occur, given infinite time," as they put it.[133] On the basis of their probabilistic model of eternity, they conclude that the pleasures of sex, food, art, books, etc. will definitely "disappear" or "permanently cease to satisfy us."[134]

There are at least three mathematical problems with Thomson/Bodington's probabilistic reasoning about immortality. First, their claim that "[i]f it is possible for an event to occur, then even an extremely unlikely event is *certain* to occur" or "will *necessarily* occur, given infinite time" is wrong.[135] Let's interrogate this claim using a simple probabilistic example. Consider a number of people each flipping a fair coin infinitely many times.[136] The probability that one of these people

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[131] Iain Thomson and James Bodington, "Against Immortality: Why Death Is Better than the Alternative," in *Intelligence Unbound: The Future of Uploaded and Machine Minds*, ed. Russell Blackford and Damien Broderick (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 253 (emphasis in the original).

[132] Thomson and Bodington, "Against Immortality," 254.

[133] Thomson and Bodington, "Against Immortality," 254 (emphasis in the original).

[134] Thomson and Bodington, "Against Immortality," 254.

[135] Thomson and Bodington, "Against Immortality," 253, 254 (emphasis in the original).

[136] A fair coin is one where there is actually a 50/50 chance that you will get either side when you toss it.

will flip an infinite sequence of heads is zero. Nevertheless, it could happen. So a more precise way to describe an event with probability zero is that it is *almost certain* not to occur. Or consider the event of getting heads on a given flip. This event has a probability greater than zero. Therefore, for each person eternally flipping coins, it is almost certain to occur, infinitely often. That is the most we can say. We cannot say that it will *certainly* or *necessarily* happen, as Thomson/Bodington presume to say of any possible event, given infinite time. The upshot is that Thomson/Bodington cannot entitle themselves to their probabilistic model of eternity, for the language of certainty and necessity that Thomson/Bodington use is conceptually distinct from the language of probability.

A second error in Thomson/Bodington's probabilistic reasoning about eternity stems from their failure to state explicitly the probabilistic theorem that drives their defense of the boredom thesis. Stated explicitly, the theorem would be, for an event E, if $P(E)>0$, then, during infinitely many independent trials, E is almost certain to occur infinitely often. The accuracy of any application of the theorem relies on the truth of the hypothesis that $P(E)>0$. But Thomson/Bodington never argue that $P(E)>0$ for the specific E that I grow bored of (e.g.) sex, food, art, books. To be sure, they say it is possible, but as we saw in the previous paragraph, possibility and probability are two conceptually distinct things. It might also be possible that I could grow permanently fascinated by, say, Picasso's *Guernica*. Thomson/Bodington never present any arguments to the effect that permanent fascination has a probability of zero while permanent boredom has a probability greater than zero. In other words, the probabilistic structure of Thomson/Bodington's argument could be used to defend my becoming permanently fascinated in eternity just as easily as it could be used to defend my becoming permanently bored:

Theorem: *P(E)>0 implies that E almost certainly occurs given enough time.*

Unless $P(E)$ eventually changes to 0, this implies a second theorem:

Theorem': *P(E)>0 implies E occurs infinitely often, given enough time.*

Proof of Theorem': After the first occurrence of E, apply Theorem again, since $P(E)>0$. Continue in this way forever. □

Now, let $E1$ = "Olivia sees *Guernica*, and enjoys it." Assume that $P(E1)>0$ (a sensible assumption). Then $E1$ is almost certain to occur infinitely many times, by Theorem', unless eventually $P(E1)$ changes from >0 to 0. Just in case $P(E1)$ changes to 0 will I almost certainly grow permanently bored.

Alternatively, we could replace the word "boredom" with "fascination" and get the same probabilistic outcome with the exact opposite valence:

Let E2 = "Olivia becomes permanently bored with *Guernica*." If $P(E2)>0$, then $E2$ is almost certain to occur, and then almost certainly Olivia is permanently bored of *Guernica*. This is the sort of situation Thomson/Bodington envision. But now we have a contradiction: both $E1$, Olivia's enjoyment of *Guernica*, is almost certain to occur infinitely often, and $E2$ is almost certain to occur, at which point she stops enjoying it. These cannot both be true.

The only way that neither of these two contradictory situations ($E1$ or $E2$) will arise is if the probability of one or both of them is zero. The only way to argue on probabilistic grounds for permanent boredom is to allow for changing probabilities, things going from $P(E)>0$ to $P(E)=0$. But once one allows for changing probabilities, one is at pains to justify one's claim that permanent boredom is more likely than permanent fascination. Thomson/Bodington never provide such a justification. To put it another way, of permanent boredom and permanent fascination, at most one of these outcomes can have a probability greater than zero. In order to decide which, if any, of these outcomes has a probability greater than zero, we would need to argue that there is something in human life that tends toward boredom or fascination. But Thomson/Bodington are silent on the question of why eternal boredom has a probability greater than zero, while eternal fascination has a probability of zero. Far from clinching Williams's boredom thesis with probabilistic reasoning, Thomson/Bodington leave us exactly where we started, at the point of needing to decide whether Williams's thesis is right.

A third problem with Thomson/Bodington's argument is that it is not clear that their probabilistic model of human immortality is a valid one for any state of affairs that involves finite dependent rational agents such as humans. Their probabilistic model, where E is almost certain to occur if $P(E)>0$, requires infinitely many independent trials (e.g., coin flips). Here, *independent* means that the probability of E happening at step n does not depend on whether E happened at a previous step m. In other words, previous events do not impact the probability of future events. But when the events in question involve finite dependent rational agents like humans, previous events do impact the probability of future events: I learn from putting my hand in the fire that it hurts, so it becomes less and less likely that I will choose to do that again. Unlike the flip of a coin, where the probability value of subsequent coin-flips is unaffected by prior coin-flips, what

happens during the first ten years of my immortal life will affect the probability value of some sorts of events in the second ten years of my immortal life, etc. For example, whether or not I spend the first ten years of my immortal life acquiring fluency in Pashto affects the probability of whether or not I will produce a novel-in-verse in Pashto during the second ten years of my immortal life. Or, if I decide to try heroin on day one of my immortal human life, the chance that I will do heroin on day two of my immortal human life becomes higher than it would have been had I not chosen to try heroin on the previous day. (Although heroin certainly would not be lethal for an immortal human person, it would still be highly addictive, as per the species criterion.)

One may regard Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis as an effort to establish that permanent boredom is more likely than permanent fascination. Scheffler suggests that our mortality is a condition of the possibility of our adopting attitudes of value; therefore, if all human persons became immune to death, our lives would necessarily fail to satisfy the motivation criterion.[137] Scheffler's argument boils down to the following steps: (1) humans make decisions against the background of temporal limits imposed on us by our ontogenesis and our mortality; (2) in response to those temporal limits, we construct ideas of value to guide us in our decision-making; therefore (3) immortality would obviate our construction of values altogether. In other words, Scheffler contends, "temporal scarcity" is one of the key ingredients of human attitudes of valuing: take away human ontogenesis and you take away the stages in virtue of which certain "physical, mental, and social capacities" come to signify as "accomplishments";[138] take away

[137] Scheffler's analysis of the desirability of subjective immortality focuses on a scenario in which all humans are immortal. He concedes that a scenario in which only one person were immortal and everyone else mortal would perhaps not be so perilous to the immortal one's attitudes of value, for "[t]he risks and dangers to other people whom the immortal loved might render him vicariously vulnerable to harm and injury and so make greater deliberative complexity possible," *Death and the Afterlife*, 97n13.

[138] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 96.

human mortality and you take away "the need to establish priorities" about "which things are worth doing and caring about and choosing."[139] Thus, if all human persons became immortal, he wagers, we would lose confidence in such complex values as "love and labor, intimacy and achievement, creativity and humor and solidarity";[140] at most, we would "deploy rudimentary hedonistic concepts of gain and loss" in our "deliberations," assuming we could still feel pleasure and pain.[141] In sum, for Scheffler, an eternal life would be a life devoid of deliberation and evaluation.

One way of responding to Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis would be to appeal to the same formal reading of Kant's ethics that I invoked above in response to Williams's boredom thesis. Immortal human persons would remain finite dependent rational beings, i.e., intelligent creatures subject to some limitations. For instance, immortality would not render us omniscient; it would not infuse us with holy wills; nor would it remove from our lives the constraints of physical laws. Thus, the motive of duty would remain an ordering principle of our lives.

But I want to point out another difficulty for Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis. Scheffler's analysis of the conditions under which humans find it necessary to construct ideas of value in order to make choices does not get at the root structure of human motivation. By Scheffler's lights, scarcity of time forces us to improvise values to guide our decision-making. In fact, the more basic constraint that drives us to construct ideas of value is our perception of a scarcity of possibilities. Put simply, the reason temporal scarcity forces mortal humans to assign value to things is that the limits of time put limits on the possibilities that any individual human can choose: at any time t I cannot do both ϕ and not-ϕ. What's more, whether or not I do ϕ at t_1

[139] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 99.
[140] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 100.
[141] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 97.

constrains the range of options/possibilities that I have at t_2. For example, whether or not I choose to try heroin at t_1 will affect whether or not I develop an addiction at t_2 or experience a relapse trigger at t_3. Therefore, the burden of Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis is to show that immortality eliminates not only temporal scarcity but also scarcity of possibilities/options.

However, I argue that scarcity of possibilities would still structure the choices of immortal human persons, forcing us to rely on ideas of value. The reason why a scarcity of possibilities would necessitate attitudes of value on our part even if we were immortal is that immortal human persons would still be temporally extended, albeit infinitely so: our temporal extension would be an attenuator of our possibilities, in that we could not do both ϕ and not-ϕ at *t*. That is to say, regardless of whether one dies, one lives each moment only once, and one can never change what actually happened in the past. Consequently, if an immortal human person makes a decision, she still closes down her options at future points. To continue with the example of addiction, if I, an immortal human, decide to try heroin at t_1, with the result that I develop an addiction to the drug at t_2, I eliminate the option of being completely invulnerable to a relapse trigger at t_3. A decision about whether or not to introduce the possibility of heroin dependence into my eternal life would, I wager, elicit more complex values than "rudimentary hedonistic concepts of gain and loss,"[142] for the following reason. Heroin derives its badness from how difficult it is to quit and how incapacitating a high is. It therefore competes with other pleasures that it precludes, such as friendship. Opting to try the drug could foreclose—and would minimally put at risk—the possibility of sustaining other projects and relationships at future times. In the figure of the addict, an immortal human person would see that eternal life is not a static universe of limitless options. That recognition—whether provoked by the example of

[142] Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, 97.

addiction or by a similarly possibility-foreclosing decision—would motivate immortal persons to improvise relatively complex ideas of value for the purpose of serving as a guide to choice-making.

In a response to Scheffler, Niko Kolodny makes an observation that could pose a difficulty for my objection to Scheffler.[143] Kolodny points out that, while complex ideas of value could still be available to immortal humans, "they would not be the *particular* human values to which we" mortal humans who exist now "are *actually* attached."[144] Or, to put it in terms of my argument, even if scarcity of possibilities/options would still structure the choices of immortal human persons, forcing us to rely on ideas of value, the fact remains that our current ontogenic constraints and their attendant psycho-developmental stages would change, with the likely consequence that we would improvise new values. Kolodny's point is that Scheffler could level a more modest argument against the desirability of subjective immortality for humans, one that "would seem to meet Scheffler's objective just as well."[145] The more modest argument that Kolodny proposes would replace the axiological collapse thesis with an axiological discontinuity thesis: mortality might not be necessary for a human value-laden life in general, but the "mortality" of the particular humans we are now "is necessary for" suffusing the particular human lives we are living with values that belong to us in particular."[146] The difficulty that Kolodny's observation could pose for my objection to Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis, then, is this: inasmuch as eternal life would force us to adopt new values, it would threaten our ability to satisfy the me-ness criterion, making subjective immortality an incoherent object of hope for

[143] Niko Kolodny, "That I Should Die and Others Live," in *Death and the Afterlife*, 159-173.
[144] Kolodny, "That I Should Die," 169.
[145] Kolodny, "That I Should Die," 169-170.
[146] Kolodny, "That I Should Die," 170.

us. However, Kolodny's axiological discontinuity thesis would face the same difficulty that Williams's psychological discontinuity faces, namely, that it is not a special objection to immortality. A normal lifespan for humans as we exist now can already accommodate changing personal values—witness religious conversions.

So much for the technical philosophical difficulties that beset arguments against the coherence of subjective immortality as an object of human hope. I want to close by offering a theological suggestion about why these philosophical theses against subjective immortality are not enough to evacuate the Christian eschatological hope of its desirability for (some) human believers. My model of the Spirit is one way of defusing each of these worries. As I explained it in chapter two, the model pictures the Spirit's economic work of indwelling, regenerating, and incorporating human believers into the divine life in terms of friendship: God and a human believer constitute a plural person with a joint evaluative perspective. *Our* love of *us* sanctifies the believer as they hold joint values with God and particularizes God's inexhaustible splendor in a new and irreplaceable way as God holds joint values with the believer. The first two sections of this chapter hint at how this model defuses Williams's psychological discontinuity thesis: forming a plural person with God gives a human believer a non-narrative ground of self-continuity, a way of perduring through psychological changes, namely, the virtuosity or muscle-memory of loving *us*. Put another way, *our* Spirit holds the believer in their identity. The grace of *our* unsubstitutable sensibilities, the *phronēma* of the Spirit (Rom 8:6), holds the multifarious fragments of the believer's life together.

As for Williams's boredom thesis and Scheffler's axiological collapse thesis—my pneumatology can defuse these worries, too, in the following way. I explained in chapter two that each plural person who participates in the Spirit's economic form expresses God's infinitude in a

distinct way as God and a human believer hold joint values. God's splendor thus stretches out to a wildly abundant eschatological wholeness of which human believers catch glimpses. In the life of the world to come, it becomes possible for believers to follow up on these glimpses, to follow so many glittering streams to their inexhaustible source. On my pneumatology, in other words, the content of the eschatological hope—what it means to experience subjective immortality—is an endlessly deepening participation in the triune life itself. *We* eternally discover new things that matter to *us* as our intimacy grows ever richer. Humans remain (divinized, deified) humans, temporally extended, held in selfhood by *our* Spirit, such that whatever *we* discover matters to *us* at one moment will ripple out into the future, with consequences for the possibility-space of what can matter to *us* later on. *We* cannot follow every glittering stream all at once; whatever stream *we* do pursue branches out into new rivulets as a believer interprets *our* Spirit in ever-novel ways. Boredom and anhedonia do not arise, then, because participation in *our* Spirit entails endless transformation for the human believer. Nor is psychological discontinuity an issue, because the Spirit instills a feeling of fit in the believer—*our* love of *us* imbues the believer's experiences with a felt quality of mineness, a dispositional form of self-continuity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used my pneumatology as a conceptual resource to address problems in the philosophy of personal identity. I showed, first, that plural person theory provides a non-narrative way of establishing the persistence of persons over time. I then used this dispositional ground of personal identity to show that my model of the economic Spirit does not exclude persons living with dementia. Although this discussion is not enough to establish the accessibility of my pneumatology to every variety of cognitive disability—a project that is beyond

the scope of this chapter—it does suggest that plural person theory in general and my pneumatology in particular can demystify the practical reasoning of porous and vulnerable selves without making relationality an ableist criterion of personhood. Finally, I traced out the eschatological implications of my pneumatology, defusing philosophical arguments against the desirability of the Christian eschatological hope for human believers.

CHAPTER FIVE: WHY THE TRINITY MATTERS

Introduction

Contemporary Christian theologians disagree about why the trinity should matter to human beings. Some theologians argue that the trinity matters politically and morally—that, in other words, the doctrine sets the pattern for how human beings should relate to one other. These *social trinitarians*, as they are known, reject individualism by appealing to the inherently social nature of God, and they derive an egalitarian and inclusive human politics from what they take the relations among Father, Son, and Spirit to be.[1] For other theologians, the doctrine of the trinity matters grammatically, providing a set of rules for talking about God's actions in the economy of salvation without contradicting the oneness of God's immanent being. These *hermeneutic trinitarians*, as I call them, have rightly identified a methodological flaw in social trinitarianism: because God's inner life is epistemologically inaccessible to human knowers, the best a social theory of the trinity can do is merely project onto God whatever moral and political ideals the social trinitarian has already arrived at from prior reflection on human relationships. Hence, Karen Kilby suggests that one should use the doctrine of the trinity only as a prescriptive grammar "for how to read the biblical stories" and "speak about some of the characters" therein—not as a description of "the way God really is" that could have "relevance" for the way humans ought to be.[2]

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[1] Proponents of social trinitarianism include Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), among others.

[2] Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with the Social Doctrine of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81.957 (2000): 443.

In short, most theologians use the trinity in one of two ways—either as an ethical blueprint for human behavior, or as a set of rules for God-talk. In this chapter, I take a third approach. Instead of using the trinity as a political ideal or an exegetical principle, I use it as a conceptual metaphor for analyzing human autonomy. In the previous chapters, I opened the black box of the Spirit for the purposes of clarifying certain theological ambiguities—how the principle of divine non-competitiveness might work; how the *sensus fidei fidelis*, or a believer's instinctive feel for the truth, might work; what the agency proper to the body of Christ entails; and how subjective immortality could be a coherent object of human hope. In what follows, I will show that opening the black box of the Spirit is of wider philosophical import. I derive from my constructive pneumatology a non-confessional framework for demystifying the agency of human individuals, one that ultimately makes better sense of friendship as an irreducibly social form of practical reasoning than does the current philosophical literature on collective agency. The result is a non-individualist account of the person that demystifies the practical reasoning of porous and vulnerable selves without making relationality an ableist criterion of personhood.

At this point, any reader who is familiar with contemporary trinitarian theology might suspect me of repeating social trinitarianism's flawed methodology. After all, I have just proposed using a particular discourse on the trinity—the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son—to shore up a non-individualist conception of human autonomy. Am I not thereby liable to the same charges as those leveled against a social trinitarian?

But my approach differs from social trinitarianism in two fundamental respects: I am asking questions of a different kind and employing a different method to answer them. Social trinitarianism asks a moral question: How *should* people ideally relate to one another? Accordingly, social trinitarianism makes trinitarian relationships normative for human ones. It

uses the trinity as an ethical guide. This chapter, by contrast, asks conceptual questions about normative practical reasoning: How *does* a group of human beings itself feel emotions and deliberate about what to do as one irreducible person? And how does such a plural person's joint capacity for autonomy build up the individual capacity for autonomy of each of its members? I am therefore using the trinity as an analytical framework rather than an ethical guide. Not only does my approach thereby escape the charges to which social trinitarianism is liable. It also contributes to constructive theology a new mode of thinking theologically for and with other academic fields: theology as thought experiment. In other words, I am claiming that, with respect to the question of why the trinity matters, social trinitarianism and hermeneutic trinitarianism do not exhaust the possibilities. The trinity could also matter *heuristically*.

1. The Errors of Social Trinitarianism

As others have shown,[3] social trinitarianism errs in at least three ways. First, why take the backwards methodological route of explaining a phenomenon of which one has firsthand experience (human relationships) in terms of something about which one can only speculate (the inner life of God)? Second, assuming one could entitle oneself to a veridical description of inner-trinitarian relationships, one would still face the difficulty of figuring out how statements about the trinity apply to human beings, given the differences between divine and human persons: God is infinite and unconditioned, for example, while humans are finite and dependent. Human persons are perforce "separate from each other in space"; because each of the three persons of the trinity is limitless, "there can be no" such "boundaries or divisions between them with respect

[3] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 432-445; Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 207-246; and Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

to space," and they "must in a rather literal sense dwell 'in' one another."[4] Downplaying the differences between divine and human persons (by, for example, deriving norms for human relationships from the economic trinity, or the trinity in its dealings with the world, where the trinitarian persons come across as having separate wills) merely replaces the problem of applicability with a problem of redundancy: if human beings already resemble the trinity, then they do not need the trinity to set the pattern for their socio-political affairs. Third, the hierarchical and masculine inflections of traditional trinitarian language make the trinity an odd resource for an egalitarian and inclusive politics.

Some social trinitarians also smuggle human limitations and failings into their descriptions of the trinity, a mistake that Tonstad calls "corrective projectionism." On these sorts of accounts, Tonstad explains, the inner-trinitarian relations "uniquely critique and overcome" conceptions of human personhood that glorify "selfishness" and "self-sufficiency," because Father, Son, and Spirit are always "making room" for one another—a claim that projects human spatial limits onto the limitless God.[5] Or the trinity corrects the alleged self-absorption of human romantic couples, because the Spirit "interrupts the otherwise narcissistic … relation between Father and Son"—a claim that theorizes God as susceptible to sin and "makes the 'threeness' of the trinity a structural necessity based on assumptions about the nature of human love."[6]

As I noted a moment ago, the approach I take in this chapter differs from social trinitarianism in that it does not ask what human relationships *ought* to look like. Rather, it asks what human autonomy *is*. Accordingly, my main task is not to correct the structures and

[4] Phillip Cary, "On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 56.3 (1992): 384.

[5] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 13.

[6] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 15-16.

strategies of normative practical reasoning that human beings use but simply to analyze them. It is to describe the forms that figuring out what one cares about or deliberating about what to do may take for human persons, not to enjoin on the reader any specific moral or political content that might populate those forms. The concept on which my reading of the bond-of-love tradition has centered in the previous chapters—the plural agency or joint autonomy proper to friendships—is one such form. It is not in itself an ethical ideal.

Indeed, philosophers, literary critics, and other social commentators have spilled a fair amount of ink over the moral ambiguities of friendship.[7] Some theologians, too, go so far as to suggest that human plural persons are more likely than their individual counterparts to exercise autonomy to immoral effect.[8] As I explained in chapters two and three, in the case of human beings, a plural person may pursue ignoble projects just as easily as noble ones—which is to say that human plural persons, like human individuals, sometimes exercise autonomy to immoral effect. To recall an example from chapter two: In the *Confessions*, Augustine describes two of his friendships in terms that come close to the concept of a plural person, but only one of these friendships strikes him as virtuous: an iconic "colloquy" with his mother, Monica, where they pledged "the first-fruits of our spirit" to God, and "there had been but one life, woven out of mine and hers," versus an idolatrous absorption in the "baneful fables" of Manichaeism with an unnamed friend for whom the young Augustine "felt that my soul and his had been but one soul

[7] See, for example, William Hazlitt, "On the Spirit of Obligations," in *The Plain Speaker*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), 197-198; C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), 115-127; Marilyn Friedman, "Friendship and Moral Growth," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 23 (1989): 10-11; Neera Kapur Badhwar, "Introduction: The Nature and Significance of Friendship," in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 12-16; Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, "Friendship and Moral Danger," *The Journal of Philosophy* 97.5 (2000): 278-296; and Alexander Nehamas, *On Friendship* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 188-196.

[8] See, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); and Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*.

in two bodies."[9] Put another way, joint autonomy is not a special feature of inner-trinitarian relations that human believers try to imitate. Joint autonomy is, rather, an irreducibly communal form of practical reasoning that, inasmuch as God and human beings alike are persons, God and human beings alike use.

Consequently, while one might reasonably consider friendship an inapposite model for divine/human relationships[10]—one cannot fault my account of friendship with God—in which God and a human believer exercise joint autonomy as one plural person—for positing a trinitarian ideal after which human beings are meant to pattern themselves in their relationships. Nor does it project human limitations and failings onto the trinity so that the trinity might critique and overcome them. My account of friendship with God is simply an analysis of how a human believer's relationship with the trinity would actually work on a bond-of-love account of the Spirit. As such, it provides an example of talking coherently about the autonomy that finite human persons exercise by virtue of their dependence on an infinite and unconditioned personal God.

All of this is to say, the differences between the driving questions of social trinitarianism and the questions I take up in this chapter correspond to differences in method—that is, to differences between social trinitarianism's use of the trinity as an example for human beings to emulate, on the one hand, and the heuristic use to which this dissertation puts the trinity, on the other. Unlike social trinitarianism, I am not seeking to make human political life a replica of the inner life of the trinity, nor am I using the trinity as a template for an aspirational picture of

[9] Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.10.24, 9.12.30, 4.4.7, 4.6.11, trans. Maria Boulding, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2012), 227, 228, 232, 96, 99. Re: the iconic/idolatrous contrast, see Richard Miller, "Evil, Friendship, and Iconic Realism in Augustine's *Confessions*," *The Harvard Theological Review* 104.4 (2011): 387-409.

[10] A. C. Grayling, *Friendship* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 69.

human autonomy. Instead, this chapter relates the trinity to humanity as a conceptual metaphor for analyzing human autonomy, not unlike the research-guiding conceptual metaphors, or metaphorical models, that scientists use to formulate questions about elusive physical phenomena.

When scientists cannot describe something directly or exhaustively (like atoms), they rely on analogies (an electron surrounds the nucleus of an atom like a cloud) to theorize the phenomenon in question (atoms as fuzzy quantum probability clouds). Similarly, philosophers construct metaphorical models to analyze normative concepts—as in Plato's *Republic* (to pick a well-known if vexing example). Socrates there defines justice in the human soul by first assuming some isomorphism between (visible) cities and (invisible) souls, then constructing an abstract model of a just city, and finally drawing conclusions about the (more elusive) soul from his claims about the (easier to grasp) city (368d-369a, 434d-435a).[11] As I discussed briefly in chapter two, theologians use metaphorical models too: when the Gospels speak of God as a mother hen,[12] or Gregory of Nyssa speaks of God as a friend,[13] they "give us a way of thinking about the unknown in terms of the known," as Sallie McFague explains.[14] There is disagreement within each of these fields about the truth of such models: Do models "reflect" (however indirectly and approximately) "the way things" really "are," as *critical realists* would have it?[15] Or are models just "heuristic

[11] On the vexing nature of this metaphorical model, see "The Analogy of City and Soul," in Bernard Williams, *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 108-117.

[12] Matt 23:37, Lk 13:34.

[13] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: HarperOne, 2006) 132.

[14] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 23.

[15] McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 101.

fictions, useful in limited ways as temporary psychological aids in the formation of a theory, but finally dispensable," as *instrumentalists* maintain?[16]

In this chapter I am arguing that, with respect to my model of the Spirit as a plural person, one need not choose between critical realism and instrumentalism about models. As I explain in the remainder of this chapter, this model of the Spirit—itself a rendering of the Augustinian model of the trinity as a bond of friendship—can be read in two ways. On one level, it can be read as a theological exercise in critical realism: an attempt to make unmysterious and expressible that which the theological literature has so often relegated to mystery and silence, namely, how the Spirit works. On this level, the point is not to eliminate but to explicate the Spirit—to show how the Spirit indwells human hearts (as I did in chapter two),[17] and to work out some implications of this pneumatology for ecclesiology (as I did in chapter three) and eschatology (as I did in chapter four). On another level, though, the account of a human believer's life of grace that emerges from this pneumatology can be read as a heuristic fiction akin to the type of thought experiments that suffuse analytic philosophy. On this other level, my overall argument—that, were an infinite and unconditioned God to exist, human dependence on the divine would enhance rather than threaten human autonomy—can generate useful concepts for making the easier case that, in the absence of such extreme social asymmetry as that between creature/Creator, conditioned/unconditioned, or finite/infinite, a human individual is not a mere epiphenomenon of their social environments.

Because this chapter uses the trinity as a research-guiding conceptual metaphor rather than a moral and political ideal, it escapes the three errors to which social trinitarianism is liable.

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[16] McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 133.
[17] Rom 5:5.

The chapter avoids first the mistake—of drawing conclusions about observable human relationships from unknowable inner-trinitarian relationships—for the simple reason that my argument over the sweep of the previous chapters has unfolded in precisely the opposite direction. I did not begin by applying speculation about the trinity to human beings; I began (in chapter two) by using the Anglo-American philosophical literature on human friendship to defend bond-of-love pneumatologies against the widespread charge that they depersonalize the Spirit. How could the Spirit be the Father's and the Son's mutual love as well as another person alongside them? I solved this theological problem by interpreting the Spirit through the philosophical claim that, in certain cases, close human friends can think, feel, and act as one person, real and irreducible.

To be sure, the human-to-trinity direction in which I argued invites other worries—in particular, the theological worry that my reading of the Spirit projects onto the trinitarian persons an anachronistic definition of a person as a center of self-consciousness, posits multiple distinct centers of self-consciousness in God, and therefore contravenes Christianity's credal affirmations of monotheism. (In chapter two, I defended my pneumatology against these objections by appealing to Richard of St. Victor's conceptuality of personhood). But the arc of my argument, starting as it does with a philosophical analysis of human friendship, avoids the problem of drawing conclusions about observable human relationships from unknowable inner-trinitarian ones.

What about the redundancy problem? To get around the difficulty of patterning observable human relationships on unknowable inner-trinitarian ones, some social trinitarian theologies make the economic trinity their norm instead. As I noted above, this introduces a second difficulty: characteristics that distinguish the immanent trinity from a human relationship

(such as the trinity's oneness and infinitude) disappear in God's dealings with the world; and along with them, any distinctive "advice" the trinity could "offer" about what a human relationship should look like.[18] Theologians learn nothing new about humanity from such reflection on the trinity. They merely confirm what they "already know."[19]

According to critics of social trinitarianism, it would be similarly pointless to glean conceptual resources from the economic trinity for an analysis of the relational character of human personhood and human autonomy. "We do not need the trinity to tell us that human beings condition one another by way of their relationships," Kathryn Tanner writes. "That is a commonplace affirmation in philosophy and recourse to the trinity adds nothing of substance to it."[20] Linn Tonstad adds that critiquing "Cartesian" accounts of personhood "has been" a "defining project of postmodernity," and that "entire fields of study have managed to develop" such critiques "apart from trinitarian doctrine." For Tonstad, "the anti-social trinitarian question" thus "remains: What do we learn from the trinity that we did not already know?"[21]

Tanner and Tonstad are right that one need not look to the trinity to see that individualist conceptions of human personhood and human autonomy are lacking. Plenty of philosophers—continental and analytic alike—have revised these concepts along non-individualist lines. However, their revisions tend either (a) to define human personhood and human autonomy in ableist terms, (b) to investigate much larger structures of collective agency (from universities and unions to corporations and countries) than the intimate bonds of plural persons I analyze (friendship), or (c) to miss the distinct type of collective agency that friendship

[18] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 232.
[19] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 230.
[20] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 230.
[21] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, 14.

affords. I cannot do justice here to all the relevant philosophical literature, but a few examples should suffice to show how such tendencies render these revisions insufficient for my purposes in this chapter.

As an example of the first tendency, consider Maurice Merleau-Ponty's mimetic account of human personhood and human autonomy. According to Merleau-Ponty, a human child acquires a self through *mimesis*: "that attitude whereby I assume the gestures, the conducts, the favorite words, the ways of doing things of those whom I confront," "the power of assuming [their] conducts or facial expressions as my own."[22] Moreover, on Merleau-Ponty's analysis, healthy adult autonomy includes "enter[ing] into an undivided situation with another" in love—that is, feeling one's lover's feelings, living one's lover's life, as if they were one's own—a "mixture" of oneself and another that hearkens back to the mimetic exchanges of early childhood.[23] At least one commentator has drawn on developmental psychology to argue that these mimetic exchanges—between infant and caregiver, between lovers—should be understood as "jointly owned phenomenal states," that is, "numerically single experiences" that are "jointly owned" by one "joint subject."[24] Such a reading of Merleau-Ponty seemingly places Merleau-Ponty's mimetic account of selfhood and autonomy in the conceptual vicinity of plural persons. But (much like the scientistic theological anthropologies I discussed in chapter one) Merleau-Ponty's mimetic account equates the development of selfhood and the healthy exercise of autonomy with specific second-personal behaviors (eye contact, facial expression, gesture, touch). It thereby excludes human beings who cannot perform those behaviors—such as autistic

[22] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relations with Others," trans. William Cobb, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 145.

[23] Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relations with Others," 154-155, 119.

[24] Joel Kruger, "Merleau-Ponty on Shared Emotions and the Joint Ownership Thesis," *Continental Philosophy Review* 46.4 (2013): 525, 510.

people—from the category of human persons. Indeed, behavioral scientists have cited the very words from Merleau-Ponty that I have quoted in this paragraph to support an unfalsifiable theory of autism as an inability to occupy the second-person standpoint (the unfalsifiability of which I explained in chapter one).[25] Insofar as Merleau-Ponty's revision of individualist conceptions of human personhood and human autonomy makes relationality an ableist criterion of personhood, it conflicts with my project of constructing a non-individualist concept of the self that could demystify the autonomy of porous and vulnerable human beings.

A second tendency in the philosophical literature on non-individualist personhood and autonomy is to investigate irreducibly social forms of agency that, unlike the intimate bonds of plural persons, are indefinitely scalable: *group agents* for which there is no limit in theory on the number of individual members it can have and still satisfy the basic conditions of agency at the level of the group (meaning that the group has a coherent set of desires and truth-tracking beliefs on which it acts whenever these desires and beliefs call for action).[26] For example, Judith Butler has argued that mass demonstrations (like the Gezi Park protests in which some 3.5 million people took part) amount to "plural forms of agency" or "plural action" in which the actor is not "a collection of individuals" but rather the "alliance" among those individuals.[27] Butler refers to this alliance as a self—"not just this or that individual self, but a social distribution of animated and interdependent selfhood with powers and freedom of expression."[28] However, such group agents (as I explained in chapters two and three) should not be confused with plural persons. For

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[25] Peter Hobson and Jessica Hobson, "Joint Attention or Joint Engagement? Insights from Autism," in *Joint Attention: New Developments in Psychology, Philosophy of Mind, and Social Neuroscience*, ed. Axel Seeman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 130.

[26] Christian List and Philip Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32, 37.

[27] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 9, 73, 84.

[28] Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 188.

the "relationship between what goes on at the level of the group and what goes on at the level of its members" in a group agent differs from the relationship between group-level practical reasoning and member-level values, beliefs, desires, goals (and the like) in a plural person,[29] a difference that makes "full-blown" joint autonomy impossible for group agents.[30] It is worth going over this difference again; recalling how group agents differ from plural persons will help clarify the goals of this chapter and what its theological method has to offer by way of achieving those goals.

2. Plural Persons versus Group Agents—An Overlooked Distinction

Group agents lack an essential feature of plural persons: the *absolute unsubstitutability* (as defined in chapter two) that being loved confers on the personal identity of the beloved. Loosely put, a group agent can change its individual membership without losing its identity as the particular group agent that it is.[31] So, for instance, when 3.5 million demonstrators congregate in Gezi Park to demand the right to freedom of assembly, the mere appearance of so many "bodies in public space" brings a specific group agent into being with the specific collective intention of "exercising a right to appear," as Butler puts it;[32] and the group agent remains in existence throughout the comings and goings of individual demonstrators for as long as enough demonstrators "refuse to cede that space."[33] It makes no difference to the performance of this collective action which individual demonstrators happen to leave or which new ones join. Hence, on Butler's analysis, the action of a mass demonstration is "never reducible" to the "perspective"

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[29] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 58.

[30] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Social Nature of Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 293 n.

[31] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 31.

[32] Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 96, 26.

[33] Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 94.

of an individual demonstrator (or an aggregate of these individual perspectives).[34] What Margaret Gilbert says about "large groups" applies here: "no one member is likely to know every other member personally," "many members will be strangers to one another," and they may "never have set eyes on many of their fellow members."[35] Thus, individual participants in a mass demonstration cannot plausibly care whether the group always has the selfsame individuals present (though they surely care, for the sake of their political demands, that the demonstration not dwindle). A group agent on the scale of a university, union, mass demonstration, religious denomination, fandom, or country is irreducible, in other words, *because* its members are *substitutable*.[36]

By contrast, a plural person's agency is irreducible to that of its members *despite* the *unsubstitutability* of those members. To put it roughly, in a close friendship, *we* mutually care about *our* specific *us*; it makes all the difference in the world to *us* (and to *our* exercise of joint autonomy) who each of *us* is. What's more, the love *we* feel for *our* irreplaceably particular *us* is the basic motivating force in *our* exercise of joint autonomy. That is, whenever close friends exercise joint autonomy, they act (a) on reasons that accord with *our* values, the values of the plural person *we* constitute, and (b) because of an unsubstitutable emotional attachment to *us*, the plural person, and to *our* life together, a life to which each of *us* contributes unsubstitutably. And in this structure of practical reasoning, (b) is the cornerstone on which (a) depends: the question of what conduces to *our* well-being gives *us* the grounds on which *we* decide whatever else matters to *us*. That is why

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[34] Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 85.

[35] Margaret Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 99.

[36] This way of characterizing the irreducibility of group agents is unconventional and incomplete but adequate for present purposes. For a more technically detailed account of why group agents have minds of their own—why group-level attitudes supervene holistically, not atomistically, on member-level attitudes—see List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, chapter three.

a plural person is irreducible. The object of a plural person's caring—that which reliably motivates certain actions on the part of its members—is not the sum of what I care about (as an outsider) for your sake plus what you care about (as an outsider) for my sake; it is, rather, the bond between *us* (which *we* care about as insiders).[37] I might by my own lights feel one way about a particular course of action and at the same time feel completely differently by *our* lights.[38] Consequently, one cannot make sense of a plural person's values or actions by looking only at the member-level and vice versa (a point I defended in chapter two).

Essential to a plural person's group-level exercise of autonomy, then, is the love for, pride in, and commitment to *our* relationship that each of *us* feels (and knows the others to feel) as an unsubstitutable member of *us*. By *unsubstitutable*, I mean (as I explained in chapter two) that loving my close friend renders them irreplaceable to me: were I to lose my friend, I could not undo my loss by befriending someone else who happens to have the same qualities that drew me to my erstwhile friend.[39] (If anything, such a new friendship would remind me of my loss.) For what I have lost is not simply access to those attractive qualities. Rather, I have lost a deeply felt bond with a specific individual person who—in valuing with me certain things for *our* sake, and in pursuing with me a life together that reflects *our* values—held a joint identity with me as a joint self or plural person.[40] I have thereby lost the grounds for reasoning, feeling, and acting as one of *us*; I have lost a specific irreducibly social capacity for autonomy that I could exercise only by virtue of *our* interdependent love. Bennett Helm describes this loss as "an identity crisis": after losing *our* capacity for joint autonomy, I might not "know" at first "what evaluative sense to make

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[37] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 277.

[38] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 267-270.

[39] Cf. David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 387-391.

[40] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 180, 286-287.

of things" that mattered to *us*.[41] Consider in this regard the ordinary language of friendship, how disruptions to a friendship can provoke one of the friends to declare that "*I* miss *us*"—not "*I* miss *you*" or "*her*" or "*him*" or "*them*," but "*us*."[42] Thus, a plural person, unlike a group agent, cannot change its individual membership without losing its identity as the particular plural person that it is.

Of course, individual participants in a mass demonstration like the Gezi Park protests might form unsubstitutable bonds of friendship with one another while demonstrating. But that does not undermine the conceptual distinction I have just made, for at least three reasons. First, note that the kind of emotional attachment constitutive of a plural person takes time to develop: loving one another habituates the friends into a way of feeling and acting for *our* sake,[43] which is to say that the kind of emotional attachment at issue has (practical) rational content (even if the friends cannot clearly articulate it).[44] This practical rational content distinguishes the emotions constitutive of plural persons from the kind of arational or objectless emotional contagion that can spread in a crowd of people—as when hearing laughter makes one laugh, even though one missed the joke that preceded it.[45] Second, human finitude would prevent all 3.5 million participants in the Gezi Park protests from forming a single unsubstitutable bond of friendship with one another, that is, from knowing one another intimately enough to become non-fungible objects of one another's love. That said, pinning down the largest number of members of a plural person such that $n + 1$ could no longer function as a plural person, or the smallest number of members of a group agent such that $n - 1$ could function as a plural person, is an instance of the

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[41] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 301.

[42] See (e.g.) the following friendship memoirs: Gail Caldwell, *Let's Take the Long Way Home: A Memoir of Friendship* (New York: Random House, 2011), 130; Patti Smith, *Just Kids* (New York: Ecco, 2010), 269.

[43] Helm, "Plural Agents," "Plural Agents," *Noûs* 42.1 (2008): 18.

[44] Helm, "Plural Agents," 29.

[45] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 88, 89, 269.

Sorites paradox, making this number unknowable.[46] (Note, though, as I pointed out in chapter three, that within social movement politics, a sense has emerged that once a group exceeds 15 members, cliques will form that stand in the way of the group's accomplishing its goals, unless the group puts formal procedures and protocols in place.)[47] Yet defending the conceptual distinction between these two irreducibly social modes of practical reasoning does not require one to set a fixed limit on the number of members after which it becomes impossible to sustain the kind of intimacy intrinsic to a plural person's capacity for joint autonomy. For, third, such intimacy is simply not necessary for exercising group agency (as I explained in chapter three). To satisfy the basic conditions of agency at the group-level, a group needs only (a) an *aggregation function*, that is, a procedure (such as assigning different subgroups of specialists to vote on different issues) for deriving group-level beliefs and desires from member-level ones, and (b) an *organizational structure*, or protocol for carrying out and acting on (a), that incentivizes honesty and cooperation on the part of individual members (such as anonymous voting and financial rewards for putting the group's attitudes into action).[48]

Members of a group agent might, however, feel an "affection for," or "attachment to," the group, which would obviate the need for an "incentive structure" that "guarantees" member cooperation "by appealing to" member "self-interest."[49] Put another way, members might identify emotionally with a group agent to such a degree that they act spontaneously on the

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[46] Cf. research that debunks Dunbar's number, or the idea that a human being can maintain at most 150 stable social relationships at a time: Patrick Lindenfors, Andreas Wartel, and Johan Lind, "'Dunbar's Number' Deconstructed," *Biology Letters* 17.5 (2021), https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsbl.2021.0158.

[47] Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader*, ed. Dark Star Collective (Oakland: AK Press), 68–75.

[48] For examples of such aggregation functions—as well as a discussion of the limits of majority voting for obtaining rational group-level attitudes—see List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, chapter two. For more on incentivizing member honesty and cooperation, see List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, chapter five.

[49] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 191, 193, 192.

group's beliefs and desires. Caring about the group as a "unified center of attitude and action," they might speak passionately in terms of a corporate *us*.[50] A Catholic, for instance, might say that they love the Church, that it defines them. But (as Helm points out) one's identification with a group agent to which one belongs, unlike one's identification with a close friend, is "non-intimate." So, for example, the love that such a Catholic feels for another Catholic on account of their common Catholic identity would not automatically link these co-religionists in an unsubstitutable bond of friendship—even if shared faith provides a helpful scaffolding of trust on which to build a friendship—because the object of the Catholic's love here is "fungible": whatever regard one Catholic has for another Catholic "in the basic role of fellow member" of the Church, they should also have "for anyone else who occupies that role." (Likewise "for occupants of special roles": whatever deference a Catholic owes "the current occupant of the role of" Pope "is the same as that which" they owe "previous or subsequent occupants of that role.") This kind of identification with another member of a group agent to which one belongs is not love for the specific person that this fellow member is; it is, rather, love for the communal norms of the group agent to which one sees this fellow member as responsible, and in light of which one appreciates their "authority" to "hold" oneself likewise responsible. Hence, Helm calls this form of love *recognition respect*.[51]

To come to the point of the conceptual distinction I have been sketching over the past several pages: Group agency (proper to indefinitely scalable communities such as companies, churches, and political parties) and joint autonomy or plural personhood (proper to deep friendships) are two different structures of practical reasoning. The basic motivating force in a

[50] List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 194.

[51] Bennett Helm, *Communities of Respect: Grounding Responsibility, Authority, and Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 235-236.

plural person is (as I explained in chapter two) is an unsubstitutable emotional attachment between specific friends: *our* love lights up some ends as desirable to *us* and dims down alternatives. By contrast, a group agent (as I explained in chapter three) acts within an organizational structure on the output of an aggregation function—mechanisms for determining and enacting the group's intentions that (recall) guarantee member buy-in, either by appealing to member self-interest, or by relying on member respect for the group's form of life and for fellow members in their fungible role as upholders of that form of life. Either way, the basic motivating force in group agency is not an unsubstitutable emotional attachment between specific members.

For the most part, the philosophical literature elides such a distinction, treating groups of varying sizes and degrees of intimacy, from couples to countries, as more or less the same as far as irreducibly social forms of agency go—the third tendency in non-individualist concepts of personhood and autonomy from philosophy that (as I noted above) makes these concepts insufficient for my purposes in this chapter. According to Margaret Gilbert, for example, the defining "structure" of any human social group (including "such small-scale temporary phenomena as" two acquaintances "going for a walk together" and "such enduring, complex phenomena as families, guilds, armies, even nations") is that of a *plural subject*: two or more individuals "act as would the parts of a single person," "as members of a single body," "pool[ing]" their wills into one "plural will" in pursuit of a "joint goal," that is, "an 'our' goal as opposed to two or more 'my goals.'"[52] I am not saying that "looking for the key to social groups" in general—or finding such a key in the concept of a plural subject—is wrong.[53] I am saying, rather, that any such key decrypts only part of the story, the part common to marriages and

[52] Margaret Gilbert, "Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 15.1 (1990): 2, 8, 9; cf. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation*, chapter eight.

[53] Gilbert, "Walking Together, 10.

multinational businesses and all groups in between.[54] Hence, Helm takes issue with Gilbert and others for leaving "caring and the emotions" out of their accounts of collective agency.[55] As Helm tells it, because these accounts seek to explain such a broad range of social phenomena—durable institutions (investment banks) and fleeting alliances between strangers (flash mobs) alike—they describe only collective instrumental rationality, or group reasoning about how to achieve a joint goal. These accounts thus overlook the collective *rationality of import* (as Helm calls it) proper to groups bound by mutual love between members: the joint values or non-instrumental reasons that such a group has for caring about *our* joint goals, acting on them, and consistently feeling emotional responses to the world consonant with the import that *our* joint goals have to *us*. When *we* love *our* specific *us*, *we* feel, each as one of *us*, determined to accomplish what matters to *us*, delighted when *we* accomplish it, irked when something stands in *our* way, and the like, regardless of what you or I might feel individually.[56] The "rational connections among" these reactions are "essentially" and irreducibly "interpersonal."[57] That is, supposing I am a member of such a group (of friends who rock-climb together, say), I might have my own values that conflict with *our* joint values, giving me first-person singular reasons not to feel determined, delighted, irked, and so on (perhaps *we* decide as a group to sign up for a climbing class, even though I would rather save the money for more climbing gear); but I am at the same time answerable to *us*, a plural person to whom certain things matter and whom I care about from the inside (just as I care about myself from the inside), giving me first-person plural reasons for feeling these things (like disappointment when the climbing class *we* planned to take is cancelled).

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[54] For Gilbert's account of marriage as a plural subject, see "Fusion: Sketch of a 'Contractual' Model," in *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 259-270.

[55] Helm, "Plural Agents," 36, (cf. 17-18, 20-21); Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 270 (cf. 35, 261, 264, 277, 279).

[56] Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, 66, 261-265, 275-279; Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 129, 158, 226.

[57] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 229.

But even Helm's plural person theory blurs the distinction I have been drawing between group agents and plural persons. The theory (as I showed in chapter three) ascribes essentially the same irreducibly communal structure of practical reasoning to friendships, where an intimate love links the members in an unsubstitutable bond with one another, as it does to what Helm calls *communities of respect*: group agents whose members feel a non-intimate love, or recognition respect, for the group's form of life as well as for one another in their fungible role as fellow practitioners of that form of life (as in the above example of the sort of affection a Catholic might feel for the Church). For Helm, plural persons and communities of respect alike reason from within a joint evaluative perspective, an interlocking network of felt evaluations and evaluative judgments constituting a collective personal identity. If friendship commits one to feeling on *our* behalf emotions that consistently line up with the import *our* joint goals have to *us*, regardless of what one feels individually, so, too, membership in a community of respect commits one to reacting to any of *us* with trust, gratitude, and esteem (or distrust, resentment, and contempt) in accordance with whether each of *us* keeps (or breaks) the norms of the community *we* care about, even if one has individual reasons not to value this community's "joint understanding of its practices" (as, for example, a queer Catholic might).[58]

Once again, I am not suggesting that it is wrong to look for a key to intimate and non-intimate groups in general. Nor am I suggesting that finding this key in the notion of a joint evaluative perspective (or an irreducibly social rationality of import) is wrong. I am simply suggesting that if one relies entirely on such a key to make sense of the relational character of human personhood and human autonomy—if one limits oneself to what the philosophical literature already has to offer on the matter—one is prone to a misleading account of why a

[58] Helm, *Communities of Respect*, 145, 233.

human individual is not a mere epiphenomenon of their social environments. For more remains to be said than analytic philosophers of collective agency have so far said about the differences between plural persons and communities of respect as irreducibly social rationalities of import. "What does it take to make a plural agent?" asks one reader of Helm. "Is loyalty to groups such as Phi Beta Kappa or Bengali expatriates living in Boston enough to count as constituting one, even though I don't know the majority of the other members? After all, it seems that I can feel like 'one of *us*' and do things for that reason even if the concern I feel for the others is not fully specific and intimate."[59] Helm's account of communities of respect (as I just described it) indicates yes. But to insist that communities of respect count as plural persons and vice versa would miss the difference that intimate versus non-intimate forms of love make to the social rationality of import. It would ignore what changes when the owner of a joint evaluative perspective is not a group of friends (where on the basis of an emotional attachment to one another in their irreplaceable particularity the friends so shape one another's lives that they create a joint identity without losing their individual identities) but a large group like a professional society (where on the basis of their commitment to the group's norms the members identify with fungible fellow members they do not personally know).

Namely (as I explained in chapter three), plural persons and group agents represent different moral psychologies with different moral motivations. A plural person forms intentions from motives that the group itself identifies with intimately; a group agent forms intentions from motives that the group itself does not identify with intimately. This difference—between the intimate identification at issue in a plural person and the non-intimate identification at issue in a

[59] Erica Stonestreet, review of *Love, Friendship, and the Self*, by Bennet Helm, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (22 June 2010): https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/love-friendship-the-self-intimacy-identification-the-social-nature-of-persons/ (emphasis mine).

community of respect—explains why, for communities of respect, only group *agency* (figuring out and enacting *our* intentions) is possible, not joint *autonomy* (defining *our* grounds for figuring out and enacting *our* intentions). The non-intimate sociality of group agents, where from the group's perspective no member is unsubstitutable, cannot bind all members to one another in the kind of inclusive and non-hierarchical and enduring emotional attachment necessary for each of *us* to have equal say over the contours of *our* identity. Institutional sociality is thus fertile soil for power asymmetries—hence James Allison's lament that "there is no level playing field" in the Catholic Church on which to discuss "the relationship between God and matters gay."[60] Without the binding and levelling effects of deep friendship, a group cannot develop a truly joint self.

Pushing plural person theory further in this direction—one that insists on a distinction between the irreducibly social modes of practical reasoning that plural persons and group agents respectively involve—makes better sense of the autonomy of porous and vulnerable human beings than the analytic philosophy of group agency has so far done. This distinction clarifies two features of human sociality that suggest a human individual is not a mere epiphenomenon of their social environments: (a) close friends develop a distinctive first-person plural way of knowing, a collective sensitivity to the requirements of *our* well-being that (as Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman say in a memoir of their friendship) helps the friends feel "at home" in their respective individual identities in the face of injustices from their ostensible communities of respect (as I explained in chapters two and three);[61] and (b) friendship thus offers one solution to the problem of personal identity, or how it is that the episodes of an individual human life—marked as they are by such narrative ruptures as trauma and conversion, as well as radical

[60] James Allison, *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 209.
[61] Sow and Friedman, *Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 188.

changes like marrying, becoming a parent, gender transitioning, and so on—can add up to a perduring self (as I explained in chapter four).

All this to say, missing the distinction between plural persons and group agents is an oversight with implications for the question of why a human individual is not a mere epiphenomenon of their social environments. My pneumatology clarifies that oversight and furnishes a set of refined concepts for correcting it that I am now teasing out. But why clarify and correct the problem this way? Even if the oversight I have been describing renders the current philosophical literature's non-individualist accounts of human personhood and human autonomy insufficient, my theological method for addressing this insufficiency still faces a problem of redundancy. That is, it remains the case (as critics of social trinitarianism including Tanner and Tonstad insist) that one need not appeal to the trinity to shore up a fuller account. That much should be obvious from the sequence of steps I have taken in this dissertation: I began with (1) the Anglo-American philosophical literature on joint autonomy in human friendship before (2) explicating the Spirit in terms of that philosophical literature and finally (3) defending a non-individualist conception of human autonomy using insights from that pneumatology. If philosophers have already begun to dismantle individualist conceptions of human personhood and human autonomy without recourse to the trinity, then why bother with the middle theological step? Why not just refine this philosophical work in strictly philosophical terms?

For at least two reasons. First, part of the point of getting a grip on collective forms of agency is to clarify how real human beings, in all their finitude and interdependency, can exercise a capacity for autonomy. The point, then, is to analyze the structures and strategies of normative practical reasoning that these inherently social creatures actually use. Many real human beings derive some of their forms of normative practical reasoning from religious

doctrines and practices. Therefore, part of understanding real human autonomy is understanding those doctrines and practices. Second, even if one could come up with perfectly serviceable models of collective agency without mining theological discourses for relevant conceptual resources, there is no reason to assume ahead of time that such discourses could yield only trivial insights about collective agency. I expand on both of these points in the next section.

3. Ethnographic Particularity and Philosophical Generality

Saba Mahmood has shown that one cannot correctly analyze the agency of women in the late-twentieth-century Cairene women's mosque movement without reference to the Islamic concepts internal to the movement itself—to practices like *khushū'* (weeping in prayer), *takhwīf* (admonitory preaching), and *ḥijāb* (the veil) through which these women cultivate virtues like *ṣabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *al-ḥayā'* (modesty).[62] Within liberal feminist philosophy, agency typically means resisting social conventions in order to accomplish the self's true desires or express the self's true feelings.[63] Contrastingly, the women of the mosque movement submit to a religious tradition in order to acquire the desires and feelings of an exemplary pious self as that tradition defines it. Liberal theories of agency view these women as passive and insincere,[64] or subsume them under the trope of the voluntary slave,[65] or unearth hidden possibilities for resistance within their movement.[66] As the women themselves see it, however, Islamic rituals are not an impediment to, but rather a condition of, agency—the necessary bodily training through

[62] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[63] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 5, 8, 11, 14, 22, 146, 148, 151, 153, 164.
[64] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 15, 146.
[65] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 149.
[66] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 5.

which one transforms unnatural virtues into second nature.[67] For them, veiling creates modesty in the one who veils.[68] Thus, "it would be a mistake," Mahmood writes, "to ignore the specificity of doctrinal reasoning" that gives the women's mosque movement "a particular force."[69]

As Mahmood points out, "anthropologists … have long acknowledged that the terms people use to organize their lives are … constitutive of different forms of personhood, knowledge, and experience."[70] Yet, to quote Harry Frankfurt, "we [analytic] philosophers have, so far, hardly any understanding of certain concepts that are quite central … to specifically religious experience … We have no lucid and sufficient grasp of the very notion of *spirituality* itself."[71] This dissertation has offered one such lucid and sufficient grasp, giving some analytic clarity to a cluster of terms that Christians have traditionally used to organize their lives: a believer's friendship with God,[72] the Spirit's indwelling a believer's heart,[73] and Jesus's living in a believer.[74]

In Christian forms of life, these terms are constitutive of a structure of practical reasoning the correct analysis of which, I submit, requires reference to the trinity, whether or not God really is triune. I mentioned above that Karen Kilby, a critic of social trinitarianism, argues for replacing a social doctrine of the trinity with a grammatical or hermeneutic doctrine. By Kilby's lights, Christians ought to think of the trinity not as an actual "picture of the divine" but as a

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[67] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 31, 51, 112-113, 122-124, 131, 133, 148, 157-158, 166, 188.
[68] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 23, 56, 157, 160-161.
[69] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 183.
[70] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 16.
[71] Harry Frankfurt, "Reflections of My Career in Philosophy," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 85.2 (2011): 107 (emphasis in the original). NB: The growing field of analytic theology, much of which is published in the Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology monograph series, aims to remedy this shortcoming in the Anglo-American philosophical literature. In addition, there have been notable exceptions within analytic philosophy proper, including William Alston, John Hick, and William Wainwright. That said, according to at least one analytic philosopher, "*ordinary religious experience*," as opposed to the "mystical or 'uncanny,'" remains an "unduly neglected category" within the literature, Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 144 (emphasis in the original).
[72] John 15:9-17.
[73] See, e.g., Rom 8:9-11, 2 Cor 1:21-22.
[74] Gal 2:20.

second-order rule for specifying "how various aspects of the Christian faith hang together."[75] But (as I pointed out in chapter two) the research of at least one anthropologist indicates that when U. S.-American evangelical Christians explain how their friendship with God works, they presuppose a trinitarian picture of God. For these Christians, the lynchpin of a believer's friendship with God is prayer,[76] where the believer can "recognize that it's not me, but God inside me, that I'm having a conversation with,"[77] thanks to Jesus's humanizing the divine,[78] together with the Spirit's occupying the believer's conscience.[79] That is, prayer puts the believer in touch with Jesus and the Spirit simultaneously. The concepts of incarnation and indwelling that structure this account of friendship with God thus assume God's immanent triune identity.

The Christian tradition is full of theologians who likewise explain a believer's friendship with God in terms of God's immanent triune identity—including Augustine, Richard of St. Victor, Peter Lombard, Catherine of Siena, Jonathan Edwards, and Karl Barth. As I showed in chapter two, for theologians like these, God in Godself is friendship; the Spirit is the bond of friendship between the Father and the Son; and God's friendship with human beings is an expansion *ad extra* of God's friendship *in se*: from all eternity, the Spirit of the Father and the Son makes the human being Jesus a member of the Spirit's bond, and Jesus invites the rest of humanity to share that bond. Thus, contrary to Kilby, I contend that, whether or not belief in the trinity is veridical, for Christians who so believe, friendship with God involves a distinctively trinitarian form of practical reasoning—again, not in that the trinity serves as a model of agency to which these Christians conform, but rather in that they believe their friendship with God

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[75] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 443-444.

[76] T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Vintage, 2012), 77.

[77] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 83.

[78] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 35, 76.

[79] Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 83, 314.

draws them into the trinity itself.[80] Plural personhood or joint autonomy is one way of describing—in terms external to Christianity—the basic rational structure of this incorporation of Christians into the relations among Father, Son, and Spirit.

Or so I argued in chapter two. The result is an account of the relevance of the trinity to human life that critics of social trinitarianism could support. Tanner, for example, proposes that this relevance is a matter of human participation in the trinity rather than human imitation of the trinity.[81] Tanner defines this participation as "drawing near," "close relationship with," "attachment to"—in a word, love.[82] The trinity has significance for human life, says Tanner, not as a relational principle that one follows, but as a God with whom one enjoys a relationship. Thus, "by becoming attached to" that triune God, a human believer is "swept up into" the immanent relations among Father, Son, and Spirit.[83] That is, God attaches Godself to humanity in Jesus, the incarnate Son; and because Jesus "retains as a human being the same sort of relations with Father and Spirit that he has as" Son, when human beings attach themselves to Jesus, they "share in" his relations with Father and Spirit.[84] Tanner's account of the relevance of the trinity to human life avoids the problems of social trinitarianism: that human beings share in the life of the trinity not by trying to copy it but by being included in it "as the very creatures they are" removes the need to figure out how statements about infinite and unconditioned trinitarian relations would apply to finite and dependent human ones;[85] and that "all" human beings, "of whatever gender," join the trinity "in the same way," through "the very same person of the

[80] Note well that insisting in this way on the first-order significance of the trinity within Christian forms of life is *not* tantamount to the social trinitarian claim that one *must* look to the trinity to understand human agency in general.

[81] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 234-237.

[82] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 13, 14.

[83] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 236.

[84] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 237.

[85] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 236.

trinity"—the Son—"prevents one from" mapping the different trinitarian persons onto different human genders and "thereby reinforcing" a gender hierarchy.[86] My constructive pneumatology is one way of spelling out how participation as Tanner conceives of it might work: participation is plural personhood; humans participate in the trinity by sharing the Spirit and so exercising joint autonomy with God.

Thus, one reason not to skip the middle theological step in my analysis of human autonomy is that it tells an important story in its own right—one of interest to those Christians who regard trinitarian statements as veridical first-order descriptions of God, as well as to scholars who wish to understand such Christians. It is (as I suggested in chapters one and two) a story that opens the "black box" of the Spirit,[87] breaking from the trend in constructive pneumatology to say "very little … about *how* the Spirit works" relative to the questions of "*who* the Spirit is and *what* the Spirit does."[88] It is also a story about what human participation in the divine means, how human friendship with God works, and why affirmations of God's unconditioned creative agency need not conflict with affirmations of human autonomy.

Throughout this chapter, however, I have been making the less cautious claim that looking to the trinity can also fund a general non-individualist account of human autonomy. Tanner and Tonstad are correct that philosophers do not *need* to look to the trinity to defend non-individualist conceptions of human personhood and human autonomy. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the trinity *has nothing of substance to add* here.

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[86] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 243.

[87] Kimberley Kroll and Joanna Leidenhag, "On the Revelation of the Holy Spirit," 38.

[88] Kevin Hector, "The Mediation of Christ's Normative Spirit: A Constructive Reading of Schleiermacher's Pneumatology," *Modern Theology* 24.1 (2008): 1-2.

To appreciate why, consider the baroque thought experiments with which the philosophical literature on personal identity is replete. Philosophers do not *need* to revisit these imaginary cases of half-brain transplants and hyper-identical twins to see that (for example) continuity of consciousness (or memory) is a problematic criterion by which to establish that a human being *x* at the present moment and a future being *y* are the same person.[89] This view is what Tanner would call a philosophical commonplace, and philosophers have defended it without appealing to any imaginary cases—by showing that the evidence for such a psychological continuity theory of personal identity presupposes the very theory for which it purports to argue,[90] or by appealing to neuroscientific data about how human beings trace one another over time.[91] Still, thought experiments—including those with a primary aim of ruling out psychological continuity theories—can play a helpful role in the philosophy of personal identity. As one philosopher explains, a person is not a natural kind; "personal identity is," rather, a metaphysical "rendering" of "empirical facts" about human physiology and psychology "in a conceptual scheme drawn partly by the significance" one "accord[s] to" those facts "relative to what matters to" one.[92] Therefore, one "cannot *discover* the true nature of personal identity" but "must decide" for oneself what to make of it.[93] Thought experiments reveal one's "self-concepts and the (often hidden) values that in part shape them."[94] That is, imaginary cases of human fission, fusion, duplication, and memory swapping enable philosophers of personal identity to

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[89] Kathleen Wilkes goes even further, arguing that thought experiments are "highly misleading as a philosophical tool," because "a world in which half-brains could be transplanted, or in which *doppelgängers* could be created, is one *so* radically different from our own that no philosophically interesting conclusion can be drawn," *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1, 45.

[90] Marya Schechtman, "Personhood and Personal Identity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 87.2 (1990): 71-92.

[91] Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 43-60, 80-84, 89-90.

[92] Daniel Kolak, "The Metaphysics and Metapsychology of Personal Identity: Why Thought Experiments Matter in Deciding Who We Are," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30.1 (1993): 43, 47.

[93] Kolak, "Why Thought Experiments Matter in Deciding Who We Are," 44, emphasis in the original.

[94] Kolak, "Why Thought Experiments Matter in Deciding Who We Are," 47.

isolate "one single" personal identity criterion "at a time"—a "conceptual dissection" impossible "in real life"—in order to ask "whether physiological continuity or psychological continuity or something else matters most."[95]

My constructive pneumatology can be read as a similarly motivated thought experiment. Plural person theory in its current form has shortcomings. Not only does the theory blur the distinction between plural persons and group agents—a distinction that my ecclesiological reflections above as well as in chapters two and three made clear. In addition, plural person theory (at least as Helm has so far articulated it) says nothing about whether the dangers of heteronomy look different for a plural persons or how a plural person would cope with threats to *our* joint autonomy. How would a plural person avoid (or recover from) such relational troubles as enmeshment or co-dependency? What forms might collective heteronomy take? How does a plural person resist them?

One lesson from the ecclesiological elaboration of my pneumatology in chapter three is of particular help in answering these questions. There, I applied Ramzi Fawaz's distinction between the flexible and open-ended queer forms of friendship (on the one hand) and the calcified orthodoxies of social movement politics (on the other) to the distinction between plural persons and communities of respect to argue that the impulse within Christian theology to find an inclusive model of ecclesial belonging is misguided.[96] As Fawaz explains, when contemporary queer and feminist social movements codify a set of ostensibly "ironclad" or "unimpeachable" rules for redressing all past harm and preventing all future harm, they forestall experimentation with new modes of relationality and thus make life harder for the very minoritized people they

[95] Kolak, "Why Thought Experiments Matter in Deciding Who We Are," 46.
[96] Ramzi Fawaz, *Queer Forms* (New York: New York University Press, 2022).

intended to liberate and heal in the first place.[97] The temptation to codify universal rules for belonging in a hegemonic framework that Fawaz sees in the contemporary rhetoric of care and harm reduction within these social movements is essentially collective heteronomy. Looking for a blueprint that lays out once-and-for-all standards of inclusivity—whether political or ecclesiological—and enforcing such a blueprint through recriminatory practices like canceling are forms of collective heteronomy. Plural persons open up the possibility of resisting collective heteronomy simply by being themselves in their weird variety—by, that is, continuing to make and keep local and contingent promises that are unique to *us* and *our* circumstances. In so doing, plural persons contribute to an archive of queer forms with which future human beings can argue and through which they can thus discover and create new conceptions of faith and hope and love.

So, while in the preceding chapters I have told an important story about the Spirit, there is also a bigger story here about what friendship is, why autonomy requires vulnerability, and how different types of collective agency work. Just as the usefulness of thought experiments about human fission for analyzing the concept of personal identity does not depend on the empirical possibility of human fission, so, too, the usefulness of my constructive pneumatology for analyzing the structures and strategies of normative practical reasoning does not require the empirical reality of God, the Spirit, or the trinity. My model of the Spirit, then, can be read by different readers in different ways. While some can read it as a Christian theology of participation, others can read it as a non-confessional thought experiment that draws heuristically on the trinity to shore up a non-individualist conception of human autonomy.

[97] Fawaz, *Queer Forms* 355, 364.

An anthropologist like Mahmood would surely balk at this suggestion. By Mahmood's lights, the examples that inform a theory tether its explanatory value to a specific time and place.[98] For instance, according to Mahmood, Judith Butler's theory of performativity cannot explain the piety movement Mahmood studied, because the theory's key example of drag queens equates agency with subverting social norms.[99] Mahmood thinks, then, that one should not put forward "*a* theory of agency."[100] Rather, one should analyze ethnographically particular modes of agency in order to "parochialize" the "assumptions" behind philosophically general theories of agency.[101] Hence, Mahmood's aim in describing the women's mosque movement is to "denaturalize" the voluntaristic self "of liberal feminist theory," that is, the self that resists social conventions in order to accomplish the self's true desires or express the self's true feelings.[102] Toward that end, Mahmood locates agency, not in the intentionality of a self-conscious human individual, but in "historically contingent discursive traditions" that make specific desires and forms of willing possible while precluding others.[103]

I agree with Mahmood that it would be a mistake to equate human agency with the subversion of social norms—not least because the desire for freedom from tradition, far from being innate, is itself the product of a particular discursive tradition, namely, liberalism.[104] Nor, in asking how multiple human beings can believe, evaluate, and act as a plural person without each losing their individual autonomy, do I mean to inquire into the requisite "social conditions"

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[98] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 163.
[99] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 164.
[100] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 34, 188 (emphasis Mahmood's).
[101] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 38.
[102] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 155.
[103] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 32
[104] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 152, 191. For more on liberalism as a discursive tradition, see Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, 2009), 20-63, especially 25-26.

for the "production and flourishing" of the voluntaristic self of liberalism,[105] as if such a self should be the goal of all human communities. On the contrary, I take my cue from Mahmood's questions for Western feminism and liberalism more broadly: "Are we willing to countenance the sometimes violent task of remaking sensibilities, lifeworlds, and attachments so that women of the kind I worked with may be taught to value the principle of 'freedom?' Furthermore, does a commitment to the ideal of equality in our own lives endow us with the capacity to know that this ideal captures what is or should be fulfilling for everyone else?"[106] It is precisely in order to decouple the concept of autonomy from the liberal principle of individualism that I raise the questions of how a group of human beings can itself feel emotions and deliberate about what to do as one real and irreducible person, and how a plural person's capacity for joint autonomy builds up the individual capacity for autonomy of each of its members.

It is important to get the autonomy of human beings right—to understand how these finite, dependent animals figure out what they care about or deliberate about what to do—lest one smuggle moral or political commitments into one's conception of autonomy and (for example) fail "to envision valuable forms of human flourishing outside the bounds of a liberal progressive imaginary," as Mahmood puts it.[107] Such failures have consequences "in the real-time of social life."[108] Anthropologists and theorists of the public sphere have long observed that liberal democracies construe nonliberal counterpublics, from queer activism to politicized Islam, as threats to reason and liberty rather than specific modes of reason and liberty.[109] To quote one

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[105] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 150.
[106] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 38.
[107] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 155.
[108] Elizabeth Povinelli, "Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 327.
[109] In addition to Povinelli, "Radical Worlds," 319-334, see Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80; Talal Asad,

anthropologist of late liberalism, "the message" of liberal democracies to these "radical worlds" is, *Remake yourself in liberalism's image or else face "severe forms of governmental control*."[110] Like Mahmood, my hope in decoupling the concept of autonomy from the liberal imaginary is that it would interrupt this message by making it possible for one habituated to a liberal form of life to see the rationality of nonliberal lifeworlds.

That said, to my mind, decoupling the concept of autonomy from the principles of liberalism does not require a methodological choice between ethnographic particularity and philosophical generality. If anything, it requires the opposite, an amalgamation of the two analytic approaches. As Mahmood herself notes, enabling liberal progressives to recognize the women's mosque movement as a mode of human flourishing requires some translation: "render[ing] unfamiliar lifeworlds into conceptual or communicable form," or, more bluntly, "render[ing] to reason that which has been banished from its domain."[111] And rendering the strategies of normative practical reasoning from one discursive tradition legible to another depends on the possibility of adequately describing a rationality common to both traditions. It depends, that is, on the possibility of a theory of normative practical reasoning that does not reproduce the theorist's parochial assumptions about what ways of life human beings ought to desire. Indeed, Mahmood explains the rationality of the women's piety movement in terms external to the movement, including Aristotle's virtues, Hadot's spiritual exercises, and Foucault's technologies of the self. In sum, one can agree with Mahmood, as I do, that "all forms of desire are discursively organized," such that neither a devout Cairene woman's "desire for submission

Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005).

[110] Povinelli, "Radical Worlds," 329, 327, emphasis mine.

[111] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 199.

to" the "recognized authority" of Islam nor, say, my own desire for submission to the recognized authority of academia is "innate" or "ahistorical,"[112] and one can still try to formulate a theory of normative practical reasoning that describes the basic rational structures common to these historically contingent desires and volitions.

Nor should one choose between locating agency in a discursive tradition and locating it in the desires and volitions of an individual adherent of that tradition. While it is true (as Mahmood argues) that "the practices of the mosque participants" are "products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable," it is simultaneously true (*pace* Mahmood) that these practices are "products" of the participants themselves. For what Mahmood's claim that "the individual is contingently made possible by the discursive logic of the ethical traditions she enacts"[113] really amounts to is the broadly Hegelian insight that, once a person has mastered a social practice, being constrained by its communal norms makes new modes of individual expressive freedom possible for that person—as when an athlete introduces an unprecedented skill to their sport (like Simone Biles's eponymous gymnastics elements), or a writer reinvents a literary form (like Victoria Chang's poetic obituaries).[114] After all, a discursive tradition is not a physical force, like gravity; it does not determine the motions of its adherents. It is, rather, a set of discourses that "aspire" to a particular "collective life"[115] and so "seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice."[116] Practitioners do evaluate these forms and their purposes, reshaping them to accommodate a historical tradition to present circumstances. (For example, as

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[112] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 15.
[113] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 32.
[114] Robert Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16.3 (1979): 187-196.
[115] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17.2 (2009): 24.
[116] Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," 20.

Mahmood shows, the women of the mosque movement regularly reflect together on how to cultivate piety when their immediate families object to their religious practices, and their secular places of work subject them to impious experiences and temptations.)[117] A "necessary part" of discursive traditions is thus the "process of trying to *win someone over* for the willing performance of a traditional practice"—in other words, argument, reasoning.[118] All of this is to suggest, a discursive tradition is a set of "historically sedimented" discourses that address themselves to persons regarding their communal and individual flourishing, and that persons pass on and rework in the present through (in Mahmood's own words) "pedagogy, training, and argumentation"—in short, a dynamic and variform ongoing collective personal invention.[119] Ergo, it makes sense to ascribe agency at once corporately, to the macrolevel of an entire discursive tradition (as a *group agent*), and distributively, to the microlevel of each adherent of that tradition (as an *individual agent*). And it makes sense to ascribe autonomy—an agent's reflexive capacity to evaluate and revise their goals—not only to practitioners of a tradition individually, but also to intimate relationships between such practitioners (*plural persons*).

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have drawn upon a particular discursive tradition, Christianity, to argue for a general account of this triple ascription of agency among individuals, plural persons, and group agents. That is, through a theological exposition of plural person theory, I have refined a set of concepts for analyzing these multiple levels of agency, be the discursive tradition in question a tradition in which one veils until one so desires the veil that one

[117] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 155-156.
[118] Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," 23 (emphasis in the original).
[119] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 115.

feels uncomfortable without it, or a tradition in which one writes scholarly prose at least fifteen minutes daily until skipping a day makes one jittery.[120] Having appropriated Christian concepts like trinity, Spirit, and participation for this general account, I want to be very clear that (*pace* Kant, Hegel, Troeltsch, and the like) Christian concepts are not the only ethnographically particular concepts conducive to philosophical generality.[121] Nor need one look to Christianity to understand human agency. Other traditions offer different riches—the freedoms of the *torah kelulah* or *māqām la māqām* (say).[122] I have mined Christianity for its evocative images of a plural self.

[120] Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* (New York: Holt, 1998).

[121] For a history of the "modern" attempt to make Christianity "something else altogether than 'mere' religion," see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 13.

[122] On the Jewish concept of the *torah kelulah*, or "God's primordial Torah," see Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 159. On *māqām la māqām*, or the Islamic concept of "the standpoint of no standpoint," "the selfhood that achieves" "freedom from constraint," see William Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 147.

EPILOGUE

In this dissertation, I have argued for a new model of the Spirit as the plural person constituted by the bond of friendship between the Father and the Son. The purpose of constructing this model of the Spirit was to remedy gaps in theological anthropology as well as in the analytic philosophy of group agency. Theological anthropologies frequently make the Spirit responsible for human freedom without explaining how the Spirit empowers human beings to act freely (as I explained in chapter one). At the same time, philosophies of group agency for the most part overlook the role of caring and the emotions in human social life (as I showed in chapter three). Even plural person theory, which closes this gap, leaves open the question of what types of collective heteronomy group agents face and how plural persons might resist them. My pneumatology provides one account of how the Spirit empowers human beings to act freely (as I showed in chapter two). As such, it also provides resources for thinking about collective heteronomy and how groups can resist it (as I described in chapters three and five).

As I see it, these are the major takeaways of my model of the Spirit:

1. I have shown in non-magical terms how human beings and God can exercise joint autonomy in the Spirit. I have thus constructed a pneumatology that has creative potential for resolving a number of theological puzzles, including (a) how the relationship between divine grace and human freedom works, (b) how a human believer can figure out for themself what they care about, (c) how a human believer's instinctive feel for the truth works, (d) whether a Christian life must take the shape of a cohesive narrative, and (e) the seeming incoherence of subjective immortality as an object of human hope.

2. Through my pneumatology, I have constructed an account of personhood and agency that shows how it is that human beings are not mere epiphenomena of their social environments. Relationships like friendship extend rather than undermine the autonomy of individual human beings. Participation in discursive traditions does not compete with the capacity for autonomy; it particularizes this capacity. That is, participation in a discursive tradition populates various forms of practical reasoning (individual agency, plural agency, group agency) with specific content (as I explained in chapter five).

3. Moreover, through my pneumatology, I have managed to construct a relational model of autonomy and personhood that does not by definition exclude people with cognitive disabilities from these categories (as I showed in chapters two and four). According to the Kantified Victorine conceptuality of personhood on which my pneumatology relies, all someones are persons. In the human community of recognition, all human beings are someones, ergo all human beings are persons. Furthermore, participating in a plural person does not require exemplary rational faculties. Rather, one's responsiveness to the world reveals one's practical preferences—preferences about which one need not be especially articulate. Qualitative research bears out my Kantified Victorine account of personhood and autonomy as well as my pneumatological elaboration of plural person theory. Christians living with dementia, no less than neurotypical Christians, can exercise joint autonomy with God and with their fellow believers. They can continue to identify with their lives even as their cognitive powers decline.

4. I have used plural person theory as well as queer theory to show that the desire to stipulate conditions for an inclusive ecclesiology is, no matter how well-intentioned, nevertheless harmful (as I pointed out in chapter three).

The above five items represent what I have been able to accomplish with my constructive pneumatology.

My pneumatology could be elaborated along any number of lines to address a variety of further theological questions. Here are just a few:

1. How might my pneumatology be developed along interspecies lines? What, theologically speaking, do human animals owe nonhuman animals? Can nonhuman animals and human beings form plural persons? And what about synthetic forms of personhood? What would my pneumatology entail for the creation, maintenance, and engagement with varieties of artificial intelligence that are capable of the rationality of import (assuming it is possible for human beings to create it)?

2. What are the implications of my pneumatology for a theology of religions? Plural person theory could describe any human friendship with God, not just those including self-identified Christian believers. That is to say, any theological tradition that allows for theorizing the relationship between humanity and divinity in terms of friendship leaves open the possibility of a model of joint human and divine agency approximating my pneumatology. It need not be a trinitarian tradition. Nor would explaining that tradition's conception of friendship between human believers and God in terms of plural person theory render that tradition crypto-trinitarian. If my pneumatology is compatible with

non-trinitarian theologies, what are the consequences for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue?

3. What modes of scriptural exegesis or biblical theology might my pneumatology open up? A favored approach to biblical theology among evangelical Christians is narrative (or, more broadly, postliberal) theology. N. T. Wright's conception of the Christian life as living out the lost fifth act of a Shakespeare play, of which creation, fall, Israel, and Jesus are the first four acts, is one example of this approach. I suggested in chapter four that asking individual Christian lives to adhere to a narrative form is problematic—it risks excluding trauma survivors, people with an episodic temperament, and people with cognitive disabilities. My pneumatology is one approach to a non-narrative mode of Christian discipleship. What parallel modes of exegesis does my pneumatology make available? What, in short, might it look like to treat scripture as an archive of queer forms?

Finally, my pneumatology could fund an account of Jesus's redemptive ministry that does not choose between Spirit Christology and Logos Christology. But I leave these matters for other theologians to pursue.