An Evaluation of the Son-Spirit Relation in Clark Pinnock's Inclusivism: An Exercise in Trinitarian Reflection

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Introduction

It is certainly an understatement to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is of critical importance to all Christian thought, life, and practice. The very heart and soul of Christian theology—the gospel itself—is rooted and grounded in our view of God as triune. Contrary to what many people sadly think, the doctrine of the Trinity is *not* some esoteric, abstract doctrine unrelated to the "practical" affairs of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, understanding God as triune is central to everything Scripture says about God. For example, without it, we could not make sense of the salvation that the Bible presents centered in a divine Father who initiates, a divine Savior who redeems, and a divine Spirit who applies Christ's work to us by doing only what God can do, namely, give us resurrection life. In the end, the doctrine of the Trinity is at the heart of what distinguishes the Christian view of God from all its rivals. And that is certainly an important point to emphasize in our pluralistic and postmodern world that is constantly attempting to challenge the exclusive claims of the gospel.

Now it is precisely because the doctrine of the Trinity is so important that we must be very careful how we appeal to the doctrine and make use of it in our theological proposals. As Keith Johnson reminds us in his important article, a lot of current non-evangelical theologizing often appeals to various aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity in an illegitimate manner.[1] But, unfortunately, this fact is also true within evangelical theology. Specifically, I have in mind recent appeals to the role relations within the triune Godhead, particularly, the Son-Spirit relationship, to ground a "wider-hope" or "inclusivist" theology. A "wider-hope" theology is one that wrestles with the relationship between the gospel and other world religions, especially regarding the status of the person who has never heard the gospel. It attempts to argue that the person who has never heard the gospel still may be saved by grace through faith due to the universal work of the Holy Spirit, but this is apart from actually hearing and believing the gospel. In my view, we find in this position an illegitimate appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity and a presentation of the relations between the Son and Spirit that is simply unbiblical. In order to substantiate this assertion, this article will proceed in four steps: First, I will briefly describe the position of inclusivism. Second, I will explain how it attempts to ground its view by appeal to a specific understanding of the Son-Spirit relation by outlining the view of one of its most prolific proponents, Clark Pinnock. Third, I will give a biblical-theological critique of Pinnock's proposal by thinking through the Son-Spirit relation across the canon of Scripture. Fourth, I will offer a

number of concluding reflections on this important subject.

A Description of Inclusivism

Living in a pluralistic and postmodern age not only challenges the exclusive claims of the gospel, but it also raises afresh legitimate issues that cannot be ignored by Christian theologians. One such example is the question of the status of those who have never heard the gospel, and whether such persons may experience the saving grace of God apart from hearing the gospel message and placing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In recent years, the threefold typology of pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism characterizes the various theological responses to the issue of the gospel's relationship to other world religions.[2] Each of these views includes a spectrum of positions. For heuristic purposes, I will briefly describe each of the views in the broadest of terms, not noting all the fine nuances within each position.[3]

First, *pluralism* is the view that relativizes all religious claims to superiority over any other religion. This view entails a denial of the claims of historic Christianity, including a denial of the Trinity, and its corollary, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If there is any "salvation" at all (which is variously conceived), pluralism teaches that people may be "saved" through a number of different religious traditions and communities.[4]

Second, in direct opposition to pluralism, is the view of *exclusivism*. This has been, at least up until recent times, the position of most evangelicals. It argues not only that the central claims and doctrines of Christianity are universally true, but also that in order to receive salvation, one must consciously repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Savior. In addition, in relation to other non-Christian religions, exclusivism contends that salvation is *not* found in the structures of those religions even though, it is admitted, non-Christian religions are not always wrong in what they believe. Where their teachings conflict with the teaching of Scripture, though, they are necessarily wrong.[5]

Third, *inclusivism* is the view that attempts to provide a mediating position between pluralism and exclusivism.[6] On the one hand, it agrees with exclusivism over against pluralism in affirming that Christianity is true and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord; no human being will be saved apart from him. However, it disagrees with exclusivism in that it affirms that God has revealed himself, even in saving ways in other religions, and that it is possible for someone who has never heard the gospel to receive salvation apart from explicit faith in Christ. At this point, inclusivists often make a distinction between an *ontological* and *epistemological* necessity when it comes to Christ, salvation, and those who have never heard the gospel. A person cannot be saved apart from Christ (an affirmation of the ontological necessity of Christ for salvation), but it is possible for people to experience salvation apart from explicit faith in Christ, at least in this life (a denial of an epistemological necessity of believing in Christ). But this distinction raises an important question: How exactly does one receive the benefits of Christ's work if one does not necessarily believe in him? Does not Scripture say, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be

saved'" (Rom 10:12-13)?

Inclusivists differ in their answer to this question. Most inclusivists affirm that one may trust in God (be a "believer") as known through God's self-disclosure in the created order (general revelation), or even through, in some limited way, a person's religion. Some even affirm a post-mortem, second chance theology. But whatever precise position is argued, in the end, inclusivists argue that "the wideness of God's mercy" is of such a nature that God will accept and save those honest, humble, and genuine seekers, who through no fault of their own, have never heard the gospel. If they cry out to the Lord, stirred by his prevenient grace, and turn to him as he is revealed in creation and their religious setting, they will discover, most probably after death, that the one who saved them was Christ, whether they were aware of it or believed in him.

However, this fairly standard inclusivist answer raises some further questions. How does God's Spirit bring people to salvation when these people have no access to the gospel message? Does not Scripture teach that salvation is grounded in Jesus Christ both ontologically and epistemologically in this life (see John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12; cf. Heb 9:27)? How does God manifest his saving presence in the world apart from one hearing the gospel and placing faith in it? How are we to make theological sense of this kind of viewpoint? Clark Pinnock, a highly influential evangelical inclusivist, has sought to address these very questions. It is his answer to these questions that I now want to describe in some detail, specifically showing how his answer is centered in an illegitimate appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity. In his book, *Flame of Love*,[7] Pinnock develops a theology of the Spirit—what he calls the "pneumatological proposal"—that, in my view, provides a much needed theological explanation as to how inclusivists attempt to reconcile the difficult challenge of affirming the uniqueness of Christ while denying that knowledge and faith *in Christ* is necessary for salvation. Ultimately this explanation fails in regard to biblical fidelity. Pinnock's pneumatological approach also has been a catalyst for other inclusivists to think through these important matters.[8] Obviously within the confines of this article I cannot do justice to his entire argument. Instead, I will focus primarily on his specific arguments found in chapter 6 of *Flame of Love*, namely, "Spirit and Universality." Why this chapter? Because in it, Pinnock succinctly gives what he believes is the biblical and theological grounding for his proposal and thus the inclusivist position.

A Description of Clark Pinnock's "Pneumatological Proposal"

A brief description of Pinnock's proposal will help prepare the way for a critical evaluation. Inclusivists, including Pinnock, often present their view in light of the tension between two biblical axioms: universality and particularity. The "universality axiom" is related to expressions of God's universal salvific will (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9) grounded in God's universal presence in the world. Pinnock, in contrast to much of historic evangelical theology, seems to understand the will of God solely in terms of God's universal salvific stance towards the world. He is not fond of making distinctions, such as God's decretive and perceptive will, that have allowed theologians to speak of God genuinely valuing many states of affairs

that are not compatible with his chosen plan for the world.[9] Nor is he fond of making distinctions between "common" and "saving" grace, which has allowed theologians to speak of God's relations to people in different ways, since, as he argues, "if the Triune God is present, grace must be present too." [10] That is why, for Pinnock, to speak of the "universality axiom" entails that God's grace *must* be available to all people. He states, "If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation."[11]

But this creates a tension with the "particularity axiom," namely "the belief that Jesus is the only way to God."[12] Why the tension? Because, as Pinnock argues, "if hearing the gospel clearly is required for salvation, it would seem that God does not want all to be saved."[13] Pinnock asks, "Does God love the whole world or not? God may desire all to be saved, but it is hard to see how they possibly can be. How can a large number meet the requirement of believing in the gospel? It would seem that they cannot."[14]

So how do we resolve this tension? Pinnock entertains the possibility that general revelation, including non-Christian religions, may play a role in the salvation of the human race, a role preparatory to the gospel of Christ. In contrast to much of historic evangelical theology, Pinnock affirms that general revelation is salvific. Since God meets us everywhere, including the natural world which includes non-Christian religions, "no nook or cranny is untouched by the finger of God" and "God is always reaching out to sinners. . . . There is no general revelation or natural knowledge of God that is not at the same time gracious revelation and a potentially saving knowledge. All revealing and reaching out are rooted in God's grace and are aimed at bringing sinners home."[15] This is not to say, as Pinnock clearly states, that there is not "depths of darkness, deception, and bondage in them [world religions]" nor is it to affirm that "religions themselves as such are vehicles of salvation." But it is to affirm that "God *may* use religion as a way of gracing people's lives and that it is *one* of God's options for evoking faith and communicating grace."[16]

But how is one to make theological sense of this? What biblical warrant may be given for this proposal? This is where Pinnock's pneumatological approach enters. The approach is centered in a specific understanding of the personal relations within the triune Godhead. How are we to conceptualize the universality of God's grace? How are we to conceive of access to God's grace given the "scandal of historical particularity?" Pinnock's proposal is that we see it in relation to the universal work of the Holy Spirit. In fact, as he states it, we must conceive of it in relation to the "twin, interdependent missions of the Son and Spirit."[17] Here is his proposal in summary:

> Christ, the only mediator, sustains particularity, while Spirit, the presence of God everywhere, safeguards universality. Christ represents particularity by being the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5-6), while Spirit upholds universality because no soul is beyond the sphere of the Spirit's operations. Spirit is not confined to the church but is present everywhere, giving life and creating community. Hovering over the waters of creation, Spirit is present also in the search for meaning and the struggle against sin and death. Because inspiration is ubiquitous and works everywhere in unseen ways, Spirit is in a position to offer grace to every person. Because Spirit works everywhere

> in advance of the church's mission, preparing the way for Christ, God's will can be truly and credibly universal.[18]

Once again, it is important to stress that Pinnock's proposal is a move away from historic evangelical theology. How so? Simply, in how he conceives of the relationship of the work of the Son to the Spirit and then to that of the Father. Historically, and a point that Pinnock admits, evangelical thought has viewed the work of the Spirit in relation to Christ. However, Pinnock believes that this approach has had the effect of exalting Christ above the Spirit and subordinating the Spirit to the Son.[19] Instead, he suggests, we should try a new idea. After all, he states, "it lies within the freedom of theology to experiment with ideas."[20] What is this new idea? It is that we view "Christ as an aspect of the Spirit's mission, instead of (as is more usual) viewing Spirit as a function of Christ's."[21]

What advantage does this new approach offer us? Pinnock is convinced that it not only will help reduce the tension between universality and particularity, it will also allow us to consider "particularity in the context of universality."[22] Thus, prior to, and geographically larger than, the Son's mission is the universal and gracious work of God's Spirit in the world. Pinnock links the work of the Spirit with the Wisdom of God (Prov 8:1-4) and then concludes that "God's wisdom is present in creation, and God calls out to all people everywhere by means of it. Beyond Torah and special revelation, wisdom speaks within human experience itself . . . God speaks even where Christ is not yet named—God does not leave himself without witness (Acts 14:17)."[23] Pinnock conceives of history as a stage play with the Spirit as its director. Wherever the Spirit touches, which is everywhere, God's good gifts are spread generously, even to people outside of the church. And grace is found where the Spirit is. By the Spirit, God reaches out to sinners both in general and special revelation, so working in them that they may ultimately become obedient to Jesus Christ. In this sense, Pinnock argues, we should not say there is no salvation outside the church, but simply that there is no salvation outside of grace.[24] Thus with this proposal, Pinnock believes that he has greatly reduced the tension between the "universality" and "particularity" axioms. He states,

> The truth of the incarnation does not eclipse truth about the Spirit, who was at work in the world before Christ and is present now where Christ is not named. The mission of the Son is not a threat to the mission of the Spirit, or vice versa. On the one hand, the Son's mission presupposes the Spirit's—Jesus was conceived and empowered by the Spirit. On the other hand, the mission of the Spirit is oriented to the goals of incarnation. The Spirit's mission is to bring history to completion and fulfillment in Christ. Thus the double mission of Son and Spirit can provide the perspective we need to handle the tension of universality and particularity.[25]

Pinnock is convinced that viewing the Son's work in the context of the universal work of the Spirit, instead of the other way around, supplies the theological warrant for seeing "the offer of grace as something as broad as history itself."[26] Creation and redemption, then, for Pinnock, are continuous, not discontinuous. Creation and redemption are both works of grace thus grounding the possibility that God's salvific intent is both universal and found in creation itself.

Pinnock's Biblical Warrant for the Pneumatological Proposal

To what biblical texts does Pinnock appeal in order to warrant his proposal? There are four kinds of texts to which he refers: (1) Pinnock appeals to texts such as 1 Tim 2:4 and Hos 11:8-10 to argue that God's stance toward the world is that of grace, and not wrath, which seems to entail, at least for him, that God makes his grace available to all without exception.

(2) Texts such as Acts 17:27 are referenced in order to justify that God's presence, by his Spirit, is everywhere, and as such, given (1), God's grace must then be viewed as universally accessible through general and special revelation. At this juncture, Pinnock also correlates texts that speak about the wisdom of God and the Spirit of God (Prov 8:1-4, 24, 30-31) to buttress his point.

(3) Texts such as Rom 5:18 imply, for Pinnock, that the mission and work of Christ, as our representative, not only have universal implications, but in some sense must be applied to all people everywhere, short of universalism, which can only take place by the universal work of the Spirit. He states, "Christ's work is complete and for all—'one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all' (Rom 5:18). There is no way around it—we must hope that God's gift of salvation is being applied to people everywhere. If so, how else than by the universal presence and activity of Spirit?"[27] Christ's universal work, then, requires the universal work of the Spirit in all people.[28]

(4) Texts that speak of God's salvific will not merely being limited to Jews and Christians imply that the Spirit is at work outside of the covenant community. Proof of this is found in such figures as Cornelius (Acts 10:34-35) and in such OT "holy pagans" as Enoch, Melchizedek, and Job. All of these individuals, Pinnock argues, were saved by the gracious work of the Spirit in them apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, Pinnock contends, on the basis of John 10:16, one can say that there are "believers who do not belong to any church."[29] In this, Pinnock is playing off a common distinction made by inclusivists between "believers" and "Christians." "Believers" are those who are saved simply because they have faith in God. "Christians" are those who have heard the gospel and have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.[30] Both groups are saved by the name of Jesus, but only the latter are informed about that name. And it is these "believers" that Jesus refers to in John 10:16 who are not yet part of the sheep fold, but who are wooed by the Spirit who is at work universally in the world, drawing people to himself.

Pinnock's Theological Warrant for the Pneumatological Proposal

In addition to the above biblical reasons, Pinnock gives us at least three theological reasons to warrant his proposal: (1) Pinnock appeals to his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity—a relational ontology—as the ground of his proposal and a further justification of his view that God's stance toward the world is always that of love and grace. In the triune identity, he argues, we discover a God who is relational, non-static, open—a God of love.[31] Since God is a loving relationality, Pinnock concludes that we must think of grace as primary, because it is rooted in the loving divine communion. God is love and as such, when it comes to grace and salvation he has "the whole human race in view in his desire to save, and the Spirit everywhere draws sinners from the

far country to the Father's love."[32]

(2) Pinnock appeals to the theological doctrine of "prevenient grace" to account for the universal, gracious operations of the Spirit in the world, even in the sphere of non-Christian religions. Pinnock writes,

> God wants a relationship with sinners, and if we accept the category of prevenient grace, we acknowledge that God offers himself to creatures. The Spirit speaks to everyone in the depths of their being, urging them not to close themselves off from God but to open themselves up. Because of the Spirit, everyone has the possibility of encountering him—even those who have not heard of Christ may establish a relationship with God through prevenient grace.[33]

Interestingly, Pinnock does not place prevenient grace in the context of soteriology—where it is normally placed by evangelical Arminian theologians—but in the context of the doctrine of creation. This is clearly evident in Pinnock's rejection of the Reformed distinction between "common" and "saving" grace. He states his opposition when he writes,

> God's presence fills the world and touches every heart. Spirit should not be restricted to one segment of history or one sphere of reality. The Spirit flourishes everywhere, beyond the boundaries of church. The Spirit's ministry is global, not only domestic, and ontic, not only noetic. The Spirit can be encountered in the entire range of experience, having always been present in the whole world, even in the groaning creation, preparing it for new birth (Rom 8:23).[34]

In this regard, Pinnock's view of "prevenient grace" has more in common with Karl Rahner than John Wesley.

(3) Pinnock continues to appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity, especially in regard to the role relations between the persons of the Godhead, by employing the Eastern church's rejection of the Western church's insertion of the *filioque* clause into the Nicene Creed.[35] Pinnock thinks that this insertion represented a misuse of power. But his main problem with the clause is due to how the Western church has viewed the Son-Spirit relationship in light of it. Historically, as represented by the *filioque* clause, the work of the Spirit is viewed in light of the Son and gospel realities. Thus, when the Spirit operates in the world, it is always in relationship to the Word. In this sense, the work of the Spirit is viewed in light of the work of the Son, something Pinnock wants us to reverse. Listen to Pinnock's complaint:

> The idea of adding *filioque* was not perverse theologically. The risen Lord did and does pour out the Spirit on the church. But the phrase in the creed can lead to a possible misunderstanding. It can threaten our understanding of the Spirit's universality. It might suggest to the worshiper that Spirit is not the gift of the Father to creation universally but a gift confined to the sphere of the Son and even the sphere of the church. It could give the impression that the Spirit is not present in the whole world but limited to Christian territories. Though it need not, the *filioque* might threaten the principle of universality—the truth that the Spirit is universally present, implementing the universal salvific will of Father and Son. One could say that the *filioque* promotes Christomonism.
>
> In my view the phrase diminishes the role of the Spirit and gives the impression that he has no mission of his own. It does not encourage us to contemplate the broad range of his operations in the universe. It tends to restrict Spirit to the churchly domain and deny his presence among people outside. It does not encourage us to view the divine mission as being prior to and geographically larger than the Son's. It could seem to limit Spirit to having a

> noetic function in relation to Christ, as if the Spirit fostered faith in him and nothing more. It undercuts the idea that Spirit can be active where the Son is not named and supports the restrictive reading of the axiom 'Outside the church, no salvation'…. The creed [Nicene] was better before this term was added to it, because it recognized Spirit as the power permeating the cosmos and energizing all of history. The mission of the Spirit is not subordinate to the Son's but equal and complementary. The *filioque* was introduced into the creed in an irregular way and adversely affects our understanding of salvation.[36]

From these biblical texts and theological arguments, Pinnock believes he has warranted his pneumatological proposal and thus grounded his understanding of the Spirit's universal, salvific work in the world, even in other religions. For, after all, asks Pinnock, "If the Spirit gives life to creation and offers grace to every creature, one would expect him to be present and make himself felt (at least occasionally) in the religious dimension of cultural life. Why would the Spirit be working everywhere else but not here?"[37] Why cannot non-Christian religions be viewed as beneficial for Christian theology, just as non-Christian philosophical thought has been? This is not to say that Pinnock thinks everything in non-Christian religions is equally valid. He states,

> We have to say both yes and no to other religions. On the one hand, we should accept any spiritual depth and truth in them. On the other hand, we must reject darkness and error and at the very least see other faiths as insufficient apart from fulfillment in Christ. The key is to hold fast to two truths: the universal operations of grace and the uniqueness of its manifestation in Jesus Christ.[38]

But Pinnock is quite convinced that since over the centuries the majority of humanity has existed without hearing the gospel, it is important to affirm that the Spirit is at work in the world, even in other religions. On the question of revelation in other religions, we must preserve the decisive self-revelation in Jesus Christ, but we are not to think that God is our property and possession.[39] In fact, we should view other religions in a similar situation to the history of Israel. Just as the history of Israel led to the coming of Jesus, and as it shows God at work apart from Jesus Christ and leading up to him, Pinnock believes that we may "watch for anticipations in other faiths to be fulfilled in Christ . . . [this] allows us to hear the word of God from others and deepens our own understanding of revelation."[40]

But, it may be legitimately asked, by what criterion does one discern whether the Spirit is at work in other religions? After all, as Pinnock acknowledges, "there are things in the world that cannot be attributed to God."[41] For Pinnock, the answer is found in the double mission of Son and Spirit and the link between them. He states,

> Truth incarnate is the criterion for testing spirits. The question to ask is christological (1 Jn 4:2-3). Spirit is in agreement with the Son and agrees with what he said and did…. What the Spirit says and does cannot be opposed to revelation in Christ, because Spirit is bound to the Word of God . . . To identify provenience, we look for the fruit of the Spirit and for the way of Jesus Christ.[42]

But what exactly does this mean? Historically, as we have noted, the work of the Spirit has been linked to the work of the Son. When we ask the question, "How do we discern whether the Spirit is at work in the world?" the answer is found in terms of the gospel. Is there repentance of sin

and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there a turning away from what we once were and a turning to God by faith in the gospel message? Obviously that is not what Pinnock means since that would entail that the universality axiom would have to be placed under the particularity axiom. Instead, for Pinnock, the Christological criterion is one that looks for the fruit of the Spirit and the way of Jesus Christ, primarily in the *ethical* domain. Pinnock underscores this when he states,

> So wherever we see traces of Jesus in the world and people opening up to his ideals, we know we are in the presence of Spirit. Wherever, for example, we find self-sacrificing love, care about community, longings for justice, wherever people love one another, care for the sick, make peace not war, wherever there is beauty and concord, generosity and forgiveness, the cup of cold water, we know the Spirit of Jesus is present.[43]

In this regard Pinnock appeals to Matt 25:31-46 to argue that this is Jesus' own criterion for recognizing his sheep. Pinnock asks, "Why does he [Jesus] consider these his sheep? Because they are just like the children of the merciful Father. Obviously they belong to the kingdom, because their faith is manifest in their actions. They are doing the works of the kingdom by the grace of God."[44] He then goes on to argue that "fruits of the Spirit" are not merely cognitive. Rather, signs of the kingdom have to do with the transformation of life. He states, "Good works do not merit grace, but they may signal a response to grace . . . Jesus is the criterion of salvation even for those who never knew him or his message. Participation in salvation is not impossible for people outside the church. The factors are behavioral as well as cognitive."[45]

Here is Pinnock's "pneumatological proposal" in a nutshell, his new way of viewing Christ as an aspect of the Spirit's mission, instead of the other way around. At its heart, his proposal is tied to the doctrine of the Trinity, and even more importantly, it is through his understanding of the Son-Spirit relation that he believes he has provided biblical and theological warrant for inclusivism, namely, that God's wide mercy is extended to all, regardless of whether they have heard the gospel or not.

A Critique of Clark Pinnock's Pneumatological Proposal

What should we think of this very creative proposal? Certainly within the confines of this article, I cannot do justice to every aspect of it.[46] Point after point of exegesis and theological argumentation is interrelated with other doctrinal commitments that would take a whole book to unpack and evaluate properly. Pinnock truly gives us a whole theological vision of the God-world relationship that at any point is intertwined with numerous other theological views, such as, an open view of God, a libertarian view of human freedom, a risk view of divine providence, a certain conception of Scripture and a specific methodological and hermeneutical approach to reading it, and so on. Instead, I want to focus on one main point of critique that takes us to the heart of his proposal, namely, his understanding of the Son-Spirit relation as it unfolds along the redemptive-historical plot line of Scripture. It is my contention that Pinnock fails to do justice to an overall biblical theology, and as such, his "new" idea of viewing Christ as an aspect of the Spirit's mission is *not* biblically warranted, and thus, it must be rejected.

A Preliminary Observation on Theological Method

How does one *do* a theology of the Holy Spirit? In fact, how does one resolve the question that is at stake here: What are the role relations within the Godhead with specific focus on the Son-Spirit relationship? In other words, how does one move from biblical text to theological formulation? Obviously, much could be said on such a subject and my reflections here are only for the purpose of making clear how I approach the task, especially in my evaluation of Pinnock's proposal.[47]

It is of crucial importance that our reading of Scripture must reflect what it is and claims to be. What, then, is it? What does it claim to be? Scripture is nothing less than *God's* self-revelation through human authors—God's Word written—that comes to us *progressively* and with a *Christological* focus. Since Scripture is *God's* self-revelation, there is a unity to it—a unified divine communicative act[48]—declaring God's unfailing purposes and plan. Furthermore, God's self-revelation, in Word and Act, involves historical progression, along a redemptive-historical story line, which entails that the task of a biblical theology is to trace out this historical unfolding of redemptive history, which presses on toward its consummation in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 1:1-2). In light of this, it is helpful to think of reading Scripture according to three horizons: textual, epochal, and canonical.[49] Thus, in reading any text we not only exegete it in terms of its syntax, context, and genre, but we also place that text in light of where it is in redemptive-history, and even, in the final analysis, where it is in light of the entire canon of Scripture. It is only when we do the latter that we read Scripture according to its truest, fullest, *divine* intention. In fact, to read the Bible as unified Scripture is not just one interpretative interest among others, but the interpretative strategy that best corresponds to the nature of the text itself, given its divine inspiration.

What does this have to do with discerning the Son-Spirit relation in Scripture? Everything. As we seek to unpack this relation, it is best to do so along the redemptive-historical story line, in light of the whole canon, discovering how the Spirit of God is presented, both in the OT and in light of the coming of Jesus Christ. And when we do so, it is my contention that what we discover is the opposite of Pinnock's proposal. Instead we discover what much of evangelical theology has always claimed, namely, that the Spirit is the Spirit of the crucified and exalted Christ and, in the words of Kevin Vanhoozer, is "the deputy of Christ rather than an independent itinerant evangelist."[50]

Toward a Biblical Theology of the Son-Spirit Relationship

This section uses the word "toward" for the simple reason that all I can do in this article is sketch out the main structures of thought in regard to the Son-Spirit relation as it is progressively revealed in the canon.

The Work of the Spirit in the OT Era and His Relationship to the Son

There is much that could be said at this point. There are just under one hundred explicit references to the "Spirit [*ruach*] of God" throughout the OT, starting from Gen 1:2.[51] None of these references unambiguously demand that we think of the "Spirit of God" as one with God yet differentiable from him (except possibly

Isa 63:7-14). The Spirit's distinct "personal" nature will become clearer in the NT, in light of the coming of the Christ, since there we must think of the Spirit not merely as the "power" of God, nor merely the "manifest presence" of God, but as the third person of the triune Godhead. But with that said, when it comes to describing the work of the "Spirit of God" in the OT, it is important to distinguish between a general and more specific work. Let us look at each of these in turn.

First, we may think of the work of "God's Spirit" in a general way, active as creator, sustainer, revealer, quickener, and enabler. We may even summarize the Spirit's work in terms of seven main functions.[52] (1) We see the Spirit's work in creation in the way God created and sustains the universe and all animate beings (Gen 1:2; 2:7; cf. Ps 33:6; Job 26:13; 33:4; 34:14-15; Isa 55:19). (2) The Spirit of God is active in the control of nature and history (Ps 104:29-30; Isa 34:16; 40:7). (3) God's Spirit is active in revelation as he makes known what was not known (Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; 2 Chron 12:18; 15:1; Neh 9:30; Job 32:8; Isa 61:1-4; Ezek 2:2; 11:24; 37:1; Mic 3:8; Zech 7:12). (4) By these revelations the Spirit of God taught the people of God the way to be faithful and obedient to the Lord (Neh 9:20; Ps 143:10; Isa 48:16; 63:10-14). (5) The Spirit's power is that which elicits personal responses to God in terms of faith, repentance, obedience, willingness to listen to God's instructions, as well as fellowship with the Lord through praise and prayer (Ps 51:10-12; Isa 11:2; 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech 12:10). (6) The Spirit of God is instrumental in equipping people for leadership, particularly those leaders in Israel—prophets, priests, and kings (Gen 41:38; Num 11:16-29; 27:16,18; Deut 34:9; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6). (7) It was God's Spirit who equipped people with skill and strength for creative work, such as in the construction of the tabernacle and temple (Exod 28:3; 31:1-11; cf. 1 Kgs 7:14; Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6).

At this point, contra Pinnock, it is important to stress that this general work—even universal work of the "Spirit of God" in the OT—does *not* entail that the Spirit's presence is always a saving or transforming presence (e.g., Balaam, Saul). Nor should we hastily conclude that what is true of a particular individual in Scripture is assumed to be true of all humanity. As Sinclair Ferguson wisely reminds us, we cannot assume from the fact that the Spirit endowed Bezalel with gifts of design and craftsmanship (Exod 31:1-15) that all artistic gifts, however used, are general endowments of the Spirit,[53] let alone evidence of God's saving presence. Yes, the Spirit is described as the one who works in relation to the created order, but it is clear, in both the OT and NT, that this general ministry of the Spirit should not always be identified with the Spirit's work in saving grace. It is possible for the former to be present when the latter is not.[54]

Second, in a more specific and significant way, as we read through the OT, the Spirit's work is not only viewed in these general terms, but it is also narrowed and focused in a more direct way as it is linked with a future, eschatological age tied to the coming of Messiah and the new covenant, Messianic age. Pinnock fails to do justice to this point. Let us think of this more specific work of the Spirit in at least two ways.[55]

(1) The OT predicts that when Messiah comes, David's greater Son, he will have

the Spirit in full measure (Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-8; 61:1-3; cf. Luke 4:17ff and Matt 12:28). This taps into a whole stream of thought in the OT. In the OT, leaders (primarily prophets, priests, and kings) were anointed by the Spirit (see 1 Sam 16:13-14), but they often failed in their representative tasks before the Lord and the people of God. The prophets, however, announce a coming Messiah, Abraham's promised seed and David's greater Son, who will have the Spirit in full measure. And, most importantly, he will not fail in his saving work, for in his coming, he will literally usher in the "age to come." Of course, this is precisely what is picked up in the NT as the Spirit is linked with the conception, birth, growth, baptism, temptations, ministry, and cross work of Christ (Luke 1:31, 35; 2:47; 4:16-21; John 1:33-34; Mark 1:10; Matt 4:3, 6; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17-18; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:18). This portrait of Jesus and the Spirit functions primarily, as Max Turner reminds us, "to confirm to readers that Jesus is indeed the Messiah anticipated by the OT,"[56] that the eschatological era predicted in the OT has finally dawned in him. But it is also more than this. As Jesus himself reminds us in John 13-16, the primary significance of the Spirit's coming is announced in programmatic terms: "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). In other words, the linkage of the Spirit with Christ is to bear witness to him. As Ferguson reminds us, "From womb to tomb to throne, the Spirit was the constant companion of the Son."[57] As a result, his work is that of chief witness for Christ, to bear witness of him, indeed to bring people to him in saving faith. After all, the Spirit is the Spirit *of Christ*.

(2) The OT predicts that the coming of the Holy Spirit will signify nothing less than the dawn of the new covenant age (Isa 32:15-17; 44:3-4; 59:20-21; Ezek 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32 [cf. Jer 31:29-34]; Zech 12:10). OT prophets often presented the time of the Lord's visitation of his people, "the time of the anticipated new covenant, as the time when the Spirit will be poured out upon men and women, young and old, without the distinctions implicit in the essentially tribal nature of the old covenant."[58] Joel 2 is significant in this regard. Peter, in Acts 2, quotes Joel 2 as proof that the work of Jesus, the Christ, is complete, and as a result, that the Spirit, anticipated and promised in the OT, has now come. That is why, as D. A. Carson reminds us,

> when in Acts the prophetic Spirit falls upon the church, mediating God's presence, enabling believers to speak with tongues and to perform deeds of power, forging the early links among Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile believers, and gently nudging the church into an expanding vision of Gentile mission, this is understood to be nothing other than what God himself had promised in Scripture.[59]

That is why it is best to interpret the events at Pentecost as a unique, redemptive-historical event, rooted and grounded in OT prophetic expectation. In this crucial sense, Pentecost must be viewed as part and parcel of Jesus' saving work; in fact it is the *culmination* of his earthly work (cf. John 7:39) by which he has inaugurated the new covenant age, thus giving the Spirit to all Christians, so that they may not only come to know him, but also be gifted and empowered for service.

The Work of the Spirit in the NT Era in Relation to the Son

In describing the work of the Holy Spirit in the OT, I have already made specific application to the Spirit's work in the NT. Probably the best way to capture the Spirit's work in the NT is in terms of "inaugurated eschatology" and the famous "already/not yet" tension. As I have observed above, the NT picks up the OT perspective and expectation. The Spirit's work, in a direct and specific way, is linked to the coming of Messiah and the new covenant age. The NT proclaims, beyond question, that what the OT anticipated has now come about in terms of fulfillment. The eschatological, future age that the prophets anticipated has now arrived even though it still awaits the final consummation. And the proof of all of this, is not only found in the coming of the Messiah—his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation—but also in the gift that the risen and exalted Lord has now poured out at Pentecost, namely the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2; cf. John 14-16; Eph 1:13-14).

That is why, especially in Paul, the Holy Spirit "not only prompts us to look backward to God's earlier promises about his coming and work, but forward as well, for in Pauline thought the Spirit is the *arrabōn,* the deposit and hence the guarantee, of the promised inheritance awaiting us in the consummation."[60] Thus, for Paul and the rest of the NT, the reception of the Spirit means that one has become a participant in the new mode of existence associated with the future age, and now partakes of the powers of the "age to come." Yet Paul also insists that what the Spirit gives is only a foretaste of far greater blessings to come. This understanding is borne out in the five ways that Paul relates the Holy Spirit to the believer in the NT. First, the Spirit testifies of our "sonship" (Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:14-27). The Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God now, even though we still await our full rights associated with sonship. Second, the role of the Spirit is that of "firstfruits" (*aparchē,* 1 Cor 15:20, 23; Rom 8:23), which speaks both of what we have now and what we await in the future. Third, the Spirit is our "pledge" or "deposit" (*arrabōn,* 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) guaranteeing our future inheritance. Fourth, the Holy Spirit is also called a "seal" (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 4:30; 1:13) which signifies that believers are nothing less than God's possession. Fifth, the Spirit is related to the resurrection of our bodies (Rom 1:3-4; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:42-44). Not only is the Spirit said to be active in relation to Christ's resurrection, but ours as well, which signifies that some day our bodies shall be raised from the dead, just as Christ, the Last Adam, was risen from the dead, so that we may share in the glorious existence of the final, consummated state. Anthony Hoekema nicely summarizes this data when he writes, "In conclusion we may say that in the possession of the Spirit we who are in Christ have a foretaste of the blessings of the age to come, and a pledge and guarantee of the resurrection of the body. Yet we have only the firstfruits. We look forward to the final consummation of the kingdom of God, when we shall enjoy these blessings to the full."[61]

It is crucial to stress the significance of this framework of inaugurated eschatology in seeking to understand the work of the Spirit (and the Son). David Wells captures its importance when he asserts,

> When Paul speaks of the God-sent Holy Spirit, his perspective is always eschatological, looking forward

> to the end, of which our present experience of redemption and life in the Spirit is the beginning. The Spirit is the gift of the new age, the guarantee and foretaste, the pledge and first installment of what is to come when the fullness of salvation is revealed at Christ's return (Eph 1:13-14; Rom 8:23). It is this teaching on the relation between the old and the new, the flesh and the Spirit, the historical and the eschatological that forms the whole context within which Paul expounds his doctrines of the church and of salvation. It is in this context that he elaborates on his doctrine of the Spirit.[62]

I would also add to Wells' statement: it is this teaching and framework of inaugurated eschatology that expounds the Christology of the NT as well.

Concluding Reflections

What are we to conclude from this redemptive-historical look at Scripture in terms of the role relations within the Godhead, with specific focus on the Son-Spirit relation? Does it yield the same conclusions that Pinnock has proposed? I offer three concluding reflections regarding Pinnock's view and his "pneumatological proposal."

First, even though Pinnock's view is creative, it does not have any biblical warrant. As we trace out the Son-Spirit relation progressively throughout the canon, what we discover is the opposite of Pinnock's proposal. In the canon, the work of the Spirit, as it is progressively disclosed, is never divorced from the work of the Son; his work is always tied to gospel realities.[63] Thus, in light of the coming of Christ, it is the Spirit's role to bear witness of *him*; to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment so that they may believe in *him* (John 16:7-11).[64] In truth, the Spirit's work, now in redemptive history, is to apply the work of Christ to us so that we may be brought to saving faith in Christ and increasingly conformed to his image. What, then, is the main problem with Pinnock's proposal? It is simply this: the work of the Spirit is stripped of its redemptive-historical connections, and then made to buttress the theological underpinning of the inclusivist's understanding of the "universality axiom." Or, as Daniel Strange states it in a similar fashion, "rather than being Christocentric in his inclusivism, which I believe he [Pinnock] would claim to be, Pinnock's position is pneumatocentric and as a result the particularity of Christ is compromised. . . . Pinnock's desire to universalize the particular has meant a separation of the epistemological from the ontological."[65] And, I would add, Pinnock's desire to universalize the particular has further compromised the whole plot line of Scripture and the presentation of the Son-Spirit relation in redemptive history.[66]

Second, the rejection of Pinnock's pneumatological proposal on biblical grounds removes the crucial theological grounding for the inclusivist separation of the epistemological from the ontological. The Spirit's work is to bring people to Christ so that they may know and believe in him. To affirm that the Spirit may work in us graciously so that we "believe" in God, but not in Jesus Christ as the object of our faith, is foreign to the entire work of the Spirit as described in the NT, as well as the OT. In fact, when the NT speaks of faith, it is never faith in the abstract or divorced from the proper object of saving faith. Nor is it the Spirit so working in people that they exhibit "Christ-like" qualities and a mere faith in "God." There is no biblical evidence for Pinnock's assertions. The only NT tex-

tual data that Pinnock appeals to is Matt 25:31-46, which should *not* be interpreted to refer to people in general, but, in context, to Jesus' disciples.[67] No, the Spirit's work, as we see it disclosed in the NT, is to bear witness to *him* so that people, by grace, may be brought to saving faith in Christ and Christ alone. I cannot help but concur with the late Ronald Nash when he asserts, "I believe it is reckless, dangerous, and unbiblical to lead people to think that the preaching of the gospel (which I insist must contain specifics about the person and work of Christ) and personal faith in Jesus are not necessary for salvation."[68]

Third, no doubt the issue of the status of those who have never heard the gospel is not an easy subject. But the proposal of inclusivism, at least at this point, is found wanting. That, of course, places upon us the challenge to take seriously the proclamation of the gospel. We may have a lot of questions to wrestle through, but we must never compromise this point: apart from the preaching, hearing, and believing of the gospel, there is no salvation. May we not attempt to construct theological proposals that are not warranted in Scripture, and may we call out to the sovereign Lord of the church to make us more faithful in gospel proclamation as we seek to do what he commands, namely, to take the gospel to the nations (Matt 28:18-20).

ENDNOTES

[1]See Keith Johnson's article, "Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions? An Evaluation of Three Recent Proposals," in this issue of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 24-47.

[2]These are not the only names given to these three positions. For example, sometimes "exclusivism" is also called "particularism" and "inclusivism" is called "accessibilism."

[3]The literature on this is vast. For example, see John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); idem, "The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions," in *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World* (ed. Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 152-68; William J. Crockett and James G. Sigountos, ed., *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, ed., *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

[4]See for example, John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Fount, 1977); idem, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (ed. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987); idem, "A Pluralist View," in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, 29-59.

[5]See, for example, Carson, *Gagging of God*; Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*; Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*; R. Douglas

Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, "A Particularist View: An Evidentialist Approach," in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, 213-45.

[6]There are a variety of inclusivist positions. For example, there is a Roman Catholic inclusivism as represented by such people as Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (23 vol.; trans. Karl and Boniface Kruger; Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 6:390-97; and Hans Küng, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (ed. Joseph Neuner; London: Burnes and Oates, 1967), 25-57. There are also evangelical inclusivists represented by people such as Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984) and the works of Pinnock and Sanders mentioned in note 3, along with Reformed inclusivists such as Terrance L. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

[7]Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996).

[8]See, for example, Amos Yong, "Discerning the Spirit(s) in the World of Religions: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions," in *No Other Gods Before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions* (ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 37-61; and Stanley J. Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31, nos. 1-2 (1994): 49-65.

[9]On this distinction see John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 105-18.

[10]Clark Pinnock, "An Inclusivist View," in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, 98.

[11]Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 157.

[12]Pinnock, *Flame*, 192.

[13]Ibid., 192.

[14]Ibid. For a similar statement of the tension see John Sanders, *No Other Name*, 25.

[15]Pinnock, *Flame*, 187.

[16]Pinnock, "An Inclusivist View," 99-100.

[17]Pinnock, *Flame*, 192.

[18]Ibid.

[19]See ibid., 79-82.

[20]Ibid., 80.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 197.

[23]Ibid., 193.

[24]See ibid., 194.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., 198.

[27]Ibid., 188.

[28]It is impossible to unpack all of Pinnock's thought, given the constraints of this article; however, it is important to stress that Pinnock's understanding of the cross work of Christ is not in terms of penal substitution, but *Christus Victor* and the governmental theory of the atonement (see Clark H. Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* [ed. Clark Pinnock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989], 15-30; and Clark H. Pinnock and Robert C. Brow, *Unbounded Love* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994], 99-110). In Pinnock's view, Jesus acted as the representative of all humanity, so that in his act of representation, not substitution, creation is restored. As Pinnock states, "God effected the conversion of humanity in Jesus, who represented the race and thereby altered the human situation. In his death and resurrection, humanity *de jure* passed from death to life, because God has included it in the event. Its destiny has been objectively realized in Christ—what remains to be done is a human response and salvation *de facto*. The possibility of newness must be laid hold of by faith" (*Flame*, 95-96). Of course, this does *not* mean that in the cross Christ paid for my individual sin, rather as Pinnock states, "as a result of his vicarious humanity, we are adopted, justified, sanctified and glorified in relation to him . . . we are saved by his representative journey. The redemption of Jesus Christ as the last Adam is ours by virtue of solidarity with him, into which we are drawn by the Spirit" (ibid., 96). Importantly, Pinnock draws out some of the theological implications of this understanding of Christ's cross work, namely that in Christ, God reconciled the world by including everyone in it. Furthermore, "the effectiveness of this reconciliation is not so much opting in as not opting out. In faith we add our yes to God's prior yes" (ibid., 109).

[29]Ibid., 195.

[30]See John Sanders, *No Other Name*, 224-25; Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 161; idem, "The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions," 162-67.

[31]See Pinnock, *Flame*, 21-48; idem, "An Inclusivist View," 102-106. When Pinnock states that God is "open" he is referring to his view that God, in creating creatures with libertarian freedom, has limited himself in terms of his sovereign power and knowledge in the world. For a more detailed treatment of his open view of God see the following works: Clark Pinnock, ed. *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994); idem, *Most Moved Mover* (Dowers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); Clark H. Pinnock and John B. Cobb, Jr., ed. *Searching for an Adequate God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); cf. Gregory Boyd, *The God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

[32]Pinnock, *Flame*, 23.

[33]Ibid., 199.

[34]Ibid., 200.

[35]Let me explain this debate briefly. In John 15:26, we are told that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, but at the same time Jesus sends the Spirit. Which is it? Does the Spirit proceed from the Father or from the Father *and the Son*? This question sparked a major debate in the history of the church which eventually led to the Western church adopting the *filioque* clause—"and from the Son." The adoption of this clause was one of the theological factors that led to the first major division within the church, known as the Great Schism in 1054 A.D. The question at debate was whether both the Father and the Son send the Spirit or whether it is only the Father who sends the Spirit. The Western church added the *filioque* clause to the Nicene Creed thus endorsing the view that the Spirit was sent by the Father *and the Son*. The Eastern church argued that only the Father sent the Spirit. What is the importance of this debate? At least two points historically. First, the issue of order and role relations within the Godhead. Second, by not viewing the Spirit as sent from both the Father *and the Son*, there was a tendency in the East to separate the work of the Spirit from the Son, and the objective realities of the gospel. This is the point that Pinnock picks up in his view even though Pinnock's view is quite out of step with Eastern theologians. For a succinct summary of the debate and description of positions see Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 201-51.

[36]Pinnock, *Flame*, 196-97.

[37]Ibid., 200-01.

[38]Ibid., 202.

[39]See ibid., 208.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., 209.

[43]Ibid., 209-10.

[44]Ibid., 210.

[45]Ibid., 210-11.

[46]In passing, there are a number of points that could be said in terms of a critique of Pinnock's proposal, even though my main point of critique will center on the Son-Spirit relation. Here are six items for consideration: (1) Inclusivists appeal to the love of God and the universal salvific stance of God in a reductionistic manner. A number of points need to be said in regard to this observation. First, why should we think that "If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved it follows *logically* that everyone must have access to salvation" (Pinnock, *Wideness in God's Mercy*, 157). As Ronald Nash reminds us, "Even if we grant the truth of the first clause (that God desires the salvation of every human being), does the second follow (that God necessarily will give every human access to that salvation)? Even evangelical Arminians would answer no. As these non-inclusivist Arminians see things, God may desire the salvation of all men, *but* getting the gospel to those people is *our* task" (*Is Jesus the Only Savior*? 135). Second, it has been shown repeatedly that Scripture speaks of both the love of God and the will of God in a variety of complex ways, and as such, we must be very careful that we do not draw logical inferences that are not biblical inferences (see D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2000]; Frame, *No Other God*, 49-118). For example, we know that it is illegitimate to draw the conclusion that since God's stance toward the world is gracious and salvific then this must entail some kind of universalism. However, it is just as illegitimate to infer from God's stance towards the world that all must have access to salvation or that God's knowledge or power is then limited, or even self-limited. When we appeal to the love of God we must do so in such a way that does justice to *all* that Scripture says about the nature and ways of

God in the world—e.g., God's sovereignty, holiness, justice, wrath, and so on (see Carson, *Gagging*, 285-91 and the essays by Geoffrey Grogan, Tony Lane, and Paul Helm in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed., Kevin J. Vanhoozer [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 47-66, 138-85). Third, many of the texts that are commonly cited to prove that God loves everyone without distinction and with a redeeming love cannot necessarily bear the weight that inclusivists often place upon them (see Carson, *Gagging*, 287-89; Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior*?, 142-43).

(2) There is little biblical evidence that general revelation is salvific (see Bruce Demarest, "General and Special Revelation: Epistemological Foundations of Religious Pluralism" in *One God, One Lord* (2nd ed.; ed. Andrew D. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 189-206; Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, 117-22; Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved*?, 143-58). In addition, Pinnock does not distinguish clearly "common" and "saving" grace. Pinnock is not wrong to link grace with creation and re-creation, but it should be understood as that of "common" grace. Furthermore, the issue of people of non-Christian religions showing the Spirit is better explained within the categories of general revelation and common grace. As Bruce Demarest states, "On the basis of God's universal general revelation and common enabling grace, undisputed truths about God, man, and sin lie embedded to varying degrees in the non-Christian religions. In addition to elements of truth, the great religions of the world frequently display a sensitivity to the spiritual dimension of life, a persistence in devotion, a readiness to sacrifice, and sundry virtues both personal (gentleness, serenity of temper) and social (concern for the poor, nonviolence). But in spite of these positive features, natural man, operating within the context of natural religion and lacking special revelation, possesses a fundamentally false understanding of spiritual truth" (*General Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 259).

(3) Pinnock's understanding of prevenient grace shifts the categories from soteriology to the doctrine of creation, where prevenient grace has now become a matter of ontology. Kevin Vanhoozer makes an astute point when he states, "For these theologians, there is only one kind of grace, one kind of call, and one kind of way in which God is related to the world. God exerts a constant attractive force on the soul—a kind of divine gravity. This universal call comes through a variety of media: the creation itself, conscience, as well as proclamation about Christ. Grace is therefore 'prevenient': that which 'comes before' a person's ability to repent and believe . . . For much of modern theology, then, prevenient grace has become a matter of *ontology*" (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002], 103-04). Also see Daniel Strange, "Deciphering the Conundrum of Pneumatological Inclusivism," in *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (ed. Tony Gray and Christopher Sinkinson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000], 226-47).

(4) There is an incipient reductionism in understanding God's presence in the world. Why is all presence a saving presence? Evangelical theology has believed that it is important to distinguish a variety of different ways God is present in creation. See what Louis Berkhof has to say on this issue: "Though God is distinct from the world and may not be identified with it, He is yet present in every part of his creation, not only *per potentiam* but also *per essentiam*. This does not mean, however, that He is equally present and present in the same sense in all his creatures. The nature of His indwelling is in harmony with that of his creatures. He does not dwell on earth as He does in heaven, in animals as He does in man, in the inorganic as He does in the organic creation, in the wicked as He does in the pious, nor in the Church as He does in Christ. There is an endless variety in the manner in which He is immanent in His creatures, and in the measure in which they reveal God to those who have eyes to see" (*Systematic Theology* [1941; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 61). Furthermore, also see the important discussion in Strange, "Deciphering the Conundrum," 242-47. Thus, one need not conclude, then, that God's presence is necessarily a "redemptive" presence. Strange states, "I think that in his desire to prove universal accessibility, Pinnock has

blurred and confused the general and universal operations of the Spirit in creation, the specific and particular operations of the Spirit in salvation, and mistaken saving presence with divine providence" (ibid., 246).

(5) Pinnock's inclusivism tends to underemphasize the guilty nature of all humanity with the result that divine saving grace is replaced with divine saving obligation. But this is not at all obvious in Scripture. See ibid., 252.

(6) When appeal is made to holy pagans in Scripture (e.g., Enoch, Melchizedek, Naaman, Cornelius) and the work of grace in them, as well as their religious traditions, there is often a failure to discern where these people are placed in the story line of Scripture. Most of the pre-Christ believers to which appeal is often made are those who enter into a "covenantal, faith-based relationship with the God who had disclosed himself to them in the terms and the extent recorded up to that time" (Carson, *Gagging*, 298). Furthermore, Carson adds, "From the perspective of the biblical plot-line, there is some genuine continuity between such Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints (e.g. Rom. 1:1-2; 11; Phil. 3:3, 7, 9). Under the old covenant, institutions, sacrificial systems, entire priestly orders, were to be adhered to as part of obedient faith on the part of the people, but such institutions and systems also pointed forward, as we have seen, to Jesus Christ—to his sacrifice, his priesthood, the heavenly tabernacle, and so forth" (ibid.). Moreover, appeal to such individuals often overlooks the fact that these believers in the OT were responding in faith to special revelation, and "were not simply exercising some sort of general 'faith' in an undefined 'God' (ibid.).

[47]For an in-depth treatment of these issues, see, e.g., Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, ed. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

[48]On this, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology*; idem, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

[49]The three horizons are taken from Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*.

[50]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions?" in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 66.

[51]Max Turner, "Holy Spirit," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 551-58; cf. See David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1-4; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 9-15; Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 15-33; J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984), 55-63.

[52]See Wells, *God the Evangelist*, 3-4, for these seven main ways the Spirit's work is described in the OT.

[53]Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 246.

[54]See Carson, *Gagging of God*, 291-96, who makes this same point.

[55]For a development of these points, see Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 55-67; cf. Geerhardus Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 91-125.

[56]Turner, "Holy Spirit," 552.

[57]Ferguson, *Holy Spirit*, 37.

[58]Carson, *Gagging of God*, 265.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., 265-66.

[61]Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 67.

[62]Wells, *God the Evangelist*, 9-10.

[63]Pinnock's dismissal of the *filioque* clause is disappointing. For an excellent discussion of the historical and theological issues surrounding the clause, see Gerald Bray, "The *Filioque* clause in History and Theology" *Tyndale Bulletin* 34 (1983), 91-144; cf. Letham, *Holy Trinity*, 201-251.

[64]See J. I. Packer who likens the Spirit's work as a floodlight ministry. He states, "The Spirit's message to us is never, 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,' but always, 'Look at *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste his gift of joy and peace.' The Spirit, we might

say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together. As the second Paraclete, the Spirit leads us constantly to the original Paraclete, who himself draws near, as we saw above, through the second Parclete's coming to us (Jn 14:18). Thus, by enabling us to discern the first Paraclete, and by moving us to stretch out our hands to him as he comes from his throne to meet us, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, according to Christ's own word"(*Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 65-66).

[65]Strange, "Deciphering the Conundrum," 250.

[66]See Bruce A. Ware, "How Shall We Think about the Trinity?" in *God Under Fire* (eds Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 260-64, who makes a similar point.

[67]See D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 518-23.

[68]Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior*? 126.