TRINITY AND TEMPORALITY: 
A PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC PERSPECTIVE*  

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The Christian apprehension of God is established by the trinitarian pattern of God’s self-communication to the world. This commonplace of Christian theism, especially in the recovery of trinitarian theology in the last two decades, has also raised questions concerning the relationship between God and temporality. Process, neo-Hegelian and liberationist perspectives have all informed approaches to this issue as well as voices that attempt either to retrieve the classical tradition or suggest reconstructions that are more amenable to an affirmation of temporality in the divine being. I propose that a Pentecostal/Charismatic contribution may help to illuminate the discussion.

Any resolution of the issue must negotiate definitions of eternity and time and the relationship between the two. From a trinitarian perspective the discussion would center on the nature of God as trinity vis-à-vis the so called ‘economic’ and ‘immanent’ trinities. In light of Karl Rahner’s axiom of identity between the two trinities (‘the “economic” Trinity is the “immanent” Trinity and the “immanent” Trinity is the “economic” Trinity’)† I will investigate how the debate over this axiom has informed the question of the relationship between God and time.

First, after a review of some of the foundational issues involved in this inquiry I will examine how both Christ and the Spirit are in time. The

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temporalization of the trinitarian missions implicates how God experiences time and reflects the intratrinitarian distinctions of the divine persons who, I will argue, inhabit temporality differently. Therefore, temporality in God must be refracted through the trinitarian distinctions. This inhabitation of the divine persons in time is the modality of God's experience of temporality.

The second level of analysis will focus on the relationship between God as immanent trinity and as economic trinity. Following a review of current positions, especially those which prioritize the divine economy as the starting point for trinitarian theology, it will be necessary to argue the cogency of the unity and distinction between the divine economy and the divine immanence and then articulate how this informs our understanding of the nature of God's eternality and temporality. Key to the resolution of this issue is how we negotiate the differentiated experience of temporality in the trinitarian missions relative to the differentiated nature of the eternal processions in the divine being. Without reducing one to the other or permitting an unwarranted separation of the two I will suggest a correspondence mediated by the eschatological nature of divine agency as proposed by both Jürgen Moltmann and Ted Peters. Building on their proposals I will then turn to insights gleaned from the Pentecostal/Charismatic experience and venture the thesis that the charismatic effusion of divine agency in Jesus and in the church represents the eschatological intensification of temporality as the needed correlation between the divine sending (and kenosis) of the trinitarian missions and the perichoretic (and energetic) relations of the trinitarian processions.

1. Foundational Issues

The subject matter before us has straddled a number of the traditional dogmatic loci. Under the doctrine of God contemplation of the divine attributes including that of God's eternality informs a good part of the speculative theological enterprise. The nature of God's triunity directs attention to the relation between the eternal divine processions and the temporal divine missions. Is there a correspondence between the eternal begetting of the Son and the eternal breathing-forth of the Holy Spirit and the sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world for its salvation? Does, then, the economic trinity affect the immanent trinity regarding the divine experience of time or a theological attribution of temporality within the divine being?