

‘IN YOUR PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY’: EXPERIENCING GOD AS TRINITY

Introduction

What do we experience when we experience God? What do we desire when we long for God’s presence? Whom are we inviting to be there with us and for us, to act savingly on us? How does this desired, welcomed God make himself present to us? And why do we need God to be present in these ways? For a long time now, these questions and others like them have been troubling me toward reflection, and what I have written here is an attempt to give voice to the reflections born of that troubledness. I hope at least some of what I have said somehow stimulates further conversation about how we can speak more faithfully—or at least less *un*faithfully—of God’s presence to and in us, and our experience of that presence.

Pentecostal Experience of God’s Presence

Pentecostals talk often and at length about experiencing God.¹ But because no pressing need is felt to work out a precise theological idiom for describing *how* God is present, talk about the experience remains by and large a first-order unreflective habit.² A remarkably labile range of terms—including ‘heaven’, ‘glory’, and ‘power’, as well as ‘Lord’, ‘God’, and ‘King’, and the more intimate names, ‘Father’, ‘Jesus’, and ‘Spirit’³—are used to identify the presence encountered at ‘the altar’, and the emphasis remains on the experience itself rather than on the ways that experience is explained.⁴ When Pentecostals *do* take pains to

¹ According to Daniel Albrecht and Evan Howard (‘Pentecostal Spirituality’ in Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Amos Yong [ed.] *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014], p. 235), ‘Pentecostalism is a renewal movement that emphasizes the experience of God’. See also Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), pp. 20-27 and Daniel Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 237-51.

² Of course, we do not want to draw the difference between first- and second-order theological speech too sharply, or play one off against the other. See Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 71-79.

³ The fact that this language seems to work for at least many Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals alike witnesses to the fact that their disagreements play out by and large only at the second order of theological reflection and speech. Perhaps, then, we need to bring our disagreements, so to speak, into the altar, reflecting together, as brothers and sister in Christ, directly on our shared experience of God. No doubt, re-contextualizing the disagreements in worship is sure to generate conflict, but hopefully they are the kinds of conflict that open us sanctifyingly toward one another and toward God. For more on what is at stake in Oneness- and Trinitarian-Pentecostal dialog, see Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 89-98.

⁴ In certain ways, Pentecostals often sound like Schleiermacher: when we experience God, we experience a unified and unifying presence, a oneness upon which we absolutely depend, and because all primary utterance of God speaks to this unity, Trinitarian talk is of secondary importance and at best marginal benefit. For more on Schleiermacher’s understanding of experience, see Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press,

describe God's presence theologically in trinitarian terms, the second-order descriptions often suggest that the Spirit has replaced the once-present and soon-returning Jesus or that 'Spirit' is simply another name for Jesus in his post-ascension heavenly glory.⁵ But even these descriptions⁶ are used, if at all, only *ad hoc*, without much concern for consistency or coherence. We are left, then, with many witnesses affirming that God is present, but without any agreed-upon sense of how we are to speak of that presence.

What are we to make of this? One might argue that the inexactness and disorderliness of our descriptions should not be challenged or changed in any way because they testify to the unsearchable riches and indescribable glories of God's presence within and among us. Truth be told, Scripture itself seems sometimes to speak in this way—think, for example of the account of YHWH's appearance to Abraham in Genesis 18 and the unpicturable images of the throne-room in the Apocalypse (4.1-5.14; 22.1-5).⁷ And it does so for good reason: rightly understood, this strange way of speaking works apophatically, impressing on our imaginations the excess, the uncircumscribability, of the life encountered in the experience of God.

But as the church, we are called to bear witness faithfully to the God of the gospel. And this means that our experiences of God are never ends in themselves but belong to the Spirit's work of revealing Christ to the world as the revelation of the Father. We are bound not only to testify but also to *teach*;⁸ therefore, we strive always to discern more theologically appropriate ways of identifying what happens in God's coming near to us. What is more, the way we describe our experiences of God is as formative as the experiences themselves, both for us and for others.⁹ What we say about what is happening to us is part of the happening itself. As Augustine insisted, if we are given a sign (*signum*) and we do not know the reality (*res*) it signifies, we learn nothing.¹⁰ The reverse holds true as well. There can be no faithful believing where there is no push for faithful understanding.¹¹ If we hope to speak rightly to, for, and of the God we experience in worship, and if we hope to be formed together rightly by that experience, we cannot avoid the work of critical theological reflection and discerning theological construction.

1993), p. 38. See also Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 2-3.

⁵ In the words of one early Pentecostal (*Latter Rain Evangel* [Jan 1915], p. 4), '[Jesus] has gone into the heavens but the executive agent of the Trinity is here and He is subjecting hearts and lives and bringing them under the dominion of the Lord Jesus. I am primarily concerned here with popular Pentecostal ministry, but some Pentecostal scholars make the argument in their own terms. For example, Simon Chan ('The Liturgy as the Work of the Spirit: A Theological Perspective' in Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks, *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009], pp. 41-57) seems to affirm pneumatic replacement in classical theological terms.

⁶ Usually, in my experience, these lines of thought are triggered by texts like Jn 16.7 and 2 Cor. 3.17. For an outsider's perspective on the issue, see Oliver Davies, *Theology of Transformation: Faith, Freedom, and the Christian Act* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 88-93.

⁷ See John Christopher Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), pp. 201-237.

⁸ Unlike the man healed by Jesus, we cannot simply say, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see' (Jn 9.25). We have to confess what the Spirit teaches us: that Jesus is God come in the flesh for us (see 1 Jn 4.1-3).

⁹ Raimundo Panikkar (*The Experience of God: Icons of Mystery* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006], pp. 25-26) describes the experience of God as constituted by four 'distinct but inseparable moments': (a) 'the pure experience, the instant of pure life, of immediate experience'; (b) 'the memory of that moment, which permits us to speak of it ...'; (c) 'the interpretation we develop of this [remembered experience], which leads us to describe it as painful, sensitive, spiritual, loving, the experience of Being, of God, of Beauty, and so on'; (d) 'its reception in the cultural world that we have not created but which has been given to us and which bestows on experience a spiritual resonance'.

¹⁰ Augustine, *De trinitate* 10.1.2.

¹¹ I agree with Steven Studebaker (*From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], p. 191), 'the options for Pentecostals do not reduce to the false alternatives of defining the movement in terms of either charismatic experience or theology and doctrine. The Pentecostal movement is about being caught up in an experience of God's Spirit that transforms lives and empowers them to serve God in this world. Yet that experience of the Spirit points the way toward a Pentecostal theology. Not a theology that fractures the Christian communities, but a theological "tongue" of the Spirit of Pentecost that contributes to the richness of the Christian community'.

Experience and the Triune God

The God of the gospel has made himself known to us as Trinity.¹² It follows then that as we strive to speak rightly about our experience of this God, we have to be learning to ‘read’ our experiences trinitarianly.¹³ The problem is, we have to a large degree lost touch with the ‘grammar’ of trinitarian dogma.¹⁴ And without the ordering of that grammar, our speech about God, however well intentioned, drifts toward unfaithfulness—even when it arises from authentic experience of God. To cite but one example: if we do not understand the Spirit as fully God—if we think of the Spirit not as person in the same sense as Father and Son, but merely as raw divine power—then we cannot appreciate what it means to be ‘baptized’ in the Spirit because only God can know God fully and make God fully known. We will instead wrongly imagine Spirit baptism as granting us possession of that raw power, putting it at our disposal. This, it seems, is exactly the mistake of Simon Magus (Acts 8.9-25).

It is well known that the early Pentecostal movement was convulsed by arguments about the doctrine of the Trinity. But what is less often recognized is how those arguments were made necessary because the movement inherited from the Wesleyan-holiness traditions a theologically frail account of the doctrine. Jason Vickers has traced the demise of trinitarian theology in English Protestantism by identifying the process of theological and practical shifts that over time altered fundamentally how salvation was understood and how theology was practiced.¹⁵ The collapse, Vickers shows, resulted from three interdetermining factors: ‘the appeal to Scripture as the rule of faith; the shift in the understanding of faith from “trust” to “assent”’; and the assumption about language and the necessity of “clear and intelligible” propositions’.¹⁶ As Peter Leithart explains,

The result was that the Trinity gradually slipped from its position of central significance in the life of the church. Instead of disclosing the name of the God who saves, along with identifying descriptions, Trinitarian formulae became simply propositions to which believers were to assent. Detached from baptism and worship, it had little practical use. Further, the fact that orthodox theologians had to expend so much space and energy to defending and explaining the Trinity proved that it failed to meet one of the basic Protestant criteria of ‘essential’ knowledge: It was obviously not obvious, and since it wasn’t obvious it could not be understood—even if true—as a truth necessary to salvation.¹⁷

The Wesleys labored to return the doctrine to central significance, primarily through their hymns, prayers, and sermons. But the Wesleys’s trinitarianism did not fully overcome the problems embedded in the English Protestant theological frames of reference, and those problems returned with a vengeance in the restorationist, biblicist theologies of the holiness movements. This is why Pentecostals, as heirs of those

¹² In the words of S.D. Kinne, an early Pentecostal (*Latter Rain Evangel* 2.10 [July 1910], p. 23): ‘the revelation of the personal Trinity is the center of Christian experience’. This holds true, I believe, for Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals alike. The disagreements come when we begin to work out what it *means* to speak of God’s tri-unity.

¹³ From the beginning of the movement, at least some Pentecostals have sensed the need for this kind of reading. Take, for example, this account from Fannie Winn, a missionary to Jerusalem and Palestine (*The Bridegroom’s Messenger* 2.26 [Nov 15, 1908], p. 4): ‘There were times ... when God poured out His Spirit upon us in the presence of the people. We could not do much but sing and shout God’s praises and bear witness to the love and joy which can only come through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are Moslems and do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. They say that God is One not Three; but during our stay they saw the power of the Third Person of the Trinity mightily manifested and heard His voice speaking in the unknown tongues’.

¹⁴ For the ways that anti-creedalism shaped early Pentecostal theology, and in particular the Oneness debates, see Aaron T. Friesen, ‘Pentecostal Antitraditionalism and the Pursuit of Holiness’, *JPT* 23 (2014), pp. 191-215.

¹⁵ Jason Vickers, *The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

¹⁶ Peter Leithart, ‘Invocation to Assent’; available online: <http://www.leithart.com/2012/09/03/invocation-to-assent/#more-15138>; accessed: 15 November 2014.

¹⁷ Leithart, ‘Invocation to Assent’, n.p.

movements, have from the beginning of the movement struggled to appreciate how the doctrine of the Trinity matters for them.¹⁸ If it is true that Pentecostals/charismatics have done more ‘to recover an active doctrine of the Holy Spirit’ than any other Western ecclesial tradition,¹⁹ the same cannot be said (at least not yet) of the doctrine of the Trinity. While most Pentecostal denominations have retained a formal affirmation of the Trinity in their statements of faith and many Pentecostal scholars affirm the doctrine and work creatively with it, the doctrine continues to have little if any *formative* influence on how Pentecostals make sense of their churchly experiences of God.²⁰

Experiencing God as Trinity

Assuming for the moment that we should seek to recover the liturgical and formational use of trinitarian doctrine, how are we going to go about it? What can be done to remake what has been unmade? Some have suggested that we should begin with liturgical changes that suffuse our worship with trinitarian language.²¹ I am sympathetic to this suggestion,²² but arguably it makes more sense to begin with our experience of God in prayer. Yes, it is necessary, but it is still not *sufficient* to flood our worship with trinitarian language. We need means of recognizing God’s threeness as it happens to us in the moment of divine encounter.²³

This recognition begins to become possible for us, I believe, at the altar. Praying together, we find ourselves *communing* with God.²⁴ And as our imaginations are faithfully shaped in and for that communion, we begin to discern that all forms of faithfully Christian prayer are ‘inherently trinitarian’.²⁵ In prayer, we are experiencing the triune God who acts triunely on us. Of course, we do not sense three presences or even the difference between the Spirit’s presence and the Son’s. But we *do* sense that we are being joined in Christ to God’s conversation with God. We find that we are not just speaking *to* God, but are speaking *with* and *for* God, who is also speaking with and for us. We are, as Sarah Coakley explains, ‘caught up’ into the ‘ceaseless divine dialogue between Spirit and “Father”’.²⁶ We are taken into the intra-Trinitarian ‘place’

¹⁸ See William P. Atkinson, *Trinity after Pentecost* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. 3-11. This lack of formative influence is evidenced in a number of ways, including, perhaps most telling, in our songs. Very few contemporary Christian worship songs are recognizably trinitarian. See Lester Ruth, ‘*Lex Amandi, Lex Orandi: The Trinity in the Most-Used Contemporary Christian Worship Songs*’, in Bryan D. Spinks, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2008), pp. 342-59 and ‘How Great is Our God: The Trinity in Contemporary Christian Worship Music’ in Robert H. Woods, Jr. and Brian D. Walrath (eds.), *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), pp. 29-38.

¹⁹ Robert Davis Hughes III, ‘The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality’ in Arthur Holder (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011], pp. 207-222 (220).

²⁰ The history of doctrine shows that the churches, Catholic and Protestant, are always in danger of making the doctrine of the Trinity, as Robert Jenson (‘A Decision Tree of Colin Gunton’s Thinking’ in Lincoln Harvey [ed.], *The Theology of Colin Gunton* [London: T&T Clark, 2010], pp. 8-16 [11]) says, ‘a conceptual puzzle, rather than a saving mystery ... a liturgical flourish rather than the enabling structure of our worship’.

²¹ Such changes might involve setting aside times for preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity (perhaps, for example, on Trinity Sunday) and purposefully selected and performed songs that celebrate God’s tri-unity. See Mark Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2010), p. 52.

²² I have, in fact, made more or less the same argument elsewhere.

²³ We need a way to make sense of how God is triunely present to us without suggesting either that the Trinity is merely an elaborate metaphor for three kinds of human experiences (one of God beyond us as ‘Father’, one of God with us as ‘Son’, and another of God within us as ‘Spirit’) or that we should be able to feel the distinct activity of the divine ‘persons’.

²⁴ This underscores the fact that the Eucharist is the heart of our prayer. Attending to the Eucharistic liturgy, and especially the *epiclesis*, we learn how our salvation depends on our being taken into the mutuality of God’s own perichoretic life. Macchia (*Justified in the Spirit*, p. 289) is right: the Eucharist is ‘communion with the risen Christ’, a ‘mutual indwelling in which we are in Christ and Christ is in us as Christ is in the Father and the Father is in Christ’. So, as we gather at his table in prayer to the Father, as ‘we sup with him [and] he sups with us’, we are filled with the same Spirit the risen Christ enjoys and gives. Within that communion and mutual indwelling, we become the people of the Father, the temple of the Spirit, and the body of Christ.

²⁵ Sarah Coakley, ‘Living into the Mystery of the Holy Trinity: Trinity, Prayer, and Sexuality’, *Anglican Theological Review* 80 (1998), pp. 223-32 (223).

²⁶ Coakley, ‘Living in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity’, p. 225.

of the Son. We pray Jesus' prayer with him as the Spirit pressures us into him, freeing us for co-operation.²⁷

Ralph Del Colle provides what I take to be a breakthrough insight: 'with respect to the notion of presence, the *Christus praesens* and the *Spiritus praesens* cannot be simply identical'.²⁸ What, then, is the difference? The Spirit's presence is 'a presence that directs one to another, provid[ing] the possibility for the *Christus praesens* to be actualized'.²⁹ Following Del Colle's insight, we can perhaps finally risk a blunt answer to the question that launched these reflections. What we *experience* in worship is neither several presences nor the presence of one of the divine 'persons'. What we experience is one presence of threeness. And because that triplicity is the being of the one God revealed to us savingly in the gospel, we can speak of that presence as the presence of the Father in Jesus Christ who is made experienceable for us by the Holy Spirit, *or* as the presence of the Holy Spirit, drawing us into the Father's embrace of the Son, *or* as the presence of Jesus, baptizing us in the Spirit who reveals to us the Father's heart.

John Wesley was open to the possibility of experiencing the three 'persons' distinctly.³⁰ But I think Sarah Coakley is right: there are not 'three distinguishable types of "experience" (in the sense of emotional tonality), each experience relating to a different point of identity—"Father", "Son" and "Holy Spirit"'.³¹ In her judgment, 'the *homoousion* principle disallows that the different "persons" should be experientially separate, or do different things'.³² Instead, the experience of God in prayer is 'ineluctably, though obscurely, triadic':

It is *one* experience of God, but God as simultaneously (i) doing the praying in me, (ii) receiving that prayer, and (iii) in that exchange, consented to in me, inviting me into the Christic life of redeemed sonship. Or to put it another way: the 'Father' (so-called here) is both source and ultimate object of divine longing in us; the 'Spirit' is that irreducibly—though obscurely—distinct enabler and incorporator of that longing in creation—that which *makes* the creation divine; and the 'Son' *is* that divine and perfect creation, into whose life I, as pray-er, am caught up.³³

Coakley is very near the truth, I believe. But her account is, in the final analysis, just a bit too static and too linear because it privileges the one nature in a way that stratifies the hypostatic relations. She is right to say that the Three act inseparably. We experience in prayer not just one or another of the 'persons' but the *Trinity* personally. Nonetheless, and against her reading of 'the *homoousion* principle', I believe each of the 'persons' does act distinctly. To encounter God is to be drawn into contact with the event that is God's perichoretically-mutual life.

We catch a revealing glimpse of this perichoretic mutuality when we read 1 Corinthians 2.9-16 alongside Romans 8.26-27. First, the Romans passage:

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁷ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 124.

²⁸ Del Colle, p. 177.

²⁹ Del Colle, p. 177. Of course, the Spirit is not more *humble* than the Son or the Father. But the Spirit, like the Father, is not embodied, and so is not experienceable in the same way as the Son.

³⁰ See Fred Sanders, 'John Wesley on Experiencing the Trinity'; available online: <http://seedbed.com/feed/john-wesley-experiencing-trinity/>; accessed: 16 December 2014.

³¹ Coakley, 'Living into the Mystery', p. 226.

³² Coakley, 'Living into the Mystery', p. 226.

³³ Coakley, 'Living into the Mystery', p. 226.

Here, the Spirit is described as interceding for us to the Father, according to the Father's will. The Father is identified as the one who searches our hearts, and is described as discovering his will for us in the 'mind of the Spirit' (that is, Jesus)—the very will that we know determines the shape of the Spirit's intercession. We can be sure, then, that God is working all things together for our good, drawing us along toward glorification (Rom. 8.28-30), because we are caught up in the Spirit's intercession for us to receive all that the Father desires for us, a fullness that is revealed and given with and within Christ. Now compare that logic of intercession with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2.9-16:

⁹But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'¹⁰—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ.

In Romans, the Spirit was described as interceding for us to the Father who knows us and knows the Son, Jesus, as his will for us. Here, the Father is the one being searched, rather than the one searching. And instead of the Spirit taking the lead in intercession, as in Romans, it is the Father who gives us the all-knowing Spirit so that we might share in 'the mind of Christ' and share in his reign. Taken together, these texts image for us a perfectly, infinitely mutual life that opens itself for our participation. And it is that life, in its fullness, that makes itself available to us in the moment of divine-human encounter.

Scripture promises that God's presence is for us the 'fullness of joy' (Ps. 16.11). But why should that be so? The answer, I believe, comes when we see what Peter saw on Pentecost: before the word is spoken to us as promise it is spoken by Jesus in testimony.³⁴ In other words, the promise of eternal joy in God's presence is ours at all only because it is first *Jesus's experience*—an experience into which we have been incorporated by the Spirit at the Father's mercy. Jesus knows, divinely and humanly, eternally and temporally, the delighted and delighting intimacy of knowing and being-known perfectly. As our lives are conformed to his, his experience becomes ours, and we are rapt into the joy he shares with the Father in the Spirit.

Conformed to the Image of the Triune God

Experiencing God, we experience the 'subsisting relations'³⁵ that are the divine life. And experiencing God as God is, we become *like* God. In trinitarian terms, that means we are not only conformed to Christ (as Rom. 8.29 promises), but also in being conformed to him we take on the likeness of the Father and the Spirit as well—and just so image forth the triune God truly.

³⁴ In the midst of his sermon (Acts 2.22-28), Peter reads the final verses of Psalm 16 as a prayer of Jesus to the Father.

³⁵ Following Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* I.30.1), 'this word "person" signifies in God a relation as subsisting in the divine nature. It was also established that there are several real relations in God; and hence it follows that there are also several realities subsistent in the divine nature; which means that there are several persons in God'.

To be made like Christ is to partake in his character and (to say the same thing another way) to participate in his intimacy with the Father and Spirit. But what does it mean to take on the likeness of the Spirit distinctly from the likeness of the Son? Bruce Marshall has it right, I believe:

The Holy Spirit does not impress himself upon us, shed the love he is abroad in our hearts, in order that we may love *him*, the Spirit, but in order that we may love Jesus. Precisely by impressing his own form upon us, we could say, the Spirit conforms us to Jesus Christ. Because he himself is love, in other words, he does not impress his own form upon us *instead of* the form of Jesus, but rather the Spirit impresses the form of Jesus upon us *by* giving us a likeness to his own modest, self-disregarding person.³⁶

What, then, of the Father's likeness? If the Son is the 'exact imprint of God's being' (Heb. 1.3), then how can we be made like the Father in any sense different from being made like the Son? How is the Father's uniqueness perfected in us? Borrowing Marshall's phrasing, we can perhaps say it like this: just as the Spirit creates in us a likeness to Jesus precisely by engendering in us the Spirit's own humility, Jesus creates in us a likeness to the Father just by marking us with his own delight in the Father's goodness. Or, we can say it like this: the Spirit creates Father-likeness in us by awakening in us the divine urgency to give ourselves joyfully and without reserve in love for our neighbor and our enemy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a few words about how these reflections matter for the praxis and theology of Pentecostal worship. First, we have to make room for second-order theological reflection as integral to our worship and not merely an addendum to it. If, as I have argued, our experience of God is inseparably bound up with our theological accounts of that experience, then we are compelled to devote ourselves to discerning together the most faithful words possible, trusting that God is at work for good no less in our struggle for words than in the moment of divine encounter. Second, assuming that what I have just said is true, we can perhaps renew Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal conversations—to say nothing of other ecumenical ventures—if we insist on this truth: the shared experience of God in prayer is the crucible in which faithful theological language can be discerned. And, as Rowan Williams has said, if God's life is in fact the perichoretic mutuality of three 'persons' in one 'nature', then we should expect that 'the actual conduct of Christian theology, in its movement between Word and Spirit, confession and debate, image and negation' would draw us together into the same kind of freedom-in-dependence.³⁷ Third, bearing the hope of reconciliation in mind, we need to fill our worship with prayers and songs, sermons and testimonies that attune us to the dynamics of God's triune presence by attending carefully to the trinitarian grammar witnessed in the Scriptures and affirmed in the Christian tradition. Because we know the faithfulness of God, we can be confident that over time, these habits will (trans)form our imaginations and our affections so that our lives, personally and corporately, are indelibly marked by 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor. 13.13).

³⁶ Marshall, 'A Brief Anatomy of Holiness', p. 16.

³⁷ Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 147.